

**EAST HERTS DISTRICT**

**APPLICATION FOR A VARIATION OF CONDITIONS TO PROVIDE FOR THE  
TEMPORARY STORAGE OF CLAY AT SOUTHFIELD WOOD, WATERHALL  
QUARRY COMPLEX, HERTFORD**

*Report of the Director of Environment*

Author: Brian Owen  
Tel: 01992 556255

Local Member: B Hammond

**1. Purpose of the report**

To consider planning application 3/1510-01 for the variation of conditions 24, 25, 26 & 36 of planning permission 3/0003-99 to provide for the temporary storage of clay at Southfield Wood Landfill Site.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 Southfield Wood forms part of the Water Hall Quarry Complex, which is located 4km to the south west of Hertford. The complex runs parallel to the River Lee and B158 Lower Hatfield Road, within the Lee Valley. It is an active sand and gravel extraction and landfill site that has been operational since the 1940s. The Quarry Complex is comprised of four distinct areas, Water Hall Quarry, Southfield Wood, Bunkers Hill Quarry and Pollards Quarry.
- 2.2 Southfield Wood has planning permission for the extraction of sand and gravel and restoration to agriculture by infilling with Categories A, B and certain category D wastes. The landfill is lined with clay to provide environmental protection from the wastes deposited within the site as part of the restoration process.
- 2.3 This application is for the variation of conditions on planning permission 3/0003-99 to provide for the temporary storage of clay required for engineering and restoration at the Southfield Wood Landfill Site. The proposal is to store clay arising from extraction within Southfield Wood, which would be used in the lining of this site. The store would be removed, as restoration of the quarry progresses with all the clay being removed by the time restoration of the quarry is complete. The application is partially retrospective as some clay storage has already occurred.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 The storage of clay within Southfield Wood would assist in the completion of the site. If the proposal were not allowed the Company would be likely to employ alternative methods of storing the material that would have a greater environmental impact. On balance, it is considered that the storage of clay within the active quarry and landfill area, subject to conditions, should be allowed.
- 3.2 The report therefore concludes that, the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission for the variation of conditions subject to the following conditions;
- i) time limits for completion of development;
  - ii) submission and agreement of a revised restoration programme to achieve as much restoration as possible, where practicable;
  - iii) monitoring of settlement rates and provision of a reduced pre-settlement plan to reflect this information;
  - iv) provision for additional drainage;
  - v) monitoring of noise levels and a requirement to keep within limits already approved for Southfield Wood.

## **1. Description of the site and proposed development**

- 1.1 Southfield Wood is part of the Water Hall Quarry Complex that is situated 4km to the south west of Hertford. The complex runs parallel to the River Lee and B158 Lower Hatfield Road, within the Lee Valley. It is an active sand and gravel extraction and landfill site that has been operational since the 1940s. The Quarry Complex is comprised of four distinct areas, Water Hall Quarry, Southfield Wood, Bunkers Hill Quarry and Pollards Quarry.
- 1.2 Southfield Wood has planning permission for the extraction of sand and gravel and restoration to agriculture by infilling with Categories A, B and certain category D wastes. The landfill of these categories of wastes requires containment in order to provide environmental protection e.g. prevention of leachate polluting ground water and migration of landfill gas. Containment is provided by lining the cells with clay that is engineered to a standard approved by the Environment Agency. The sequence of material at the Southfield Wood is top and sub soils, some sand and gravel, then brown clay, then grey clay, then sand and gravel which lies over the chalk bedrock. The clay lining cannot be placed until sand and gravel has been extracted from over the underlying chalk.
- 1.3 The application is for the temporary storage, at the Southfield Wood site, of engineering clay needed for the lining and restoration of the remaining landfill cells within the Southfield Wood site. There is a need to temporarily store up to 215,000m<sup>3</sup> of clay materials over the next 5-6 years. It is proposed to store up to 150,000m<sup>3</sup> of grey clay on the infilled part of Phase 3 in 2002. It would then be removed over the next 4 years and the area progressively restored between 2004 and 2006. The majority of the clay would be stored up to a height of about 4 metres above the approved restoration that equates to a height of about 78 metres AOD. Some clay would be stored for a 6-9 month period during 2002 to an additional depth of 2m., which equates to a maximum height of 80m.
- 1.4 Clay would be transported to the area using a dump truck and spread out across the area using a bulldozer. It would be removed by hydraulic excavator from north to south and transported from the area by dump truck.
- 1.5 The operational conditions that would need to be changed to allow for the temporary storage of clay are: No. 24 (phasing of working and restoration), No. 25 (no more than three of the phases open at any one time), No. 26 (extraction and restoration operations to be restored within three calendar years) and No. 36b (restoration of Phase 1 and part Phase 2 to be completed by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2001 and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001).
- 1.6 The temporary storage of clay on Phase 3 would prevent this phase from being fully restored until after Phase 5 has been restored. In addition, the proposed store encroaches on a small part (around 1,000m<sup>2</sup>) of Phase 2 which would mean it could not be restored by 31 October 2001 as required by current condition. The progressive restoration of the remainder of the Site would continue as infilling progresses through Phases 4 and 5.

- 1.7 The hours of operation proposed by the applicant are between  
07.00 hours and 18.00 hours Monday to Friday; and  
07.00 hours and 13.00 hours Saturday  
No working on Sundays or Bank Holidays.
- 1.8 The application is partly retrospective, as the store has already been partially constructed.

## **2. Consultations and representations**

- 2.6 East Hertfordshire District Council – (these comments apply to both the applications for clay storage at Water Hall East and Southfield Wood) Have no objection to the proposals and make the following comments; new mounds near to the valley ridge will adversely impact on the surrounding landscape, it would be preferable for storage to be maintained within the Southfield Wood area to reduce vehicular movements and to avoid use of virgin or restored land, EHDC has previously raised its concerns at the height of the overburden storage at the site, expert arboricultural advice should be sought regarding the impact of storage on adjacent woodland areas, if the proposed solution provides an opportunity to reduce traffic movements across the B158 that will be of benefit.
- 2.7 Hertford Town Council – expressed concern as to where the water running off the clay would be discharged and felt unable to comment further until more information was available from the relevant agencies on the discharge of water.
- 2.8 Environment Agency – had no comments
- 2.9 East Hertfordshire District Council Environmental Health Department – are concerned about the additional noise impact on Roxford and feel it would be appropriate to submit a detailed noise impact assessment for the works.
- 2.10 The County Council as Highway Authority – do not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission
- 2.11 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – does not wish to comment on the principle of the proposal and does not wish to object to the proposal because it would not result in the loss of any best and most versatile land. DEFRA draws the Authority's attention to the following agricultural consideration – Soils should be handled when dry and friable and in such a way as to ensure that damage to the structure is avoided.
- 2.12 A total of 24 properties were consulted and four responses have been received. The main issues of concern are:
- extra noise and dust for residents of East End Green and Roxford;
  - noise from vehicles 'bleeping warning sirens';
  - visual impact;
  - why not possible to store this material where originally intended at Pollards?;
  - piecemeal approach to the development of the site;

- views from footpath;
- affect on the adjacent historic Grotto Wood.

### **3. Planning Considerations**

- 3.1 Planning permission for sand and gravel extraction and infill with waste at Southfield Wood was granted in 1991. Since that date there have been a number of revisions to the original permission, which have had a cumulative impact.
- 3.2 Due to the nature of the mineral deposit, there have been problems with overburden storage at Water Hall and, in recent years, at Southfield Wood.
- 3.3 The current proposal would have further impacts but would assist in completing this site. The proposal would result in the delay of restoration of 3 ha. of land. This area of the site has not yet been restored.
- 3.4 If the proposal were not allowed the company would be likely to look at storing the overburden elsewhere within the terms of the existing planning consents. The material could be stored at Bunkers or Pollards Quarries. This would involve the transport of the material over the B158 to these locations. This would result in traffic movements, which would take up part of the limitation of traffic movements that could otherwise be used for importing material for the restoration of these sites. Whilst there are dates for restoration set in conditions at these sites, the placement of this overburden could delay earlier achievement of restoration at these sites.
- 3.5 The store is for a temporary period within an active quarry and landfill site where operations and activities associated with this would limit the impact of a temporary store. The store would be required only for the duration of an already permitted landfill and would be removed during the completion of the site. It is considered that there is sufficient capacity for the clay storage within the operational area without causing visual detriment.
- 3.6 The proposal would involve the storage of clay above permitted contours. The maximum pre-settlement contours of Southfield Wood is 79m AOD. The proposal would involve the storage of some clay above this level, to 80m AOD for a 6-9 month duration. The clay would vary in depth: it would be to a depth of 4m. for most of the period covered by the application, with the depth up to 6m. for a 6-9 month duration during 2002.
- 3.7 The proposal is temporary and it would not be likely to have a greater significant impact upon any footpaths or Grotto Wood than the existing approved operation of the sand and gravel quarry.
- 3.8 The proposal would add load to the underlying waste and compress it. This 'surcharging' of a limited area of the site would accelerate the settlement process that would take place on the rest of Southfield Wood. Final levels in this area would therefore need to be modified and reduced to take account of this factor. If planning permission were granted then monitoring of the levels of this area and other areas of the tip should be undertaken and this information used to reduce the final pre-

settlement levels within this area of the site. Conditions could be imposed to ensure that this takes place.

3.9 The submitted restoration phasing arising from the proposal is complex and may not represent the best approach to achieving as much restoration as early as possible. Conditions could be imposed requiring the submission and agreement of a revised programme of restoration that would achieve as much restoration as early as possible.

3.10 Additional conditions should be imposed to cover the following matters:

- time limits for completion of development
- provision for additional drainage
- monitoring of noise levels and requirement to keep within limits already approved for Southfield Wood

#### **4. Conclusion**

4.1 The storage of clay within Southfield Wood would enable the site to be completed without transport of materials over the B158 and could be accommodated within the existing working area. If the proposal were not allowed the Company would be likely to employ alternative methods of storing the material that would have a greater environmental impact. On balance, it is considered that the storage of clay within the active quarry and landfill, subject to conditions as set out in this report, should be allowed.

#### **5. Financial implications**

5.1 Planning applications should be determined on the basis of material planning considerations, and not on the basis of their financial implications for the County Council. However, it is a requirement of the County Council to advise all Committees of the financial implications that may arise from a decision of the Committee.

5.2 If a planning application is refused or is not determined within a specific period, the applicant has a right of appeal. Any appeal would result in additional costs, which in part can be met from existing budget provisions. However, a major public inquiry may give rise to significant costs for which there is no specific budget provision. If the County Council refuses an application without reasonable planning grounds on which to base its decision, it may be liable to pay the costs of the applicant in contesting the appeal.

#### *Background information referred to by the author whilst compiling this report*

Application reference 3/1510-01 including supporting statement and drawings

Planning permission reference 3/0003-99.

Consultation responses and public representations received

If you would like to know more about the issues referred to in this report please contact Brian Owen (Tel: 01992 556255)