

15<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Linda Townsend  
Senior Planner  
Gloucestershire County Council



By email to [Linda.Townsend@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:Linda.Townsend@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

Dear Linda

**19/0086/CWMAJM - Variation of condition 7 (annual output of material) relating to planning consent 14/0101/CWMAJM dated 21/05/2015 to facilitate an increase of mineral export by 50,000 tonnes to a total of 100,000 tonnes per annum - Oathill Quarry, Fiddlers Green, Temple Guiting, Gloucestershire, GL54 5SG.**

Thank you for consulting the Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') on the above planning application.

The Board has previously objected to a similar, previous planning application to double the output at Oathill Quarry from 50,000 tonnes per annum to 100,000 tonnes per annum (19/0032/CWMAJM). The reasons for the Board's previous objection primarily related to:

- 1) The increase in HGV movements and the adverse effect that this would have on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB.
- 2) The cumulative impacts of the cluster of quarries in this locality.
- 3) The need for the increased output and the potential conflict with local and national policies, including the policies of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023.

The Board acknowledges that the current planning application provides a more comprehensive assessment of these issues than the previous planning application. However, the Board still does not consider the proposed variation of condition 7 to be justified or to be compatible with the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

On this basis, the Board objects to the proposed development and recommends that the variation of condition 7 should not be granted planning permission.

In addition, the Board is concerned by the applicant's inference (for example in paragraph 2.58 of the Environmental Statement Addendum) that the responses of statutory consultees have demonstrated that the proposed development would not result in any adverse effects such to undermine the characteristics and special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB. For the most part, these consultees have not commented explicitly on the effects of the proposal on the characteristics and special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB. The Board's advice on these characteristics and special qualities should be a key consideration.

The Board's comments on these topics is summarised below.

#### HGV movements and impacts on the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB

The Board was pleased to see that the current planning application has more thoroughly assessed the potential increase in HGV movements, rather than focussing on overall traffic movements, as in the previous application.

Conserving, enhancing, understanding and enjoying the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Cotswolds Conservation Board Fosse Way Northleach Gloucestershire GL54 3JH

Tel: 01451 862000 Fax: 01451 862001 Email: [info@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](mailto:info@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

Website: [www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk](http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk)

However, we consider the plethora of transport assessment information provided in the Environmental Statement to be confusing. We are also concerned about the use of a mixture of *annual* average weekday traffic (AAWT) flow data and data specific to individual months. The most significant output from the quarry is in August and September, but using AAWT data could potentially disguise the peaks in output during these months.

Perhaps most importantly, the Board's own calculations, shown in Annex A, below, indicate that the increase in HGV movements on local roads resulting from the proposed increase in output could potentially be as much as 10%, rather than the 5.9% maximum identified by the applicant. As indicated in the Board's Tranquillity Position Statement, an increase in HGV movements of 10% should be considered significant.

The applicant implies that increases in HGV movements of less than 10% are of negligible significance. However, such increases could, in fact, still potentially be of moderate significance.

The planning applications does not provide measures to enhance the tranquillity of the Cotswolds AONB, for example, by removing and / or reducing existing sources of noise pollution and other aural and visual disturbance (as required in Policy CE4 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023).

#### Cumulative impacts

The applicant provides a useful summary of the status of the other quarries within the quarry cluster in this locality.

However, the applicant uses this information to indicate that there is no clear evidence of HGV movements having increased significantly over the last 10-20 years. For example, the applicant indicates that a number of quarries used to have no conditions limiting output but now do have such conditions in place. The applicant infers that this may mean that the output has not increased or has actually decreased. However, this inference takes no account of the fact that Naunton Quarry, for example, has significantly increased its scale of production in recent years.

The applicant also underplays the fact that several quarries in this cluster have secured the removal of restrictions on output and HGV movements. Securing the removal of such conditions is clearly a means of increasing output and HGV movements. However, the applicant does not address these increases in output and HGV movements in a satisfactory manner.

#### Policy conflict

As indicated in our response to the previous planning application, the Board recognises that provision should be made for the quarrying of limestone, at an appropriate scale, in order to provide building materials that help to maintain and enhance the local distinctiveness of the AONB (as stated in Policy CE5 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023).

However, this principle is undermined when the by-products of the quarry operation become the main output, as is the case at Oathill Quarry. The proposed variation would result in the by-product, agricultural lime, making up 50% of the quarry's output. Another by-product, crushed aggregate, would be included in the other 50% of quarry output. As such, agricultural lime and crushed aggregate would constitute more than 50% of the quarry output.

Table 2.1 of the Transport Statement Addendum shows that lime and aggregates together provided over 75,000t of the quarry's 83,000t output in 2019. In other words, these by-products constituted 90% of the quarry's 2019 output. This provides an even more alarming picture of the extent to which by-products output is exceeding output of block stone and walling stone.

The Board recognises that the production of some by-product is an inevitable part of the quarrying process. However, as indicated in paragraph 3.5 of the applicant's planning statement, the waste material which is used to provide the saleable by-product can comprise up to 50% of all material extracted. The applicant has not provided robust justification for the lime and aggregate output to constitute more than 50% of the total output and certainly not the 90% of output that these by-products represented in 2019.

Overall, the Board recommends that, in order to be consistent with Policy CE3 of the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan 2018-2023, agricultural lime and crushed aggregate, combined, should not be permitted to constitute more than 50% of the total output. Blockstone and walling stone should constitute at least 50% of the total output. Given the relatively low level of production of blockstone and walling stone (which constituted only 10% of output in 2019), there would be little justification for increasing total output on this basis.

The Board acknowledges that maintaining the status quo may result in some excess waste material at the cessation of mineral working. However, this potentially provides an opportunity to review the agreed restoration scheme to see if the quarry can be restored to a landform that more closely resembles the pre-quarrying landform (or at least, one that is more in keeping with the surrounding landform).

### Need

The applicant has indicated that their contract to supply 35,000t of agricultural lime demonstrates the need for increased output of this by-product. However, this contract exceeds the output of lime that is currently permitted. Given that the contract requires the applicant to exceed their permitted output, it should not be treated as a material consideration in the planning decision.

The applicant indicates that the 35,000t of lime is distributed within Gloucestershire and neighbouring counties. However, they do not explicitly state how much is used within the Cotswolds AONB. It is surprising that there is a demand for such a product in the AONB, where the farmland that is located on limestone geology.

The applicant asserts that the need for the lime should constitute exceptional circumstances. However, it is worth pointing out that the lime only serves a relatively local need. This should be balanced against the national importance of the AONB designation.

The applicant asserts that if the lime wasn't provided by this quarry, it would have to be imported into the AONB and surrounding area from elsewhere. If this is the case, then this may still be a more desirable option than increasing output of lime at Oathill Quarry. For example, this option would help to control the cumulative impacts of HGV movements across this quarry cluster in this particularly sensitive area of the AONB.

The applicant dismisses the option of using alternative sites to supply the agricultural lime on the basis that this option is not considered to represent any improvement to the proposed scheme. However, this is not necessarily the case. Supplying agricultural lime from quarries that are not located in a protected landscape could potentially have significant benefits compared to securing this supply from quarries within a protected landscape.

If you have any queries regarding the Board's response, please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Mills". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

John Mills  
Planning & Landscape Officer

## **ANNEX 1. Cotswolds Conservation Board's Traffic Assessment**

50,000t extra per annum = 2,500 extra HGV loads (at 20t per load) = 5,000 extra HGV movements

Table 2.1 of the Transport Statement Addendum indicates that the quarry had an output of 35,075t of lime in 2019, of which 15,157t (43%) was exported in August / September (the peak months for agricultural lime).

Table 5.2 of the April 2019 Transport Statement indicates that the 57% of the quarry's agricultural lime output was exported in August / September 2017.

If these two figures are averaged, the average % of agricultural lime output that is exported in August / September is 50%.

50% of the total extra HGV movements per annum = 2,500 HGV movements. In other words there would be an extra 2,500 HGV movements in August and September to deal with the increase in agricultural lime production. This provides an average of 1,125 HGV movements per month in August and September. This, in turn, equates to approximately 261 extra HGV movements per week, or 58 extra HGV movements (or 26 extra loads) per day.

If 50% of the loads head west and 50% head east (as indicated in Table 2.2 of the December 2019 Transport Statement, for example) this would equate to 13 HGV loads heading west each day and 13 HGV loads heading east. This is almost double the number identified in Table 2.1 of the December 2019 Transport Statement.

Table 1.5 of the December 2019 Transport Statement shows a baseline of 136 HGV movements east-bound on the B4077 east of Oathill Quarry. 13 HGV loads heading east from the quarry on this road would equate to 9.6% of this total.

In other words, the increase in output could potentially increase the HGV movements by 9.6%.

Whilst this doesn't quite exceed the 10% 'Rule of Thumb' threshold outlined in the Board's Tranquillity Position Statement, it comes very close and is significantly higher than the 5.9% predicted in the Transport Statement.

It is worth noting that a 10% 'Rule of Thumb' Threshold is the level above which a development might be considered to have significant adverse impacts and merit an Environmental Impact Assessment. Increases in HGV movements of less than 10% could still be considered to have an adverse impact of up to moderate significance, rather than the negligible significance implied in the applicant's environmental statement.