



The Coal
Authority

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For the attention of: Mr B Hurst

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

[By email: planning@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk]

20 February 2024

Dear Mr Hurst

Re: SMD/2023/0647

New waste management drainage to Visitor's Centre; Country Park Visitor Centre, Grange Park Drive, Biddulph

Thank you for your notification of 31 January 2024 seeking the views of the Coal Authority on the above.

The Coal Authority is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ). As a statutory consultee, The Coal Authority has a duty to respond to planning applications and development plans in order to protect the public and the environment in mining areas.

The Coal Authority Response: **Material Consideration**

I have reviewed the proposals and confirm that the application site falls within the defined Development High Risk Area; therefore within the application site and surrounding area there are coal mining features and hazards which need to be considered in relation to the determination of this planning application.

The Coal Authority records indicate that a thick coal seam outcrops at or close to the surface of the site which may have been worked in the past and historic unrecorded underground coal mining is likely to have taken place beneath the site at shallow depth. Voids and broken ground associated with such workings can pose a risk of ground instability and may give rise to the emission of mine gases. The site also lies within a Surface Coal Resource Zone.

The applicant has obtained appropriate and up-to-date coal mining information for the proposed development site. This information has been used to inform a Coal Mining Risk Assessment (or equivalent) (January 2024, prepared by Eastwood Consulting Engineers) to accompany the planning application.

The report summarises the proposal as follows: The proposed development comprises the installation of a foul water treatment plant to serve an existing café. The proposed plant has an empty weight of around 5.5 tonnes and an overall depth of around 3.2 m. A grease trap/separator is also to be installed, although this is a small unit which will be installed at shallow depth. Pipework will be provided between the café/grease separator and the treatment plant, and from the plant to a new headwall at the outfall into the Biddulph Brook tributary to the east of the site. Accordingly, whilst there is no building proposed as part of the development, the extent of the engineering/ground works involved warrants the consideration of coal mining risk on ground stability.

The report states that, *'The site is shown to be located within a development high risk area by Coal Authority mapping. This is likely due to the nearby outcrop of the Two Foot Coal, and the potential for unrecorded mine workings to exist in this seam at shallow depth. Recorded workings are present in the Two Foot coal at a depth of 51 m, according to the mining report obtained for this report, although this seems to contradict the information presented by the geological maps, which would place the coal at depths of between about 3.5 and 7 m below surface. The seam is indicated to be 0.6 m thick by the maps, but up to 1 m thick by the Coal Authority. Recorded workings are present just east of the site, and it is therefore very possible that further workings are present which underlie the site directly.'*

'For there to be no significant risk to surface developments from potential ground movements caused by the collapse of old mine workings, it is generally considered for Coal Measures strata that there should be ten times the seam thickness of competent ground above the workings and below the proposed foundation level, which in this case will be the underside of the proposed BioDisc. This thickness of competent cover is unlikely to be present if the seam has been worked, and at worst case, the base of the BioDisc may lie within or immediately above the Two Foot Coal. Conversely, if the seam is deeper than the geological maps suggest, then it is likely that sufficient cover will be present.'

Based on the above, given the discrepancy between the records, the report author considers it prudent to undertake an intrusive site investigation comprising at least one rotary borehole to a depth of at least 15 m to confirm whether the Two Foot coal is present at shallow depth or not. If

workings are present at shallow depth beneath the proposed treatment plan, the reports identifies that remedial works such as drilling and grouting, or the deepening/re-engineering of the excavation may be necessary.

The intrusive site investigations should be designed and undertaken by competent persons and should be appropriate to assess the ground conditions on the site in order to establish the coal-mining legacy present and the risks it may pose to the development and inform any remedial works and/or mitigation measures that may be necessary.

The applicant should note that Permission is required from the Coal Authority Permit and Licensing Team before undertaking any activity, such as ground investigation and ground works, which may disturb coal property. Please note that any comments that the Coal Authority may have made in a Planning context are without prejudice to the outcomes of a Permit application.

Mine Gas

It should be noted that wherever coal resources or coal mine features exist at shallow depth or at the surface, there is the potential for mine gases to exist. These risks should always be considered by the LPA. The Planning and Development Team at the Coal Authority, in its role of statutory consultee in the planning process, only comments on gas issues if our data indicates that gas emissions have been recorded on the site. However, the absence of such a comment should not be interpreted to imply that there are no gas risks present. Whether or not specific emissions have been noted by the Coal Authority, local planning authorities should seek their own technical advice on the gas hazards that may exist, and appropriate measures to be implemented, from technically competent personnel.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

It should be noted that where SUDs are proposed as part of the development scheme consideration will need to be given to the implications of this in relation to the stability and public safety risks posed by coal mining legacy. The developer should seek their own advice from a technically competent person to ensure that a proper assessment has been made of the potential interaction between hydrology, the proposed drainage system and ground stability, including the implications this may have for any mine workings which may be present beneath the site.

The Coal Authority Recommendation to the LPA

The Coal Authority concurs with the recommendations of the Coal Mining Risk Assessment Report; that coal mining legacy potentially poses a risk to the proposed development and that intrusive site investigation works should be undertaken prior to development in order to establish the exact situation regarding coal mining legacy issues on the site.

Accordingly, the Coal Authority recommends the imposition of the following conditions:



1. No development shall commence until;
 - a) a scheme of intrusive site investigations has been carried out on site to establish the risks posed to the development by past coal mining activity, and;
 - b) any remediation works and/or mitigation measures to address land instability arising from coal mining legacy, as may be necessary, have been implemented on site in full in order to ensure that the site is made safe and stable for the development proposed.

The intrusive site investigations and remedial works shall be carried out in accordance with authoritative UK guidance.

2. Prior to the occupation of the development, or it being taken into beneficial use, a signed statement or declaration prepared by a suitably competent person confirming that the site is, or has been made, safe and stable for the approved development shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval in writing. This document shall confirm the methods and findings of the intrusive site investigations and the completion of any remedial works and/or mitigation necessary to address the risks posed by past coal mining activity.

The Coal Authority therefore has **no objection** to the proposed development **subject to the imposition of the conditions to secure the above**.

This is our recommendation for condition wording. Whilst we appreciate that you may wish to make some amendment to the choice of words, we would respectfully request that the specific parameters to be satisfied are not altered by any changes that may be made.

The following statement provides the justification why the Coal Authority considers that a pre-commencement condition is required in this instance:

The undertaking of intrusive site investigations, prior to the commencement of development, is considered to be necessary to ensure that adequate information pertaining to ground conditions and coal mining legacy is available to enable appropriate remedial and mitigatory measures to be identified and carried out before building works commence on site. This is in order to ensure the safety and stability of the development, in accordance with paragraphs 189 and 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.



Yours sincerely

Ashley Langrick BA (HONS) Dip TRP MRTPI

Planning and Development Manager (Corporate Projects)

PLEASE INCLUDE AS INFORMATIVE NOTES FOR APPLICANTS ON ANY PLANNING PERMISSION GRANTED

Ground Investigations:

Under the Coal Industry Act 1994 any intrusive activities, including initial site investigation boreholes, and/or any subsequent treatment of coal mine workings/coal mine entries for ground stability purposes require the prior written permission of The Coal Authority, since such activities can have serious public health and safety implications. Failure to obtain permission to enter or disturb our property will result in the potential for court action. In the event that you are proposing to undertake such work in the Forest of Dean local authority area our permission may not be required; it is recommended that you check with us prior to commencing any works. Application forms for Coal Authority permission and further guidance can be obtained from The Coal Authority's website at: www.gov.uk/get-a-permit-to-deal-with-a-coal-mine-on-your-property

Shallow coal seams:

In areas where shallow coal seams are present caution should be taken when carrying out any on site burning or heat focused activities. To check your site for coal mining features on or near to the surface the [Coal Authority interactive map viewer](#) allows you to view selected coal mining information in your browser graphically. To check a particular location either enter a post code or use your mouse to zoom in to view the surrounding area.

The Coal Authority's records indicate that surface coal resource is present on the site, although this should not be taken to imply that mineral extraction would be economically viable, technically feasible or environmentally acceptable. As you will be aware those authorities with responsibility for minerals planning and safeguarding will have identified where they consider minerals of national importance are present in your area and related policy considerations. As part of the planning application decision making process consideration should be given to such advice in respect of the indicated surface coal resource.

Disclaimer

The above consultation response is provided by The Coal Authority as a Statutory Consultee and is based upon the latest available data on the date of the response, and electronic consultation records held by The Coal Authority since 1 April 2013. The comments made are also based upon only the information provided to The Coal Authority by the Local Planning Authority and/or has been published on the Council's website for consultation purposes in relation to this specific planning application. The views and conclusions contained in this response may be subject to review and amendment by The Coal Authority if additional or new data/information (such as a revised Coal Mining Risk Assessment) is provided by the Local Planning Authority or the Applicant for consultation purposes.

In formulating this response The Coal Authority has taken full account of the professional conclusions reached by the competent person who has prepared the Coal Mining Risk Assessment or other similar report. In the event that any future claim for liability arises in relation to this development The Coal Authority will take full account of the views, conclusions and mitigation previously expressed by the professional advisers for this development in relation to ground conditions and the acceptability of development.