

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Sites Plan

Site AS19: Woodsford Quarry Extension

Introduction

1. The Pre-Submission Draft of the Minerals Sites Plan 2017 includes land at Woodsford Farms, Woodsford as one of the proposed allocated sites for sand and gravel extraction.
2. This Statement sets out the approach proposed by the Mineral Planning Authority with regard to appropriate protection of the cultural heritage interest at the AS19 Woodsford Quarry Extension site. The Agents for the landowner have seen and commented on an earlier draft of this statement.
3. This site allocation is within West Dorset District Council and the informal comments made in June 2017 by the Purbeck District Council Conservation Officer do not directly apply to this allocation site. However, some of the general comments made are relevant.
4. Potential impacts resulting from sand and gravel working could include:
 - i. *Potential setting impacts on the Grade II listed Frome Bridge;*
 - ii. *Potential impacts on historic Estate landscape character, in particular the loss of mature hedgerow trees and other historic site/field boundaries;*
 - iii. *The loss of historic watercourses, possibly related to past use of the land as water meadows;*
 - iv. *Potential for cumulative impact viewed in conjunction with AS26 Hurst Farm.*
 - v. *Potential loss of below-ground archaeology.*
 - vi. *Harm would not be adequately mitigated by reinstating field boundaries after quarrying given that the loss of mature hedgerow trees could not be compensated for in this way.*
5. Potential mitigation could include:
 - i. *Boundaries that had to be removed or damaged could be repaired and improved. Planting of new hedgerow oaks could make a valuable contribution.*
 - ii. *The historic water meadows should be properly assessed, and appropriate mitigation identified. The most archaeologically sensitive parts of the historic water meadows could be excluded.*
 - iii. *Adoption of a quarrying strategy which conserved key field boundaries and ditches would avoid harm to these features.*

MPA Response

5. The MPA recognise the heritage interest in this proposed allocation. Historic environment assessment has been carried out, and commissioned Context One consultants to undertake heritage assessment of the site. This is available at the Dorset County Council Mineral Sites Plan Examination website (MSDCC 37 and MSDCC 40¹).
6. A more detailed historic environment assessment has been commissioned by the site nominee, and is also available on the Examination website - see Woodsford HD - 28c and Woodsford HD - 28f.

Historic England Response to Mineral Sites Plan Pre-Submission Consultation

7. Historic England made the following response in January 2018 to the 2017/2018 Pre-Submission Consultation on the Mineral Sites Plan.

¹ See: <https://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/dorset-county-council/minerals-planning-policy/mineral-sites-plan/mineral-sites-plan.aspx>

We note, and appreciate, the Conservation Officer's particular concern regarding Philliol's Farm (AS-12), Woodsford Quarry (AS-19), Station Road, Moreton (AS-25), and Hurst Farm, Moreton (AS-26).

Has the local authority considered small plot phased extraction within these very large sites to reduce the impact on the landscape, and allow a more sensitive, responsive managed release of sites that can enable the conservation of, for example, ancient trees and hedgerows, important features within the historic landscape? Historic England would welcome the opportunity to discuss such potential measures, and others to reduce the level of harm to the significance of the historic environment.

8. A subsequent email from Historic England dated 16th August 2018 included the following summarised points:

Historic England have previously acknowledged the validity of the comments and recommendations provided by the former Purbeck CO and therefore it was felt to be reasonable to expect a consideration and response to those matters and in so doing accord with the expectations of national planning policy.

Is the LA able to positively respond to the (Conservation Officer comments) and ensure:

- i. parcel by parcel extraction*
- ii. retention of historic hedged boundaries, ditches and mature trees which both screen and are clearly of historic landscape significance*
- iii. avoidance of sensitive water meadows*

The next steps would be to clearly set out how you (the LA) can positively respond to the evidence gathered and in so doing accord with national policy. A positive response to both sites may help to limit a cumulative impact/harm.

9. A subsequent email from Historic England (24th August, 2018) referred to the presence of the water meadows in more detail, querying:
- i. how to determine the relative significance of the watermeadows;*
 - ii. how the MPA propose to respond to the presence of the watermeadows, in applying national policy.*

Proposed Mitigation to address Historic England concerns

10. The following approaches could address heritage impacts, including:

- i. working the site through parcel by parcel extraction;*
- ii. retention of the historic hedged boundaries and mature trees, which both screen and signify the historic arrangement of the landscape;*
- iii. avoidance of visually intrusive spoil dumps during the extraction;*
- iv. maintaining as much of the existing boundary system (including field boundaries within the site) as possible, and reinstating those which have had to be removed or damaged, after completion of extraction;*
- v. appropriate evaluation and mitigation in relation to the archaeological potential of the Site, to provide the opportunity for greater understanding of both the post-medieval estate development and the important water meadows which are partly represented in the north-west of the Site.*

11. The MPA consider that these actions would mitigate the long-term effects, even if the landform is permanently altered. Restoration plans need to take into account the potential for an enduring alteration of the landform and identify areas where the greatest remaining ground level reduction is least visually evident and explore potential for enhancing the legibility of the landscape to a wider audience.

12. Many aspects of the potential impacts will be temporary in nature and limited to the period of active extraction, albeit that this may last for some years. However, these will not create permanent change to setting, while changes to the current land form would be permanent, although this could be remedied with respect to the visual impact by sympathetic restoration.

Implementing these mitigation actions

13. The MPA recognise the importance of mitigating potential impacts on heritage interests in the vicinity of the site. One option would be to include a more generalised Development Guideline (DG) in the MSP, noting the potential for heritage impacts and requiring a detailed Heritage Assessment in support of any future planning application to identify these impacts along with appropriate mitigation to address the identified impacts.

14. The preference of the MPA is to keep the DGs as guidelines, and avoid being overly prescriptive in terms of actions required. However, in a sensitive case such as this proposed allocation, the MPA consider that it is appropriate to be more prescriptive.

7. Therefore, it is proposed to add a DG requiring a detailed Heritage and Setting Assessment, with mitigation to be identified and implemented. The following text sets out the mitigation that will be required:

1. *Given the historic nature of the system of field boundaries within and around the Site, these boundaries should be maintained as far as possible through;
 - a. *Employing parcel by parcel extraction of the mineral, and leaving the hedgerow and tree boundaries intact as far as possible;*
 - b. *In cases where the removal of boundaries cannot be avoided, reinstating those boundaries which have to be removed after completion of extraction.**

The further detailed assessment will identify which boundaries will be kept, and which will be removed.

2. *Visually intrusive mineral/soil/spoil dumps will be avoided during site preparation, working and restoration;*
3. *Undertaking a full photographic and topographic survey in advance of the extraction to record the existing landscape and facilitate the restoration. Restoration plans should take this into account and be agreed in order to provide some compensative mitigation.*
4. *There will be appropriate evaluation and mitigation in relation to the archaeological potential of the site, to provide the opportunity for greater understanding of the important water meadows which are partly represented in the north of the Site.*

Watermeadows

15. Historic England have indicated they are not in a position to undertake a survey to assess the relative importance of the watermeadows, either along the Frome valley or more specifically within the area of the site (and the neighbouring AS26 Woodsford site proposal).

16. The MPA do not propose to undertake any assessment of watermeadows at this stage. The presence of the watermeadow system in the north-western part of the site is acknowledged, and a DG will be added to require that at the planning application stage the importance of the watermeadows will be assessed and appropriate mitigation identified and implemented, based on the findings of the assessment.

Archaeology

17. It is acknowledged that there is potential for there to be below-ground archaeology within the site. The MPA are satisfied that Policy DM7 of the 2014 Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy and

the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 policy stance are sufficient to adequately protect archaeology on the site.

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy:

'Policy DM7 - The Historic Environment

Proposals for minerals development in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated through an authoritative process of assessment and evaluation that heritage assets and their settings will be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Adverse impacts should be avoided or mitigated to an acceptable level. Where the presence of historic assets of national significance is proven, either through designation or a process of assessment, their preservation in situ will be required. Any other historic assets should be preserved in situ if possible, or otherwise by record.'

8. The MSP - AS19 Woodsford Quarry Extension site allocation - includes a DG requiring archaeological assessment and evaluation.

Conclusion

9. The MPA consider that the safeguards available through National Policy, Policy DM7 of the Minerals Strategy 2014 and the proposed DGs as modified provide an appropriate level of protection to the heritage interests in and around the proposed allocation.