

Wonersh Parish Council

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COMMENTS BY THE COUNCIL ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED TO SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL (SCC)

Woodhill Sandpit - WA/2022/00997, SCC Ref: 2021/0150

Wonersh Green Parish Council (“WPC”) strongly object to this application, primarily because there is no evidence that infilling is necessary to support the pit walls, great damage and disturbance would be caused to the surrounding AONB and the access routes are completely unsuitable. WPC believes that the approval of this application would cause considerable distress, risk and inconvenience to the residents of our parish, other surrounding communities and visitors.

WPC understands that Surrey County Council (“SCC”) refused similar applications in 1980 and 1997. Since 1997, traffic volumes have increased and there is further evidence that the North bank of the pit is structurally sound, so the arguments in favour of refusal have only grown stronger.

Unnecessary

WPC do not believe that the proposed infilling is necessary to support the pit walls. WPC understands that the SCC Planning Department did not consider infilling necessary at the time of the 1997 application. During the intervening 26 years there does not appear to have been any significant movement of the pit walls. Recently, the owner of the woodland to the North of the pit has confirmed that there is no evidence of any movement of the North wall during his period of ownership (23 years). Similarly, the owner of the land to the West has confirmed that there has not been any change to the shorter West wall since he acquired the land (13 years ago). In both cases, the walls appear to be securely held by extensive numbers of mature trees.

If the infilling is unnecessary then the application contravenes the requirements of both Waverley Borough Council LPP1 Policy RE2 and Guildford Borough Council LPP1 Policy 2, which require that any development in the Green Belt must be necessary.

AONB

The site is located in the Surrey Hills AONB and AGLV. NPPF paragraph 176 and the Guildford and Waverley Local Plans afford great weight to protecting and enhancing this AONB, which enjoys the highest level of protection for landscapes. The proposed activity would cause considerable damage and disturbance and so is completely at odds with these policies.

The noise and disruption caused by the trucks is also contrary to the SCC LTP, SCC Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2014), the Surrey Hills AONB Management Plan and the Waverley Cycling Plan.

Traffic

The intended access route along Farley Heath Road from the North is wholly unsuitable for HGVs, being a poorly constructed and predominantly single lane road.

It will be very difficult for cars to pass the HGVs. Furthermore, the proposed 44 movements per day mean that lorries will regularly need to pass each other, which is virtually impossible on many lengthy sections of the route. This is likely to lead to very significant delays and blockages, causing considerable inconvenience to drivers and damage to the road and verges. The Woodhill Lane/Farley Heath Road route currently provides a valuable route circumventing Guildford to the South East. The already congested A281 and B2128 routes into Guildford can ill afford the additional traffic burden if drivers are forced to avoid Farley Heath Road.

It is inevitable that some lorries, the majority of which will not be owned and controlled by the applicant, will try to take a 'short cut' or blindly follow SatNav and attempt to access the site along Woodhill Lane or Stroud Lane and the Southern section of Farley Heath Road. This route is exclusively a narrow single lane and even more inappropriate for HGVs, as confirmed by the unsuitable for HGVs signage erected by Surrey Highways. This would be likely to lead to repeats of the grid lock and chaos recently caused by one of the applicant's lorries taking this route, which resulted in the police being called out to resolve the issue.

Other Considerations

WPC have a number of other concerns about this application including:

1. Risk to horse riders – many riders trot along Farley Heath Road and Woodhill Lane. Attempting to pass large trucks along such narrow lanes is likely to cause distress to the horses and so put both the horses and their riders at risk. Furthermore, the likely noise and dust arising from the pit is liable to unsettle horses travelling on the bridle path that runs along the northern boundary of the pit, putting the horses, their riders and other users of the bridle path at risk.
2. Risk to cyclists – the area is very popular with cyclists who will be put at risk by the passing of large trucks.
3. Risk to wildlife, including protected species such as the significant number of toads that cross Farley Heath Road. We note that no biodiversity report appears to have been submitted.
4. Pollution – the diesel pollution from 44 HGVs per day will be significant and is at odds with Waverley's Clean Air Strategy and Local Plan (objective 20).
5. Despite the intention to only import inert waste, it is inevitable that some more toxic waste will be included, which is likely to leach into the surrounding soil and ground water, contrary to the Surrey Waste Local Plan 2019-2023.

Lisa Davison

Clerk to the Council

Wonersh Parish Council,

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5 September 2023

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