



10 November 2023

Subject: Westdown quarry

Dear local stakeholder

PROPOSED REVISED SCHEME OF WORKING FOR WESTDOWN

We have recently submitted proposals for a revised scheme of working for our Westdown quarry to Somerset Council and wanted to provide some context for this.

Planning applications timeline

As you will be aware, our plans to update the existing conditions for Westdown quarry were submitted to Somerset County Council (now Somerset Council) some time ago, in January 2021. Extensive discussions with the council, as well as statutory and non-statutory consultees and local stakeholders followed. As is standard planning procedure for this type of project, this led to us providing more information and refinements to our proposals in a document known as Regulation-25, submitted to the council in June 2022. Our understanding is that all issues raised by statutory consultees have now been satisfactorily addressed. However, the application remains undetermined, and we have not received a definitive timeline for when it might go to committee.

Unfortunately, the time when we had expected to see Westdown operating again has long passed and, against a backdrop of resilient market demand and lengthening timelines for planning outcomes across the minerals sector, we are increasingly aware of the need to make progress. Consequently, we have now decided to be pragmatic and adapt our approach as an interim measure.

Uncoupling Asham quarry void from our applications to reopen Westdown quarry

It is our expectation that a simpler interim scheme – focused solely within the existing boundary of Westdown quarry – could be consented and be operational sooner. That is why we have now submitted revised proposals which would remove the use of the Asham quarry void in its entirety from our scheme of working.

Unfortunately, the scope of this revised scheme of working would see the introduction of some double handling of material, along with constraining the extraction of around 20 million tonnes of the mineral reserve at Westdown. Regretfully, it would also mean that the significant legacy benefit

that would have been realised through the restoration of Asham quarry void, which has always been a key consideration of ours, would no longer take place.

Fig: map highlighting proposed revised scheme of working at Westdown



However, we have no plans to withdraw our original 2021 Asham Wood application, which includes the use and full restoration of Asham quarry void and will continue to pursue this in the longer term as part of more detailed discussions with Somerset Council.

Next steps

As the determining authority, Somerset Council will be carrying out a consultation on our proposed revised scheme of working and it may have already been in touch with you about this. We understand that the deadline for feedback to its consultation is 21 November 2023, which is why we wanted to share some additional background information.

Below (see page 4) we have set out a series of FAQs to provide further detail. We have also uploaded all the relevant planning documents to our website where they can be viewed/downloaded. Please go to: <https://www.communities.heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/en/whatley-and-westdown-quarry-community-page/documents> and scroll down to the **Westdown revised scheme of working Autumn 2023**.

Any comments on this stage of the application need to be made direct to Somerset Council Planning Department for their consideration.

Do feel free to share this letter and accompanying FAQs with members of your community who may be interested in our revised proposals for Westdown. If you have any further queries on this or any other issue, please do get in touch by emailing us at: whatley.quarry@uk.heidelbergmaterials.com

Kind regards



Ian Strachan MBA, BSc, CMgr, FCMI, FIQ (He/Him)
Strategic Development Manager
UK Strategy & Development



REVISED SCHEME OF WORKING FOR WESTDOWN: FAQs

Q: Why are you revising your plans for Westdown quarry?

Limestone from our Whatley quarry is recognised as a nationally significant resource, but its mineral bank is getting smaller and remaining reserves are more constrained. To ensure the consistent and secure supply of limestone for use in construction, including nationally significant infrastructure projects as well as local schemes, we want to reopen our Westdown quarry, dormant since the late 1980s.

Although all issues raised by statutory consultees have now been satisfactorily addressed, there is an outstanding concern raised by Somerset Council's legal team about the existing planning consent for Asham quarry void. Heidelberg Materials strongly disputes this and will continue to do so using all means available.

However, mindful of the time it has taken to reach this stage and conscious of the need to secure supplies, we are now taking a stop-gap step to uncouple the use of Asham quarry void from our plans by submitting a revised scheme of working. We believe that this revised interim approach could be consented and operational sooner.

We have no plans to withdraw our original 2021 application of Asham quarry void and will continue to pursue this alongside our revised plans at Westdown.

Q: Do your revised plans mean that Asham quarry void will be left as it is?

Yes – for now. It is important to point out that this means that our proposals for full restoration of Asham quarry void within 15 years of Westdown being operational won't proceed under these revised proposals and until such time that a way forward with Somerset's Legal department has been reached.

At present Asham quarry void has no Public Rights of Way (PROW) across it and the material remaining there is unstable. In contrast, our previously proposed comprehensive restoration programme would have seen the void returned to a condition that better represents the area's ancient woodland habitats – providing significant ecological enhancements to enrich fauna and flora, while also creating a valuable ecological buffer to nearby Asham Wood SSSI, improving PROW and enabling recreational access.

Regretfully, the proposed revised scheme of working does not offer these enhancements and legacy benefits, albeit this is something we still hope can be delivered through further dialog with Somerset Council to realise the benefits proposed.

Q: What is the impact of this change to Asham Wood SSSI?

Our earlier applications as well as these latest revisions have always sought to fully protect Asham Wood SSSI with proposals only to enhance the area.

Until a way forward on the scheme at Asham quarry void is established with Somerset Council (see above) no consideration of this element of the original scheme will take place, as our application adjacent to the SSSI will be held in abeyance.

Q: Is the upfront offsite mitigation included in your previous proposals still included?

Yes. Our proposals for a revised interim scheme of working still include 44-acres of well-connected habitat to the north of Westdown quarry with woodland planting and the creation of species rich grassland to enhance biodiversity.

Q: Do your revised proposals impact on HGV volumes?

The revised scheme of working will not change our commitment to HGV volumes. Material from Whatley quarry will focus on supplying national markets by rail, with Westdown supporting local demand. HGV volumes would remain the same, or be less, than the current permitted levels for Whatley.

A new safer entrance would still be created onto the Bulls Green Link Road and, with direct access to key routes. Reopening Westdown will also mean HGVs are kept away from local villages.

Q: What will you do with the soils and overburden from Westdown quarry you were planning to store in Asham quarry void?

Our initial proposals saw topsoils and overburden stored in Asham quarry void ahead of being used in the progressive restoration of the former quarry. Under our revised scheme of working, they will now be stored within Westdown quarry itself – albeit storing them there constrains access to the mineral reserve as well as necessitating a degree of double handling.

Q: What happens if/when the legal situation with Somerset Council is resolved?

As outlined above, revising our proposed scheme of working for Westdown is an interim measure while we continue to work for a resolution on the legal issues Somerset Council has raised. Once these are resolved it is our intention to seek determination of our original proposals which include the use of Asham quarry void. This is why we have not formally withdrawn this application from the planning process.

Q: If these revised proposals are simpler, why didn't you opt for them from the start?

We are only uncoupling Asham quarry void from our proposals now as we believe it will allow the scheme to be consented sooner, allowing us to get on with reopening Westdown. However, the revised scheme of working constrains around 20 million tonnes of mineral reserve and necessitates a degree of doubling handling and the longer stockpiling of soils and overburden than the original scheme. It also means that the significant legacy benefit that would have been realised through the restoration of Asham quarry void, which has always been a key consideration of ours, would no longer take place.

ENDS