

## QUARRY APPLICATION TO BE DECIDED ON 27 NOVEMBER

The Planning Application for a huge quarry near Clifton Hampden will be considered by Oxfordshire County Council's Planning and Regulation committee on Monday 27 November. This is despite a recent objection from the Council's Highways Authority which has said the quarry would cause "severe harm" to road safety, threatens air quality and oust plans for a much needed new road and river crossing between Didcot and Culham.

The papers for the committee meeting should be released tomorrow. At this point it will become clear whether the Council's planning officers will recommend the application is approved and go against the objections raised by the not only the the Highways authority but others also opposing the quarry, including SODC, Clifton Hampden and Burcot Parish Council, neighbouring villages of Long Wittenham, Culham and Appleford, Abingdon Town Council, and the UK Atomic Energy Authority who manage the Culham Science Centre.

Responding to the council's fourth consultation on the quarry the Highways highlighted the results of recent detailed surveys and modelling work on junctions in Culham and Sutton Courtenay in connection with the development of Didcot Garden Town. It also carried out queue length surveys at the staggered crossroads of A415, B4015 and High Street at Clifton Hampden.

The Highways department is worried about "gridlock". Principal highways engineer Geoffrey Arnold says the quarry would generate more traffic through a sensitive part of the highway network. In his response he notes "The A415 is an important corridor in the local highway network and it is of paramount importance that appropriate priority is given to this A-road to maintain operational capacity. If exit blocking occurs at these points in the network then it can have a severe and detrimental impact on the wider highway network."

Engineers fear queues would be slow to disperse and drivers would perform unorthodox manoeuvres. "Frustrated drivers merging and manoeuvring indiscriminately will have an adverse impact on road safety as will the increased likelihood of rear-end shunt collisions resulting from queuing, especially where forward visibility may be limited.

"In addition, idling vehicles would add to particulate and carbon dioxide emissions. The Highway authority considers the traffic impact of this development would be unacceptable and will cause severe harm so as to justify the refusal of planning permission."

Mr Arnold also has worries about an increase in lorries using the quarry travelling through Abingdon town centre. He says extra HGV movements have implications on air quality for the town and urges further consultation.

Leading the opposition to the quarry is Bachport –Burcot and Clifton Hampden for the Protection of the River Thames. Their spokesman Giles Baxter said: "The quarry company has consistently ignored the traffic problem, despite advice from the outset by Highways to avoid routing through Abingdon and to assess the signal controlled junction at Clifton Hampden. The Highway authority's survey results come as no surprise to us and confirms our own experts survey of the junction. "

Highways have also objected to the quarry as it could compromise delivery of a new link road and river crossing. Mr Baxter adds: "The road and crossing is needed to alleviate the horrendous traffic

that we have now, which will get significantly worse with the massive expansion of housing in Didcot. It would be madness to scupper plans for a new road in favour of a quarry that is not”

Bachport argue that traffic is not the only reason to reject the application. “This quarry will cause permanent harm to the openness and tranquil nature of Oxford’s Green Belt and the Thames path. Demand for sand and gravel has fallen consistently over the past 30 years due to the success of aggregate recycling schemes and new sources such as marine. Oxfordshire has permitted sand and gravel reserves for 15-20 years even after taking account of the increases in proposed house building. There is no justification to support the development of a new quarry in this highly sensitive location.”