

Jacobs House
Shrewsbury Business Park
Shrewsbury
Shropshire SY2 6LG
United Kingdom
T +44 (0)1743 284 800
F +44 (0)1743 245 558

Subject	Landscape Comments: Parbold Hill Quarry (Application no. LCC/2019/0028)	Project Name	LCC Technical Advice
Attention	Jonathan Haine	Project No.	B2327FE3
From	██████████		
Date	08/04/2020		

1. Introduction

The landscape comments below relate to the following planning application put forward by Maybrook Investments Ltd:

APPLICATION: LCC/2019/0028

PROPOSAL: EXTENSION LAND RESTORATION AND REGRADING WORKS USING INERT MATERIAL, INCLUDING NEW ACCESS

LOCATION: FORMER PARBOLD QUARRY, PARBOLD HILL, PARBOLD

GR: 350795,410488

2. Comments/Observations

The following documents submitted to support the application applicable to landscape and visual issues have been reviewed through the planning portal on 06 March 2020:

- Covering letter accompanying amended information – Peter Dickson Architects;
- Amended Supporting Statement: Phase 1 Land Level Restoration Rev A (12.03.2020);
- Amended Masterplan – Land Restoration Proposal, New Highway Access and Tipping Area;
- Plan P19034-001E Proposed Access Strategy; and
- Plan P19034-002D Long Section.

In understanding the proposed scheme, the amended Supporting Statement document has been the main point of reference, as it states the design intentions for the scheme represented on the amended masterplan and access strategy plans.

Additionally, this review has had regard to other application information including:

- Superseded sections and masterplans (including Phase 2) – Peter Dickinson Architects;
- Highway designs – Prime Transport Planning;
- Environmental Risk Assessment – TerraConsult Limited;

- Restoration Landform Maintenance Scheme – TerraConsult Limited;
- Plan 18K182 – 001 Existing Topographical Survey;
- Ecology Assessment – Urban Green; and
- Ecological Appraisal in Relation to Vegetation & Habitats report – Tyrer Ecological Consultants.

2.1 Timescale

In the amended Supporting Statement for the planning application, the proposed development is explained in two phases. Phase 1, being landfill of inert waste to that of their previous approved levels (or greater) and restoration, and Phase 2, to redevelop the former quarry area and form a small holiday park in the woodland to the south.

The applicant has also stated in the amended Supporting Statement that the Phase 1 works would commence following approval of planning permission and, based on the rate of haulage estimates, it would take 55 weeks to complete the operational phase, and then approximately 12 to 18 months for the land restoration works.

The amended Transport Assessment (Rev A) by Prime Transport Planning suggests in section 4.2.13 that the completion of filling operations would take 'circa 55 months', but this is presumed to be a mistake and that this should say 55 weeks also.

Based on the above, a figure of circa 103 – 133 weeks, or 2+ years from construction to final restoration, has been assumed as the timescale to assess the medium-term impacts from the works. This would include all traffic calming measures and construction of the tipping area at the start of the works.

2.2 Planning Policy

The applicant has set out the planning history for this site in the amended Supporting Statement and it is welcomed that the applicant has revised the submission following consultee feedback. This includes a much-reduced landfill area to be remediated, which the applicant states in section 9.5 is the '*minimum level of restoration required to resolve the water percolation, leachate and site maintenance issues*'. In the covering letter accompanying the amended information dated 20.11.2019, the proposed restoration works are described as having reduced the levels of filling materials '*from 200,014m³ to 88,000m³*' with a '*notable reduction in the land area which will receive restoration*'.

Also of high importance in the review of the application, is the position of the site within the Green Belt for West Lancashire, Chorley Borough and Wigan Borough, as defined by the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027. In Lancashire County Council pre-application correspondence, the applicant was informed that landfilling operations of inert waste were regarded as inappropriate in terms of the openness of the Green Belt, without justification that the harm to the Green Belt was outweighed through the provision of '*very special circumstances*' (see National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraph 144).

The applicant has responded to this and put forward justification for the scheme on the grounds of resolving the existing landfill issues. Whether or not this meets the requirements of the NPPF Paragraph 144 for '*very special circumstances*' that outweigh the potential for harm to the Green Belt is not within the remit of this review. However, to assist with the planning decision the applicant is advised to provide additional information to further explain the potential landscape and visual impacts

from the construction and operational phases. Further to this, additional detail on the restoration of the site should also be provided to demonstrate that it enhances landscape both in terms of visual amenity and biodiversity (see NPPF Paragraph 14.1).

2.3 Landscape & Visual Assessment

No formal landscape and visual assessment has been provided with this application. However, the applicant has described likely impacts in the amended Summary Statement and provided some restoration details in both this document and the submitted plans (see specific comments on restoration in section 2.4 below).

In reviewing the application to understand the potential landscape and visual impacts, the construction, operational and restoration phases of the scheme have all been considered. This includes the construction of the new highway access (including site clearance), the implementation of new traffic calming measures, the operational phase of the landfill and the proposed restoration and future management of the site.

2.3.1 Construction

The Proposed Access Strategy (P19034-001 Rev E dated 12.03.2020) puts forward traffic calming measures and an adjusted highway layout to accommodate access to the site and to lower speeds to 40mph within the area of the site access. This reduction in speed is generally welcomed, but the introduction of a new junction access, additional signs, rumble strips, and a 2m wide ghost island with ladder markings is considered in this review to result in a significant adverse visual change compared to the current baseline view along this stretch of the A5209. The change in views is likely to be significant due to the prominent position of the proposals on the brow of a hill, and their proximity to two footways on both sides of the road and an extended parking layby, which is a well-known viewing area.

There is also a query over the full nature of the works, with no right turn signs marked as provisional, as is an extension of the 40mph speed limit, with the applicant offering to *'fund a TRO to reduce speed from Parbold Hill to Sparrow Hill to 40mph'*. Greater clarity on these provisional items needs to be provided in order to fully understand their associated visual impacts.

In construction, it is noted that a section of the existing stone wall and vegetation would be removed to facilitate the new highway access, and a section of footway would require realigning. The full extent and detail of these works is not clear and further information would need to be provided; however, it is anticipated that these changes would result in a detrimental impact on the baseline views in this area. This is because the stone wall is an important linear boundary feature along the A5209, which forms part of the local landscape character. In addition, existing vegetation has an important landscape function in filtering views towards the road, and there would be an interruption in or severance of the existing footway.

The access would also require substantial excavation of the existing earth bank to provide a level access that meets visibility guidelines (see submitted planning comments on this by Dave Allen, LCC Highways, dated 17.01.2020, who expressed concerns over the footway potentially requiring steps). These changes at the access are considered to detrimentally impact the visual amenity of this area in comparison to the baseline. This would be because the footway, which whilst remaining passable, would be severed and would require a refuge island in the middle of the site access junction and drop kerbs to either side (as shown in the Proposed Access Strategy plan P19034-001 Rev E).

It is noted that the scheme proposals do not include details for a construction compound. This may be needed to facilitate the initial construction works to form the site access, and also for the site restoration works. The applicant needs to confirm if this is required and what it would constitute.

2.3.2 Operation

Additional Haulage Traffic

In operation, the visual intrusion from additional haulage traffic along the A5209, together with accessing and exiting the site, would be notable. This is particularly the case due to its proximity to the well-known viewing area at the adjacent layby, where people would be stationary and therefore more aware of their surroundings.

Similarly, the footways to both sides of the A5209 would have direct views towards additional haulage traffic and vehicles turning in and out of the access. This would detrimentally impact on views from the footways.

There is also a Public Right of Way (footpath 8-13-FP 5), which runs parallel to the eastern boundary of the site, before exiting into the layby area. Much of the route would be screened by vegetation; however, users of this footpath would have direct views of increased haulage traffic accessing the site where the footpath meets the layby.

There would also be visual impacts arising from increased haulage traffic on the nearby Miller and Carter restaurant (formerly The Wiggin Tree public house) and the Beacon View residential property, which is situated opposite the layby. However, it is acknowledged that the A5209 is already a well trafficked road and that views towards the site access would not be direct.

Tipping works and earthworks

Out with the visual intrusion of additional haulage traffic travelling on the A5209 and accessing the site, it is not clear if the receptors listed above would also see the tipping works area, and landfill operations.

In 4.30 of the amended Supporting Statement the applicant states that *'due to the topography of the site the tipping area shall be 1-2m below the height of the viewing area/lay-by. The location of the tipping area relative to the highway shall ensure that it is not visible by pedestrians or motorists along Parbold Hill'*. It then refers out to drawing 3746-19-21, which unfortunately has not been located on the LCC planning portal website and has therefore not been reviewed.

In 8.20 of the amended Supporting Statement the applicant states that *'the siting of the proposed tipping area and access track are such that they are sufficiently far enough away from the viewing area so that visitor experiences are not impeded'*. It is also stated on the Land Restoration Proposal, New Highway Access and Tipping Area drawing that *'existing views to the south'* would be *'uninterrupted'* and that 2m high landscape screening mounds would be constructed *'to obscure tipping area from lay-by and viewing area'*.

These broad statements in both the amended Supporting Statement and Land Restoration Proposal, New Highway Access and Tipping Area drawing need to be demonstrated through sections or modelling information. This would help to clarify the extent of visibility that the layby and Miller and Carter restaurant would have towards the tipping area and landfill areas.

It would also be useful if the applicant confirms that the temporary 2m high landscape screening mounds are to be grass seeded only, which this review has presumed to be the case.

The applicant has addressed concern over dust levels associated with earth tipping and moving operations, which may impact on views and visual amenity (see section 2.5.13 of the Environmental Risk Assessment, document reference 4458/R/002/02, by TerraConsult). Providing restrictions and guidelines outlined in the report are adhered to, then this should not be an issue.

The applicant should also have regard to the potential impacts on outlying receptors. This should include specifically the 'Parbold Bottle', a stone monument which can be reached by a short walk from the existing layby. This is a location renowned for having open views south, but appears to be well screened to the east and north-east where the landfill operations would be taking place. The applicant should confirm this is the case and also whether access to this monument from the layby is visually impacted at all by the works.

The applicant should also confirm if there is any further land take required at the tipping area for material inspections, security or welfare facilities. In addition, the Restoration Landform Maintenance Scheme Report (document reference 4458/R/003/01, by TerraConsult) describes the requirement for a holding or quarantine (isolated) area. In section 7.5, it suggests that *'a holding or quarantine area will be designated for waste vehicles or part loads. Any unpermitted waste will be prevented from being unloaded where possible, or isolated and reloaded as quickly as possible. Any incompatible wastes, which are impractical to re-load will be segregated in the isolated area until they can be transported to a suitable disposal site in accordance with arrangements made with the Environment Agency and using any relevant documentation. Any waste identified as being unsuitable for disposal at the Site will be rejected'*. The location of this areas and any associated visual impacts should be confirmed by the applicant.

Restoration

Further detail is required to understand the proposed final landscape restoration of the site, as there is insufficient information provided in the submission. With sensitive design, it should be feasible to restore the landscape and provide visual and biodiversity enhancements. However, there is concern over the approach taken (see specific restoration comments below).

2.4 Restoration

It is considered that there is insufficient information to assess the restoration proposals fully.

Section 7.1 of the amended Supporting Statement suggests that the tipping area and landscape screening mounds would be removed, but that the site access would be retained for any ongoing site maintenance. This raises concern, as elsewhere in the amended Supporting Statement (sections 4.1, 4.24 and 4.29) and in the amended Transport Assessment (section 4.2.13), it is stated that the highway access is temporary and on completion the *'access would be closed up and footway, wall and other verge features reinstated'*.

The applicant should also confirm what would happen to the traffic calming measures put in place to facilitate the site access and whether the additional signs, rumble strips, and the 2m wide ghost island with ladder markings would be removed.

Section 7.2 of the amended Supporting Statement states that the land restoration works '*will restore the site to match its current condition and shall not affect the existing views in any way*'. This may be achievable with sensitive design and landscaping, but further detail is required to confirm this would be the case. In particular, there should be details provided with regard to appropriate contouring to ensure the proposals integrate with the surrounding landscape. There should also be more detail provided on how the right soil conditions would be achieved for meadow grasses and wildflowers, including the re-use of the existing impoverished soils, which may be more suited to the successful establishment of certain wildflowers.

Further to this, the restoration plans should provide enhancement and net gain to biodiversity through habitat creation, particularly for invertebrates, and also include a range of native species, ideally of local provenance. This should include protection of rare or protected plant species, and translocation of certain identified existing plants where there is benefit from doing so.

The applicant is advised to refer to the separately commissioned Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) ecology report for further details of these habitat creation recommendations and rare or protected species found on the existing site. For example the CPRE commissioned Tyrer Ecological Consultants report states that the existing '*former Parbold Quarry is an exceptionally floristically diverse site, with 140 vascular plant taxa recorded at the time of the survey*', '*three plant species of national – local conservation importance*', and '*one invertebrate of conservation importance*' the '*cinnabar moth (Tyria jacobaeae)*'.

All of the above restoration works should form part of the Phase 1 proposals and should not be dependent on the Phase 2 enhancements, as implied in the amended Supporting Statement.

Long-term maintenance of the restored landfill areas also needs to be explained further by the applicant. Section 7.3 of the amended Supporting Statement states that areas of wildflowers would be '*maintenance free and provide a notable improvement to the existing flora and ecological habitats*'; however, this is considered to be an unacceptable approach. Even in areas proposed for minimal intervention, there is the potential for establishment problems (particularly with regard to wildflowers), growth of injurious weeds, scrub encroachment and changing habitat type. The applicant is therefore requested to put forward an appropriate management plan for the restored areas that sufficiently addresses the concerns raised above, and ensures that landscape and ecological environmental objectives continue to be met.

Relevant to the above, there is an inconsistency in the maintenance suggested in the Restoration Landform Maintenance Scheme Report (document reference 4458/R/003/01, by TerraConsult). In section 4.8.2 it suggests that '*once a robust sward is established it will be maintained by grazing or other means appropriate to its ultimate land use*'. This conflicts with the maintenance operations stated in the amended Supporting Statement.

It is also noted in section 8.2 of the Restoration Landform Maintenance Scheme Report that, due to the topography of the site, a '*system of barriers, checkdams or traps within ditches is to be installed to provide filtration and sedimentation of any suspended solids in the surface water runoff*'. Whilst this is described as a temporary measure, it would be useful to have a greater understanding of the restoration phases to ensure that the operations required to remove these barriers do not damage the establishing vegetation.

3. Conclusion

Overall, it is apparent that there would be both construction and operational landscape and visual impacts as a result of the proposed scheme, which would be adverse, and short to medium term in nature. This would be due to the additional vehicular movements of landfill haulage trucks, changes in the highway layout to facilitate access, and the physical landfill operations.

There may also be permanent visual impacts associated with the proposed scheme if the site access off the A5209 is retained for maintenance purposes and is not removed and restored to its previous condition. Clarification is requested from the applicant on this point.

It is acknowledged that the applicant has scaled back the proposals and responded to community feedback in the updated design. However, there are still concerns over the proposal, namely around the duration of the operational works, the justification in terms of Green Belt NPPF guidance, and also for the lack of detail on the restoration phase to ensure that it does positively enhance the landscape both visually and in terms of restoring and increasing biodiversity.

It is recommended that the applicant responds to the items raised within this document. This includes:

- providing greater certainty over the timescales for the landfill operational phase, to better understand how long the visual intrusion of haulage vehicles travelling to and from the site would last for and how long restoration/final earthworks would take to complete;
- providing further detail on the proposed restoration phase, focusing on providing a finished design that integrates into the surrounding landscape, enhances visual amenity and provides biodiversity habitat;
- providing specific restoration proposals for biodiversity enhancement, such as translocation of existing plants where appropriate, habitat creation for invertebrates, and use of native (ideally local to the area) provenance plants and seed mixes;
- providing clarification on what happens to the site access and traffic calming features once the operational works are complete; and
- providing greater detail on the future maintenance of the restored site. This should include determining management responsibilities, and a schedule of maintenance and monitoring operations to ensure all the required landscape and ecological objectives are met.

It is my professional opinion that the application is not acceptable in its current form, due to points of clarification raised and concerns over the detrimental landscape and visual impact of the scheme. These issues need to be addressed and submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to determination or, where appropriate, agreed as pre-commencement conditions.