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Mr Graham Gunby

Development Manager

Growth, Highways & Infrastructure

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4th March 2022

Dear Mr Gunby,

**Barnham Parish Council Response to Additional Information:** **Updated Ecological Air Quality Assessment and** **updated Appropriate Assessment.**

**Application No: SCC/0095/20SE And SCC/0042/21SE**

 Barnham Parish Council would like to make it clear that the existing quarry in these applications is not a working quarry and never has been. Its classification as a quarry arose as a result of the development of the bunds contrary to the conditions imposed on the original quarry application some 10 years ago. The PC’s objections to these applications are clearly explained in previous submissions and remain valid.

**Updated Ecological Air Quality Assessment**

The PC do not consider themselves qualified to comment on the technical data of the Ecological Air Quality Assessment but do have concerns about some of the conclusions regarding the change in Annual Average Daily Traffic. Throughout this consultation the effect of traffic entering the C633 from the quarry has been looked upon in isolation and does not appear to have considered the large increase in traffic from the 2 industrial sites located at the eastern end of C633. Most of the vehicles accessing these sites will be allowed to travel in both directions along C633 and against the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). This will mean they will be passing westbound against the eastbound flow of traffic and adjacent to the ecologically sensitive areas. Most of the increase in traffic from the industrial sites has occurred since 2019 which casts doubt on the validity of the data used in the Ecological Assessment. The issues associated with HGVs using the C633 were highlighted during the Planning Inspectors review of the Suffolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan and as a result he directed that no quarry traffic was to route through local villages including Barnham. This directive was made before the increase in traffic from the new industrial sites, so it is even more relevant today. This should preclude any consideration of the use of C633 for quarry traffic. There is, in any case, a more appropriate and previously approved routing overland to the B1106.

**Updated Appropriate Assessment**

The PC have various concerns about this document. It has no author and within the space of 4 months from the original Appropriate Assessment it recommends a partial reversal of the restriction to limit working to avoid the Stone-Curlew nesting season. Policy MS2 states that the issue of seasonal working needs to be employed to avoid the stone-curlew nesting season. This Assessment quotes this policy but supports a concept that all year round working of future phases of the quarry can be carried out. According to the Assessment this would not be permitted until the first phase of restoration to the existing quarry is complete. There is no existing quarry so no restoration can be carried out until mineral extraction has taken place. Therefore, an all year operating licence for this application should not be given. **This restricts the working time to 6 months of the year outside the stone-curlew breeding season for all quarrying operations associated with this application**.

The PC disagree with the statement from the Appropriate Assessment, para 3.2.10 “***This evidence shows that minerals extraction does successfully convert land of lower value to stone-curlew to land of higher value to stone-curlew”***. Mineral extraction alone does not achieve this result. The expert management of the land and the inclusion of specific measures result in the benefit to the Stone-Curlew. Land management could be implemented without the need to excavate the land for mineral extraction. If this was done there would be a positive effect on the breeding ground for this bird and none of the adverse effects from the quarry which would drive the stone-curlew from its habitat. Cavenham quarry has been used as an example of the benefits to the stone-curlew but advice from RSPB sources confirm that this site needed to be expertly managed and specific measures put in place such as anti-predator fencing in order to achieve this result. Cavenham needs permanent, professional management to ensure the habitat retains its suitability for this bird. If permission is given for the North Farm Site, then strict conditions need to be applied to the restoration phase to ensure appropriate measures are carried out and are enforceable. RSPB advise that in order to avoid negative impact on the stone-curlew the land needs to be of higher value to the Stone-Curlew than the current land after restoration. The restoration programme proposes to restore the site from heathland back to heathland. This would, according to RSPB advice, have a negative impact on the Stone-Curlew.

This Assessment claims that there has been no evidence of Stone-Curlew nesting within the site or vicinity within the last 10 years. This is disputed by the tenant farmer who has evidence of nesting both in the site and within 500m of the site boundary.

Finally, the PC’s impression of these reports is that they have been manipulated to achieve a desired conclusion and this conclusion is biased in favour of the application. Bearing in mind the possible damage to the ecology and environment as a result of this proposal and the impact on local amenities as a result of the revised routing then Barnham PC again seek refusal of both these applications.

**Summary**

Barnham Parish Council wish to continue its objection to both applications.

Approval to route quarry traffic along C633 would be in breach of the Planning Inspectors directive and policy MS2.

If approval is given to the quarrying,

* Then all operations should be restricted to outside the Stone-Curlew nesting season in accordance with conditions of approval for the original borrow pit.
* Strict criteria should be conditioned on any approval to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to correctly restore the land to a condition more beneficial for the Stone-Curlew. If the land is restored to its current form, then the effect on the Stone-Curlew will be negative.
* The local plan should not be amended to permit all year excavations until it has been successfully proven that the Stone-Curlew has returned to nesting in the site in more abundant numbers.

There may be evidence that the Stone-Curlew is currently present in greater numbers than the Appropriate Assessment states and if this is substantiated it would cast doubt on the credibility of this document.

Yours sincerely,

N. Deverell (Mrs.)

Barnham Parish Council Clerk

(on behalf of Barnham Parish Council)