

Objections to application CM4/1215/125

We note that the new submission makes no material changes to the original application.

Despite taking 5 months to resubmit the application Provectus Remediation Ltd have not addressed the many objections and concerns raised by Hilltop Action Group and others.

The following details significant issues that have still not been addressed.

Communities affected

As in the original application, the applicant fails to acknowledge the number of residential properties, schools, care homes, businesses and community facilities in close proximity to the site.

They have not considered the demographics of the local communities. A disproportionate number of people are of retirement age and are at home throughout the proposed working hours of the site.

The negative health impacts will affect over 5000 people on a daily basis.

Tuption Hall School, with over 2000 pupils and staff, is a mere 420m downwind of the site and will be significantly affected by both noise and air pollution. This is particularly significant as it is a Sport Academy so outdoor sports and activities will be affected.

The Community Benefits proposed are unlikely to be deliverable and are of no interest or use to the majority of local residents.

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 1)

Noise

There is no evidence in the application that the applicant has acknowledged that vehicles on the northern haul road will be above the level of the noise bunds as they enter the coal processing area.

Also, they are still only proposing 3m noise bunds whilst other similar schemes, with far fewer residential properties in close proximity, have required 5 or 6m bunds.

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 2)

Air Quality and Dust

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 3)

Health

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 4)

Geological and Hydrogeological, Flooding, Pollution and Watercourses

The applicant has still not acknowledged the risk to properties to the west of the site which sit on strata above the coal seams to be worked. There is a significant risk from drawdown of groundwater to foundation stability.

Also Network Rail have raised similar concerns about the integrity of Clay Cross Tunnel and flooding to the south of the tunnel.

There is still no evidence of a comprehensive survey being carried out on the watercourse to the southwest of the site running into Press Brook.

Furthermore, the watercourse which runs through the proposed Coal Processing Area has still not been acknowledged in the new application. Their affect of their intention is to obliterate this stream is therefore unknown.

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 5)

Transport

There is still no approved and agreed site access.

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 6)

Site Safety

The applicant has still not acknowledged that Site Safety is an issue. With the site only protected by bunds easy access to the proposed workings is a potential danger to adventurous youngsters.

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 7)

Ecology

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 8)

Visual Impact

The applicant has still not identified how many residents will see each of the views identified in the LVIA report as they were requested to do.

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 9)

Cumulative Impact

The proposed scheme will seriously impact the Clay Cross Regeneration plans.

The combined negative impacts will affect the many thousand residents in the local communities of Old Tupton, Clay Cross, Holmgate and Tupton and totally outweigh any benefits there may be.

Our original objections still stand. (See Appendix 10)

The Need for Coal

Both Government and Planning Policy currently say that there is a need for coal.

The question here is **'Is there a need for THIS coal?'**

Recent figures show that the UK used 41.167 million tonnes of steam coal in 2014 for energy production.

Assuming the Hilltop scheme would produce its coal at a uniform rate over about 3 years, it would only contribute about 60,000 tonnes of coal each year to this total. This is just 0.146% of the UK's current annual needs. (Enough to meet the UK's energy needs for 12³/₄ hours each year!)

This an insignificant amount of coal and if not available would not have any significant affect on the UK's energy security.

As the site is agricultural land, leaving the coal in the ground would mean it could be available at some future time if technology and energy demand made its extraction necessary and environmentally acceptable.

The global price of coal has recently fallen to £34 per tonne. This is almost half its value four years ago when Provectus Remediation Ltd first proposed this scheme. Whilst the commercial viability of the project is an issue for the applicant rather than a planning matter it has potentially serious consequences for the local communities.

This increases the likelihood that they will wish to stockpile coal on the site whilst waiting for coal prices to increase.

A planning condition would be required to restrict this - say a maximum of 1000 tones of stockpiled coal (approximately 1 weeks production).

More worryingly, reduced commercial viability greatly increases the risk of abandonment of the site.

A pre-paid restoration bond for the full restoration costs is the only way to safeguard local communities from having to live with an abandoned surface mine on their doorstep.

Conclusion

The National Planning Policy Framework states in para 149:

Permission should not be given for the extraction of coal unless the proposal is environmentally acceptable, or can be made so by planning conditions or obligations; or if not, it provides national, local or community benefits which clearly outweigh the likely impacts to justify the grant of planning permission.

Clearly this application by Provectus Remediation Ltd for a surface coal mining scheme cannot be made environmentally acceptable due to the unprecedented number of people living in extremely close proximity to the site.

The scheme identifies no national, local or community benefits capable of outweighing the negative impacts.

Planning permission for the extraction of coal on the Hilltop site must therefore be refused.