

WARWICKSHIRE CC
EMERGING MINERALS SPATIAL STRATEGY
SITE ALLOCATIONS

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR SITE
REPRESENTATION – CONSERVATION BUILDING STONE

LAND ADJACENT TO
HORNTON GROUNDS QUARRY
WARWICKSHIRE

PETER BENNIE Ltd. and HORNTON QUARRIES

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The site being proposed has an area of 14.37 hectares (35.51 acres), and comprises a long strip of land adjoining the A422 Stratford Road, to the north-west of Banbury, and to the east of the village of Hornton. Part of the eastern side of the site forms the boundary with Oxfordshire.
- 1.2. Past quarrying within this area is apparent from the Ordnance Survey maps, and adjacent to the eastern boundary, is Dry Hill Quarry, now mainly worked out, but not fully restored. The edge of the mineral working is evident as an exposed face, which runs along the southern part of the length of the county boundary.
- 1.3. Part of that area is designated as an important wildlife area, and a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS). To the east of the county boundary a very large area of land has been worked for both conservation stone and aggregates, by Peter Bennie Ltd at the site known as Hornton Grounds Quarry.
- 1.4. Within Hornton Grounds Quarry area is a haul road from the A422 to a working area, used for stone processing (e.g. stone from Alkerton Quarry nearer Banbury – however, this is nearly worked out).
- 1.5. Peter Bennie Ltd, in conjunction with Hornton Quarries, wish to put forward this site for the Minerals Spatial Strategy Site Allocations, because it represents a valuable source of building stone which is represented in local vernacular architecture and which is also of high quality, lending itself to the full range of building stone outputs, including mouldings and masonry requirements. Only a small area within the County is able to provide this type of stone. The two companies both need a local supply of stone suitable for processing by hand and by saw. A search has been carried out to identify a suitable site, as all of the local reserves of the valuable brown stone have been worked out. This site represents the only site in this local area that is known to contain the building stone used by both companies.
- 1.6. While there are a number of constraints such as historical, nature and landscape considerations, it is considered that in view of the benefits for quality and design of buildings within the historical landscape, this potential mineral quarry represents an important resource to the County. Quarrying of this locality has been taking place historically for probably centuries, and the main modern quarry dates from the 1930s.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The site is situated on a gently sloping plateau behind the escarpment face which forms a ridge from Edgehill in the north to Tysoe Hill in the south. The height is between 190 and 197m above sea level. The site is presently used as grass pasture farmland and is bounded by mixed deciduous and coniferous woodland planting to the west adjacent to the A422. The character of the wider landscape is open, with pastureland and arable fields separated by hedges, copses and tree belts.
- 2.2. Previously quarried land in Oxfordshire, to the east and south, has been restored to agriculture.

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- 2.3. The proposed quarry lies within an isolated island defined by the site boundary and designated as a Special Landscape area adjacent to the north-eastern tip of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To the north-west is the estate of Upton House, a Grade II* Listed National Trust property. To the north-east is a lane leading to Hornton village (1.4 km.) on which are situated several houses.
 - 2.4. The existing extensive quarry was working the Lower Jurassic, Middle Lias and Marlstone Rock Bed. The stone in this site is a ferruginous sandy oolitic limestone, and is golden-brown or sometimes bluish in colour.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The proposal is to use the existing infrastructure at Hornton Grounds Quarry to work the site from the south east in a northerly direction. This would be facilitated by the construction of a short haul road across the area previously worked in Oxfordshire to the county boundary. This will enable the mineral to be taken out via the existing access to the Stratford Road A422. The compound contains the weighbridge, site office, and wheelwash facilities, and all of the infrastructure for working conservation stone. Continuing with the use of this area would result in complete screening from the surrounding countryside and isolated dwellings. The monumental stone needed by Hornton Quarries would be transported via the Hornton Grounds access to the existing premises operated in Edge Hill.
- 3.2. Preliminary calculations show a reserve of about 1 million tonnes of which perhaps 200,000 tonnes would be potential building stone. The different strata include a "blue" stone, and golden-brown stone, and relatively thick layers are identified. Both these stone-types are in demand, for matching buildings in the landscape.
- 3.3. The shape of the site suggests that it should be easy to be able to work gradually northwards, disturbing only a small area of land at any one time. This will facilitate progressive restoration and will have the obvious effect of reducing the impact of mineral workings on the local environment. Restoration would be at a relatively low level, similar to that achieved in the adjacent area, where the land is back in use for agriculture. It is likely that some import of inert waste will be required to achieve restoration levels, drainage, etc. including to the adjacent Dry Hill quarry to the north.
- 3.4. Since the proposed extraction area is on a plateau, it is unlikely that there will be implications from flooding.

4. ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

- 4.1. The north-east side of the site abuts existing quarries, partly restored. One is identified as having wildlife interest. To the south-west, the site abuts the A422, with a narrow belt of mature woodland acting as a screen, and a further belt of woodland screening views out of the Upton House estate. Otherwise the site is used for agriculture. There would be no interference with the woodland belt, which would remain, and can also be supplemented. Any development application would require survey and mitigation proposals to establish that important wildlife characteristics were not lost. Working the site for building stone in phased working here would give the opportunity to design mitigation and enhancement features, with retained wildlife corridors, and additional planting. The likelihood of revealing geological features in

the form of rock faces would allow consideration of enhancing the site as a RIGS, with the community benefits that would result.

- 4.2. The latter is of interest because of the revealed outcrop of geology, and associated aspects such as access, size, and linkage to Edge Hill Quarries. However, even if quarrying took place, the outcrop can be replaced by a similar outcrop to the south, which from the geological formations now identified, is considered likely to be available.

5. VISUAL IMPACT

- 5.1. Work already carried out on visibility analysis indicates that the areas from which the site can be seen are restricted to a narrow corridor to the south west. This is due to the location of the site on top of an escarpment which slopes gently to the south and tilts from north-east to south west. To the north, the site is not visible beyond the steep ridge formed by the scarp slope and the view from the east is screened by higher ground immediately to the east of the site. The presence of mature mixed deciduous woodland to the south west of the site adjacent to the A422 road and within the grounds of Upton House acts to screen the site from the surrounding areas.
- 5.2. There are no significant views of the site from large residential areas, the Cotswolds AONB, Special Landscape Areas (outside of the site boundaries), National Trust properties, major public rights of way, or main roads.
- 5.3. Meanwhile, the availability of local building stone which matches and enhances local building work would be a valuable asset to the district as a whole, in terms of the appearance of the landscape.

6. PLANNING POLICIES

Warwickshire County Council – Minerals Core Strategy – emerging policies following Issues and Options and Preferred Options.

- 6.1. This representation is being made following the decision by the Council to seek to define sites on a spatial basis within the Core Strategy. The following text relates the site adjacent to Hornton Grounds to matters raised within the draft Core Strategy.

Key Issue – Existing Workings

The proposal is linked to existing workings and it is proposed that use is made of the existing access road, and dedicated processing area.

Key Issue – Transport

The site's road accesses directly onto the A422. The purpose of the quarry is to provide building stone to allow a match to local vernacular architecture and features such as walling. The stone would therefore not be travelling far for use.

Key Issue – Aggregates

Producers of building stone have been making the point that policies for aggregates are not suited to the needs of building stone sourcing and production (see next section and Appendix 2).

In the nature of quarrying, aggregate will be produced, even where the main output is stone that lends itself to masonry and monument use.

Key Issue – Building Stone

Local distinctiveness is a significant objective, and the Council's support for new sites is noted. The Council is required to ensure that stone is available which matches local characteristics ie. that access is available to a range of shades of stone, preferably of the same general origins as the buildings it is intended to match. Extraction of building stone within the AONB, in principle, is supported.

The British Geological Survey was commissioned by the Government to produce a report in 2005 on Building Stone, and makes many important points with reference to the problems of building-stone quarries in achieving viability. There is a need for flexibility, and for adequate supplies to support developed markets.

Meanwhile, however, there is increasing demand due to strict planning controls, new building designs, and public appreciation of real stonework.

Key Issue - Restoration

It is noted that typically, mineral sites offer opportunities for biodiversity benefits and public amenity schemes. The presence of strata of rock which can be revealed to form a RIG site is significant.

Key Issue – Agricultural land

Land restoration to agriculture and associated wildlife habitat can be achieved by working the site in phases.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1. The proposal allows the potential supply of approximately 200,000 tonnes of building stone. This is estimated to be of a high quality with consistent strata of deposits. The present RIG site demonstrates the character of the geology of this plateau.
- 7.2. The site is capable of supplying a sustainable source in that it is near to areas of future use, minimising transportation. It represents the continuation of an existing quarry location, and is adjacent to an A-class road for access for export of finished product and any aggregates.
- 7.3. There are few residential properties in the vicinity of the site. Much of the processing work would be hidden. Present and future planting can act as screening, wildlife corridors, and agents for biodiversity.
- 7.4. Policies protecting the amenities of residents, landscape, and nature/wildlife can be complied with. Good local building stone, and stone suitable for carving and masonry needs, is an asset to the character of the countryside, and its historic and modern buildings.