

CHARFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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Planning Team
Government Office for the South West
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15th June 2007

URGENT

Dear Sirs

REQUEST FOR CALL-IN OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The following planning applications have been submitted by CEMEX UK Materials Ltd to South Gloucestershire Council:

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| PT07/0573/F | Extension of Wickwar East Quarry northwards. |
| PT07/0577/RVC | Variation of condition to allow crushing and screening of mineral and production of ready mixed concrete between the hours of 5.30am-22.00pm Mondays to Fridays and 5.30am-12.00pm on Saturdays. |
| PT07/0578/RVC | Variation of condition to allow the coating plant to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. |

These applications are extremely controversial and at the last count had prompted a petition of objection, with approximately 400 signatures, and some 500 formal objections from about 160 households. In the rural context, this is a massive amount of objection. The strength of feeling was clearly apparent at a public meeting chaired by Steve Webb MP. At that meeting concerns were also expressed about the expertise of South Gloucestershire Council's newly appointed Development Control Committee to assess the applications, as some of the councillors allegedly had no experience of planning and had not yet had training.

The proposed developments are in the parish of Charfield. Charfield Parish Council has strongly objected to all of the applications. The objections are explained in a report which responds in detail to the applications. South Gloucestershire Council has included the report on its website together with other responses to consultation on the applications. On the first page of its response the Parish Council has set out a number of modifications that would need to be included to make the first application satisfactory. The aim is to ensure that the extension to the quarry is carried out sensitively and with appropriate mitigation works.

Against the background of local tension and anxiety, there is a particular reason why the applications should be called-in for decision by the Secretary of State. Application PT07/0573/F is for the extension of the existing quarry to provide approximately 20 years of limestone extraction at a rate of 750,000 tonnes/year. The present permitted rate is 400,000 t/year. The proposed extraction area extends eastwards outside the Preferred Area identified in the South Gloucestershire Minerals & Waste Local Plan adopted in May 2002. By doing so it destroys a shelterbelt of local landscape and ecological significance alongside the Preferred Area.

The proposed extraction area also takes virtually the full length of the Preferred Area northwards towards the hamlet of Churchend, ignoring the Minerals & Waste Local Plan requirement that the Preferred Area should represent the overall envelope within which a site may be developed, including allowance for appropriate stand-offs, screening or landscaping and other environmental and operational constraints. Proximity to Churchend is identified in the Plan as one of the main constraints on working this site. The application proposal is for quarrying to within about 300m of the nearest residential properties at Churchend, whereas quarrying to the south has been stopped 600m from the edge of the village of Wickwar.

From January 1998 onwards Charfield Parish Council responded to consultations on the draft Minerals & Waste Plan because of the potential impact of quarrying on the residential amenities and character of Churchend, which enjoys a tranquil environment and contains statutorily listed dwellings and a Grade I listed church. The Parish Council objected to the introduction into the Plan in July 2000 of a new category of "Safeguarded Land" and the written representations were taken into account by the Inspector who held the subsequent public inquiry. She found in favour of the Parish Council, Safeguarded Land was deleted and the Preferred Area was determined accordingly. The relevant history of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan is at Appendix 1 to the Parish Council's objections to the applications.

Following the work done by the Parish Council and the ruling of the Inspector on this site specifically, the adopted Minerals & Waste Local Plan offers a degree of assurance and certainty to local residents. It would be most unfortunate if these statutory provisions were to be brushed aside by the granting of an incompatible planning permission. It would call into question the credibility of the forward planning process and its constituent public consultation. Because of the conflict between the application and the statutory Development Plan, Charfield Parish Council urges that you:

1. direct South Gloucestershire Council not to grant planning permission in respect of any of the three related applications;
2. call-in the applications for determination by the Secretary of State.

The urgency arises because the provisional date for the Development Control Committee to consider these applications is 5 July.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Ashford
Chairman – Charfield Parish Council

cc Steve Webb MP
cc Mark Davies, South Gloucestershire Council