

## **Dorset County Council Minerals Sites Plans**

**Public Inquiry 23 – 25 September 2018**

### **Worth Matravers Parish Council Supplementary Statement**

**30 August 2018**

#### **Summary**

Worth Matravers Parish Council has over the many years of preparation of the Minerals Core Strategy and now Sites Plans repeatedly expressed its concerns on the increasing impact of new Open Cast machine operations not traditional to the Purbeck Stone area. Purbeck Stone is a limited and finite national resource evolved over millions of years, yet the Plans Core Strategy refers to extraction of at least X 000 tonnes. The original Minerals Core Strategy proposed sustainable, small scale, low impact excavation, conservation, and reinstatement of the AONB using added value operations on stone extracted. To date DCC have failed in consultation to properly identify and label many proposed sites as being individually and cumulatively in Worth Matravers parish.

Worth Matravers Parish Council asks that its representations on the Minerals Sites Plan will now be fully considered by the Inspector. Whether something has been properly or legally done is not known by the PC but it seemed strange that as Purbeck Stone exists solely in three areas (The Parishes of Worth Matravers, Langton Matravers and parts of Swanage in Purbeck) so little communication or discussion has taken place in evolving acceptable policies for extracting Purbeck Stone in the WM parish area. There was previously no consultation on developing proposals for an Area of Search, which was conceptually introduced at a late stage in the Core Strategy after consultation was completed, The external consultant's AONB landscape appraisal supporting document categorising different quality of parts of an AONB as less worthy of protection was never placed on-line circulated or discussed with WMPC. The PC have never seen this document which should have been brought to the PC for discussion by DCC. These visual appraisals by consultants based on photographs etc. are controversial and increasingly and successfully being scientifically and practically challenged as non-representative of the actual visual impact. An AONB should not be sliced and diced in this way as it is meant to have the highest level of planning protection. The PC have constantly noted in recent planning applications comments that in effect the locally increased open cast quarrying has so lowered the landscape quality that a few more holes and spoil heaps will not make much difference.

Residents have over a number of years raised a series of environmental and highway issues about the DCC Minerals Sites Plans proposals in the Gallows Gore area. There were already the two large existing sites at Landers and Lovells Quarries with cumulatively significant visual impact on the AONB from the Purbeck Hills and properties up from Harmans Cross. Residents consider that over many years there had been a radical change with existing

operations already encroaching towards their properties. Promised reinstatement seemed to be continuously delayed as time extensions for the quarrying were agreed by DCC. Concerns were expressed that Operators were aware how DCC monitoring was more lax than in other parts of the country. The three further sites proposed at Broadmead, (Quarr) and Gallows Gore cumulatively if agreed would surround the existing residential properties on Haycrafts Lane and Gallows Gore. These now comprised some 25 households who would have significant environmental issues from visual impact encroachment, dust and noise disturbance.

Current DCC Excavation and Reinstatement policies and practice are simply not good enough to make acceptable proposals in the Sites Plan. The PC has asked the Inspector to visit WM and especially see the typical mess made of landscaping quality of the final levels on the former extraction sites in the area.

There has been little effort by DCC to get Operators or land owners such as the National Trust to reduce overburden impact, to reinstate excavations. The timescale for extraction completion on existing sites has continuously been extended by DCC Planning Committees for many years up to 2030. Quarry Operators in this area are felt to be much more loosely controlled than in other parts of the country as DCC Planning have very limited enforcement resources

### **AONB**

Overall the adverse visual impact of each proposed site around Gallows Gore has been minimised starting from an original and unacceptable predisposition by DCC to downplay the importance of the north facing slopes of the AONB in Worth Matravers. This approach is still unacceptable to the PC as individually and cumulatively existing extraction and servicing sites in WM have considerable adverse impact on the AONB especially as viewed from the Purbeck Hills and the Gallows Gore, Haycrafts Lane and Harmans Cross directions

The PC has had repeated complaints over some years on a range of issues regarding the impact on the AONB of quarrying in the Gallows Gore area. Residents feel that the increasing extent, constant time extensions of many years and the resultant lack of reinstatement has created a blot of excavation and spoil heaps on the landscape of the AONB. This is especially as viewed up from Harmans Cross where DCC officers incorrectly report these sites cannot be seen or from Haycrafts Lane immediately adjacent to existing sites.

The proposals and recommendations of the Minerals Planning organisation at DCC appear totally inconsistent with the Dorset AONB definition and Management Policies and Principles. The most outrageous being the acceptance and promotion by DCC Mineral Planning of a commissioned but previously unavailable visual impact report from DCC consultants. The landscaping consultants' opinions on low visual impacts from key receptor points were heavily criticised and finally rejected by the four independent Inspectors at the Infrastructure Commission Inquiry on the Navitus Bay Wind farm application.

The basis of the Purbeck Stone 'Area of Search' proposals to define all the north facing AONB slopes of the parish as of low environmental or amenity quality was based on these consultants' opinion that slicing and dicing up of this AONB into lesser or better areas would

allow higher and more cumulative impact quarrying proposals to be acceptable in certain parts of these slopes.

### **Environmental and Amenity Impact of Specific Minerals development**

The Plan in its core strategy accepts that there will be adverse and increased

- Noise generation
- Dust and air emissions
- Visual and landscape impacts
- Vibration levels
- Site related traffic impacts as well as
- Potential instability of land impacts at and around the site both above and below ground level.

It fails to recognise that the current proposals are far from the historical concept of underground quarrying and are now industrial open cast mining operations chasing seams sometimes deep down to great depths and throwing up mini mountains of spoil . These can be seen in the Acton coastline area

### **Mitigation**

Mitigation over visual impact issues and noise can be achieved in part by a significant standoff of acceptable excavation from the residential properties. Storing no spoil or stone above ground level would also help. Bunds are a further interruption of the visual outlook and they interrupt and deflect not dissipate noise. Existing machine noise currently travels long distances in the countryside bouncing off buildings, stone, and walls back into the Haycrafts lane properties. Existing bunds on an uphill slope by Jestys in Haycrafts Lane help a little, perhaps, but the field is on a different set of slopes and bunds on the new PK21 proposals would have very positive impact. Cleaning off dust on house windows, cars and inside properties is a constant practical and cost issue for residents.

The subsequent history of actual mitigation achieved in practice is poor. Residents feel that the increasing extent, constant time extensions of many years and the resultant lack of or minimal saucer like surface reinstatement has created a blot of excavation and spoil heaps on the landscape of the AONB. Proposals for bunds do not affect noise and other environmental impacts indeed adjacent to property these can have a very adverse visual impact depending on their height. It is difficult to see how the cumulative impact from noise and disturbance of new quarry sites alongside existing ones when current noise bounce backwards and forwards into the Haycrafts lane properties. It's difficult to see how further large excavation scars across the landscape can easily be concealed.

Minerals development is subsequently decided by Councillors with different priorities at the Development Control stage. Past evidence is that despite opposition from the Parish Council and the land owner even minimal boundary excavation limit mitigation accepted on the SSI site near Haycrafts lane was halved by elected County Council members to a minimal distance at a subsequent application.

The Parish Council is repeatedly reminded by Local Authority Planning departments that it has no statutory importance being not even a statutory consultee on planning applications. Its

views carry no more weight with a planning committee than those of any other individual. Where there are planning conditions at application stage these have been ignored or are simply changed at subsequent applications the most notable being the timescale for completion and reinstatement changed from 12 months to twenty years.

The Parish Council seeks assistance from the Inspector for a clear definition of the any mitigation measures which as a minimum the Inspector considers form a core part of any future Minerals Site Plan application.

### **PK21 Gallows Gore**

The Site Plan document fails to recognise the extent of the adverse social, economic, highway and environmental impacts on the residents of the parish especially around PK21.

PK21 is a site which has almost uniquely a large number of houses in the immediate vicinity. This impact will be seriously exacerbated by any additional individual or combined proposals in the Minerals Site Plan for further excavation in the Gallows Gore area.

The PC does not accept that there is an overriding commercial need to create a vast quarrying area around Gallows Gore surrounding and blighting for many years in the future fourteen residential properties some with activity or impact from all sides. Excavations and transport of material would be taking place for many years in to the future. It considers the number of sites should be restricted and thereafter responsible selective and phased quarrying on those sites as proposed on the PK19 Broadmead site and originally in early editions of the DCC Minerals Sites Policy should be adopted. This will help to ensure a sustainable high value supply policy for the future as new quarries are not opened until existing or new ones in whole or part are exhausted and fully reinstated.

Three further sites proposed at Broadmead, Quarr and Gallows Gore cumulatively if agreed would surround the existing residential properties on Haycrafts Lane and Gallows Gore. These now comprised some twenty-five households who would then have significant additional environmental issues from visual impact encroachment, dust and noise disturbance. The PC is concerned that seven residential properties immediately adjoining the PK 21 site are now subject to Planning Blight affecting and preventing the sale of these properties.

The PC is concerned on the potential for impact on the Wessex Water infrastructure and reservoirs, albeit covered, which are immediately adjacent to the PK 21 site and supply Swanage and the surrounding area. It notes that the water supply to the Gallows Gore area and indeed the whole of the Worth village area is a pumped service up Haycrafts Lane and vulnerable to any service interruption including damage by heavy traffic. The Water Authority had previously expressed serious concerns on quarrying next to the reservoirs which could be critical with infrastructure operations potentially injuriously affected.

The PC has raised previously to DCC issues of unacceptable proposals for highway access to proposed minerals sites off Haycrafts Lane providing photographs illustrating the massive size and physical impact of the existing operational mining and transport vehicles. The PC is concerned that its previous representations on the adverse effect of such an access on

Haycrafts Lane has not yet been accepted and the proposal formally deemed unacceptable by DCC in the Sites Plan.

The site of PK21 is still shown as potentially accessible off a short length off Haycrafts Lane to residents on the lane, cyclists, the many walkers that use the lane as well as cars and other larger access vehicles. Cllrs have concerns regarding the necessity and environmental impact of the required visibility splays and the mud and muck that will be left by any quarry vehicles crossing Haycrafts Lane. This will be tracked up and down the whole length of the lane causing a high risk to vehicles walkers and cyclists climbing or descending up and down the very steep, narrow hill in Haycrafts Lane. Cllrs have direct experience of many operational sites in WM and of having shared a road with a quarry access for a number of years. All the undertakings that were made at site proposal and planning application stage to keep the road clean were never kept or enforced by the Highway Authority This proposal for access to PK 21 is unacceptable to the PC.

The Parish council opposes this site inclusion not least as it so severely impacts on adjoining residents. It is aware from recent subsidence in the area how a network of historic underground working exists around this site with potential stability of land impacts at and around the site both above and below ground level. This site would surround properties already severely impacted at times by dust, noise, air emissions and visually adverse landscape impact from areas as far away as Harmans Cross.

The parish council supports the residents local experience and knowledge of potential impact or even destruction of existing Wildlife Habitats. The south east corner of the PK field has already been excluded from the site due to its butterfly habitat. They report in their evidence how the main part of the field also supports a host of wildlife, some of which would be affected by the mining. Currently cows graze the field which encourages insects and many bird species that eat them, including flocks of starlings. Many different species regularly use it. Rabbit, fox, deer, starling, sparrow, robins, greenfinch, goldfinch, swift, swallow, kestrel, rook, crow, jackdaw, pigeon etc., but also badger, stoat, barn owl, whitethroat, redstart, flycatcher, moles, slow worms, common lizards, adders and several other rarer species. Underground tunnels cross under the field, the extent of which is yet to be confirmed. There is access to these tunnels both east and west of the site. The tunnels are an ideal habitat for bats, possibly including the rare greater horseshoe bat. Bats regularly hunt at dusk by the flank walls of local houses. All bat species and their roosts are protected in law.

The PC has been made aware by residents at PC meetings of the current economic impact regarding property valuations and sales blight from the Minerals Plan 'Area of Search' definition for this site

The PC has recent experience of large stone extraction carry lorries minimal traffic to Lovells quarry creating significant local complaints about mud / clay on the Langton to Kingston road. Parish Councillors have lived by other sites where conditions on watering, sweeping, wheel washing etc. have had minimal impact. The PC is aware of the Haycrafts Lane usage over the whole year and it totally opposed to its use for any length by stone carrying lorries from PK21. The lane in summer is used by large numbers of families with small children

going from the camp sites to the 40 Swanage to Poole bus stop at Gallows Gore and cyclists and walkers some with dogs who regularly use the lane.

### **PK 16 Swanworth Quarry**

The proposals at Swanworth Quarry PK 16 on the AONB have a potential for impact both in terms of visual and environmental impact across the rolling uplands to the skyline and cumulative impact from a quarry which was scheduled for closure and reinstatement many years ago. The restoration of the current site is now to be phased in with completion by 2025 with the new proposals extending well into the future. Any proposals may be highly visible in the landscape and there is concern about potential impact, even with appropriate bunding, on the AONB landscape of their open cut and new bridge and tunnel proposals.

The PC is aware that local employment is a priority as well as the need for sufficient stone to be available for industry and commercial needs. The Operators have confirmed to the Parish Councils that they are a large and ongoing local employer with 38 people directly employed from their local quarry at the Swanworth Quarry. The provision of 2000 tonnes of limestone dust is used by local farmers on fields and a sustainable supply of crushed rock from this site ninety percent of which aggregate output would be sent out to the Poole /Bournemouth area must be balanced against the presumption against location within the AONB. The proposed development lies within the Heritage Coast area, unlike the present quarry where the PC had no objections to the 2018 revised scheme of restoration and continuation of importation of inert fill. The PC considered an exposed cliff face would be positive as a natural area for habitats.

This quarry which was first scheduled for closure many years ago is now proposed in the Plan for an expansion of its open cast aggregate mining operation to 2030 and would have a major adverse visual impact on the rolling uplands of the AONB. With increased visitor numbers and HC and AONB designations, the PC considers protection of the visual amenity of such hillsides in Purbeck becomes even more important.

Any development of PK16 must not risk permanent loss of archaeological evidence of the overall context of the monuments. Concerns are expressed about the Bronze and Iron Age land systems across Worth Matravers which require protection and preservation before any further excavation takes place.

Any additional heavy goods vehicle movements generated by the development towards the Poole and Bournemouth areas would put additional strain on already inadequate and well trafficked local road network, particularly through Corfe and Sandford.