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DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

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MEMO FROM AREA PLANNING OFFICER TO PRINCIPAL PLANNER

APPLICATION NO. 86-6-6567	RECOMMENDATION REFUSE
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TECHNICAL REPORT:

PROPOSED QUARRYING OPERATIONS AT HORN CRAG QUARRY, SILSDEN
APPLICANT: BALFOUR BEATTY CONSTRUCTION

Members may recall that they last considered the matter of quarrying operations at this site on 14th May, 1986, when they refused planning permission on the application then before them.

A further application has now been submitted which essentially only differs from the earlier one in that the amount of stone to be taken out amounts to some 50% of the previous proposal. The amount of traffic generated by the development is correspondingly reduced.

SITUATION

Horn Crag Quarry is situated approximately 1 mile to the north-east of Silsden Village, and lies just below the west facing slope of Ilkley Moor. The Moor as a whole rises to some 1,300 ft. a.s.l. and the application site is set against the main massif at approximately 780 ft. a.s.l. At that height grazing land has become established and the quarry is prominent from the south and west. Despite the above, the whole curtilage of the site (17 acres) comprises an isolated tract of rough grass and heather, and this gives it a semi-moorland character.

ACCESS

The site is served principally by a minor road known as Fishbeck Lane which links the A6034 Silsden-Addingham road at a point some 400 yards to the north-west with Brownbank Lane, an unclassified road to the south-east. Fishbeck Lane itself is a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile long metalled single track gated road varying in width between 8'9" and 10'5"; approximately half that length is unfenced. The quarry itself is approached via a rough track some 10' wide.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

On the old style West Riding County Council Development Plan approved in 1966, the site is shown to be within the Green Belt and also within an area of High Landscape Value. The approved Development Plan is still in force and its proposals were underwritten by the former West Yorkshire County Council's Structure Plan which was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 8th July, 1980. On the Structure Plan Key Diagram, therefore, the site is already shown to be within the West Yorkshire Green Belt and within an area of Special Landscape. In the draft Upper Airedale District Plan, the site is similarly included with the Special Landscape area and Green Belt.

PRESENT PROPOSAL

The present application seeks permission for the extraction of sandstone from some 17 acres of land, and upon completion, the site would be landscaped and seeded with grass and/or heathers. At the time of the earlier application, the applicants were preparing to tender for Stage 1 of the Airedale Route, and they hoped to gain permission for the taking of stone from the quarry for general rock-fill purposes. The tender was not, however, successful and in re-submitting the application, they hope to be able to supply stone to the contractors who were awarded the contract. Members will know that Messrs. Balfour Beatty did not obtain the contract for Stage 2 either, and in the circumstances the quarry would only be able to supply rock-fill as an alternative to other established sources.

CONSULTATIONS

Yorkshire Electricity Board - The Board have 11Kv. overhead lines within the curtilage of the site, and these could be affected by the present proposal.

British Gas - No objections.

B.M.D.C. Ecological Advisory Service - It is known that parts of the site are occupied by badger setts, and steps must be taken to preserve those habitats.

B.M.D.C. Traffic and Road Safety Unit - Objections are varied against the application on the following grounds:

- i. Access to the site is inadequate by reason of narrow single track roads and sub-standard junctions with existing primary routes.

- ii) The proposal, if allowed, would result in a considerable increase in heavy traffic within the Silsden village, with consequent detriment to safety and the environment generally.

B.M.D.C. Main Drainage Unit - No objections provided that all culverts and land drains are safeguarded, and that surface water run-off is controlled.

Yorkshire Water Authority - The Authority state categorically that private ground spring water supplies enjoyed by neighbouring properties will be at risk if the quarry is enlarged. Springs used for domestic supplies immediately to the west of the quarry would be extremely sensitive to changes in the local groundwater regime. Other springs and boreholes to the south and east may suffer from discoloured or turbid water and possibly reduced yields.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Telegraph & Argus on 27th October, 1986, and on site as required by Section 26 of the Town & Country Planning Act, 1971. In response, 4 individual letters of objection have been received along with a petition from some 880 persons which (although originally submitted with the previous application) the Council has been asked to accept in the present case. Both the letters and the petition cite the following as grounds of objection:

- Excessive heavy goods traffic in Silsden.
- Threat to future of local shops.
- Damage to the environment.
- That the rockfill material can be supplied from existing quarries in North Yorkshire, which are already geared up to produce the necessary quantities.
- Derogation of private water supplies.
- The roads (Fishbeck Lane) in the immediate area of the quarry are totally unsuitable for intensive quarry use.
- Quarrying will inevitably damage established badger setts at the quarry.
- The additional heavy traffic will inevitably damage drainage in the area and will also cause extra noise and dust.

Additionally, the Silsden Parish Council has considered the application and has recommended that:

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ANALYSIS

Ever since unauthorised quarrying operations commenced at this site towards the end of 1982, the 3 planning applications that have been submitted since then have all been refused. The reasons for those refusals were based on the following grounds:

- a. The detrimental effect that the operations have had upon the private ground spring water supplies to the neighbouring dwellings of which there are 7 in number.
- b. That the means of access to the quarry is inadequate by reason of the poor highway infrastructure in the area.
- c. That the extraction of minerals from the quarry will be detrimental to the amenities of the area because of the additional noise, dust, and traffic generated.
- d. The inevitable disturbance to protected wild-life habitats.

Looking at these issues in greater details, the position is as follows:

(i) Water Supplies

There is little reason to doubt that the working of the quarry since unauthorised commencement in 1982, has adversely affected the private spring water supplies to the 7 dwelling houses. Until that time they had enjoyed a satisfactory supply of water that was adequate for all domestic and agricultural needs.

In 1983 the former County Council issued a Stop Notice and an Enforcement Notice and the subsequent cessation resulted in a marked improvement to the water supply. In 1984 the previous applicant's commissioned consultants to report on water supplies in the area. Subsequently the consultants recommended certain courses of action involving filtration of the spring water supplies and/or the sinking of a private borehole on adjoining land. The Yorkshire Water Authority were agreeable to the recommendations as made in the report. Since that time, attempts to improve and clean the springwater channels and silt traps has proved moderately successful, but an adjoining householder has felt it necessary to sink his own private borehole within his curtilage. Certainly there is still no agreed basis (either formal or informal) whereby the problem can be resolved in a manner

acceptable to all parties

In the present application, the applicant's state that (page 11, para. 7)

"Whilst final details are not yet to hand, Balfour Beattie will give an undertaking to comply with the YWA requirements and is currently considering methods of ensuring the maintenance of the water supply to properties mentioned, including the possibility of a borehole installation which it is believed would solve many of the problems currently existing"

It is not known whether the above matters are still being actively considered, but if they are, no details or conclusions have been advised to the Planning Authority. So far as is known, the land on which a borehole might be constructed, is outside the control of the applicants and it is not therefore possible for the Authority to impose planning conditions in respect of such measures.

(ii) Access

The highway infrastructure is poor and totally unsuitable for use by heavy quarry traffic. In an earlier application, only 2 vehicles/day were expected to call at the quarry, but it was known that that figure was exceeded on occasions. Fishbeck Lane is already used by farm traffic and if vehicular activity is raised to 10 vehicles/hour (in each direction) there will be inevitably serious damage to the verges and roadside boundary walls. The present application includes proposals also for the construction of at least one passing place on Fishbeck Lane, but it is not on land under the control of the applicants, nor has a section 27 notice been served in connection with it.

(iii) Amenity.

It is accepted that the site is not readily visible from the main or minor road network in the vicinity of the site, although this is due entirely to the juxtaposition of the relative levels of carriageway, boundary walls and adjoining fields. Nevertheless, there are points on the Silsden-Addingham Class I road and the adjoining Cringles residential caravan site where there are views of the exposed quarry workings which are unsightly and intrusive against the backdrop of open areas of land comprising the western flank of Ilkley Moor.

As the unauthorised workings have extended, they have become more visible than has hitherto been the case, and they now affect much more adversely the amenities of the dwellings that look onto the site.

A bund has been formed from quarry waste in an attempt to screen the unauthorised workings, but it has not been properly conceived and it will remain an obtrusive feature even if soiled and seeded.

(iv) Wild-life habitats

It is considered that the quarrying operations are still likely to affect adversely, the wild-life habitats which are situated at the north western corner of the quarry. The developers are aware of the presence of these habitats and have indicated their intent to prevent damage to them wherever possible. The proposed bund would, however, be very close to the habitats, and it cannot be said with certainty that they will remain unaffected. Safeguarding conditions would, at the request of the Nature Conservancy Council, have to be imposed if planning permission was to be granted.

In terms of the approved Structure Plan, the application has been considered in the light of the following policies:

N.36. In terms of the above observations, the proposal cannot be regarded as relating to the extension of existing authorised Mineral workings.

N.39 (i) It is agreed that the mineral does exist at the site.

(ii) The need for the mineral to come from this particular site has not been proven. Members will know that rock-fill material is already being brought to the site from other quarries in the Keighley area, and it is also being brought in some quantity from quarries at Skipton. The contractors for Stage 2 of the Airedale Route, are

pursuing their own planning application for a source of rock-fill from an existing disused quarry to the south of Keighley and that application will be brought to the Committee for determination very shortly. The proposal will have a considerable effect on the environment and local Communities, and in the light of the foregoing paragraphs, it is clear that this part of Policy N39 is not satisfied.

- (iii) As has been explained previously, the means of transporting minerals from the site is unsatisfactory and the highway infrastructure is inadequate. Accordingly, this part of the policy is not satisfied.
- (iv) The restoration proposals and intended methods of working are only partially explained and this part of the policy is not satisfied.

In relation to the policy as a whole, Members cannot be advised that the proposals are compatible with the policy.

N21 It is considered that the proposals will adversely affect the visual character of the area contrary to the general intent of the policy.

N23 It is considered that conditions could be imposed to safeguard the wild-life interests, but in any event, these interests are already protected by the Wild-life and Countryside Act 1981.

FOR THE APPLICANTS

The applicants have considered the available sources of rock-fill material, and point out that if the source involves a greater travelling time, then the net result would be more vehicles on the road. Their conclusion is that because Horn Crag is closer to the Airedale Route than other alternatives, then there would be fewer vehicles on the road at any one time, but they concede that these same vehicles will be making more round trips during the working day. They also consider that if the material is bought, for example, from Skipton or Keighley, not only would this increase the journey time, but it would add further to the problems of the already overcrowded trunk road, particularly during the Summer construction period.

The applicants state that they consider that the environmental impact of the quarrying operation will be minimal, and that they are prepared to undertake a considerable amount of restoration at the end of the contract period in order to integrate the quarry face in the landscape. This would, to a large extent, appear to consist of disposing of some waste material from the road contract and depositing it in the quarry, and subsequent grassing over or planting. The methods of working will involve daily blasting, and crushing on site.

On vehicle routing and access, the applicants state that they will voluntarily impose a 15 m.p.h. speed limit in High Street, Silsden; they also suggest that further improvements to safety would result if all on-street parking in High Street was prohibited.

CONCLUSION

The application proposes operations which are generally seen to be undesirable in terms of their effect on the amenity of the area which is identified as being of high landscape value. The use of the site as a quarry will cause detriment to those amenities which are enjoyed by several

dwellinghouses and a caravan site which look onto the site. Also, on the information presently available, there is a high probability that the operation of the quarry will continue to affect adversely the private spring water supplies to those houses. The unauthorised commencement of development in advance of planning permission allows Members to appreciate more readily the objections to the application, and the new application does not overcome the fundamental grounds of refusal on the earlier applications.

With regard to a possible Traffic Regulation Order banning parking or loading on the High Street during peak hours, it is considered that in view of the likely objections to such an Order, it would be unlikely to be approved by the Secretary of State.

In the earlier applications, it was considered that the establishment of a quarry for the production of blockstone even on a limited scale was unacceptable. Any proposal to open a fully mechanised quarry with crushers, rippers and other ancillary heavy equipment, including blasting, would seriously exacerbate the situation.

Insofar as the applicants are concerned, the strongest argument in favour of the application is that the existing unauthorised workings could be properly restored, but there are other methods of achieving such restoration, and a further report will be made to the Committee in due course.