

Norton Action Group

NYCC Minerals & Waste Joint Plan Whitewall Quarry - Bullet Points

Summary

Whitewall Quarry produces a soft limestone which is mainly used as a general filler material and for the production of agricultural lime. There are numerous quarries nearby in the North and East Riding capable of providing this low-grade material. It appears to us the debate hinges on whether Clifford Watts Ltd should be allowed to operate the Quarry for another 20 years with the loss of amenity in Norton to safeguard relatively few jobs. Furthermore, the two “ancillary” operations use only small quantities of material from the Quarry and there are 5 years of planning permission left to relocate these operations to a more suitable site in keeping with Ryedale Plan Policy SP6.

Transport

1. On 26th February 2018 Ryedale District Council placed a weight limit on the railway crossing at the end of Welham Rd which will direct all north-bound Watts' heavy goods vehicles through the commercial centre of Norton. The recent High Court ruling (see below) requires Local Authorities to take more active steps to reduce emissions in Air Quality Management Areas.
2. In December 2017 the above cross-roads were altered to give priority to traffic passing into Welham Rd. We believe this is a safety measure to prevent queuing traffic on the railway line and is prompted by the new Regional Operating Centre (ROC) in York which will eventually automate the manual signal box at the crossing.¹ This has increased the number of vehicles queuing down Norton Commercial Street and into the town centre.
3. From May 2019 the number of train movements at this crossing is to double to four per hour². The increase in queuing traffic, including the re-routed diesel powered HGVs, will have an adverse effect on the vitality, viability and air quality in Norton town centre.
4. On the 21st February 2018 the High Court³ ruled the Government's plans to clean up UK air quality were unlawful as they required no action from the 45 local councils (of which RDC is one) where air quality is below EU standards. In view of the lack of progress since the previous November 2016 hearing the Court was prepared to consider a continuing liberty for the Claimant to bring the matter back before the Court if there is evidence that either Defendant is falling short in its compliance with the terms of the order of the Court.
5. In a separate case the High Court⁴ has upheld the Planning Inspectorate's ruling to reject a planning application for a housing development in Kent on the grounds that it could impact air quality in the area. This ruling ensures air quality is now a consideration within the planning process.
6. Our survey of the 118 traffic movements⁵ down Welham Road was taken on a randomly selected day on Thursday 2nd October 2014 between the hours of 06:24 and 17:40. Some 30% of the traffic was in vehicles not carrying the Watts' brand name, presumably working on a collect basis. Watts' traffic estimates have been based on yearly averages and do not account for seasonal variations.

¹ Rail Engineer 23 Feb 2017 *UK Signalling a 2017 Update*.

² Department of Transport, Northern Franchise Train Service Requirements, December 2015

³ ClientEarth No.3 v SoSEFRA, SoSfT, WM [2018] EWHC 315 on 21st February 2018

⁴ Gladman v SCLG & CPRE (Kent) [2017] EWHC 2768, on 6th November 2017

⁵ Letter to Mr Paul Roberts, Transport & Development Engineer, NYCC ref. Td/d5/596, dated 6th Oct 2014

Amenities

1. The rejected Appeal⁶ to the Watts' application for an "ancillary" asphalt plant noted, in paragraph 37, the adverse impact of heavy goods vehicle traffic on the vitality, viability and attractiveness of Norton and the undermining of Policy SP7 in The Ryedale Local Plan. The traffic impact on Norton Commercial Street is deteriorating due to the following impacts:-
 - a) A forecast increase in the population of Malton & Norton of about 28% between 2011 and 2027 due to new housing Policy SP2.
 - b) Additional HGV traffic due to a weight limit on County Bridge.
 - c) Additional traffic congestion due to doubling of train movements.
 - d) Change in traffic priority at the railway crossing which causes congestion as far back as the commercial centre of Norton.

Sustainability

1. Greenwich Quarry (Fenstone Ltd) is some 12 miles to the south of Whitewall, but lies only some 600 metres over the county boundary in the East Riding and has therefore not been included in the M&WJP. This is a large quarry and its contribution to sustainable supplies should be considered in the light of Watts' statement that 60% of their traffic travels south from Whitewall.
2. Other active quarries & aggregate recycling centres nearby include the following:
 - a) Settrington Fenstone Ltd YO17 8NP
 - b) Wath, Hovingham Lafarge Aggregates YO62 4LT
 - c) Newbridge, Pickering Cemex UK Ltd YO18 8JL
 - d) Wilberfoss Aggregate Recycling (UK) Ltd YO41 4DD

We believe an analysis of the reserves and potential output from these quarries will confirm there is a sustainable supply of limestone aggregate & stone for the foreseeable future without Whitewall quarry. Alas, we are not given access to NYCC's quarry output returns on the grounds of "commercial confidentiality".

3. Watts' submission states the current reserves will be exhausted in ten years; just 5 years after the current planning permissions expire. To continue the operation Watts further states he needs to extend the quarry boundary to give a further extraction period of 20 years in order to be able to recover his investment. Otherwise 25 people will lose their jobs. We note the refusal of the planning application for the asphalt plant is a material planning consideration relating to any further development of "ancillary operations".
4. The current planning permission extends to 30th November 2023⁷. It would seem unlikely that any of the alleged 25 people employed in the quarry is in imminent danger of losing their job. We wonder how many of the alleged 25 are dedicated full-time employees working in Whitewall Quarry and how many are based at other sites or work as self-employed contractors?
5. We believe the limestone in Whitewall Quarry is soft and suitable for use only as general filler material and is not durable enough to supply good-quality building stone. Furthermore we understand, as the quarry moves south, the quality of the stone has been deteriorating. We wonder what percentage of the Quarry output has been supplied as building stone? We respectfully suggest the Planning Inspector is accompanied by a "Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person" who is able to verify Watts' statements.

J Howard
C Eng F I Mech E
on behalf of Norton Action Group
12th March 2018

⁶ APP/P2745/A/15/3002825

⁷ NY/2007/0247/FUL