

# **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT AND PLANNING STATEMENT**

## **Beckermet Estates Ltd**

### **Energy Coast Business Park, Haile, Egremont**

**Erection of two commercial buildings of 1,440 sq. m and 2,880 sq. m together with re grading of an iron ore mine spoil heap, top soiling, seeding, and planting with the creation of a screened plateau for placement of the buildings.**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This statement is provided under the provisions of Dept for Communities and Local Government circular 01/2006.

It accompanies an application for the erection of two commercial buildings (currently defined as being for B8 uses) with associated regrading of an iron ore mine spoil heap, top soiling, seeding, and planting with the creation of a screened plateau for placement of the buildings.

The application is for full planning permission.

#### **2. The Proposal**

2.1 The industrial estate here (now known as the Energy Coast Business Park) has been developed over several decades being located on a former iron ore mine. The site has been developed up to the defined boundaries as shown in previous versions of the Copeland Local Plan. The site includes an extensive spoil heap area which is in a raw state as the gradients are too steep to facilitate grass or tree growth. The material itself is also inert, making it difficult to develop greenery. The spoil heap has a significant detrimental impact on the amenity of the village of Haile to the east.

To the north of the site lies agricultural land with an extensive tree belt to the east abutting Kirkbeck. To the south lies the developed Business Park with agricultural land to the west. The site is accessed from the A595 at the top of Yeorton Brow.

2.2 This proposal seeks to regrade the slopes of the spoil heap and soil and seed the resulting land form including extensive landscaping. All the regrading work will be on land in the ownership of the applicant Beckermet Estates Ltd, including some poor quality greenfield land to the north of the current operational site boundaries. This area also includes some brownfield land being former railway sidings.

It is also intended, within the reprofiled area, to create a plateau area to facilitate development of two commercial buildings to be rented for use as storage. The site area is 5.57ha of land.

2.3 The proposal will not require the import of additional sub and topsoil as this can be provided from material currently imported for treatment in the existing approved and licenced transfer station. Thus, there will be no additional traffic movements and possibly a slight reduction as some treated material would be stored on site for use on the re graded spoil heap rather than be exported to other markets following crushing and/or regrading.

2.4 From a sequential perspective this proposal relates to remediation of a spoil heap to create an extended plateau for commercial use and is thus site specific. As such the applicant has no other available land in the vicinity for the creation of two additional commercial units for which there is a known and robust demand.

The restoration of this land provides a considerable landscape enhancement, new habitats, few if any traffic impacts and the creation of additional productive industrial land and on this basis, it is believed the proposal is sustainable.

### **3. Design and layout**

The design and layout principles applied here are based upon the opportunity to provide additional floor space at the Business Park whilst creating a more satisfactory impact upon the wider landscape. The Park has been developed to date with the existing boundaries defined by the old spoil heaps and mining complex. The proposal has sought to avoid extension into greenfield land particularly on the west and east sides of the site. If there is to be further development here this is the only realistic set of proposals for such works, providing as it does a significant landscape improvement.

The buildings will be functional for the purposes of storage being portal frame buildings with Juniper green cladding. Each building will have vehicle turning space and employee car parking. Each unit will have a small welfare unit including toilets which will drain to the existing treatment works on site. The proposals exclude any impact on the waste recycling facility although application may be made to the County Council in the near future for fencing and surfacing that area to provide definitive limits to recycling operations. From a Design for Crime perspective it should be noted that the current Park has CCTV and lighting, and this will be extended to the new buildings. The access is private, and the nearest public right of way is a footpath 1km to the north of the site.

The newly created and regraded spoil banks will be extensively planted which over time will provide an extensive screen of the Business Park when viewed from the east.

### **4. Access**

The two new buildings will be served from the existing Business Park access onto the A595 and a Transport Assessment is provided with application documents. The access is not being altered.

There will be few traffic movements for the operations involving regrading of spoil as machinery will be held on site during the earthworks period. No import of materials will be required as the existing throughput of the recycling plant will be used for regrading and top soiling.

### **5. Supporting documents**

The application is accompanied by a raft of documents which include:

Location and site plans

Floor and elevation plans of the buildings

Before and after reprofiling plans in respect of regrading and formation of plateau.

Landscape Impact Assessment

Ecology report

Tree report

Land contamination report

Flood Risk Assessment and drainage

Land contamination

CDM report (in respect of earthworks activity)

Noise and Dust assessment (in respect of earthworks activity)

## **6. Planning Policy**

6.1 The current Local Plan relating to this development is the Copeland Local Plan 2013-2018 Core Strategy and Development Management Policies. However, this document is currently under review particularly in relation to Housing Policies and Allocations and supply. Policies in relation to commercial development in the Plan thus have less weight than was the case prior to the review commencing.

The ECBP was considered in the Core Strategy as being within open countryside whereby no further extension of the Park was envisaged in the form of additional allocated land.

Policy ER6 of the Core Strategy sought to define areas for the location of employment. Part A of the Policy states that such development would be supported in Whitehaven and Key Service Centres. Outside those settlements and specific allocated sites, economic development proposals will be considered on their merits bearing in mind a number of important matters, these being:

- i) Justification of a rural location. In this instance development is proposed on an existing employment site with known demand.
- ii) Transport impact. A TA is provided showing that such impacts are sustainable
- iii) Vulnerability to Flooding. An FRA clearly shows no flooding is likely to arise from the development.
- iv) Impact on landscape character, settlement character and biodiversity. Studies and reports show there is no detriment to habitats or the adjacent settlements, Haile, will receive a significant amenity improvement from reprofiling of the mine tip and associated landscaping thus materially improving local landscape character.

It is also relevant to consider landscape impact on a wider basis than the site itself. Policy ENV6 seeks to protect and enhance the Borough's landscapes by:

- i) Protecting all landscapes from inappropriate change by ensuring development does not threaten or detract from the distinctive characteristics of the area
- ii) Where the benefits of the development outweigh the potential harm, ensuring that the impact of the development on the landscape is minimised through adequate mitigation, preferably on site and
- iii) Supporting proposals which enhance the value of the Borough's landscapes.

In this case the landscape proposals would significantly change for the better the current landscape by reprofiling the spoil heaps, planting an area of over 4 ha with native species and creating a woodland wedge for over 5 km to include the woods on the Kirkbeck and Great Haile Wood to the north (a SSSI and Ancient woodland). Within this context the erection of the two buildings becomes a relatively minor intrusion. The LVA attached to the application shows 5 and 10 year growth for the new landscaped areas. It is argued that in this instance the landscape benefits outweigh any policy concerns regarding extension of the estate which in any event is on poor agricultural land and brownfield former mine land. The proposal is thus compliant with this policy.

6.2 it is also appropriate to mention the draft revision to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This has been subject to consultation and thus has some weight. Paragraphs 84 and 85 are relevant here. Para 84 states decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas and para 85 states that sites may have to be developed outside settlements providing no detrimental impacts arise.

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