

25 February 2020

Simon Gale
Director of Prosperity and Development
Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
Sardis House,
Sardis Road,
Pontypridd
CF37 1DU



Our Ref:407.00027.00385

Your Ref: 15/0666/10

Dear Mr Gale

**RE: HANSON UK: CRAIG YR HESG QUARRY, PONYPRIDD
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 6TH FEBRUARY 2020**

I write with reference to the above application which was considered at Planning & Development Committee (Committee) on 6 February 2020. The resolution of the Committee on that day was to refuse the Application, with the reasons for the refusal to be determined at a subsequent Committee meeting.

As you are aware, I represent Hanson in connection with the Application and was present at the Committee on 6 February 2020.

It goes without saying that Hanson are extremely disappointed with the Committee resolution. In addition, they are also disappointed with the manner in which the decision was reached.

Against the background of an officer recommendation for approval of the Application, the first Committee member that spoke following the presentations stated that the "evidence was clearly against the application" and moved refusal.

This was notwithstanding that there were no technical objections from any of the statutory consultees, including Public Health Wales and the Council's own Public Health, Protection and Community Services Department.

No questions were asked of officers by any members of the Committee and no clarification was sought of any of the conclusions in the Committee Report, which clearly set out that the Application is in accordance with the Council's development plan, adopted in 2011, which identifies the area within which the Site is situated as a "Preferred Area of Known Mineral Resource".

The Council has a duty to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It is clear that the Council did not approach its decision making in respect of the Application in this way.

I also noted that some members suggested there were no benefits flowing from the Application. The Application details the following:

- the contribution to supply of a nationally important mineral, recognising that the Committee Report identifies these resources as the only realistic prospect for the Council to provide its expected contribution to aggregate production required by the Regional Technical Statement for the South Wales area (1st Review) (2014);
- the continued employment provided which would otherwise cease when the current reserves are exhausted, comprising 25 full time on-site jobs; 40 drivers and 20-30 contract drivers; 40 servicing and maintenance jobs;
- business rates of at least £80,000 per annum (anticipated to be circa £100,000 for 2020/21); and
- significant expenditure within the local economy on spares, repairs, maintenance, hire costs etc (circa £900,000 per annum in total predominantly spent with business's with offices in South Wales).

In addition, it should be noted that:

- whilst the Council did not wish to accept Hanson's offer to dedicate to the Council 4.6ha of woodland, adjacent to the Craig yr Hesg Local Nature Reserve, a management plan would be imposed by condition on that area, which would secure its management during operations;
- the management plan referred to would also apply to all woodland in Hanson's ownership within and surrounding the Quarry;
- from the commencement of the development new woodland areas totalling 2.35ha would be provided along the northern, eastern and western boundaries of the extension area, involving the planting of approximately 5,000 mixed species trees and shrubs. The new areas will link with established woodland and provide a permanent landscape enhancement;
- a new permissive path would be provided from Glynoch westwards to link with existing rights of way at the Darren Ddu Road from commencement, providing access to the Pontypridd Circular Walk and valuable additional local amenity;
- the proposed restoration has been designed to maximise ecological gains by providing a range of new habitats including enhanced habitats for bats and invertebrates, resulting in a net gain for biodiversity in the long term; and
- although the community has refused to engage in a Liaison Group whilst the Application is ongoing, Hanson has committed to a series of measures to seek to address public perception of operations of the Quarry and generally improve community liaison, including the offer to re-establish the Liaison Group, visits to the Quarry and an enhanced website (containing information on blasting etc).

Whilst not a relevant material consideration, members did suggest that Hanson did not provide any benefits for the community more generally. Whilst not matters to be taken into account in the planning

decision making process, Hanson do wish to address this assertion and draw attention to the fact that Hanson and/or Craig yr Hesg Quarry has, in recent years, provided the following community benefits:

- 16.2 ha of mature woodland was gifted to the Council, with a commuted sum for maintenance; now the Craig yr Hesg Local Nature Reserve, one of only two such reserves in the County Borough;
- permissive paths created within Hanson's land linking the Pontypridd Circular Walk to footpaths within the Craig yr Hesg Local Nature Reserve; and
- a donation of £403,000 from the Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund as 50% funding for the Glyncoch Community Centre (now run by Glyncoch Community Regeneration Limited).

In the event that the Council issues a decision notice refusing the Application, Hanson intends to appeal. It is considered that the Council has behaved unreasonably in reaching the decision to refuse and Hanson also intends to seek a costs award against the Council in any such appeal.

Hanson will of course consider any further report to the Committee in connection with proposed reasons for refusal and may comment further on these. However I would suggest that it is appropriate for the Committee to reconsider whether it still wishes to refuse the Application in the light of the conclusions of the Committee Report of 6 February 2020 and the planning benefits of the Application as set out above, which did not form part of the consideration on 6 February 2020.

Please confirm that this letter will be placed before members of the Committee or its contents reported in full to them, in advance of the Committee meeting to consider reasons for refusal in respect of the Application.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Chief Executive, Mr Chris Bradshaw, by e mail.

Yours sincerely
SLR Consulting Limited



Graham Jenkins
Technical Director

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