



**GILL PAWSON PLANNING**

Specialist in Minerals and Waste Matters

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Planning application

By

The Nunneley Family Trust

For the

Extension of Hornton Grounds Quarry  
Hornton  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire

**SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

Mill House  
East Haddon  
Northamptonshire  
NN6 8DU

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Hornton Grounds Quarry is nearing exhaustion. In 1997, when the submission to Oxfordshire County Council was made for the approval of modern conditions of working within the old 1956 consent, it was predicted that there would be 10 years life left in the quarry. It now looks as if working will be finished later this year, a life of 5 years since the submission. The main reason that the site has been worked twice as quickly is that the minerals in the south-east part of the quarry were of very poor quality. Only 40% by volume of the material extracted was of sufficient quality to sell, the remaining 60% was returned as mineral waste. In addition, during the last 18 months, the output of the quarry has been increased to supply the contractors working on the A43 highway improvement works.
- 1.2 It has been known since 1994, when Peter Bennie Limited carried out a borehole survey, that the land east of Hornton Grounds Quarry has a reserve of over 1 million tonnes of hard rock. A copy of the borehole logs is attached at Appendix 1. At various times in the past the possibility of working this site has been discussed, but no plans were submitted for planning permission. There is now the opportunity to work these minerals, following on from the extraction within the adjoining fields, prior to the closure of the existing site compound and infrastructure.

## 2.0 The Proposals

- 2.1 The area into which it is proposed to extend the quarry is shown on Plan no. GPP/HG/01/02. Working the two fields around Manor Farm should be seen as a further phase of working the existing quarry. All of the existing site infrastructure would be used and the haul road through the quarry would be extended into this area. The method of working and restoration would be the same as in the current phase of working. These are described in the Working Plan, Restoration and Aftercare Scheme attached at Appendix 2.
- 2.2 The area of the proposed extension is 17 ha and this should produce 850,000 tonnes of saleable material. A total of 1.4m tonnes will be extracted, but only approximately 60% will be of sufficient quality to sell; the remaining 40% will be returned and used to achieve the proposed restoration contours.
- 2.3 It is expected that the site will produce a useful supply of building stone, which Bennie markets as Wroxton stone. This stone is brown and is the most popular of the various building stones sold by the company. When the existing site is worked out, the supply of brown stone will cease, unless this extension is permitted. A copy of the latest brochure describing this product is included at Appendix 3. It should be noted that this stone is different from Alkerton stone produced at the conservation stone quarry adjacent to the A422. This latter stone contains a significant amount of blue stone, whereas the 'Wroxton' stone is completely brown.

2.4 At recent rates of working, which have averaged 300,000 tonnes per annum over the last three years, this extension will provide a further three years supply. This will enable the operator to continue working in this locality, postponing the time when the quarrying operations will be transferred to the permitted reserves around Wroxton. This will have the beneficial effect of allowing the tree planting undertaken in February 2002 to become established.

### **3.0 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

3.1 This proposed development falls under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999. The scale of the development means that it falls within Schedule 2 development, in which case an EIA may need to be prepared to accompany the planning application.

3.2 Section 2(a) of Schedule 2 sets the indicative threshold for new quarries. An EIA is more likely to be required if they cover more than 15ha or involve the extraction of more than 30,000 tonnes per annum. This proposal is not for a new site.

3.3 Section 13(a), which refers to an extension of a quarry, states that an EIA will be necessary where the development "may have significant adverse effects on the environment". The impacts that may result from the development are considered in detail in Section 5 and it is clear that where impacts could occur, measures can be taken to mitigate their effects, so that there will be no adverse effects.

### **4.0 Planning Policy background**

4.1 The relevant policies relating to this proposal are set out in Oxfordshire County Council's Minerals and Waste Local Plan, adopted in 1996. Although the review of this Plan has commenced, as yet there are no proposed replacement policies.

4.2 The particularly relevant policy is SD4 which states that "Planning permission for additional ironstone extraction will only be granted in exchange for an agreed revocation, without compensation, of an existing planning permission containing workable reserves". This is based upon the conclusion that there is no need to release any additional land for ironstone working during the period of the plan.

4.3 This application therefore contains a proposal to revoke the planning permission for working a number of areas within the planning permission 97/430. Although The Nunneley Trust owns the land and minerals that are the subject of this application, agreement has been reached with Corus whereby Corus will enable this development by surrendering some of its consented minerals.

- 4.4 The package proposed is as follows: The sites are shown shaded in red on the attached plan at 1:25000 scale.
1. Land surrounding Hornton Grounds Farmhouse – 20.27ha (49 acres) containing an estimated 2.0m tonnes gross; at 40% saleable minerals this could produce 0.8 m tonnes. It is estimated that there is a further 0.6m tonnes under the farmhouse and within the standoff shown on approved plan HORNT/MP/C.
  2. Land north of Alkerton Landfill site, excluding the standoff from the New Inn– 13ha (32 acres) containing an estimated 1m tonnes gross. It is known that this reserve is of poor quality, therefore a saleable quantity of 0.4m tonnes is likely.
  3. Parcels of land south of Alkerton – 23.5ha (58 acres). Some of these areas are excluded from working under the conditions issued in 1999, reference 97/430, but their formal surrender will remove any uncertainty over future working. The total gross reserve within these areas is 0.97m tonnes.

The total saleable mineral within these three areas is 1.2m tonnes.

- 4.5 The area around Hornton Grounds Farmhouse not only contains a useful quantity of stone, but occupies a particularly sensitive location in the landscape. Although it is impossible to put a value on the attractive appearance of this area, its importance in the landscape should be recognised as a significant benefit of its proposed surrender.
- 4.6 Policies M10, M14 and M15 of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan set out the County Council's expectations in respect of proposed mineral workings. These are discussed below.

## **5.0 Protecting the Environment**

5.1 Policy M10 seeks to protect landscapes of regional and local importance. The application site is not located within an area designated of landscape importance, nor will it affect any other designated site such as historic parks and gardens.

5.2 Policy M14 sets out specific criteria for mineral working proposals.

*(a) the protection of local residential, landscape and natural amenities.*

The site lies over 300m from the nearest property on the edge of Hornton village. In addition, the village properties are completely screened from the site by the steep valley slope that lies along the southern edge of the village. The site surrounds Manor Farm, but this property is owned by the mineral owner and will not be occupied for the duration of the quarrying. A 10m standoff will protect the single storey property from the risk of physical disturbance.

There is an established hedge alongside the minor road that runs beside the eastern site boundary. This will be allowed to grow to a height of 1.5 – 2m to screen the working area from users of the highway.

Most of the site is over 1km from the A422, although it can be glimpsed while driving along this road. The operations will be no more visually obtrusive from this direction than the recent operations on the adjoining land.

- (b) *the provision of adequate buffer zones to protect residential amenities and natural amenities.*

Please see above.

In conjunction with the submission and agreement of modern conditions of working for the existing quarry, a noise assessment was carried out. On the basis of the assessment, noise limits were set for noise sensitive locations in Hornton village. In the light of the experience on the adjoining land, no noise problems are likely to result from working more than 325m from the village, provided that a temporary bund 4m high is constructed along the northern boundary of the site. The proposed location of the bund is shown on Drawing No NFT/2/3. It is proposed that these limits be adopted for the working of the extension and that noise monitoring be carried out when working commences in this area and subsequently in the event of any noise complaints.

Local residents, during the working of the existing quarry, have reported no problems caused by quarry dust. Dust monitoring is being carried out and would be continued if this site were to be worked.

- (c) *buildings of architectural and historical importance and their setting are not significantly damaged.*

Hornton Grounds Farmhouse is a listed building, but is located over 800m west of the application site. There are a number of listed properties in Hornton village, but they will be completely protected from any adverse impacts of quarrying this site by the lie of the land in between.

- (d) *that satisfactory access can be provided onto roads which can safely accommodate the proposed traffic without material harm to the environment.*

The proposed quarry extension would rely upon the existing access to Hornton Grounds for all traffic associated with mineral extraction. This access was provided to ensure the safety of highway users. Access into the site will be achieved via the existing haul road through Hornton Grounds Quarry, which will enter the site in the north-west corner, as shown on Drawing No NFT/2/3.

In the approved modern conditions for the existing quarry, there is an annual limit to the volume of material that can be extracted from the site, of 350,000 tonnes, to protect the residential amenities of the residents of Wroxton and Drayton. If the proposed extension were to be worked the same limit would be accepted.

- (e) *where archaeological sites do need to be preserved, appropriate provision is made for the recovery and recording of remains before extraction takes place.*

There have been no indications of archaeological interest at the existing quarry, therefore it is unlikely that proposed site will have such an interest.

- (f) *sites important for nature conservation, other than covered by policy M9(d), are not seriously damaged.*

The land within the application site is in intensive arable agricultural use, and has been for decades. The site therefore has little importance for nature

conservation. There is a badger sett within the hedgerow of the south-west boundary; this will be protected by means of a 40m standoff, as shown on Drawing No NFT/2/3.

- (g) *woods, copses and belts of trees which are important in the landscape are protected.*

There are no such features at the site.

- (h) *a high standard of restoration and landscaping is provided.*

Bennie's record of restoration at the existing quarry demonstrates that a high standard is and can be achieved. When land is currently returned to the tenant farmer following soil replacement, it is immediately used for arable production. The farmer, who has a vested interest in ensuring that the restoration is carried out to the highest possible standard, owns the land subject to this application. The lie of the land will allow it to be drained naturally, but artificial drains can be laid if it is found to be necessary. The proposed Restoration Aftercare Scheme included at Appendix 2 should ensure a high quality finished site.

The existing hedgerows around the field boundaries that have to be removed to facilitate linking the restoration contours to those of the existing site, as shown on Drawing No NFT/2/4, they will be replaced on the restored surface as described in the Restoration Scheme attached at Appendix 2. Trees will be included in the replacement hedges and added to retained hedges and the landscaping feature planted along the eastern boundary of the existing quarry will be extended along the length of the eastern boundary of this site; as shown on Drawing No NFT/2/3. This will provide a significant feature alongside the minor road into Hornton village. This feature will also be continued to link with the woodland in the valley to the south of the site. The length occupied by the house and farm buildings will not be planted.

The steeply sloping land to the south of the application site is within the ownership of the applicants, who have agreed to plant up a woodland area as indicated on Drawing No NFT/2/3. This will extend both the existing woodland in the bottom of the valley and the proposed planting that will be carried out on nearby land in conjunction with the proposals relating to Hornton Grounds Quarry. The details of the woodland, including its exact extent and species mix will be agreed with the County Council's Landscape Officer.

- (i) *Water supplies and resources are protected and pollution avoided, and hydrological studies are provided where necessary.*

Quarrying has taken place in this vicinity for decades without any adverse effects on water supplies or resources and no pollution has taken place. The proposed extension should not cause any problems.

- (j) *the networks of public rights of way are protected.*

There are no public rights of way over this site and the existing arrangements to protect the users of the bridleway and footpath where they cross the haul road will be maintained.

- (k) *that every care is taken in the siting , design and landscaping of processing plants to minimise the effects on the local area.*

The existing processing facilities at Hornton Grounds quarry will be used. These are well sited to ensure that there is minimum effect on the locality.

- (l) *when considering applications for mineral development, the County Council will consider the feasibility of the restoration and aftercare proposals.*

The feasibility of the proposals is demonstrated by the success achieved at the existing site.

5.3 Policy M15 requires that the County Council is satisfied that the land will be progressively restored within a reasonable timescale to an acceptable use that is appropriate to its location and immediate area.

5.4 The progressive restoration of the existing site, with its immediate return to productive arable land should be sufficient evidence to prove that the proposed extension will be similarly restored and returned to agriculture within a reasonable timescale.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

6.1 An opportunity exists for the County Council to accept the surrender of a significant area and volume of consented ironstone, in sensitive landscape settings, in return for permitting an extension to the existing Hornton Grounds quarry. Giving up the permitted reserves identified in this report will provide the certainty of the protection of areas of attractive landscape, long campaigned for by the local action group.

6.2 The proposed extension will not cause any adverse environmental impacts and will enable the operator, Peter Bennie Limited to continue working in this area for a further three years. This will allow the tree planting undertaken in February 2002 on the consented land near Wroxton to become established, before working is moved to the south-eastern corner of the area of the old mineral planning permission.