

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT

PROGRESS REPORT ON RESTORATION AND EXTRACTION AT GREAT WESTWOOD QUARRY, CHANDLERS CROSS, HERTFORDSHIRE

Report of the Director of Environment

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Local Member:- E Clarke

Adjoining Members:- P V Goggins, R Gordon

1. Purpose of Report

To inform Committee of progress in restoring Great Westwood Quarry and the extraction of sand and gravel at the Lees Wood extension site in accordance with the resolution of the Development Control Sub-Committee on 14 March 2000.

2. Summary

2.1 An application for determination of new planning conditions at Great Westwood Quarry was considered by the Environment Cases Sub-Committee on 2 March 1999, when it was resolved that the Director of Environment be authorised to determine the application. At that time the Sub-Committee expressed its concern with respect to the lack of restoration at the site and resolved that the Director of Environment submit a report in twelve months reviewing the progress of works.

2.2 A report was duly submitted to the Development Control Sub-Committee on 14 March 2000 and whilst it noted that considerable progress had been made in terms of getting the necessary planning permissions in place, restoration had yet to commence. The Sub-Committee resolved that a further report should be considered in 18 months time to again review the progress of restoration works.

2.3 This report therefore provides an update of the current position at the site.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The report concludes that substantial progress has been made to enable the commencement of landfilling at the main site in April 2001 and extraction from the Lees Wood extension. As the main site is now in the process of being landfilled, which will enable restoration in due course, it is concluded that it is unnecessary to provide a further progress report to the Committee and that continued monitoring of progress towards restoration of the site should be reported to the relevant Spokesmen.

1. Background to the Report

- 1.1 An application for determination of new planning conditions at Great Westwood Quarry under the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 was considered by the Environment Cases Sub-Committee on 2 March 1999, when it was resolved that the Director of Environment be authorised to determine the application. At that time the Sub-Committee expressed its concern with respect to the lack of restoration at the site and resolved that the Director of Environment submit a report in twelve months reviewing the progress of works.
- 1.2 Restoration of the site was originally permitted at the lower level (i.e. did not require the importation of any fill materials). An application was submitted in 1990 (ref 8/0503-90) to restore the site to original levels using imported inert material, but, at the time the updated conditions were being considered, the planning permission had not been issued due to protracted negotiations concerning a S106 legal agreement for highway improvements to Langleybury Lane. The commencement of restoration of the site was therefore put on hold pending the grant of this permission.
- 1.3 The review report was considered by the Development Control Sub-Committee on 14 March 2000 and, whilst it noted that considerable progress had been made in terms of getting the necessary planning permissions in place, actual restoration had yet to commence. The report detailed that the decision updating the conditions referred to in para 1.1 above had been issued on 4 June 1999 and these conditions had come into effect on 4 December 1999. The report also detailed that planning permission ref. 8/0503-90 (restoration by infill) had been issued in October 1999.
- 1.4 Finally, the report detailed that planning permission ref. 8/0735-96 (extension of extraction activities south of Fir Tree Hill – Lees Wood) had been granted planning permission on 27 September 1999. This planning permission allows for the extraction of 208,000 tonnes of sand and gravel from 8.26 hectares of land over 2 years. Restoration of this site is to be to woodland at a lower level, using on site material only (soils and overburden).
- 1.5 The Sub-Committee resolved that a further report should be considered in 18 months time to again review the progress of restoration works.

2. The Current Position

Planning Permission Ref. 8/0503-90: Restoration of the main Great Westwood Quarry

- 2.1 The above planning permission was granted on 8 October 1999, however the permission could not be implemented until highway improvement works to Langleybury Lane, required by the accompanying S106 Agreement, had been completed. The road improvement works began in October 2000 and comprised the construction of a new length of road to effectively straighten a stretch of Langleybury Lane and thereby remove the hazard of a sharp bend in the original

road (shown on Plan 3). The required provision of street lights and landscaping works and were completed in April 2001.

- 2.2 Also, before the site could begin to accept waste, a Waste Management Licence was required and the Environment Agency issued this on 8 September 2000.
- 2.3 The County Council received formal notification on 19 March 2001 that landfilling was due to commence at the site. In fact landfilling commenced in April 2001 and approximately 100,000 tonnes of inert material has been deposited to date. RMC Aggregates Greater London anticipate that by September of this year it may be possible to place subsoils and topsoils on an area adjacent to Langleybury Lane (phase 1 as shown on Plan 2), although this will be subject to weather conditions. In addition the company anticipate that at the current rate, landfilling of Phases 1 and 2, i.e. the area north of the M25 slip road, should be complete by the end of September 2002.
- 2.4 Planning permission 8/0503-90 requires that the development is completed within ten years and RMC have submitted a scheme of working that divides the development into nine phases, with phase nine due to be completed in 2009/2010. Plan 2 accompanying this report shows these phases and the anticipated timetable for working.

Planning Permission Ref. 8/0735-96: Extension site south of Fir Tree Hill – Lees Wood

- 2.5 The above planning permission was issued on 27 September 1999 but could not be implemented until such time as the highway improvements to Langleybury Lane had been completed, all pre-development requirements had been satisfied and all reserves at the main Great Westwood site had been worked.
- 2.6 As stated above the road improvements were completed in April 2001 and the final pre-development requirements were satisfied on 8 February 2001. The permission required the construction of a tunnel under Fir Tree Hill to enable a conveyor to run from the extraction site, under Fir Tree Hill and on to the main plant site in Great Westwood. The tunnel was completed by mid-April 2001 and extraction of sand and gravel has since commenced at the Lees Wood site.
- 2.7 From a site visit undertaken on 23 July 2001 it was noted that extraction at the Lees Wood site had commenced in Phase B rather than the scheduled Phase A (see Plan 1). The company explained that this had occurred as they were waiting for Phase A to be surveyed by a team of appointed archaeologists. Once this had been completed, extraction would return to the approved phasing. The processing plant at the main site is continuing to process the material extracted from the extension site and now that plant and conveyor problems have been overcome the anticipated production rate is 10,000 tonnes monthly.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 It is considered that substantial progress has been made in the past two years to enable the restoration of the site to commence.
- 3.2 The landfilling of the site is now underway and is progressing satisfactorily in accordance with the planning permission. By September of 2002 the company anticipate that the landfilling of the area north of the M25 slip road will be substantially complete. If so this will represent a significant improvement as this part of the site is most readily viewed from the M25 and M25 slip road.
- 3.3 It is therefore concluded that it is unnecessary to provide a further progress report to the Committee and that continued monitoring of progress towards restoration of the site should be reported to the relevant Spokesmen.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are none for this Committee.

Background information used by the author in compiling this report

Report to Environment Cases Sub-Committee, 2 March 1999.

Report to Development Control Sub-Committee, 14 March 2000.

Planning permissions 8/0735-96, 8/0503-90 and 8/0860-98.