EXPRESS PARK BUXTON – COWDALE QUARRY

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

JULY 2010

Report Prepared for:
Express Park Buxton Ltd
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ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT: NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Environmental Statement has been prepared to accompany a full planning application submitted on behalf of Express Park Buxton Ltd for planning consent for a water bottling facility and heritage visitor centre at Cowdale Quarry, Buxton.

1.2. The Environmental Statement has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999, and should be read in conjunction with the plans and accompanying documents submitted as part of the planning application.

1.3. The submission follows pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority, statutory and non statutory consultees, submission of a Scoping Report, and a local public consultation event held in Buxton in February 2010. Comments received have been taken on board where possible within the application.

1.4. The Environmental Statement has addressed the following areas with a separate chapter on each:

- Planning Policy Context
- Ecology
- Transport and Access
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Cultural Heritage
- Hydrology

1.5. The assessment methodology is set out for each issue considered in the Environmental Statement, which includes the baseline situation and severity of possible impacts from the proposed development. The full Environmental Statement accompanying this summary sets out in detail the possible effects and proposed mitigation measures where necessary.

2.0. SITE LOCATION/DESCRIPTION

2.1 The application site is on previously developed land within Cowdale Quarry, approximately 1.5 km from Buxton town centre. The quarry has a floor area of some 20 ha and is bordered by rock faces ranging from 10 to 20 m high. It was abandoned some years ago and its margins are naturally revegetating with trees and scrub. The quarry floor has been levelled off with a thin layer of soil and is used temporarily as grazing land. The proposed development site is an artificial landform with a flat floor. Because of the surrounding topography, the quarry is not visible at all from the east, south, or west, and from the north its southern face is all that can be seen, at a distance of 1 km or so. The site of the bottling plant and heritage visitor centre is circa 5 hectares.

2.2. The quarry is within the Special Landscape Area and close to the National Park boundary. The quarry is identified as an "Other Recorded Site of Interest" (HP 135). This is not a formal

designation but simply identifies that the site may be of ecological interest. There is a Local Wildlife Site adjoining the site boundary to the east, with other statutory and non statutory sites within 5km of the proposed development. The quarry is privately owned and there is no public access or use within the quarry although rock climbing does take place. A public footpath runs along the southern boundary of the quarry which is within the overall site area.

2.3. There are a number of derelict structures within the overall site area which formed part of the former Cowdale Lime Works and are of historical interest. The majority of these are unaffected by the proposed development but the remains of the former powerhouse will need to be demolished.

2.4. Rockhead Spring, a natural mineral water spring is located within the overall site boundary some 700 metres from the proposed bottling plant, and this source of mineral water is the main reason for the choice of site for the development.

3.0. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

3.1. The application seeks detailed consent for a bottling plant totalling 15,060 sq. metres, including 660 sq metres of offices, ancillary car and cycle parking, together with a new access road off the A6. In addition, it is proposed to provide a heritage visitor centre of 260 sq metres.

3.2. The new access road from the A6 will be constructed to minimize its effect on trees and need for rock excavation and will be in full compliance to current Highway Standards and Codes of Practice allowing all vehicles, including HGV's to enter and exit the site safely. Prior to any works starting on site, all details of the new junction and its method of construction will be approved by the Highway Authority.

3.3. Following discussions with the British Mountaineering Council, it has been agreed that access to certain quarry faces for rock climbing will be formalized and facilitated as part of the proposed development.

3.4. The rationale, design and landscaping proposals are set out in the Design and Access Statement and plans accompanying the planning application. Taken together with the Planning Statement and Environmental Statement, this shows that the scale of the proposed development is appropriate to the location and nature of the site and will provide a positive boost to the Buxton economy.

4.0. THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

4.1. The Environmental Statement considers the following areas in detail with a dedicated chapter on each together with appendices where appropriate:

- Planning Policy Context
- Ecology
- Transport and Access

- Noise
- Air Quality
- Cultural Heritage
- Hydrology.

4.2. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

The Planning Policy context and Assessment is set out in full in the Planning Statement accompanying the application which should be read in conjunction with the Environmental Statement.

4.3. The High Peak Local Development Framework is not yet adopted policy and the current Development Plan for this site formally comprises:

- The East Midlands Regional Plan 2009.
- The High Peak Local Plan Saved Policies.

Other material considerations include National Planning Policies as set out in Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance.

4.4. The key issues arising from these policy areas are:

- Whether the proposed use is appropriate in the countryside and Special Landscape area.
- The effect of the development on the open character and visual amenities of the countryside and Special Landscape Area.
- Whether the proposed use would be likely to have an adverse effect or environmental impact on the nature conservation interests of the site and surroundings.

There is no doubt that the development could be considered to be one which would require a countryside location as of necessity. Mineral water regulations state that water must be bottled as close as possible to the springhead. This point was conceded by the planning inspector when considering the adoption of the local plan, and by High Peak Borough Council when considering the 2000 application for a bottling facility. The proposed bottling plant is an appropriate use in the countryside and Special Landscape Area because of these special locational requirements. This is strengthened by the fact that the proposed site has an extant consent for a bottling plant, albeit, on a smaller scale than the current proposal, and is previously developed land.

The proposed development is not visible from the A6 and would only be partly visible from limited sections of a nearby public footpath where the development would only be visible from limited sections where the footpath runs close to the quarry face. There would also be limited visibility from a short section of public footpath over 1 km north of the quarry. The visible prominence of the development in the countryside and Special Landscape Area is not, therefore, so great as to justify refusal on the grounds of these policies.

4.5. The proposed development, together with mitigation measures where identified is in accord with national, regional and local planning policies.

4.6. ECOLOGY

The Ecological Impact Assessment has been carried out with reference to the guidance produced by the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM, 2006) which is recognised as current best practice. The baseline ecology of the proposed development area is reviewed. Species and habitats are evaluated on a national and regional basis. Potential sources of ecological impact are outlined and predicted effects of the proposed development are described. The significance of these effects is evaluated and mitigation measures discussed. Any residual effects following mitigation are identified.

4.7. This chapter of the Environmental Statement is structured to follow the ecological impact assessment process from baseline data gathering to the assessment of residual impacts. It starts by describing the desk study and field survey carried out to gather data on flora and fauna, the habitats present on and around the site and any designated nature conservation sites in the area in order to establish the baseline conditions. This information is then evaluated to identify which receptors (i.e. sites, habitats and species) are of importance for nature conservation, placing that importance on a geographical scale from site to international level. The potential impacts on these receptors are then outlined and an assessment is made as to whether the effects of the impacts are likely to be ecologically significant. In the final stages, the potential for mitigation measures to reduce the level of any significant adverse impacts is investigated and the likely post-mitigation residual impacts are discussed.

4.8. A series of mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures have been included within the development design proposals. These have been developed through discussion between the consultant team ecologists, and the consultant team architects and engineers. This has resulted in a variety of mitigation measures being included in the design of the proposed development, aimed at avoiding or minimising identified impacts and where this has not been possible to provide compensation for any adverse effects. In addition, in line with Paragraph 14 and Key Principal iv of PPS9, measures have been included in the development proposals to enhance the biodiversity value of the site overall. These measures are described below:

- The preparation and implementation of a site-wide Ecology Management Plan to enhance the semi-improved grassland area.
- The creation of a 265m2 brown roof on the Heritage Building to partially compensate for the loss of the ephemeral calcareous grassland and invertebrate habitat.
- The planting of 9600 m2 of woodland along the northern edge of the site and on the southern edge to compensate for the loss of ancient and secondary woodland.
- Translocation of ancient woodland ground flora and some of the soil to secondary woodland areas being retained within the development.
- The creation of new pond habitats with native aquatic marginal planting to encourage biodiversity.

- Creation of 360m new species-rich hedgerow along the southern boundary of the agricultural land to the south of the quarry.
- Interpretation of the ecological interest of the site and the management being undertaken within the new Heritage Centre.
- The use of native plant species informal areas that also provide foraging, nesting and over wintering habitat for wildlife.
- The footprint of the buildings will be set away from the quarry face, and the quarry face will continue to be available for wildlife such as nesting birds and bats.
- It is proposed to minimise the potential for badger road casualties through the use of reflectors on both sides of the road.
- The provision of new nest boxes for breeding bird species.

4.9. The impact of the proposed development on key ecological receptors, taking into account the likely effects of the proposed mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures is set out in detail in the Environmental Statement and summarized in Table 14 of the Ecology chapter. After implementation of mitigation/compensation there is no residual impact that is greater than local or site level. In some cases, the impact is positive.

4.10. TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

The Environmental Statement has examined the implications of the scheme on receptors in the area, and the mitigation measures and residual effects that will remain. As part of this application, a full Transport Assessment has been prepared that has considered the nature and demand for vehicular and sustainable trips to and from the development site and more fully documents these aspects. The TA has considered ways in which the scheme can contribute positively to enhance and maintain the Peak Districts' character through sensitive highway design that promotes sustainable travel and that mitigates potential negative environmental consequences. It illustrates that the changes allow for improved facilities and a stronger focus on travel issues to raise awareness and understanding by staff and visitors. The proposed development gives rise to few vehicular movements and hence a minimal amount of new traffic will be generated. Consequently, the envisaged impact on the surrounding road network will be negligible.

4.11. NOISE

The noise assessment in the Environmental Statement shows that the noise impact of the proposed development is unlikely to be significant. The assessment concludes that the level will be well below the existing background even without acoustic treatment. The assessment indicates that the bottling plant would have little impact, with night time rating levels of 18dB below background at Staden and 9dB below background at the worst case houses in Cowdale.

4.12. Noise limits have been given such that the proposed plant will be below the existing background. If detailed assessment of the actual plant indicates noise levels may be exceeded, noise attenuation measures are proposed, including increased attenuation of the building

envelope and ventilation, and use of barriers to shield access roads and delivery/loading areas from residential properties.

4.12. AIR QUALITY

A review of data from the Defra background maps and available monitoring data indicate that annual mean nitrogen dioxide and PM_{10} concentrations are well below the annual mean objectives in the vicinity of the proposed development. Slightly higher concentrations have been recorded in Buxton, but still comfortably within the objectives.

4.13. During construction activities, there is the potential that emissions of dust arising from a site will result in nuisance soiling at adjacent properties. Surrounding land uses are predominantly farmland. The closest sensitive receptors are located east of the development at approximately 125 m from the eastern boundary. There are also residential properties located to the south and south west of the site. These receptors will be highly sensitive to dust impacts and therefore care will be needed to control and minimise dust emissions from construction activities. Dust emissions can be effectively controlled by the employment of stringent management practices, e.g. the use of 'just in time' deliveries to preclude the need for large stockpiles, use of water sprays, screens and maximising separation distances. These will be implemented through adherence to a Construction Environmental Management Plan agreed with HPBC.

4.14. Assessment of local air quality using the DMRB model predicts that future concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and PM_{10} will meet the objective limits across the development site. The proposed development is predicted to increase nitrogen dioxide concentrations by a maximum of 5% and PM_{10} concentrations by 2% of the relevant objective limits. Where air quality is predicted to be well below the relevant standards these predicted levels of increase in pollutant concentrations correspond to a negligible impact on local air quality.

4.15. CULTURAL HERITAGE

In order to inform the preparation of the Cultural Heritage Chapter of the Environmental Statement, an archaeological desk-based assessment and buildings appraisal has been prepared. Full details of the archaeological background to the application site are given in the Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Buildings Appraisal, which is reproduced as an appendix to the Environmental Statement.

4.16. The Environmental Assessment considers the potential effects of the proposed development on archaeological and historic landscape issues (cultural heritage). The site contains the remains of Cowdale Lime Works, which are significant heritage assets which English Heritage is currently considering whether or not to designate. The demolition of the powerhouse is considered to have a severe adverse effect on loss of significance on the cultural heritage of the site. The removal or impact on additional structural remains associated with the quarry, and the impact of the proposed development on the setting of the known heritage assets is considered to be moderate adverse. However, appropriate recording measures in

conjunction with positive benefits, facilitated by the proposed development to the remaining lime works, are proposed. The proposed development facilitates the repair and maintenance of the remains of Cowdale Lime Works, secures the long term future of these assets and provides substantial public benefit. If the development does not proceed, the significant heritage assets will continue to decay and will remain inaccessible to the public. Consequently, the Environmental Statement considers that the overall impact of the proposed development on the cultural heritage is neutral.

4.17. HYDROLOGY

The Hydrology Chapter of the Environmental Assessment describes the hydrology and hydrogeology of the site and assesses the potential impacts of the proposed development. In summary, the assessment concludes that:

- The proposed development is situated within an inner Source Protection Zone that has been drawn to protect groundwater discharging from Rockhead Spring
- The risk of derogation of water quality at Rockhead Spring as a consequence of the development is considered to be very low as no potentially contaminated water will be allowed to infiltrate
- The development is likely to result in a small derogation of water quantity at Rockhead Spring as water from roads and vehicle parking areas will not be allowed to infiltrate or be sent to soakaways to avoid any possibility of groundwater pollution. It is impossible to assess the degree of derogation, particularly given uncertainties regarding the distal catchment, but it is likely to be small and to pose no risk to the licensed abstraction.

4.18. CONCLUSION

The proposed development will provide a sustainable development on previously used land based on a natural, local resource. The development will provide a boost to the local economy, and the scale and nature of the proposals is appropriate to the location of the site.