

5. Alternative Sites

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section of the ES provides a description of alternative sites including the merits of each in comparison to the appeal site.
- 5.1.2 The identification of alternative sites is based on discussions with the LPA as well as an assessment of potential sites highlighted within the Nathaniel Litchfield Partnership Employment Land Review 2008 carried out for the Peak sub-region authorities including High Peak (see Figure 5.1).

5.2 Background

- 5.2.1 The Appeal Site is significant because it constitutes a coincidence of locations for all the key elements of the bottling process which are not available on other sites. This coincidence of locations applies to the following factors:
- a) Proximity to the Water Source at Rockhead Spring.
 - b) Proximity to the Staden Lane borehole which provides a source of compensation water as required by the Environment Agency licence.
 - c) Sufficient level land with good access to the strategic road system and enough space for water lagoons to assist with compensation water requirements, providing additional robustness for drought conditions and climate change.

- 5.2.2 Each of these matters is explained further below:

5.3 The Water Source

- 5.3.1 The water source for the project is Rockhead Spring, which is located a short distance to the north-east of the quarry.
- 5.3.2 There are only two groundwater sources on limestone in the Peak District that have full recognition as Natural Mineral Waters under 'The Natural Mineral Water, Spring Water and Bottled Drinking Water Regulations 1999' [Statutory Instrument 1999 No. 1540]. These are St Anne's Well, which has a long history of water

bottling, and Rockhead Spring which was formally approved as a Natural Mineral Water by High Peak Borough Council in 2000 after a rigorous programme of testing.

- 5.3.3 The Rockhead Spring is licensed for the abstraction of 175,700 cubic metres of water per annum.

5.4 The Staden Lane Borehole

- 5.4.1 The Staden Lane borehole benefits from a license to abstract 125,000 cubic metres per annum from that source. Water from this source is not recognised as a Natural Mineral Water but could in future be sold as 'Bottled Drinking Water' following treatment. Water from the borehole can however be used as 'Compensation water'.
- 5.4.2 In times of low water flow in the River Wye, the operators will be required to "compensate" for their levels of water extraction from the spring at a rate of 125%. The ability to achieve this from the Staden borehole is a significant requirement of the proposals.
- 5.4.3 In addition to this, the proposals provide for lagoons within the secure area of the site which will also be capable of providing "compensation" water in times of low river water. This will allow continued production at the plant from the Rockhead source.

5.5 The Site for the Bottling Plant

- 5.5.1 To achieve the full potential of the Spring a large purpose built plant is essential. The most important requirement is that the factory should be as close to the source as possible both to reduce pumping costs and, more importantly to ensure the integrity of the connecting pipeline. Contamination of the pipe, or a breach leading to loss of water, would be commercially disastrous.
- 5.5.2 In legal terms, although the water cannot be transported from the source by container to a bottling plant, it can be piped and there is no legal limit to the length of that pipeline. In practice however it is desirable that the pipeline should not be longer than 2 km.

- 5.5.3 The nature of the site required is addressed in the Detailed Description of the Development. A minimum site area of 5 hectares is required for the bottling plant and associated warehousing together with the hard standing areas for delivery vehicles and additional areas for landscaping and drainage etc. subject to site location and ground conditions.

5.6 The Choice of Site

- 5.6.1 The choice of a site within the former Cowdale Quarry as the location for the bottling plant was made following a comprehensive appraisal of all possible sites in and around Buxton.
- 5.6.2 At the application stage, the exercise was undertaken utilising the Economic Land Review undertaken by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners in 2008 for the Council, which is the latest available information on sites for the wider area including Buxton. This Review identifies and provides an assessment of available employment sites in the area. The location of all sites assessed is attached at Figure 5.1 of this Chapter.

5.7 The Assessment of Alternatives

- 5.7.1 As a wider review of the above matters the potential alternative sites were assessed against the following detailed criteria on a like for like basis:

1. Area

- Gross area (minimum of 5 ha required)

2. Access

- Proximity to strategic road junction on good roads

3. Location

- Proximity to centre of urban area

4. Quality of Site

- Level site, regular shape, no infrastructure Constraints

5. Status

- Brownfield/Greenfield
- Within urban area

6. Availability of Site

- Ownership constraints
7. Location from water source
- Length of pipeline
 - Other Potential obstacles
8. Site specific constraints

5.7.2 A summary of the findings for each site is set out below:

Cowdale Quarry

- 5.7.3 The Cowdale Quarry site is located 1.5 km by road from Buxton. The site is located outside the defined limits of Buxton. Vehicle access to the site would be created by means of a new junction onto the A6.
- 5.7.4 The site is located close to the Rockhead Spring, the Staden Lane borehole and the River Wye. The site is in excess of the minimum 5 ha requirement and located within Cowdale Quarry giving a high level of visual screening.
- 5.7.5 The quarry contains a recently designated Scheduled Ancient Monument, the limeworks associated with the quarry. The quarry itself falls within the defined Special Landscape Area which lies east of Buxton. The creation of the new access would impact on the recently designated TPOs and the edge of an area of Ancient Woodland.

Tongue Lane

- 5.7.6 The Tongue Lane site is located 2.6 km by road from the centre of Buxton. The site, as an edge of town allocation is part greenfield/part brownfield but located within the defined limits of Buxton. The site is located some 1.6km from the Rockhead Spring.
- 5.7.7 The allocated area adjoins the Cuning Dale section of the Wye Valley SSSI and is described as close to the Peak District Dales Candidate Special Area of Conservation. The allocation adjoins a larger existing industrial area and the two main sites total 4 hectares, albeit within two different ownerships.

- 5.7.8 The development of the Tongue Lane site is dependent on the new Fairfield Road link, funding for which is in turn dependent on private sector investment tied in to new housing and industrial development. The area is close to and currently takes access through an existing residential area.
- 5.7.9 The site projects into open countryside and would be clearly visible as an extension to the urban area in wide views from elevated ground to the south and west. Depending on the nature of the development, there could be significant landscape and visual effects on the open access land at Cuning Dale.
- 5.7.10 The Review gave a time scale for the availability of these sites of in excess of five years. High Peak, in April 2011 when addressing proposals elsewhere indicated there was no known timescale for the site being brought forward.
- 5.7.11 There would be major logistical problems in routing a pipeline from Rockhead Spring to this site as the intervening ground lies within the Cuning Dale section of the Wye Valley SSSI and Ashwood Dale Quarry.

Staden Lane

- 5.7.12 The Staden Lane site is located 2.9km by road from Buxton. The site is a greenfield allocation adjoining the existing industrial estate at Staden Lane. The defined built up area boundary of Buxton has been extended to encompass the existing industrial estate and the allocation. The site is located some 1.5 km from the Rockhead Spring.
- 5.7.13 The site is close to the borehole which contains an existing link to the Rockhead Spring.
- 5.7.14 The site and the adjoining countryside is highly visible.
- 5.7.15 This is identified by the Economic Land Review as a site of less than 2 hectares and as such is too small for consideration for this project.

Hoffman Quarry

- 5.7.16 The Hoffman Quarry site is located 4km by road from the centre of Buxton. The

site is allocated for employment but lies outside the defined urban boundary of Buxton. The site is located some 3.7 km from the Rockhead Spring.

5.7.17 This is identified in the Economic Land Review as 2.2 hectares of potential developable land and as such is too small to accommodate this project. It is identified as requiring significant investment in site preparation to prepare the site for development even at this scale. It is irregular in shape and would require extensive excavation to create a level site.

5.7.18 As a quarry site development contained within the quarry would be unlikely to have significant visual or landscape effects.

5.7.19 The Economic Land Review identified a number of constraints to the development of the site, including remoteness from the strategic highway network and Buxton.

5.7.20 Any pipeline between Rockhead Spring and this site would have to run beneath public highways for a considerable distance.

Harpur Hill

5.7.21 The Harpur Hill site is located 3.9 km by road from Buxton. The site is allocated for employment but lies outside the defined limits of Buxton. The site is located some 3.4km from the Rockhead Spring.

5.7.22 This is shown as having only 0.5ha of available land and is therefore not suitable for consideration for this project.

Waterswallows Road (designated Employment area)

5.7.23 The Waterswallows Road site is located 3.9 km by road from Buxton. The site is allocated for employment but lies outside the defined built up limits of Buxton. The site is located some 3.2 km from the Rockhead Spring.

5.7.24 The Economic Land Review shows around 1.8 hectares of land to be available, and this site is therefore too small for consideration for this project.

Foxlow Farm

- 5.7.25 The Foxlow Farm site is located 2.6 km by road from Buxton. The site is a greenfield site in open countryside of uneven topography currently used for agriculture.
- 5.7.26 The site is located outside the defined built up limits of Buxton and within the open countryside. The site is located some 2 km from the Rockhead Spring.
- 5.7.27 Foxlow Farm was previously promoted for allocation in the draft High Peak Local Plan by the Council as a possible employment and residential site.
- 5.7.28 Access to the site is potentially good with the site's location opposite Staden Lane on the A515
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- 5.7.29 The site was rejected by the Local Plan Inspector in 2004.
- 5.7.30 The Local Plan Inspector saw the proposals for employment and residential uses conflicting with each other and representing a conspicuous encroachment into an attractive landscape on an important approach to the town. The site is highly visible and any development would be impossible to screen. It would not be possible to incorporate the development into this landscape because of its topography.

Waterswallows Road 2

- 5.7.31 The Waterswallows Road site is located 4.2 km by road from Buxton. The site is located outside the defined limits of Buxton within the open countryside and close to the Nestle development. The site is located some 3.2 km from the Rockhead Spring.
- 5.7.32 Land in open countryside at Waterswallows Road was considered as part of the exercise but there would be major logistical problems in constructing a pipeline from Rockhead Spring to this site.
- 5.7.33 The site is highly visible from the surrounding countryside.
- 5.7.34 It is also clear from the planning officer's report on Nestle's planning application

that, because there were considered to be no other suitable sites for a bottling plant, an exception was recommended for Nestle on a personal basis.

5.7.35 The slopes of Ashwood Dale to the north of Rockhead Spring are very steep and heavily vegetated. They are also within the Peak District National Park and it is considered highly unlikely that planning permission would be granted for the highly disruptive works associated with pipeline construction. If a route was to be followed running east up Ashwood Dale from the spring to the boundary of the Park, then it would be necessary to route the pipeline through part of the Cunning Dale SSSI.

5.8 Conclusion

5.8.1 The only sites assessed which are potentially large enough to accommodate the proposed plant are the non-allocated sites close to Waterswallows Road and at Foxlow Farm. These sites are greenfield sites outside the defined built-up area of Buxton. None of the sites considered in the Nathaniel Lichfield Employment Land Study 2008 are large enough for the purpose.

5.8.2 In terms of access no sites were identified in the Employment Land Study as having good access. In the context of Buxton however all sites had the potential for reasonable access, albeit the access road to Hoffmann Quarry and to Harpur Hill with a 14% gradient is not ideal and was a specific concern in the Employment Land Study.

5.8.3 All sites have similar locations relative to drive distance to the centre of Buxton ranging from 2.6 km at Foxlow Farm to 4.2 km at Waterswallows.

5.8.4 In terms of site quality Hoffmann Quarry would require substantial site preparation and Tongue Lane would need a new link road funded by development which represents a significant constraint.

5.8.5 Certain sites are identified as falling within the built-up area although in practice the defined boundary has been extended to include Staden Lane and Tongue Lane which are edge of town locations. Staden Lane and Tongue Lane, while within the development boundary are greenfield sites. This applies also to the unallocated sites at Foxlow Farm and Waterswallows (large site). The remaining

sites are all brownfield.

- 5.8.6 In terms of ownership the identified allocated sites appear to be available although the position on the larger greenfield unallocated sites are unknown.
- 5.8.7 Only two sites have close access to the Water Source, Staden Lane and Cowdale Quarry. The next closest site is that at Tongue Lane although that would require a pipeline to be constructed through a sensitive designated area.
- 5.8.8 The Cowdale site is the only site which allows for the necessary combination of circumstances to enable the Rockhead Spring to be exploited effectively and economically. The site is large enough to accommodate the necessary plant and associated requirements. The site is close by the Rockhead Spring and Staden Lane borehole which will be used for compensation water purposes.

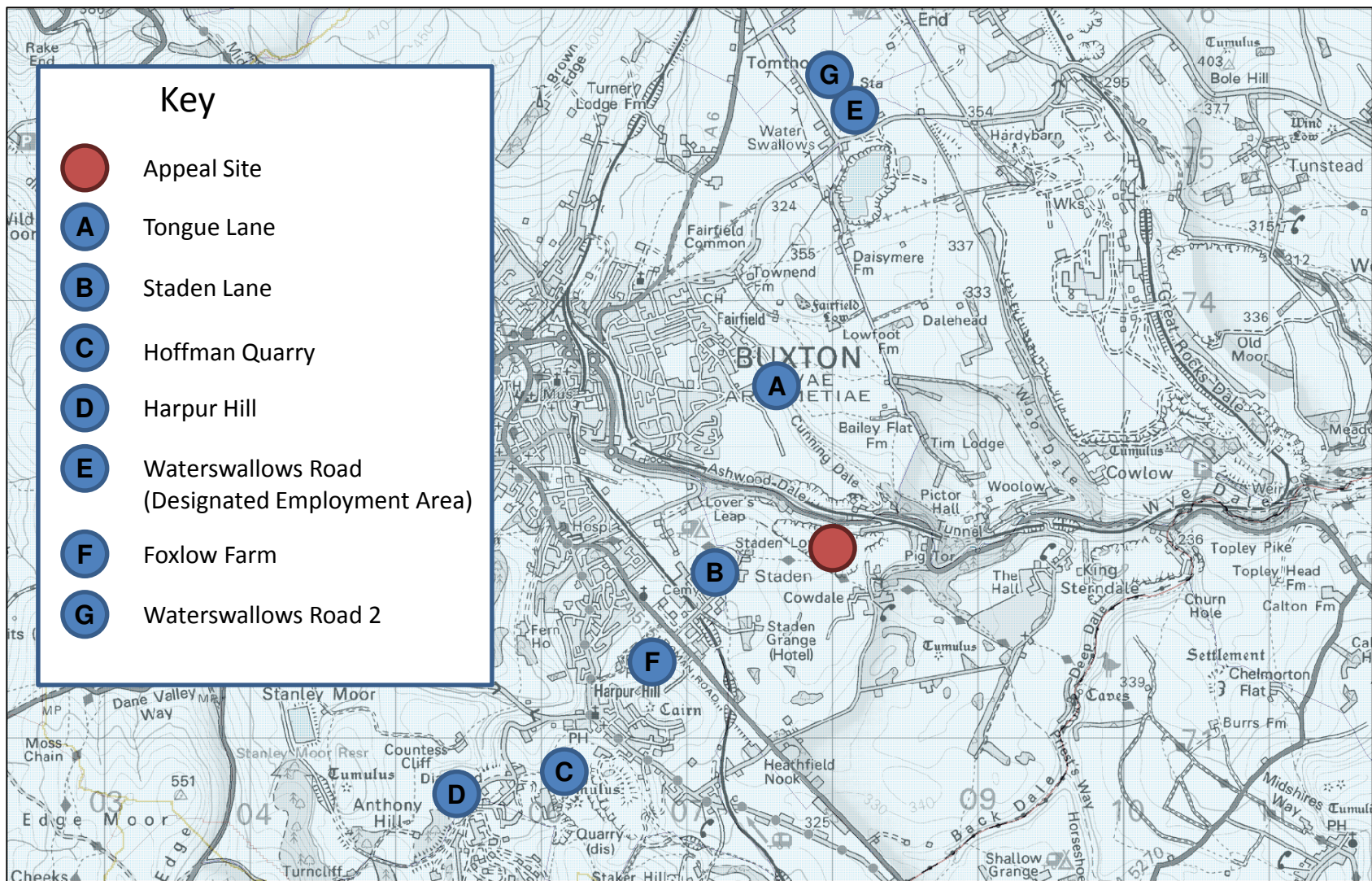


Figure 5.1: Location of Potential Alternative Sites