

Date: 30 June 2020  
Our ref: 319243  
Your ref: SM.20/02/110 M



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## BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Julie,

**Planning consultation:** SM.20/02/110 M Application to allow for the additional release of 1.5 Million tonnes of sand and gravel reserve and a revised Restoration Masterplan, compiled to allow a new consolidated planning permission (superseding SM.11/07/110 M)..

**Location:** Croxden Quarry, Freehay, near Cheadle, Staffordshire

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 09 June 2020 which was received by Natural England on 09 June 2020

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

### SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

#### NO OBJECTION

Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on designated sites and has no objection.

Natural England's further advice on designated sites/landscapes and advice on other natural environmental issues is set out below.

### Dimmings Dale and The Ranger Site of Special Scientific Interest

Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not damage or destroy the interest features for which the site has been notified and has no objection. We note that ground and surface water protection will continue to be managed in accordance with conditions 49 to 54.

### Soils, Land Quality and Reclamation

Having examined this proposal in the light of our statutory duties under Schedule 5 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Government's policy for the sustainable use of soil as set out in paragraphs 170 and 171 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2018), Natural England has the following comments to make:

1. Based on the information provided in support of the planning application, we note that the proposed development would include no additional net loss of 'best and most versatile' (BMV) agricultural land; namely Grades 1, 2 and 3a land in the Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system.
2. We are satisfied that that the site working and reclamation proposals provided in support of this application meet the requirements for sustainable minerals development set out in the NPPF and current [Minerals Planning Practice Guidance](#), particularly section 6 titled "Restoration and aftercare of mineral sites", and recognised best practice.
3. Natural England would advise that any grant of planning permission should be made subject to conditions to safeguard soil resources and promote a satisfactory standard of reclamation appropriate to the proposed afteruses, as set out in the applicant's proposals.
4. We acknowledge that the applicant has taken into account Defra's [Good Practice Guide for Handling Soils](#) which provides detailed advice on the choice of machinery and method of their use for handling soils at various phases. We welcome the adoption of "Loose-handling" methods (as described by Sheets 1-4 of the Guide), to minimise damage to soil structure and achieve high standards of restoration.
5. More general advice for planning authorities on the agricultural aspects of site working and reclamation can be found in the Defra [Guidance for successful reclamation of mineral and waste sites](#).

#### **Other advice**

Further general advice on the consideration of protected species and other natural environment issues is provided at Annex A.

Should the proposal change, please consult us again.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter please contact me on 07900 608175

Yours Sincerely,

*H McDowall*

Hazel McDowall  
West Midlands Area Team

## **Annex A – Additional Advice**

Natural England offers the following additional advice:

### **Landscape**

Paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes through the planning system. This application may present opportunities to protect and enhance locally valued landscapes, including any local landscape designations. You may want to consider whether any local landscape features or characteristics (such as ponds, woodland or dry stone walls) could be incorporated into the development in order to respect and enhance local landscape character and distinctiveness, in line with any local landscape character assessments. We

note the completion and consideration of a Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment.

### **Protected Species**

Natural England has produced [standing advice](#)<sup>1</sup> to help planning authorities understand the impact of particular developments on protected species. We advise you to refer to this advice. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on protected species where they form part of a SSSI or in exceptional circumstances.

### **Local sites and priority habitats and species**

You should consider the impacts of the proposed development on any local wildlife or geodiversity sites, in line with paragraphs 171 and 174 of the NPPF and any relevant development plan policy. There may also be opportunities to enhance local sites and improve their connectivity. Natural England does not hold locally specific information on local sites and recommends further information is obtained from appropriate bodies such as the local records centre, wildlife trust, geoconservation groups or recording societies.

Priority habitats and Species are of particular importance for nature conservation and included in the England Biodiversity List published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Most priority habitats will be mapped either as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, on the Magic website or as Local Wildlife Sites. List of priority habitats and species can be found [here](#)<sup>2</sup>. Natural England does not routinely hold species data, such data should be collected when impacts on priority habitats or species are considered likely. Consideration should also be given to the potential environmental value of brownfield sites, often found in urban areas and former industrial land, further information including links to the open mosaic habitats inventory can be found [here](#).

### **Ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees**

You should consider any impacts on ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees in line with paragraph 175 of the NPPF. Natural England maintains the Ancient Woodland [Inventory](#) which can help identify ancient woodland. Natural England and the Forestry Commission have produced [standing advice](#) for planning authorities in relation to ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees. It should be taken into account by planning authorities when determining relevant planning applications. Natural England will only provide bespoke advice on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees where they form part of a SSSI or in exceptional circumstances.

### **Environmental enhancement**

Development provides opportunities to secure net gains for biodiversity and wider environmental gains, as outlined in the NPPF (paragraphs 8, 72, 102, 118, 170, 171, 174 and 175). We advise you to follow the mitigation hierarchy as set out in paragraph 175 of the NPPF and firstly consider what existing environmental features on and around the site can be retained or enhanced or what new features could be incorporated into the development proposal. Where onsite measures are not possible, you should consider off site measures. Opportunities for enhancement might include:

- Providing a new footpath through the new development to link into existing rights of way.
- Restoring a neglected hedgerow.
- Creating a new pond as an attractive feature on the site.
- Planting trees characteristic to the local area to make a positive contribution to the local landscape.
- Using native plants in landscaping schemes for better nectar and seed sources for bees and birds.
- Incorporating swift boxes or bat boxes into the design of new buildings.
- Designing lighting to encourage wildlife.
- Adding a green roof to new buildings.

You could also consider how the proposed development can contribute to the wider environment and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/protected-species-and-sites-how-to-review-planning-proposals>

<sup>2</sup> <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140711133551/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx>

help implement elements of any Landscape, Green Infrastructure or Biodiversity Strategy in place in your area. For example:

- Links to existing greenspace and/or opportunities to enhance and improve access.
- Identifying opportunities for new greenspace and managing existing (and new) public spaces to be more wildlife friendly (e.g. by sowing wild flower strips)
- Planting additional street trees.
- Identifying any improvements to the existing public right of way network or using the opportunity of new development to extend the network to create missing links.
- Restoring neglected environmental features (e.g. coppicing a prominent hedge that is in poor condition or clearing away an eyesore).

### **Access and Recreation**

Natural England encourages any proposal to incorporate measures to help improve people's access to the natural environment. Measures such as reinstating existing footpaths together with the creation of new footpaths and bridleways should be considered. Links to other green networks and, where appropriate, urban fringe areas should also be explored to help promote the creation of wider green infrastructure. Relevant aspects of local authority green infrastructure strategies should be delivered where appropriate.

### **Rights of Way and Access land**

Paragraphs 98 and 170 of the NPPF highlights the important of public rights of way and access. Development should consider potential impacts on access land, common land and rights of way in the vicinity of the development and the scope to mitigate any adverse impacts.

### **Biodiversity duty**

Your authority has a [duty](#) to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of your decision making. Conserving biodiversity can also include restoration or enhancement to a population or habitat. Further information is available [here](#).