



Mendip Hills AONB Unit
Charterhouse Centre
Charterhouse
Blagdon
BS40 7XR

Tel. 01761 462338

Bath & North East Somerset Council
Planning Services
Trimbridge House
Trim Street
Bath
BA1 2 DP

FAO: Chris Herbert,

17th April 2012

Dear Chris,

Planning Application ref. 10/05199/EFUL: Stowey Quarry Stowey Road Stowey.
Restoration of Stowey Quarry by landfilling of Stable Non Reactive Hazardous Waste (SNRHW) including asbestos and inert wastes

Thank you for consulting the Mendip Hills AONB Unit regarding the above planning application.

The proposed development must be assessed in the context of the site's close proximity to a nationally designated AONB landscape and have regard for Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), Section 85 General Duties of Public Bodies placing a duty to have regard to the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of AONBs.

In making our comments below, in addition to the above we have taken into account the Objectives and Actions of the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2009 – 2014 adopted by Bath & North East Somerset Council as required by the CRoW Act.

The AONB Management Plan objectives in terms of development include (p27) the need for it to enhance the distinctive character of the location, avoid damaging intrusions in to the landscape, incorporate designs and landscaping consistent with the distinctive landscape character, incorporate appropriate sustainability elements and designs, maintain or improve the existing level of tranquillity and dark skies and protect and where possible enhance, biodiversity.

In terms of transport planning, this should 'ensure that the special qualities of the AONB are fully respected in the design, provision and management of all types of transport'. In relation to this the AONB Management Plan indicates that the protection of the designated landscape should be addressed in Transport assessments accompanying development proposals.

With the above in mind our advice to the Council is as follows.

Whilst the application site lies outside the Mendip Hills AONB, we consider that the Council, when making its decision, should take into account any adverse impacts the proposal may have on the landscape setting to the designated area. Factors which should be considered should include important views, the potential traffic impacts on the AONB, noise and dust pollution, the possible loss of tranquillity within the designated landscape and potential undermining of dark skies through increased light pollution.

In terms of views out from the AONB, the Environmental Impact Assessment indicates that the application site and proposed development would not be seen. We do not have any information that would lead us to disagree with that conclusion. We would, however, advise the Council to also consider any potential impact on views from outside the AONB towards the designated landscape where it may form an important part of the view as a backdrop.

We note from the application documents that HGV routes would be via the A37 and an unclassified road outside the AONB. The AONB Unit would have serious concerns over HGV traffic associated with the proposed use passing through the designated area because of potential visual, noise and pollution impacts. It is suggested that if consent is granted for the development, traffic route restrictions are imposed and effectively monitored.

It is also considered important that the Council take into account any likely detrimental impacts from the proposed development on the AONB from noise, dust and light pollution.

Tranquillity is an important characteristic of the AONB landscape and noise from sites outside but near the designated area, or traffic associated with uses on such sites, should be carefully considered. The AONB Management Plan seeks to protect current levels of dark skies in the AONB and the Council should take into account proposed lighting at the development site with this in mind. The potential effects of dust blown from the application site that could undermine peoples' enjoyment of the AONB's natural beauty must also be a factor to be taken into account.

The potential impact of the proposal on water resources, particularly Chew Valley Lake within the Mendip Hills AONB, is outside of the AONB Unit's remit for specialist comment but is clearly a highly significant issue to be addressed by the relevant agencies, including Bristol Water.

I hope this advice is helpful to the Council in determining the application and would be grateful if you could inform me of the Council's decision on this application for our monitoring records.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Richards

Planning Liaison Officer
Mendip Hills AONB Unit

cc Cllr Dawn Hill, AONB Partnership Committee Chair; Hinton Blewett Parish Council; West Harptree Parish Council, S Murtagh (B&NES Council), Natural England