

Our Ref: SBC1031/1/JAC/SCCMin

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David Sykes
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By Email

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Dear David,

Proposed Solar Farm at Moneystone Quarry, Nr Whiston, Staffordshire: Ref No. SMD/2014/0432

I write with regard to the consultation response received from Staffordshire County Council's Mineral Planning Policy team dated 2nd September 2014 (ref. SMD/2014/0432 122M MCA).

The response suggests that the northern part of the application site is located within an area defined as a Mineral Consultation Area (MCA). The adopted Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Minerals Local Plan (1994 – 2006), saved policy 5 requires that:

Development within Mineral Consultation Areas should not sterilise or seriously hinder the extraction of mineral deposits of economic value which are capable of being worked in accordance with policy 4.

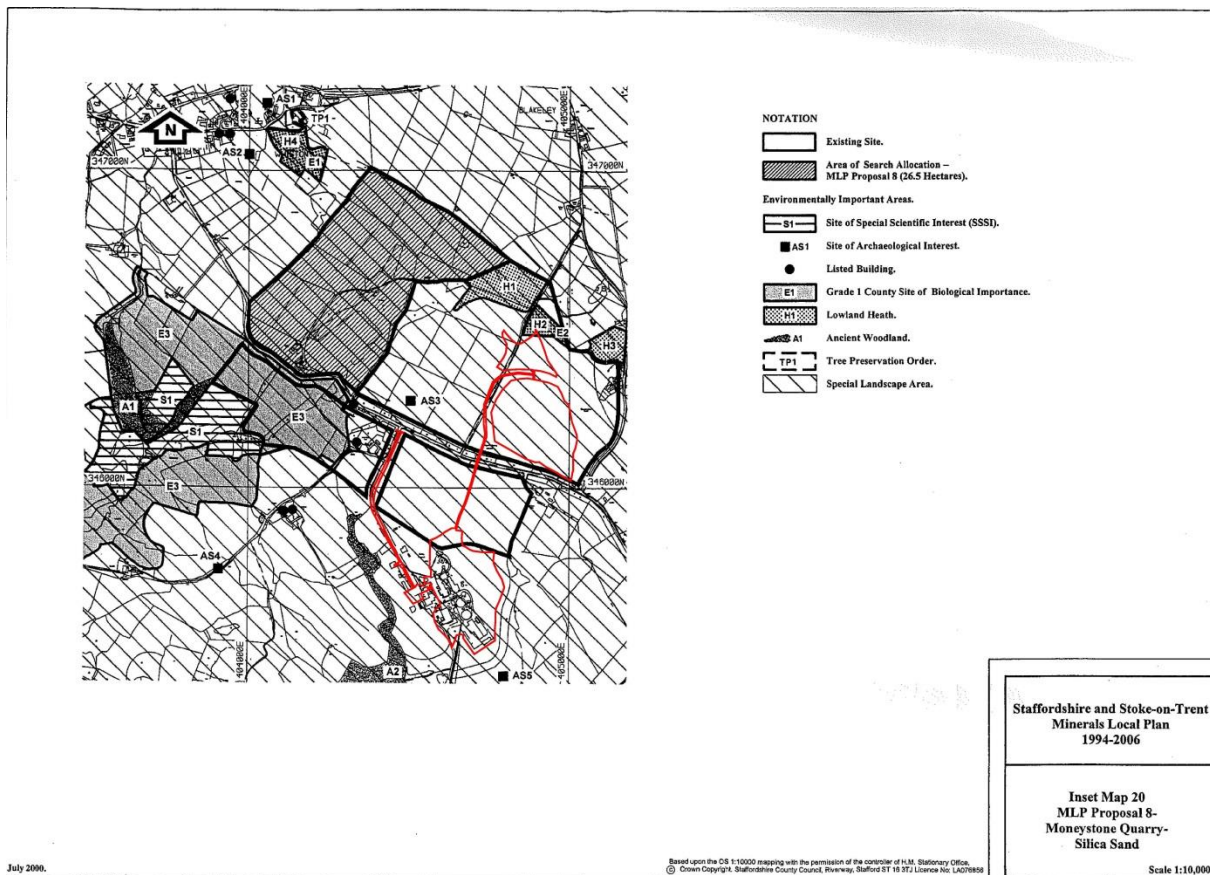
Where the proposed development falls within the Mineral Consultation Area and may have a significant impact upon mineral resources then the responsibility rests with the prospective developer to prove the existence or otherwise, quantity and quality of the mineral prior to the determination of the planning application.

The letter continues to state that the emerging Staffordshire Minerals Local Plan (2015 – 2030) refers to Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSA) for silica sand that covers the site. Within these areas, policy 3 of the emerging Plan requires that:

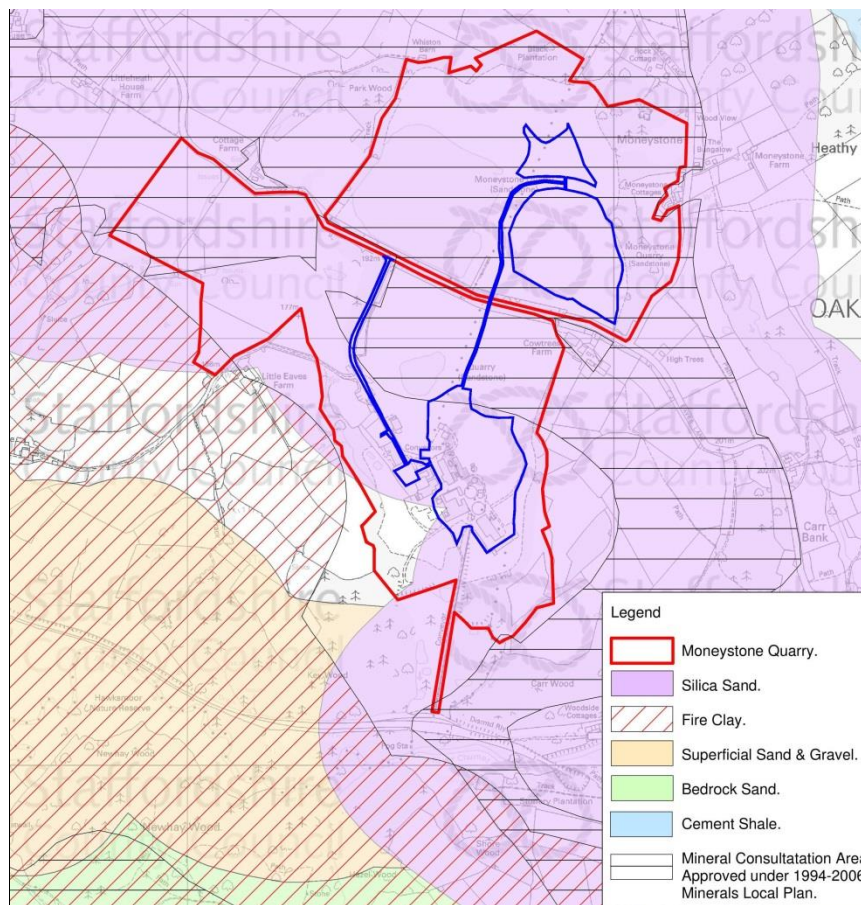
Within a Mineral Safeguarding Area, non-mineral development should not be permitted to go ahead until the prospective developer has produced evidence prior to determination of the planning application to demonstrate:

- a) the existence, the quantity and the quality of the underlying or adjacent mineral resource;*
- and*
- b) that proposals for non-mineral development in the vicinity of permitted mineral sites or mineral site allocations would not unduly restrict the mineral operations.*

The solar farm application boundary (redline) has been overlaid the inset map 20 from the adopted MLP, as shown below. It can be clearly seen that the proposal is situated some way off the identified area of search (to the west of the application site) and as such would not affect this designation.



In addition, the application site boundary has been overlaid the Mineral Safeguarding Area for Moneystone Quarry of the Emerging Minerals Local Plan. It is clear the solar application site is situated within the silica sand safeguarding area. It is also noted that areas B, D and a small proportion of area E of the solar application site is located within the minerals consultation area as per the saved policies of the Minerals Local Plan 1994 to 2006.



The solar farm proposal covers the former mineral production area and land to the north of Eaves Lane otherwise known as Quarry 2 East (QE2). Small scale quarrying is shown on the 1979 map in the north eastern corner of QE2, this was probably for the extraction of building stone. Quarrying recommenced in the late 1950s, with the southern part of QE2 completed in the late 1970s. Excavation of the northern half was largely finished by the late 1990s with battering back of the northern slope in the early 2000s.

Two historic boreholes and trial pit were carried out in 1981 and 1979, respectively. The boreholes were positioned just beyond the northern boundary of solar area E (to the north of the former processing area) and the trial pit was located centrally within solar area D.

Boreholes encountered made ground to depth of up to 15.6m. Sandstone was noted beneath this to a depth unknown. The trial pit recorded sandstone in the first 0.6m (quarry floor) with siltstone underlying the sandstone to a recorded depth of 4.6m.

It is clear that the sand resource has been exhausted within the worked areas. The only remaining sand has been left to support side slopes and Eaves Lane. Although sandstone remains under the production area (Area E) it is concealed and it was found not to be viable to work this area. The only remaining viable reserves are those to the north of Eaves Lane on the higher ground between Q2 and Whiston to the west.



It noted that the wider quarry site is closed and is currently being restored in accordance with a scheme recently approved by Staffordshire County Council. This is sufficient evidence to suggest that the previous owner of the site did not consider that continued operations could be viable with the remaining available resources. Furthermore, it would not be financially attractive to restart quarrying operations on site now that the existing infrastructure has been removed.

The proposed solar farm is a temporary use of land. The expected life of the scheme is 25 years, after which under terms of any forthcoming planning consent, the solar infrastructure could be removed from site and the land reinstated to an agreed scheme. Therefore, any minerals that are beneath the proposal site, will not be sterilised on a long term basis.

In conclusion, the known mineral resources within the solar application boundary have been exhausted and any known remaining resources are not viable to extract. It is therefore considered that the proposal reflects the objectives of saved policy 5 of the Mineral Local Plan and policy 3 of the Emerging Minerals Local Plan.

Should you have any queries with the contents of this letter then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

James Cook
Stratus Environmental Limited