

Dear Residents,

As we await the Smith's revised Environmental Statement in response to the Regulation 25 request for more information and to address our concerns, we thought it may be useful to update everyone in this and in the next edition on the current position of the concerns that many of you expressed in your submitted objections to the planning application.

**Noise.** National guidelines state that for eight weeks a year the quarry can operate at 70db and the remainder of time at 55db maximums. Smiths are planning to use the 70db limit when they move the bunds around the site and during the first 18 months of startup operations. So, the current proposal is to max out the noise limitations which are well above our current noise levels. Our noise specialist identified that there is insufficient information as to how the proposed noise levels will actually be controlled by the bunds and the equipment to be used is only described as indicative.

**Use of Best Most Versatile Agricultural Land currently in food production.**

The National Planning Policy Framework changed in December 2023. This aspect is now a significant planning consideration. WCC knew this change was coming long ago when they promoted the site for sand and gravel extraction. They are now asking the developer to justify its use. Whether the site can be satisfactorily restored relies on good soil storage and aftercare. Currently the proposed methodology for storage of the retained topsoil is not acceptable to Natural England and there is no aftercare plan. The importance of UK food production has recently been recognised by the Prime Minister in a letter to all farmers. The position that the need for the sand and gravel outweighs the agricultural production is no longer tenable given that current reserves already far exceed the level of strategic reserves required.

**Air quality.** Currently our local poor air quality is hitting national recommended guidelines during the day. We have undertaken research on the impact of air quality by a similar quarry and there is significant impact to air quality. The issue is that quarry industry custom and practice is to average day and night air quality measurements thereby lowering the readings. Current accepted planning practice is to use desk modelling to estimate how far and where dust will travel from proposed quarries. This is becoming increasingly challenged but there is a general lack of hard data. We have actual measurements for our villages versus modelled out-of-date data submitted by the applicant. We will be pursuing those that have statutory responsibility for our health very closely.

The senior Minerals Planning Officer has indicated to us that the Regulatory Committee will probably not be sitting until September. Before then, in late Spring/early Summer, we expect Smiths to respond to the Regulation 25 which will be a copious document attempting to mitigate all of the objections you have raised. As soon as the Planning Officer receives Smiths' response, he is duty bound to inform all of those of you that submitted comments last year with the detail of that response. This will trigger the start of the second Consultation which lasts for only 3 weeks. In this short window, you have the opportunity to comment on those mitigations if you feel that they are insufficient. If you do not respond, it is likely that this will be seen by the Senior Minerals Planning Officer, Regulatory Committee and Smiths that you accept their mitigations. It is therefore imperative that you do respond within the stated time to make your case if you so wish.

Finally, we are keen to find someone in our community who has recently retired and is looking to help by carrying out research in finding information. This would be on a voluntary basis. Anyone interested, please contact Malcolm Eykyn by email at [malcolm.eykyn@gmail.com](mailto:malcolm.eykyn@gmail.com). We hope you find this information helpful. Next month we will up-date you on flood and de-watering risks, ecology and traffic.

Maxine Mayer