

## **Hampshire Minerals and Waste Consultation**

The following sites are included in the consultation:

### **1.0 Site code NFT011 Purple Haze, Ringwood Forest**

1.1 The proposal is to extract sharp sand and gravel and soft sand and to restore the site with non-hazardous landfill to the original levels, this site can then be used for recreational uses and public open space, linked to Moors Valley Country Park. The amount of soft sand available from this location forms a sizeable portion of Hampshire's allocation for the production of soft sand. There will therefore be considerable pressure from Hampshire County Council to include this site in subsequent documents and to allocate it.

1.2 The land is currently used as part of the country park. The permanent orienteering course, a way marked walk, a cycle trail and a single track cycle route for mountain bikers go through this part of the park.

1.3 Most of the area is Corsican or Scots Pine or other conifers, but there are pockets of heathland which provide a valuable habitat for a variety of species including nightjars which have been known to nest in the vicinity.

1.4 There is a potential impact on groundwater. The Habitats Regulations Assessment does not consider this issue properly as Moors River is not an SAC or SPA – but it is an SSSI and its nature conservation quality is heavily dependent on its water quality. Ebblake stream close to the northern boundary of the site drains in to the Moors River System SSSI as well as the Ebblake Bog SSSI.

1.5 Visitor numbers to the Country Park, based on those using the car park are about 780,000 per annum. It is estimated that a further 50,000 walk into the park. Three of the ten entrances off the B3081 would be affected by the proposal and it is estimated that about 20,000 visitors use these entrances. A large proportion of the latter visitors are likely to be dog walkers from Verwood and if easy access to Moors Valley were not available, they are likely to go elsewhere. The areas used instead may well include heathlands such as Verwood Heaths with a resulting impact on the wildlife of those areas.

1.6 As this loss of a recreational area would increase the numbers of people using nearby heathlands, it is considered that any proposal would require assessment under the Habitats Regulations. This is supported by evidence reports produced in conjunction with the emerging South East Dorset Joint Heathlands DPD. As part of this work, a householder survey that was conducted to investigate the recreation use of heathland and other open space sites classed Ringwood Forest both as a heathland site and the third most visited in south east Dorset. This does not take in to account Moors Valley Country Park. Therefore if access was displaced from Ringwood Forest, users of this type of site are likely to look at other heathland sites in south east Dorset. To give an idea of scale of the issue, based on assumptions from figures in the report, if all access to Ringwood Forest was

lost (obviously this would not be the case with the minerals proposals, but some would be), it would have the equivalent impact on other heathland sites of outdoor trips generated by nearly 6,000 additional households.

1.7 There would be an impact on ambience of the park. Enjoyment of the tranquil forest environment could be greatly affected by increased noise if excavation and landfill took place. There could also be an impact on wildlife in the area but this is unknown. Smell and dust resulting from the operations could also be a problem in the park, though it is recognised that this is not in the direction of the prevailing wind.

1.8 It is important to point out that Moors Valley Country Park is the seventh most visited attraction (including both free and paid attractions) in the south of England and it is the third most visited country park in England. Loss of part of the park and the uses of it as set out above, as well as any impact from smell, noise and dust could reduce visitors. One area of concern to the Council may also be a loss of revenue. Should visitor numbers be reduced due to the impact of the operations, there could be a resultant loss of revenue. Moors Valley employs over 30 permanent staff and many more part time staff as well as supporting local businesses.

1.9 The document promotes the benefits to the Country Park and to users of the park following restoration but does not take into consideration the existing access and use of the land or the existing habitat. The document implies that the restoration after land fill will be more beneficial than the current situation.

1.10 There is concern over the capacity of the B3081 from Verwood to Ringwood, specifically at the Baker's Hanging junction that sits within East Dorset and the parish of St Leonards and St Ives. Any development – if it were to take place, and which officers believe should be opposed – should be linked as a pre-requisite with the improvement of this junction. This would also need to be considered in combination with other proposals which will also load traffic through to this junction. There are also concerns that some of the traffic could not be prevented from going through Verwood.

1.11 The document states that a potential access point has been identified 800m north of the B3081 with Harbridge Drove. It is an existing access point to the Country Park. Use of this access point by cars and by heavy lorries would not seem to be advisable, especially given the high numbers of visitors to the Park.

1.12 There would be impacts on the adjacent urban area from the effects of the proposed excavation and landfill as well as from traffic and these impacts could also be on parts of the parish of St Leonards and St Ives.

## **2.0 Site code NFT009 Bleak Hill Extension, Harbridge**

2.1 The proposal is to extract sharp sand and gravel and to infill with inert waste to agriculture with opportunities for biodiversity and public access.

2.2 The land is currently in agricultural use.

2.3 As the site is an extension to an existing working, traffic levels will remain similar as the earlier stages of working are reduced and the new area brought into use. However, there are concerns that there would be an increase in traffic on the Alderholt road, on the B3081 with implications for Verwood, and at the junction at Bakers Hanging. There may also be impacts on the nearby Dorset Heath internationally protected sites as well as any other heathland sites in Hampshire, such as through any potential changes to groundwater levels.

### **3.0 Site code NFT047 Blue Haze**

3.1 The proposal is to provide landfill in an existing void at an existing land fill site. The site is east of Ebblake and the B3081, on the other side of the B3081 to Purple Haze.

3.2 Existing access would be used. As the site is an extension to an existing working, traffic levels will remain similar as the earlier stages of working are reduced and the new area brought into use.

3.3 The use of both sites on the B3081, Purple Haze and Blue Haze would impact on the approach to Verwood and could potentially create an unpleasant entrance or exit to the town.

### **General Comments**

Paragraph 2.14 suggests the area is remote, therefore ignoring the significance of the site being close to Verwood.

None of the sites are close to rail links and in that sense can be considered to be remote and therefore unsuitable for use. Any minerals extracted will be taken out of the area by road and waste for infill brought in by road.

Paragraph 2.15 doesn't mention the environmental importance of the area in and around Ringwood Forest.

Paragraph 3.3 refers to just the importance of Hampshire's wildlife sites, it should make reference to Dorset's and particularly the internationally designated ones.

If the Purple Haze site is carried forward to the next stage, Hampshire County Council must consult users of Moors Valley Country Park directly.

Environmental Health officers have been asked for their views on the proposals, as have Dorset County Council transportation officers

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