

Statement of Community Involvement

Express Park Buxton Limited – Cowdale Quarry

March 2011

Report Prepared for Express Park Buxton Ltd.
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1.0 Introduction

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) details the numerous consultation activities and processes that were carried out to gather important community views prior to the application submission. This SCI is submitted as additional information in support of the planning application by Express Park Buxton Ltd. It does not form part of the application documentation for which approval is sought. Whilst not forming part of the documentation for which approval is sought, this supporting document is submitted with the aim of assisting in both the understanding and evaluation of the proposal.

High Peak Borough Council places community involvement high on their agenda and encourage residents to play an active and constructive role in the local planning process. By enabling residents to participate in planning policy and development control HPBC states that participation leads to the development of more inclusive accessible, safe and sustainable communities.

1.1 The Proposal

The proposed development in part of Cowdale Quarry is a water bottling plant and associated storage areas together with a new access off the A6, internal roads and a heritage visitors centre. The nearby Rockhead Spring is a natural artesian spring located to the east of Cowdale Quarry on land owned by the applicant. A second water source at Staden Lane is located to the South West of Cowdale Quarry also on land owned by the applicant. It is intended to utilise the water resource and this site has been identified as the only feasible option in the area. (Further information on the water resource can be found in the other planning application documents).

2.0 Overview of Consultation

Express Park Buxton Ltd undertook a consultation programme in order to assess and understand the aspirations and concerns of the local community prior to the submission of the planning application.

2.1 Summary of Activity and Attendance

Pre-application consultation was undertaken by means of a series of meetings with the planners, key stakeholders and local interest groups. Presentations were given to the local interest groups and the wider community. Several press articles were released to inform a wider representation of the public and a petition was circulated to gauge the strength of local support for the proposals. The presentations were undertaken before the initial application was lodged with High Peak Borough Council. The issues and suggestions that

were raised by people within the meetings have been taken into account when preparing this updated application; these are shown below in 2.2 Summary of Results.

2.1.1 Presentations

Four presentations were carried out to advertise the initial proposal and to make the developer available for comments:

- 24/02/10 Open Day at Leewood Hotel, Buxton
This Open Day was advertised in the Buxton Advertiser (18/02/10) – See Appendix 1. There were 85 Participants who spoke to members of the project team and viewed the display boards that were on show – See Appendix 2.
- 08/03/10 Evening Presentation to Vision Buxton at Leewood Hotel, Buxton
20 Members attended the presentation and the Question and Answer session that followed.
- 17/02/10 Ben Dean attended a sub area meeting of British Mountaineering Council at Norfolk Arms.
- 16/9/10 Evening Presentation to Buxton Civic Association at Poole Cavern in Buxton
25 members attended the presentation. New display boards were used (see Appendix 3)

2.1.2 Petition: Right to Work

A petition organized by Shannon Gerrard, a local Buxton resident, was signed by 2004 people over the time span of a week. It was signed by residents from the local community who felt that the proposal would provide a substantial number of secure jobs for people within the area, which are desperately needed in Buxton. Appendix 4 shows a page sample of the 2,004 signatures in support of the development at Cowdale.

2.1.3 Press Articles

Several articles were released to inform a wider representation of the public the details of the proposal. They were also used to correct misinformation (see Appendix 5). As well as articles, there were a number of letters of support published in the Buxton Advertiser.

See Appendix 5 for letter to Buxton Advertiser from Paul Knell correcting misinformation regarding the development.

See Appendix 6 for letter to Buxton Advertiser from Paul Dinsdale titled *“We can’t afford to say no to jobs.”*

See Appendix 7 for letter to Buxton Advertiser from Professor John Gunn titled *“Rockhead water will boost Buxton.”*

See Appendix 8 for a letter to Buxton Advertiser from R. Benson titled *“Choice is walking or working.”*

See Appendix 9 for a letter to Buxton Advertiser from Steve Grimes titled *“We need jobs for the future.”*

See Appendix 10 for a letter to Buxton Advertiser from Steve Kenworthy titled *“An inclusive debate, please.”*

The press articles included within the appendices help display the strengths of the development but also highlight the issues that are important to the local community.

2.1.4 Letters to Key Stakeholders

A number of letters were sent out to key stakeholders informing them of the development proposal and what it entailed including:

- Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
- English Heritage
- Peak District National Park
- Buxton Civic Association
- Vision Buxton

2.2 Summary of findings from consultations

2.2.1 Key Subject areas

Following the consultations, key stakeholders, local interest groups and the wider community raised certain issues of concern. These issues were forefront in the developers mind when adapting the plans and making changes in order to improve the development plans.

As with any development, objections were made to the development proposal. However, it was clear that the application received a large number of fictitious objections alongside genuine letters and emails of concern. The developer has tried to address the genuine matters that have been raised by people within this application.

The issues that arose from genuine objections and concerns are listed together with the ways in which the developer has sought to address them:

Removal of Spoil Heaps

A number of people were concerned that the spoil heaps in the quarry would be removed, which could affect noise and also damage habitats within the area.

- As part of the new application changes have been made to the layout within the quarry so that it will only be necessary to remove one spoil heap for the access road to the bottling facility.

Loss of Ancient Woodland

In order to build the access road a very small percentage of ancient woodland that borders the A6 will be lost and a number of people were concerned about this.

- The Environmental Statement attached with this application highlights that the area of woodland to be lost does not support the characteristic species associated with ancient woodland of this type.
- Only circa 1% of the total woodland will be affected.
- A mitigation plan will be put in place to aid rejuvenation of the area after construction, including the planting of more trees.
- An Environmental Land Stewardship scheme has been proposed which would help manage the natural areas of the site and aid rejuvenation and protection of flora and fauna within the area.

Altered Views from the National Park

Local people were concerned about the visual impact that the development will have on the area, including the views of the National Park. It was clear from talking to members of the public that some of these concerns were misplaced. For example, walkers were concerned about views from the footpath that runs to the south of the quarry. However, at its closest point this footpath is over 14m (45 feet) from the quarry edge and it will not be possible to see the proposed development from the footpath. However, the working faces of Ashwood dale Quarry on the opposite side of the A6 are seen from the footpath. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken, the key conclusions being that:

- Due to the location of the proposed development, the visual impact on the area is minimal.
- The site can only be seen from land 400 to 1500m to the north on the opposite side of the A6 from where there are also other developments in the foreground and background.
- Mitigation measures have been put in place, the roof of the development has been lowered in the factory area and green and brown roofs have been added to help the buildings blend into the background.

Noise and Light Pollution

Local residents were concerned about the issue of increased noise and light pollution in the area. However, these concerns have also been addressed:

- The buildings will be below the level of residential areas to the south and shielded by the quarry rock faces. Hence, it has been concluded in the Noise Impact Assessment, that the proposed development would have little impact with day and night rating levels below background at Staden and Cowdale.
- To help reduce light pollution full cut off light fittings will be used which are designed to minimize light spillage.

A6 Road Junction

It is apparent that there are concerns over the new junction to be built on the A6 and the effect it will have on the road and surrounding area. However:

- Derbyshire County Highways have approved the Junction on the A6 which meets all safety standards.
- The rock faces on both sides of the valley near the proposed junction have already been modified by human activity including recent face dressing. Any new exposed rock faces will be treated to encourage vegetation growth.
- It will not be possible to see the development in Cowdale Quarry from the A6.

3.0 Support

It is important to mention the correspondence that was received in support of the application. There are many people who feel the project is beneficial to the area for a number of reasons, these are explored below with examples of supporting statements.

Regional Growth and Improved Economy

The proposed development will help deliver employment and *“better opportunities for all, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment and conserving the countryside and open spaces that are vital resources for everyone”* (PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development). To protect and conserve the countryside and open spaces, it is important to concentrate development on previous industrial land, this prevents the exploitation of Greenfield sites.

The reuse of Previously Developed Land/Brownfield sites is a core component of the UK sustainable development strategy. Promoting a sustainable community within Buxton would help conform to the numerous government policies that are in place to help reduce the impact upon the land as much as possible whilst creating an abundance of opportunities for growth at the same time.

*“We support it because **it is using a brownfield site and the opportunity of job creation, which is badly required in the area. We are content with the projected traffic flow and new junction. Any arguments regarding do we need 'bottled water' is not a planning issue** - it is more a commercial/business one made by investors and the business community. **We also believe much disinformation through the media has taken place and had an adverse effect on this application**”* – Received from Trevor and Stella Johnson on 18/09/2010 by email.

“I was surprised that people are required to petition for this proposal and the jobs it will create. I thought this government was elected on a mandate to stabilise our economy and broaden our economic base so that we are not so reliant on the service sector.” – Received from Sharon Whale on 30/09/2010 by email.

*“**Don't let this opportunity pass us by, its fantastic for Buxton people and the surrounding areas and will not cost us a penny, it's a win win situation for the high peak, and somebody***

else is going to pay, what more do we want than that?" – Received from Ian Tighe on 08/10/2010 by email.

"Me and my husband have been struggling to find any work in the area and we now have to travel for over an hour a day to get to work. We have are now considering moving which we do not want to. This application will help to generate that much needed work within the area. Buxton's future." – Received from Mari Jones on 25/05/2010 by email.

Preserving Heritage

The town of Buxton has long been famous for two commodities, limestone and water. The proposed Heritage Centre would tell the story of these materials and their contribution to the local economy.

"To my knowledge there is no such centre elsewhere, in or near the Peak, based on the significant remains of a limestone such as exist at Cowdale...unique opportunity to recognize, and enable people to be aware of the tremendous work and contribution made by thousands of hereto unsung Peak district quarry worker." – Received by Robert Dawson on 24/09/2010 by letter.

4.0 Conclusion

Following the initial Planning Application submitted in December 2009, several further meetings were held with High Peak Planning and key stakeholders, local interest groups to discuss issues raised during the application. Following these meetings, the scheme has been amended to take on board the issues raised during the previous application.

As with any development, some concerns relating to various aspects of the scheme were raised. The consultation has helped develop the planning application and where possible, the consultation team has taken on board comments and issues raised by the public and amended the plans to reflect these views.

As stated previously, please refer to the relevant supporting documents of the planning application for further clarification of issues.

5.0 Appendices