Development Brief for Dingle Bank Quarry

August 2004
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The site lies in the North Cheshire Green Belt and outside but adjacent to an area of Special County Value. The site also lies within the outer boundary of the Jodrell Bank Consultation Zone.

1.2 The site is located on the Holmes Chapel Road (A535) approximately 2 miles south east of Chelford and 7 miles west of Macclesfield Town Centre.

1.3 The majority of the buildings are grouped together at the entrance to the site, which include single storey office and administration buildings and the plant and machinery buildings used in the processing of the sand.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The site formerly operated by a succession of mineral extraction companies is now operated by WBB Minerals who have also managed the site and invested in environmental improvements.

2.2 Restoration of the quarry site, as required by the planning condition attached to the mineral planning consent, will involve the creation of varied landscapes and habitats centred around three lakes. The aim is to provide an attractive semi-natural grassed and wooded environment adjacent to the lakes, creating a variety of habitats for flora and fauna and incorporating some areas of wetland margins, as gradient permits, in the restored lagoons (see Appendix 1 for details of the agreed restoration scheme).

2.3 The site comprises four distinct areas:

(i) **The Plant Site** - The plant site is currently occupied by office and administrative buildings, plant production machinery and extensive areas of hardstanding. It is industrial in nature, with access to this part of the site being taken from Holmes Chapel Road (A535). This part of the site is to be returned to agricultural use as part of the agreed restoration plans, with two small fishing lakes also to be created.

(ii) **Parkland Lake** - This lake will be located adjacent to Holmes Chapel Road (A535). It will cover an area of some 17.5 hectares (43.2 acres) and will have a mean length of 850m and a mean width of 230m. The water level of the lake will be controlled by weirs. This lake offers potential for both wildlife habitat creation and passive recreational use of the water and surrounding parkland landscape. A permissive path is to be created around the lake and this will be linked to a wider network of footpaths throughout the site. Parkland specimens will screen the lake from the adjacent road and there will be grassed/wildflower areas.

(iii) **Lapwing Hall Lake** - This lake will occupy the northern boundary of the site adjacent to Congleton Lane. It will cover an area of some 17.7 hectares (43.7 acres) and will have a mean length of 600m and a mean width of 320m. This area is subject to a separate legal agreement that requires the restoration and future management of this lake as a nature reserve. The restoration will allow the creation of inlets and marshland type habitats around the lake margins for wildlife. Public access will, therefore, be limited to access to the small car park
(which is to be located adjacent to Congleton Lane) and along permissory footpaths around the lake. Fishing will be allowed from the bankside. Public access, including access for fishing, shall be at all times of secondary importance to the primary aim of nature conservation. The water levels on this lake will fluctuate in response to seasonal groundwater movements.

(iv) **Acre Nook Lake** - This will form the largest body of water on the site and will cover an area of some 72.5 hectares (179.1 acres). The lake will have a mean length of 1,800m and a mean width of 480m. This lake has the potential to be used for a variety of water sports and recreational activities and will be of regional significance, with the potential to attract a high number of recreational users. It is important to ensure that any environmental restoration around the banks of the lake does not conflict with any proposed leisure activities such as sailing and windsurfing. Weirs will control water levels on this lake.

2.4 An area of land to the south east of the existing quarry is identified in the adopted Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan as a preferred area of search for further silica sand extraction. If sand extraction takes place in this area the size and length of Acre Nook Lake will be increased.

2.5 It is understood that the mineral operator is proposing to seek planning consent for an extension of the working. If the extension to the quarry goes ahead it is anticipated that the final extraction period of the quarry will be approximately 2010, with final restoration of the site due by 2015 and the ultimate final water levels are anticipated by 2020. If the extension does not proceed these dates will be 2 or 3 years earlier.

2.6 Restoration on the site has already begun, in places. This has included development of dedicated footpaths, planting of trees and secure fencing along the site boundaries. Restoration will continue to be an incremental process until working ceases.

### 3.0 PLANNING POLICY

**National Guidance – PPG2 Green Belts**

3.1 The general policies controlling development in the countryside (PPG7) apply with equal force in the Green Belt but there is, in addition, a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

3.2 PPG2 sets out instances where new buildings in the Green Belt are considered to be appropriate and this includes essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation.

3.3 Essential facilities should be genuinely required for uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it. An example of such a facility would be a small changing room.
3.4 PPG2 also makes it clear that the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by proposals for development within them, which might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design.

Cheshire Replacement Structure Plan 2011

3.5 Policy GEN2 of the Structure Plan identifies the broad extent of the North Cheshire Green Belt. Policy GEN3 is a general development policy, which seeks to ensure that development minimises adverse impacts on the beauty, heritage value and amenity of its site and surroundings and where possible improves the quality of the environment.

Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan 1999

3.6 The Cheshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan identifies an area of land to the south east of the existing quarry as a preferred area of search for further silica sand extraction.

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan – January 2004

3.7 The Green Belt and Countryside Chapter of the adopted Local Plan contains policies that deal with development in the Green Belt and these are consistent with the national guidance contained within PPG2. Policy GC1 deals with new buildings in the Green Belt, GC2 deals with other operations and changes of use of land within the Green Belt, whilst Policy GC3 deals with the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

3.8 Policy GC14 of the adopted Local Plan deals with the Jodrell Bank Safeguarding Zone and states that within this zone no development will be permitted which would impair the efficiency of the radio telescopes.

3.9 Policy RT10 of the adopted Local Plan deals with water recreation. It states that the Borough Council will encourage the recreational use of former mineral extraction sites. It notes that proposals will be subject to Green Belt, countryside and conservation policies. The supporting text to this policy (paragraph 5.18) includes specific reference to Dingle Bank Quarry. It states that the site is likely to become available for recreational use in the later part of the Plan period and that Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared to guide the after use of the area.

4.0 TRANSPORT

4.1 At present, the majority of the site can be accessed from Lapwing Lane (north), which links to the A535 Holmes Chapel Road, and which terminates in close proximity to Acre Nook Lake. Congleton Lane can also be accessed from the A535 and this forms the north eastern boundary of the site. The plant site can be accessed directly from the A535.

4.2 The site can be reached from the north and south by the M6 motorway via junction 18. The nearest railway stations are at Chelford and Holmes Chapel approximately 1.5 miles and 5 miles respectively. Macclesfield Town Centre is approximately 7 miles to the east of the site.

4.3 Applicants should carry out a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) for any future use proposed on the site; this would take into consideration the likely number of visitors
and the types of ancillary amenities on the site. It is advised that specialist traffic consultants should carry out such an assessment. In such a situation it would be advisable that applicants look at similar sized water bodies with similar leisure activities.

4.4 Such a traffic assessment needs to consider the access arrangements (including access to the main water body), parking and safety. Lapwing Lane (north) provides the most direct access to the site and may require improvements in order to manage an increased flow of traffic. Any improvements to the highway network should take account of the site’s rural location.

5.0 ENVIRONMENT

5.1 Any future use of the site should be sensitive to its countryside and Green Belt location and the potential importance of the site for nature conservation. Environmental Health will be consulted on any future use and where an application would have unacceptable noise levels (at the nearest noise sensitive dwellings) refusal would be likely. This is likely to imply that the use of powered leisure craft will be considered unfavourably, unless they are required for the safe operation or essential management of the water sports listed in paragraph 6.4.

5.2 Light Pollution is a growing concern for rural areas. Urban areas are slowly eroding the sanctuary of the countryside, and it is therefore essential that any future development takes this into consideration. Applicants must demonstrate that a need for lighting exists. Where a need does exist an efficient use of lighting using modern technology, located only in necessary positions, will be required.

6.0 APPROPRIATE USES FOR THE SITE

6.1 Acre Nook Lake is the largest area for future consideration. The site has already gained interest from a number of sporting bodies both locally and regionally, and due to the size of the water body that will exist, demand will be high.

6.2 Given the location, characteristics and planning policy for the site, it is considered that the following uses would not be acceptable:

- Residential
- Retail
- Industrial

6.3 Subject to the provisions of the Brief, and the legal agreements controlling the restoration of the site, the following uses are considered to be acceptable:

- Certain types of Leisure Use
- Educational/Institutional Use

6.4 The Council considers that ‘Quiet Enjoyment’ should be fundamental to any re-use proposal of the site and the following uses are considered to be appropriate:
• Sailing
• Windsurfing
• Canoeing
• Rowing
• Fishing

Other uses might also be acceptable provided that they comply with the requirement for ‘Quiet Enjoyment’.

6.5 Powered craft will only be permitted if they are required for the safe operation or essential management of the water sports listed above (i.e. to provide rescue cover, to set course buoys and to operate races). The use of sound signals by the water sports listed in paragraph 6.4 will be acceptable where these are required for the operation of competitions (i.e. for the starting and finishing of races) or for safety reasons.

6.6 Ancillary facilities that will benefit the use of the site for leisure, recreation and educational reasons will be considered. This may include boat/clubhouses, teaching facilities and changing rooms. Such structures must be designed and built to a high standard, be small scale, be sited so as not to be intrusive, be located close to existing points of access, and take account of the countryside location. Generally single-storey buildings will be preferable although there might be instances where two-storey buildings might be acceptable. For example, on sloping sites adjacent to the lake it might be possible to construct a two-storey building which would be unobtrusive. A small two-storey starting box/command post for safety purposes might also be acceptable provided it is sensitively located.

6.7 Areas of car parking, boat parking, storage areas and an access road will also be considered. The parking and storage areas should be carefully sited so as to be unobtrusive and should take account of the rural location of the site, particularly in relation to the surface treatment and any proposed lighting. Comprehensive and effective screening will be required.

6.8 Sufficient and safe access would be required to gain entry to the lake itself and should form part of any proposal for the re-use of Acre Nook Lake.

6.9 The re-use of Lapwing Hall Lake has largely been pre-determined by the legal agreements and will be for a nature reserve. Use of Parkland Lake should be low impact, such as walking and fishing.

6.10 Options for the use of land around the lakes could include:

• Creation of a footpath network for walking
• Creation of bridle paths for horse riding
• Creation of tracks for cycling
• Picnic Areas

7.0 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

7.1 The site lies within the Safeguarded Area for Manchester Airport and within the Bird Safeguarding Circle. As a consequence, any applicant will need to consult
Manchester Airport who might request that a condition is placed on any future planning permission which requires the preparation and submission of a Bird Hazard Management Plan.

7.2 Any applicant will need to consult the Environment Agency’s Water Resources Department to discuss: the final recovered water level; contingency measures should the actual water level be higher or lower than expected; Impounding and Abstraction Licences; the impact on existing legal water interests in the area and sewage disposal arrangements.
Appendix 1
Details of the Approved Restoration Scheme
Appendix 2
Ownership Details
Appendix 3

CONTACT DETAILS

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