



**Whatley and Westdown Quarries
Community Liaison Group Meeting
16th January 2024 - 17:30
Whatley Quarry**

APPROVED MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

- Barry Clark (BC) Councillor, Mendip Central & East Somerset Council (SCC)
- Colin Arnold (CA) Principal Planning Officer, Somerset Council (SCC)
- Steve West (SW) Mells Parish Council
- Richard Evans (RE) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Richard King (RK) Great Elm residents' representative
- Andrew Bramston (ABR) Whatley & Chantry Parish Council
- Ian Kirby (IK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Estelle Kirby (EK) Leigh on Mendip Parish Council
- Ian Strachan (IS) Heidelberg Materials, Strategic Development Manager
- Vince Pitt (VP) Heidelberg Materials, Operations Manager
- Trystan Mabbitt (TM) Heidelberg Materials, Consenting and Development Manager
- Alexandra Hemming (AH) Heidelberg Materials, Senior Landscape Architect
- Samantha Stagg (SS) James Reed PR, communications for Heidelberg Materials

APOLOGIES AND MEMBERS ABSENT:

- Philip Ham (PH) Councillor Somerset Council, Mendip Central & East (Chair)
- Martyn Ford (MF) Senior Enforcement Officer (Planning, Rights of Way, Gypsies and Travellers) Somerset Council
- Richard Keith-Hill (RKH) Environmental Protection Officer, Mendip District Council
- Alan Townsend (AT) Coleford Parish Council
- Ann Crowcombe (AC) Cranmore Parish Council
- Paul Hooper (PHO) Downhead Parish Council
- Will Palmer (WP) Whatley and Chantry parish council (Richard Evans attending)
- Simon Clegg (SC) Nunney Parish Council
- Dave Barton (DB) Heidelberg Materials Regional Transport Manager
- Steven Morton (SM) Heidelberg Materials UK Marketing and Communications Manager

- Simon Stonehouse (SST) Natural England
- Lila Morris (LM) Somerset Wildlife Trust
- PC Toni Lines (TL) Avon and Somerset Police
- Andrew Gunn (AGU) Principal Planning Policy Officer, Somerset Council
- Nieke Pengelly (NP) WSP

Agenda

1. Introduction – Chair

- Welcome and Chair introductions
- Review of minutes from last meeting
- Matters arising from last minutes (issues relating to agenda items below will be covered as part of the meeting).

2. Whatley update – Vincent Pitt, Unit Manager Whatley quarry, Heidelberg Materials

- Operational overview and logistics (including road and rail)
- Blasting
- Feedback
- Community support update

3. Environmental Update – Alexandra Hemming, Senior Landscape Architect, Heidelberg Materials

4. Planning update: Whatley and Westdown – Trystan Mabbitt, Consenting and Development Manager, Heidelberg Materials

- Westdown proposed revised scheme of working
- Whatley ROMP

5. AOBs

6. Date of next meetings

MEETING MINUTES

1. Chair's introduction

Welcome & Apologies:

BC, standing in for PH welcomed attendees to the meeting and highlighted aim to complete meeting by 18.30.

Apologies received from: Philip Ham, Will Palmer, Martin Ford & Nienke Pengelly.

Review of previous minutes:

- The Group confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting and these are now approved.
- Matters Arising - VP had an action to highlight on a map where train line upgrades will be taking place in 2024. This is indicated on the map below. In Q1 work by Great Elm, by the pond, will be done over 1 weekend. In Q2, most likely in May, the whole of the departure track from Whatley will be upgraded, over 3 weekends.



2. Whatley Quarry update

Operational overview:

- VP provided an update on production and sales volumes year to date. It was been a strong end to 2023 due to HS2 and Hinkley orders, with sales being higher than production.
- VP added we are looking to de-stock the existing stocks on site to reduce the excess held.

Capex

- As discussed, there will be rail track replacement works ongoing with £600K approved for 2024.
- Dust suppression project completed by year end 2023.
- Allocation of £200,000 for improved onsite welfare facilities, including upgrades showers etc.
- Wash plant upgrade planned.

Projects

- Circular quarry walk development ongoing, to be completed by spring.
- The fences damaged by the weather in Chantry to be repaired.
- Repairing fences at Mells Primary School.
- Installation of defibrillators in Chantry.

Tip material recycling

- Mobile plant ensuring effective use of material.

Recruitment

- We have had approval for 2 Higher apprentices and 2 engineering apprentices starting at Whatley in September 2024. The deadline for applications is 19th February.

Blasting Operations:

VP provided an update on quarry blasting:

- The average highest peak particle velocity (PPV) recorded in 2023 is 2.74mm/s, ranging from 0.5mm/s to 7.4mm/s
- Of the 113 blasts in 2023, 87% have been at or below 4.5mm/s PPV (self-imposed level we work to wherever possible on the south face of the quarry).
- 100% of blasts within permitted 9.5mm/s limit at 95% confidence.

ABR expressed surprise about the disparity between monitors, adding it's not nice when the vibrations happen, there were none since October but then 2 before Christmas. ABR said that he respected that they are trying to keep below 4.5mm/s. VP reminded everyone that the planning limits are set at 9.5mm/s and the 4.5mm/s is a self-imposed limit. There are the odd ones that go over, however the site continues to work with EPC, the blasting specialists, to improve it. RE added that as the blasting goes down a level, there is less impact felt. VP added that once they come away from the south side, it should improve things.

ABR wanted to add that Whatley and Chantry parish Council is in the process of objecting to a planning application in Chantry re proposals to convert a barn into 5 houses. As the patch

of land has several outbuildings, there is the possibility that one barn conversion could turn into several. While not against new developments in general, the concern is there would then be additional homes closer to the quarry which could be impacted by operations.

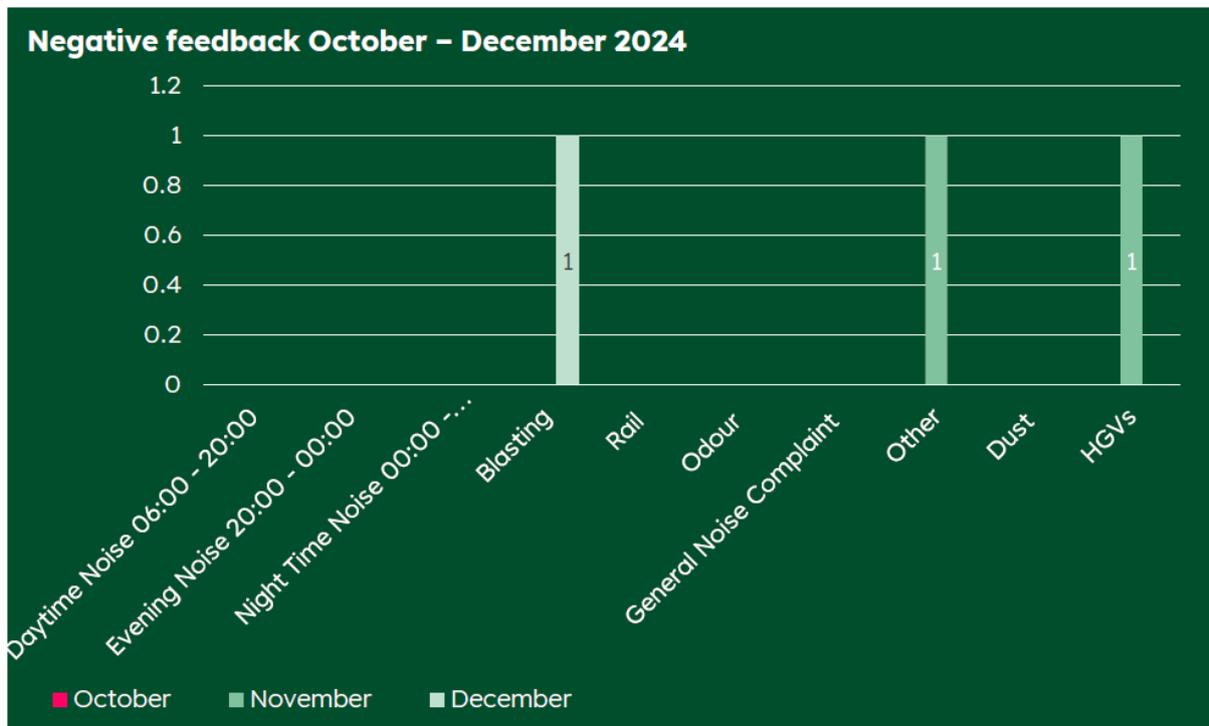
BC suggested the developers come and speak with VP. CA commented that this would be permitted development, however subject to planning and building regs. ABR added considerations for the houses could be difficult drainage, re access during construction and blasting noise.

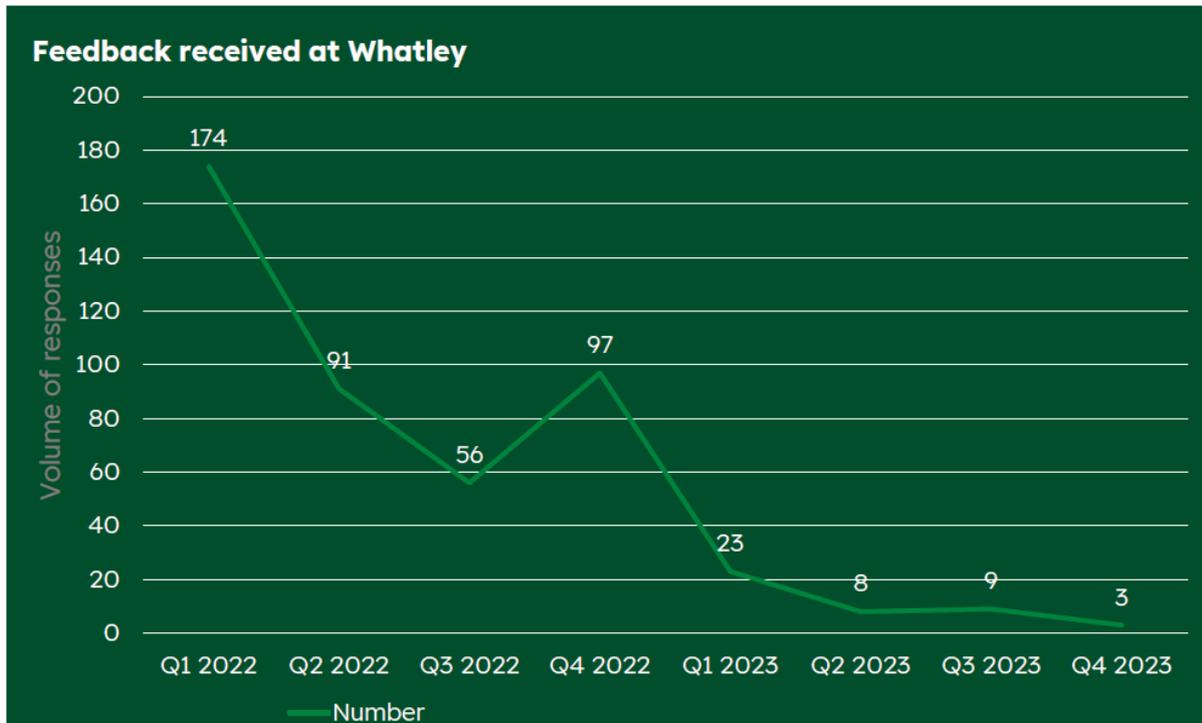
Feedback

SS provided information on feedback received:

Between October and December x3 pieces of negative feedback received, with issues being blasting, finding out where to complain and HGVs.

See diagrams shared at meeting below:





The blasting complaint relates to vibration on 12 and 13 December 2023 – highest PPV recorded 5.5mm and 7.25mm/s, though at other monitored locations highest levels recorded were all below 4mm/s.

VP set out there was also a noise complaint that relates to call from local resident concerning noise. This was able to be addressed quickly by identifying the source and carrying out immediate repair.

The feedback regarding HGVs was that there were 2 lorries observed going through Chantry late in the evening. It was discovered they were asphalt contractors’ HGVs. VP explained that their company was spoken to and told using this route is not acceptable. All new drivers should know the routes as they will all have been inducted on their first visit to site. It was queried if they would have had trackers, however not all hauliers use trackers in their vehicles. VP outlined the yellow card/red card system was used for drivers who break the rules.

BC asked if all drivers are inducted individually. VP confirmed that this is the case. On their first visit to site they receive an induction and learn the site rules and agreed routes into and out of the area. TM added that, regarding Westdown, there are

strategic routes and transport plans, giving us more control over where the traffic goes.

ABR commented that the Bulls Green link road exit from Westdown is steep either side, and lorries can get some speed going down the hills. This could be dangerous when exiting at the junction. RE also mentioned that there is a flow of water coming across the road from Westdown towards Chantry, down to the dip, which could be a skid risk if it freezes. AH suggested it was where the stream goes.

ACTION AH/TM work out where this is and why it was flowing across the road.

Community update

- Over £18,000 in donations, plus materials and volunteering in 2023.
- Recent beneficiaries include, Mates in Mind Santa's Grotto in Frome and Whatley quarry donated £1500 worth of Heidelberg branded Hockey Kit and new balls to Frome Ladies Hockey club.
- Staff at the quarry have also carried out a voluntary food collection for Community Fridge, Frome to help with the Christmas school closure.

Environmental update

Vallis Vale:

AH advised the work she has been doing with the Environment Agency (EA) and Wild Trout Trust for the wildlife and river system is all done to include felling and anchoring trees into the river and brushwood berms to improve invertebrate and fish habitat. She added that the following work had also been carried out/planned:

- Ash dieback clearance is ongoing and being overseen by First Ecology.
- Vallis Vale is in a state after the rainfall. The footpaths are severely eroded. There are plans to survey them and organise major repair works that will require temporary closures to Rights of Way. As part of the repairs we will also address the illegal paths where people have tracked their own routes through, which is bad for the habitat, and make efforts to close them off which is essential for the SSSI.
- Two historic lime kilns have been cleared and there are two more to do.
- Works to Tedbury camp are ongoing as the geological faces had become overgrown. Works included floor clearance as well as repairing the steps and getting rid of the graffiti.

AH also confirmed it is intended to put up information boards for both geological sites as well as the SSSI looking at the history, habitats and management of the site.

Asham:

AH summarised recent and planned work:

- Deer management license is signed, next step is to use a thermal drone to assess the population.
- Lots of work on removing the fallen trees.
- Wildlife boxes are now up supporting birds & bats.

SW asked if the old seabed at Tetbury is oolitic. AH responded she thinks yes, but it's eroded off revealing the carboniferous below. Detail and background to be found by next meeting for information. All the information will be on the information boards when they are up with the help of geological specialists.

RK mentioned people were asked to collect acorns. He has lots. AH said they should be planted up and once seedlings are big enough, they can be planted in the beds at Whatley top office.

AH offered to host another Vallis Vale walk in the Spring.

Action: VP and AH to access on site area where seedlings could be replanted/nurtured and to advise

Planning update

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TM provided an update on the planning application to update existing conditions for Westdown quarry ahead of reopening it.

- TM advised that plans have been submitted to revise the scheme with the decoupling of Asham quarry void from the original application. The initial intention had been to use Asham quarry void for overburden, taking the top layer of material cleared from Westdown, and use it to create some new habitats and footpaths as part of a full restoration of the former quarry. TM set out that potential legal issues with this had arisen and while the lawyers are debating, we will concentrate on the mineral at Westdown by revising our plans and submitting a simpler scheme. It is hoped that this amended scheme of working, while still reflecting industry best practice, can be consented sooner, allowing us to reopen Westdown in 2025.

- TM advised that there has been a local door drop advising that on Thursday 18th Jan, Whatley quarry will hold a drop-in session for local parishioners with further information about the revised plans and to answer any questions.
- We don't intend to withdraw the planning application featuring the use of Asham quarry void, but will proceed with Westdown first, which means we will have to retain the overburden at Westdown site for now. The plans below show how it will work and can be seen at the drop-in session. The information will go on the website after Thursday.



Revised scheme of working for Westdown quarry

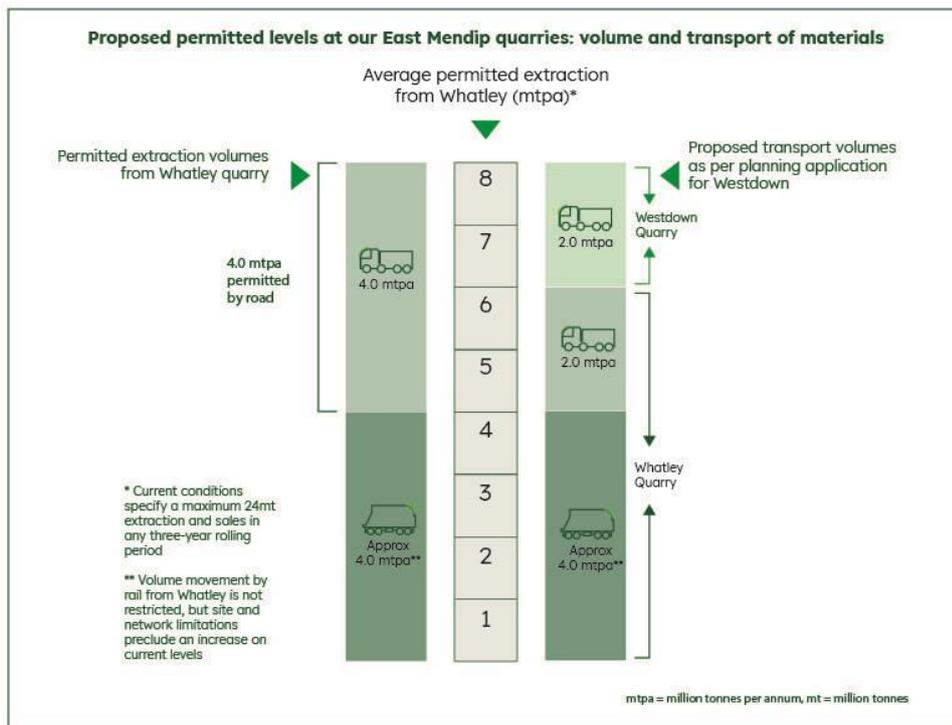
What changes?

- Asham quarry void will no longer be used to store soil and overburden in early stages of mineral extraction at Westdown.
- Overburden will be stored within Westdown, constraining 20 million tonnes of mineral reserved and necessitating doubling handling of materials.
- Plans to restore Asham quarry void to better reflect areas woodland habitats, provide a buffer to Asham Wood SSSI and extend PROW, will no longer take place.

AH said that we will lose the legacy of Asham Void for now. It's a significant loss for the habitat creation and the movement of wildlife across the landscape. The trees in Asham are growing on 3 inches of eroded stone, restoration using the overburden will improve the stability of these trees and will improve the habitat. ABR asked with this in mind, how finite is the project? Will it keep going? AH responded there's a finite amount to be put in Asham quarry void, however once it's all in, the rest will need to be kept on site. RE asked why this has happened. TM answered that the legal discussions are complicated and taking up time so we decided to go with a workable solution.

Revised scheme of working for Westdown quarry
What stays the same?

- Commitment to HGV volumes – with these remaining the same, or less than permitted volumes for Whatley.
- New safer entrance on Bulls Green Link Road.
- Plans for upfront 44-acre offsite mitigation remains.
- Extensive mitigation measures including 3m high bunds.
- Asham Wood SSSI and Special Area of Conservation to the northwest of site remains protected.



TM confirmed there will be a commitment to a total of 4 million tonnes per annum by road as part of operations across both Whatley and Westdown. RK asked would it be less at Whatley and more from Westdown? ABR also asked what the impact would be for the residents.

IS advised we are currently permitted to take 4 million tonnes out of Whatley per year by road. With Westdown quarry reopen, this 4 million tonnes limit would be split across both sites. However, with the focus to transport material from Whatley mostly by rail, and based on current market projections, it is unlikely that the 4 million tonnes by road limit would be reached, even with both Whatley and Westdown operating.

Review of Mineral Planning (ROMP)

TM advised that the scope and pre-application is ongoing with SCC and there was some progress with additional information.

AOB

- SW wanted to say thank you for the stones outside Mells post office.

Next meeting date

The next meeting will take place on TUESDAY 16TH April 2024 at 17.30 at Whatley quarry offices.

Further meeting dates are:

Tuesday 16th July 2024

Tuesday 15th October 2024

Meeting Ends 18:30