



Doncaster Council

Report

8th December 2020

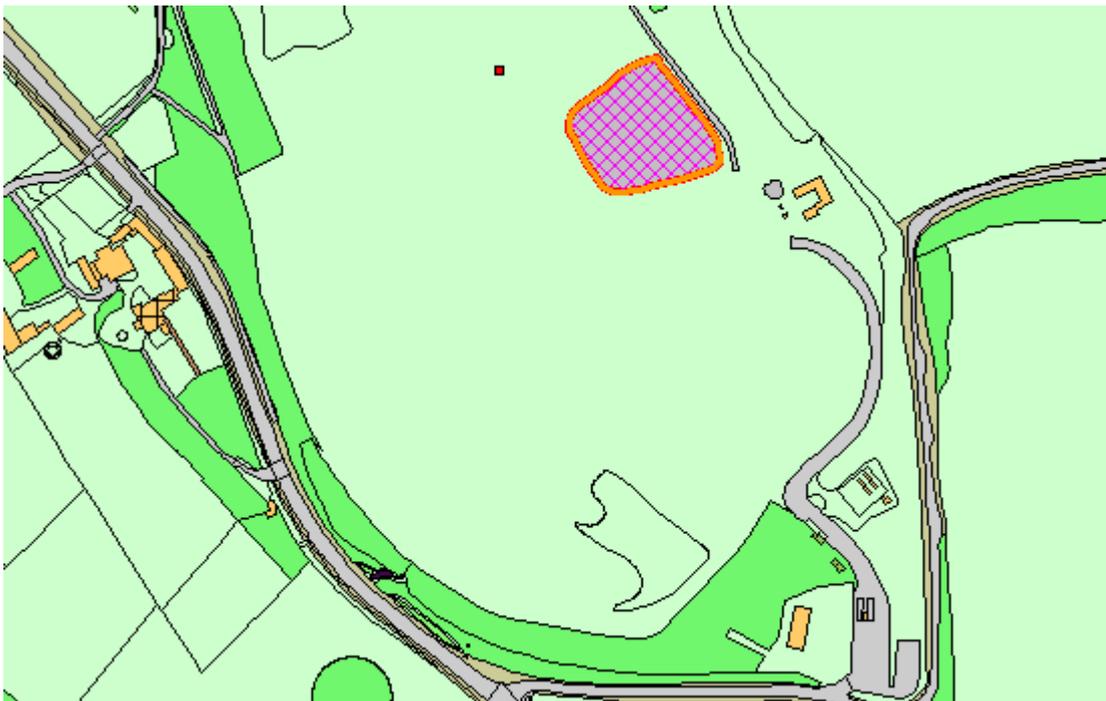
To the Chair and Members of the
PLANNING COMMITTEE

STEREFIBRE – UPDATE

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Chris McGuinness	No	No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report was requested by Planning Committee at the meeting held on 10th November 2020. An update was requested in relation to the current situation relating to the continued storage of Sterefibre (SF) at Hazel Lane Quarry, Hampole.



2. Members will recall that the last planning application seeking to retain SF at

this site (Ref: 18/00702/TIP) was refused planning permission on 18th October 2018.

3. The reason for the refusal was:

The development constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is harmful by definition. The development does not preserve openness and would conflict with one of the main purposes of including land within the Green Belt namely that of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Local Planning Authorities are required to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt. No case for very special circumstances has been put forward to justify the development. As such the proposal is contrary to Unitary Development Plan Policy ENV3, Core Strategy Policy CS3 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. It was detailed in the officer's report for this application that approximately half of the SF stockpile had been removed (under periodic supervision by the Council and Environment Agency). The SF stockpile has been significantly reduced as a result of this deployment from site by a 3rd party company (Tetron Welbeck LLP) as part of a programme of permitted works by the Environment Agency. The SF that has been removed has been taken to a receiving site at Meden Vale, Nottinghamshire to be used as restoration material for an old colliery working site at the former Welbeck Colliery site.
5. Officers have visited the receiving site to assess the use and can confirm this has been undertaken and that the mixing of the SF to 'dilute' its properties has resulted in a beneficial material for non-agricultural restoration.
6. Currently, there is an application to the Environment Agency from Tetron Welbeck LLP seeking a permit the deployment of the remaining half of the SF stockpile from Hazel Lane Quarry. This application has encountered significant delay – due primarily to the current COVID situation and a telephone conversation with the Environment Agency on 17th November has confirmed this. The application is, however, currently now under consideration.
7. The intention is to remove the remaining SF stockpile from its unauthorised position at Hazel Lane Quarry and there is no technical reason why this will not happen in the near future once the EA have granted the permit.
8. Contact was made with the operator of Hazel Lane Quarry on 15th October asking for an update on the deployment of SF. On the same day the operator responded:

'Tetron have had some deployment information issues with other materials. This resulted in them finding other sources and having to resample before the deployment application could be submitted again due to COVID this took a long time. This has now been submitted to the EA but Tetron are struggling to find the officer dealing with it to prompt its approval. I spoke to Rob [Tetron] last week and he is trying to push it along but the EA are still working from home. He assures me that they will take my material as soon

as the deployment is approved and it will remove all the remaining tonnage at HLQ.'

9. Contact has since been had with the EA Permitting Team to confirm the above. It was confirmed that the application was finally confirmed on 30th September 2020 but was still awaiting an officer to progress it.
10. In relation to the Hazel Lane Quarry site, the EA Regulation Officer for this site has been contacted to establish whether there have been any odour complaints pertaining to the continued storage of SF:
 1. **Have there been any odour complaints over the last year?** – EA RESPONSE – *'A few sporadic complaints on odour (waste odour) and site levels, but none in relation to sterefibre.'*
 2. **What is the current position with the next deployment of SF to the Tetron Wellbeck site in Notts? Is this imminent? How is it being viewed by the EA?** EA RESPONSE – *'This is with our permitting team, I have no input. Determination times for permit and deployment applications are currently much longer than normal due to there being a back log. The deployment location is not within our team's geographic patch and will not be regulated by an officer in my team.'*
 3. **Any other relevant issues relating to SF that I may need to be aware of?** EA RESPONSE – *'The only potential issue I foresee is when they start to remove again, which has the same risks as before i.e. odour generation. Once all the fibre is removed, Catplant will have to remove the engineered pad on which it has sat for all these years. This also has the potential to generate odour, although I would anticipate this will be short lived. We would expect Catplant to take all appropriate measures to control odour of course and if what they had in place wasn't adequate, we would look to them to improve them.'*

EXEMPT REPORT

11. This report is not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. The Planning Committee are recommended to note the content of this report.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

13. The unauthorised stockpile of SF is contrary to Green Belt policy and does not benefit from a planning permission. The removal of half of the SF stockpile had reduced the height and visual impact and impact on the openness of the Green belt. The remaining SF is required to be removed to ensure planning control is established.

BACKGROUND

What is Sterefibre (SF)

14. SF is a waste by-product derived from the former Sterecycle waste treatment facility, which was based in Templeborough, Rotherham. Sterecycle is no longer operational, having gone into administration in 2012. The waste treatment facility processed municipal ('black bin') waste arisings from Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Councils via an autoclaving (i.e. steam and pressure) process in order to 'sanitise' the material. Following this initial treatment, recyclable materials (e.g. bottles, cans etc.) were removed for re-use but the process did not remove all recyclable material due to the nature of the Sterecycle process.
15. The remaining by-product after all the larger recyclable materials had been removed was termed 'Sterefibre' (SF), which is an organic rich waste by-product of all that is left over from this process - including shards of glass, small plastic objects etc. and comprising a varied chemical composition.

Amount of SF

16. The most recent survey, in preparation for a Public Inquiry, was carried out by the appellant's surveyor (Silkstone Environmental Ltd.) on 8th September 2017. Officers of the Council and their representatives (South Yorkshire Mining Advisory Service - SYMAS) were in attendance to validate the findings. The results showed there to be approximately 37,882m³ of SF - which equates to c. 30,306 tonnes of SF stockpiled on site (using the lowest average density for waste). SYMAS' calculations suggested there to potentially be slightly more i.e. 33,000 tonnes. With the removal of c. 16,000 tonnes as part of the first deployment to the Tetron Welbeck site - this leaves anywhere between 14,306 - 17,000 tonnes of SF remaining on site.

Re-Use of SF

17. SF had previously been deployed and used for a number of landfill and quarry sites for non-agricultural restoration schemes i.e.:
 1. Cast Quarry (8,011 tonnes)
 2. Barnsdale Bar Quarry (3,870 tonnes)
 3. Barnstone Landfill (6,480 tonnes)
 4. Bighton Landfill (15,930 tonnes)
 5. Darrington Quarry (11, 970 tonnes)
 6. Parkwood Landfill (1,340 tonnes)
18. An agreement with Tetron Welbeck LLP for the deployment of c. 16,000 tonnes of the SF to their site at the former Welbeck Colliery site, Meden Vale, Nottinghamshire has also been agreed. This represents the largest deployment of this material.
19. The 16,000 tonnes equates to half of the SF stockpiled on site and was a significant deployment in complying with the terms of the extant enforcement notice. In planning terms, the removal of SF significantly reduced the impact of the SF stockpile in terms of openness and visual impacts on land designated as Green Belt. This is important - as the harm

has been significantly reduced (especially in the context of an operational quarry and landfill site).

20. Under the previous deployment to the former Welbeck Colliery site, SF was mixed with sand and sewage sludge to form a 'soil-substitute' for the non-agricultural reclamation of this former colliery site i.e. tree planting. The permit was issued by the Environment Agency for the use of SF at this receiving site and officers have visited the site to verify SF's use over the proposed area. Compliance visits by the Environment Agency to the former colliery site revealed that there were no issues with the SF. The deployment of SF to the former Welbeck Colliery in Nottinghamshire is proposed to be completed within a two year period with SF having commenced to be removed from site at the beginning of August 2018. There is therefore no technical reason why the second permit will not be issued in due course.

Previous Method of Removal

21. The proposed method of removing SF from the stockpile at Hazel Lane Quarry involved the top c. 1m or so of the material being stripped and stockpiled once it has been confirmed that the SF was in an aerobic state. This is important because if the material was anaerobic it would have the potential to cause odour. The SF was tested with an oxygen and temperature probe prior to any transfer operations. The material was bladed off using a tracked dozer to the edge of the storage pad. The SF was then placed by an excavator into a dumper truck to be moved from the stockpile. The recently exposed surface of the stockpile was then 'ripped' by a machine to allow air to permeate into the SF. The next time SF was to be deployed from site, the next c.1m would again be checked for oxygen levels to ensure aerobic conditions and if satisfactory, begin to be removed and relocated. This sequence continued. If the SF is found to be anaerobic (i.e. less than 1% oxygen present) then the movement of SF did not proceed until aerobic conditions existed.
22. Both officers of the LPA and the Environment Agency were in attendance on the on a number of dates of the removal to see how this was occurring in practice and to assess the odour implications during export from the site.

Continued Storage

23. Over the period of time that SF has been stored here, the stockpile has visibly reduced to a height that is now significantly less than that when the Planning Committee originally refused planning permission (i.e. Ref: 10/01971/TIP) and also latterly refused permission for a subsequent application (18/00702/TIP).
24. The current removal of the SF has seen a significant reduction in the height and volume of the SF stockpile. At the time of the original appeal, as a result of the height of the stockpile when the SF stockpile was actively receiving waste and as a result of the height, views could be seen of the SF both at long and short range viewpoints. However, with the cessation of importation of SF, along with the decrease in the height of the stockpile (through natural degradation and now removal), in tandem with landfilling works to the south of the site - both long and short range public views of the SF are no longer possible.

25. In practice, the SF stockpile are not visible beyond the immediate quarry/landfill boundary. Soil screen mounds are also present along the eastern site boundary, which prevent views of the stockpile from the public right of way on the boundary. It is therefore only possible to see the stockpile either from within the quarry/landfill boundary or by standing on the top of the perimeter soil mounds having crossed the perimeter fence.

Amenity Impacts - Odour

26. In the event odour complaints are raised and substantiated, the operation is subject to an Environmental Permit, which can be enforced by the Environment Agency. As detailed in paragraph 10 above – there have been no odour complaints attributed to Sterefibre.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

1. Continue to raise the urgency of this case with the operator of Hazel Lane Quarry and Tetron Welbeck LLP.
2. Liaise closely with the Environment Agency Regulatory Officer for Hazel Lane Quarry.
3. Liaise closely with the Environment Agency Permitting Officer for the Tetron Welbeck LLP receiving site – in relation to the pending permit application and impress the Council’s desire to see this matter concluded as soon as possible.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

1. All the above will ensure the Council is being proactive and monitoring the situation moving forwards.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	N/A
	<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster’s people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster 	Removal of the SF is required to comply with the Enforcement Notice and to mitigate the impact to the Green Belt harm.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	
	<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work 	N/A
	<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	N/A
	<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce • Modern, accessible customer interactions • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance 	N/A

CONSULTATION

1. Environment Agency Regulatory Officer for Hazel Lane Quarry.
2. Environment Agency Contact Centre re: the second deployment permit.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

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