

January 2014

Purple Haze South - Frequently Asked Questions

Background

Purple Haze South in Ringwood Forest has been nominated to Dorset County Council for inclusion in the emerging Mineral Sites Plan as a future site for mineral extraction (primarily building sand).

It is included in the initial Mineral Sites Plan public consultation document, which is available for comment until 13th February 2014.

For more information about DCC's consultation process please go to <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/mwdf>

Questions

1. Why is the site being considered when a minerals site along the A338 towards Bournemouth has been mothballed due to lack of local demand? Won't that one, rather than Purple Haze South, better help to meet Dorset's needs when it eventually starts operations? If not, why not?

Dorset County Council is, at this stage, considering all potential quarry sites that are nominated to us for possible inclusion in the Mineral Sites Plan. This does not mean that all sites will ultimately be included in the Mineral Sites Plan when it is completed.

All sites are being assessed and have also been put out for public comment at this time. Further consideration of how much aggregate is currently available, how long it will last, what additional supplies will be needed during the timescale of the Mineral Sites Plan, where the potential sites are and the timescale and rate of supply is required and will be carried out in the coming weeks.

Avon Common, the other site referred to, is an existing permission and will be taken into consideration as described above. Until the aggregates supply/demand calculations are carried out and further discussions are held with site nominees regarding when the various site nominations might come on stream, it will not be known how many new sites will be needed during the new Plan and where they will be.

2. Do you believe the site will be needed during the lifetime of the Dorset Minerals Plan if adopted? If so, why? And if there is currently no opinion, how & when will one be established?

See answer to question 1. above

3. Who is the operator for Purple Haze South? Will the public be able to engage with them directly to ask them questions about the site design & operation? If so, how and when will that happen?

Dorset County Council have not yet been informed if an operator has been selected.

4. How do you know the minerals are there and are good enough quality for building? Minerals from the same geology layers in Blue Haze were used mostly for filling in other quarry sites and not for building/construction because of their poor quality. If you don't know, how will you find out and when?

Dorset County Council have not yet seen any borehole information indicating with a degree of accuracy the quality/quantity of mineral present. The Somerley Estate or their Agent will be asked to supply such information as part of the on-going assessment of the site.

5. Why is the exact location of the sand, whether above or below the water table, sensitive to industry? If it's not, why can't we have written confirmation of the borehole evidence?

Information such as the quality/quantity of mineral contained within a site, and other matters such as the location of the water table and other potentially constraining factors, are often kept confidential as they can affect the financial viability of a site, how much a company will offer for the right to work a site, how much profit they realise and so on. Such financial/business matters are kept confidential, if not indefinitely then as long as possible. This approach varies between operators/sites etc.

6. What does Natural England (NE) think about Dorset considering the site? For Purple Haze North (in Hampshire's Minerals & Waste Plan) their support only applies if the minerals are found above the water table and not below. What will Dorset do if the minerals are found to be below the water table and NE can't support development of the site? What would be the fallback plan?

No information on the water table position and flow of groundwater through the site has to date been submitted by the Somerley estate or their agent.

Natural England have not yet commented on the site nomination. We expect they will offer comments as part of the current consultation and will be involved in the Sustainability Appraisal as it is prepared.

If Natural England have a serious objections to the site that cannot be mitigated it is unlikely to be considered acceptable by the Inspector at Examination and it is very likely that in such circumstances Dorset County Council would not continue to progress the site. Supply would have to come from other site nominations/sources.

7. What do you know about the hydrology for this site - how water moves through the geology? For example, no mention is made of the possible impact of minerals extraction on Ebblake Bog? Why not? And what will Dorset do to check for, mitigate and then monitor any likely impact?

Dorset County Council currently have no information on the hydrology of the site. There is no particular reason that Dorset County Council would mention possible impacts on Ebblake Bog – but this does not mean that we are not aware of the potential inter-connectivity between the Hampshire/Dorset sites and the impacts that site working could have on distant areas.

Dorset County Council would normally expect the Environment Agency to indicate what hydrological studies/information are needed and the developer to provide them. Unacceptable impacts, as identified by the Environment Agency, would need to be mitigated to their satisfaction. The developer/operator would be expected to monitor the impacts of the site working. We anticipate that the Environment Agency will offer comments as part of the current consultation and will be involved in the Sustainability Appraisal as it is prepared.

8. Properties on the Ebblake Development are on the edge of a flood risk area. What will be done to ensure that activities at Purple Haze do not increase the risk of flood damage to nearby properties? And if you don't know whether there could be an impact on properties, how will you find out and when?

Assessment of the site nominations will include a Flood Risk Assessment. Dorset County Council would look to the Environment Agency for further advice on possible impacts and how these could be mitigated.

9. Could more mineral extraction here impact other local river systems where we have noticed increasingly higher water levels over recent years? If you don't know, how will you find out and when?

As noted in the answer to Q.7, this information would be provided by the developer. The Environment Agency would also highlight relevant issues.

10. The site is to be accessed from the working site @ Purple Haze North (Hampshire). What would Dorset's fallback plan be if a planning application for the Hampshire site fails?

Dorset County Council do not currently have a fallback plan. It is expected that the site is large enough to stand on its own if the entire Hampshire area is found to have unacceptable impacts. Dorset County Council would look to the developer to propose working details, which we would consider and respond to.

11. Are any complexities or risks foreseen when working a minerals site jointly with another Authority? If so, what mitigation might be put in place to manage them and do you foresee DCC's costs increasing as a consequence?

The two Mineral Planning Authorities should ideally have a good working relationship to provide a uniform approach across the two sites. More relevant is the issue of landownership which in this case, as with Roeshot in Christchurch, is in one ownership.

12. How will you protect Verwood's mains water supply which runs through the middle of the site? How would any required protection measures be monitored? And if any protection measures fail, what would be the response from Dorset?

Dorset County Council would look to the developer to indicate how they would deal with the water main and ensure that the relevant Statutory Undertaker(s) are happy with the proposed approach. The water company would be consulted as part of the preparation of the Sites Plan and also at the application stage.

13. How will you estimate the likely traffic impact for the site? If traffic levels during any stage of the site's development seem to be unacceptable, what can the public do after planning permission has been granted? How will traffic impact be monitored and who will be responsible?

Firstly, planning conditions can be attached to any future planning permission to limit the numbers of HGV traffic leaving the site to an appropriate level.

Dorset County Council would seek advice from its Highways development control officers regarding likely traffic impacts and their acceptability or mitigation required. Members of the public can contact Dorset County Council with complaints about lorry traffic following planning permission and such complaints will be investigated by our monitoring and enforcement team. It is impossible to monitor the levels of traffic going to/from all the minerals sites across the county. Cases of unacceptable impact are usually drawn to our attention by members of the public, parish councils and so on.

14. What do you think the impact of quarrying/landfill/restoration activities will be on users of Moors Valley/Ringwood Forest? If you don't know, how will you find out? And if that impact is adverse, what mitigation action would be taken and how would it be monitored?

No landfill is currently proposed in Dorset. It is expected that recreational use on the actual Purple Haze site will cease during working and restoration and presumably be reinstated following working. Such details are yet to be worked out. The views of the Country Park and the District Council would normally be sought. Alternative recreational facilities might be provided outside the Purple Haze site during working.

Also very relevant is the issue of displacement of recreation users of the site onto nearby areas protected for nature conservation purposes by European designations. Further information will be needed and the advice of Natural England would be sought in this case.

15. As well as for recreation, people use access through/around the site to travel safely between Verwood and locations south of it to get to school, ride horses, get to work and other similar purposes. How, exactly, will you capture and confirm those needs? How will their needs then be met?

Dorset County Council would look to the developer to identify such needs and proposed mitigation if they were affected. The current consultation is an opportunity for local residents/users to inform the Mineral Planning Authority of any such uses. If there is an existing access (public right of way) through the site it would normally be diverted during working and recreated afterwards. Opportunities exist to seek improved access over the restored site.

16. Where do you expect people will go to who currently use Purple Haze South for recreation? Will it put pressure on other nearby open spaces such as the New Forest? And if you don't think it will, why not?

See answer to Q.14.

17. What will be done to identify and protect flora/fauna inhabiting the site? How is that protection going to be monitored? What action would be taken if monitoring provides evidence of an adverse impact on flora/fauna?

The developer would be expected to supply the necessary ecological studies and assessments, the results of which would be considered by the Dorset County Council County Ecologist and Natural England before any decisions are made on the suitability of the site. If the potential for unacceptable impacts are identified, the developer would have to demonstrate how those impacts would be mitigated to the satisfaction of Dorset County Council and Natural England.

If, following the grant of planning permission, it was to be shown that action by the quarry operator was contravening planning conditions regarding the ecology of the site, then the operator would be asked to make good any damage or planning enforcement would begin.

18. Is it Dorset's policy not to use landfill to fill expired quarries? How will the quarry void be filled to enable restoration of the site after minerals have been extracted?

The review of the Dorset Waste Plan is in its early stages. Given increases in recycling and the limited volumes of residual waste projected to be generated in the county in the next 20 years or so, it is currently unlikely that new non-hazardous landfill sites will be actively sought in Dorset.

The proposed development suggests restoration of the site at a lower level, and no importation of any materials. Further information will need to be supplied by the developer regarding this approach. Dorset County Council will consider the suitability of such an approach, particularly in light of the location of the water table.

19. How will full site restoration be guaranteed? Who will pay for it? How many years do you think it would take before full public access is possible again?

Site restoration is carried out by the developer, and is 'set' by the planning permission when that is issued. The costs are normally borne by the developer. Progressive restoration would normally be expected on a site such as this – i.e. restoration would be carried out as the mineral is dug and along with other conditions is regularly monitored by officers of the Dorset County Council – if restoration wasn't being undertaken as required, Dorset County Council would enforce against the developer, if necessary.

Restoration is 'guaranteed' by the operator. If for some reason they do not restore the site, the umbrella minerals organisations they will likely belong to (e.g. British Aggregates Association or Mineral Products Association) would normally ensure restoration.

It is difficult to say at this stage how long it would be before full public access is possible again – there is normally an aftercare period of at least five years after the site has been restored but before it is handed back to the landowner.

Please keep looking at Dorset County Council's website for any updates about this or any other site nomination.