

Report on Meeting on 13th September 2016 at Laxton Village Hall The Wakerley Quarry Liaison Group

Attendees

Northants CC Planning
North East Northants DC
Mick George Ltd (Quarry Operators) MGL
Harringworth PC
Wakerley PM
Barrowden PC
Laxton PM

Ringstead Site Visit

Prior to the meeting the Liaison Group had the opportunity to visit the MGL limestone extraction quarry at Ringstead. The quarry has been operating for a couple of years and had major opposition during the planning application however residents now appear to be content with the operation. From the edge of the village, 700m from the quarry, it is just possible to hear very low level noise from the site, although this was very difficult with the noise coming from the local traffic. The noise level was similar to a hard drive in a desk top computer, extremely low and one had to concentrate to hear the noise. We then entered the site itself which was well maintained with a concrete road leading up to the offices and weighbridge. A site safety induction was carried out before we were driven around the site.

Just beyond the weighbridge there were two washing systems, the first unit is used in wet weather to remove the majority of the mud which is then followed by a spray system to remove the balance of mud, etc. During our visit a bowser was being used to spray water on the roadways to keep dust levels down. One might have considered that this was being carried out for the visit but it was noted that the hedges along roadways were clear of dust suggesting the spraying was carried out on a regular basis.

The main extraction site was about 20m below ground level which had the effect of keeping the worst noise inside the hole in the ground. The basic operation involves breaking the limestone from the walls of the quarry and then transporting it into the crusher/grader as shown in the photo below.

On the edge of the site a newly reclaimed area demonstrated the filling with imported inert material before being covered with the top soil which had been scraped off of a new area required for extraction. The finish was fairly smooth with as many small stones as we would normally see in fields around Barrowden. The reclaimed area will be grassed and managed for up to five years by MGL although the farmer can take it over earlier if he wishes.

The overall organisation and sequence of events of the visit to Ringstead was expertly planned and executed. The Liaison Group were also impressed by the openness of MGL in the answers they provided to the questions asked and also their willingness to provide copies of the Ringstead Liaison Group Minutes so that we can identify issues that occurred and how they were dealt with by MGL.

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Overall an interesting visit and useful for future comparisons.

Pre-commencement Planning Conditions

MGL has submitted all the pre-planning requirements to Northants CC with the exception of the highways and ecological documentation.

As far as the highways are concerned, the technical requirements for the A43 and Fineshades junctions have been approved by Northants CC, however they have requested that MGL provide a mitigation scheme of about 700sq m to compensate for the loss of the 200 sq m associated with the verges works. MGL will provide a copy of the mitigation plan to the Group. The work involves stripping the verge and moving it under ecological supervision to the mitigation area. Hopefully this will protect some of the glow worms, however there is an issue with grass cutting regime with the new area which will be taken up with MGL and Northants CC.

The main ecological work continues, in particular a dormouse survey which will run through until October. There is also a programme to catch up and move reptiles from the woodland where the initial bunding areas will be created to a specially prepared area close to Fineshades Wood.

Work has commenced on tidying up the existing footpath and preparing for the diversion work. It is expected that the diversion will be approved by Northants CC by November. The existing footpath will be retained until the new path is completed.

New Planning Applications

MGL have delayed their planning application relating to the importation of inert material for infill until all the pre commencement planning conditions have been met.

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A new planning application will be submitted relating to a change in the positioning of the haul road where it crosses the old railway line. Apparently Total, the French oil company, have a pipeline buried in the gap in the embankment which will require MGL to open up a further gap for their road through the embankment about 15 metres to the south. This will have the benefit of a wider gap between Wakerley Oaks wood and the haul road.

Programme of Work

Once the Highways works have been approved by Northants CC, MGL will “book” the two roads to allow them to commence the junction changes. This is liable to commence before the end of the year and is not conditional on any of the other works being started.

Once all the pre-commencement planning conditions have been approved by Northants CC, MGL will commence on the haul road preparation and stripping the top soil and sub-soil from the Phase A extraction area. This will be subject to weather conditions over the winter. It is likely that the haul roads will be commenced from the A43 at one end and the extraction site at the west of the site.

Next Meeting of Liaison Group

This planned for early February, but MGL will provide email updates as each key phase is commenced and/or completed.

GRSB
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