



Proposal for mineral extraction with progressive restoration

Sibelco, a leading supplier of specialist minerals operating in Norfolk for many years, has identified high quality glass making sand it hopes to extract at Grandcourt Quarry near East Winch.

We are seeking an extension to our existing site, located between Middleton and East Winch, which opened in 2008. Grandcourt Quarry is the UK's premier source of sands for clear glass making, being used in windows, car windscreens, bottles and jars.

We directly employ 45 people locally with an additional 80 contractors and many more indirectly through our customers. Our Norfolk operations are vital to a number of regional businesses and we contribute at least f 15 million annually into the local area economy.

The proposed extension would be physically connected to the current workings and linked to the processing plant by the existing internal access road. All sales would be from the Leziate plant on Station Road with no vehicle access from East Winch or the A47. Some 80% of the products would be despatched by rail, meaning no additional HGVs on the road network.

The site is crossed by a bridleway and a footpath. We propose to temporarily divert and later replace these routes as part of the restoration programme.

Environmental studies

The site has been the focus of detailed environmental studies over the past three years guided by national advice and expert local knowledge. The assessments have included:

landscape; visual; ecology; ground and surface water; trees and hedgerows; noise; dust; air quality; transport; ground stability; soils; archaeology.

Having established existing conditions, our studies have been used to predict the effects of the proposals on each of these disciplines. The proposal, as set out, conforms to all required standards of environmental protection. Views into the site both during the planned development and later restoration have been considered.

There would inevitably be landscape change, but designed to complement the already permitted restoration on the adjacent Grandcourt Quarry. Temporary and new permanent public rights of way would be established and located so as to provide appropriate routes in the short and long term. No protected or nationally scarce plants were identified on site, nor were any bat roosts.

There is no evidence to suggest that East Winch Common would experience any direct or indirect negative effects as a result of the proposals. Noise at all nearby properties would be within nationally acceptable levels.

Mitigation would include agreed operating hours, the construction of temporary grassed soil screens and time- limited surface operations (such as soil removal). Dust is unlikely to travel beyond the site. We would limit surface activities in dry or windy weather, impose speed limits, grade internal roads, use temporary soil screens and plant new tree blocks.

Studies of fine particulates found in the area have confirmed that these are derived, in the main, from traffic on the A47. Results over the past four years show levels well within the National Air Quality Standard (below half the permitted amount) and in line with typical rural areas. We have a dust monitoring network around the proposed extension site which would be retained to monitor air quality throughout the development period.

The proposed extension would not have any additional impact on ground or surface water compared to the existing planning consent. A water management and monitoring plan exists for the current quarry site and an update to this would be drawn up in consultation with the appropriate regulatory authorities.

Evidence of some buried archaeology is present on the site and a detailed study of all areas would be established during soil removal phases. Any finds would be recorded and reports prepared. Some finds may be suitable for future display in the locality together with an interpretation of the site's history.

Timescales

Subject to planning consent it is anticipated that development works could commence in late 2016. Extraction would continue until late 2020 although limited to around one year in the proximity of East Winch.

The site would be progressively restored to a lake with grassland banks, woodland blocks and public rights of way.

Our scheme takes into account the UK and Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan objectives. There is the potential to attract rare or declining species by creating appropriate conditions for skylark, grey partridge, reed bunting and brown hare. The total hedgerow length would be increased and a significant number of hedgerow trees would also be planted.

The end result for the Grandcourt Quarry and extension area would be:

81 hectares (200 acres) of agricultural land

30 hectares (74 acres) of woodland and scrub

13 hectares (32 acres) of grassland

4.1 hectares (100 acres) of lakes

4 kilometres (2.5 miles) of hedgerows