

# THE SITE AND ITS SETTING 2

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Appendix 2-1: Copy of Decision Notice Reference 9.21/62.001.98

## Drawings

Drawing 0350/01	Site Location Plan
Drawing 0350/02	Planning Application Boundary
Drawing 0350/03	Application Site Layout & Setting
Drawing 0350/04	Existing Quarrying Permissions



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## INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The following sets out a description of the setting of the application site, its context in the environment, and outlines the key characteristics of the application site itself. More extensive details on each of its features can be found in the respective Sections 6 to 14 below. This section should be read in conjunction with the following plans:

Drawing 0350/01	Site Location Plan;
Drawing 0350/02	Planning Application Boundary;
Drawing 0350/03	Application Site Layout & Setting; and
Drawing 0350/04	Existing Quarrying Permissions.

## SITE LOCATION

- 2.2 New England Quarry is located at National Grid reference SX595 548 (as shown on **Drawing 0350/01**). The northern extent of the site is located immediately to the south of the village of Lee Mill and the A38 road, the principal route between Plymouth and Exeter. It lies also approximately 2km to the south west of Ivybridge and approximately 2.5km north east of Yealmpton.
- 2.3 The site constitutes an access road of some 1.3km extending south from the A38, and a development area of approximately 30.7 ha. focused on the mothballed New England Quarry and associated stocking, operational and landscaping areas. The site is situated within South Hams District and the two parishes of Sparkwell (the northern part) and Yealmpton (the main development plateau).
- 2.4 At its closest point, the access road is situated some 2.5km to the south-west of the southern boundary of the Dartmoor National Park, which generally follows the alignment of the Exeter to Plymouth railway line in the vicinity of Ivybridge. The southern boundary of the site is approximately 2km to the north of the boundary of the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is formed by the A379 between Modbury and Yealmpton.
- 2.5 Access to the site is currently gained via a network of minor roads from the A38 via Challonsleigh, Smithhaleigh, New England Road and New England Hill: there is no current direct access through the application area from the A38.

## SURROUNDING LAND USES

- 2.6 The application site sits lies in an area characterised by ribbon development associated with the A38 and, to the south, the more rural landscape of South Devon and the River Yealm valley.

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- 2.7 In the vicinity of the site, the A38 corridor is heavily developed to the north of the eastbound carriageway including Lee Mill village, a large Tesco superstore, the Lee Mill Industrial Estate and Ivybridge. To the south of the road, development is more sporadic and includes Waste Water Treatment Works at Ivybridge and Lee Mill, a garden centre and the Smithleigh Hotel. Many of these features are shown on **Drawing 0350/03**.
- 2.8 To the south of the A38 immediately adjacent to the access road, the land is characterised by recycling, extraction and landfilling operations at Strashleigh (to the east) and in the vicinity of Challonsleigh to the west. Two lines of high voltage overhead cables on pylons run east-west, one north of the site and one south of New England Hill.
- 2.9 Within a 2km radius of the application area, as well as Lee Mill village and the western extent of Ivybridge, there are a number of isolated single dwellings and clusters of houses. These properties number some 70 homes and farmhouses within a predominantly rural landscape.
- 2.10 To the north-east of the site, the wider area is characterised by a wider urban area that is subject to a number of recently completed schemes, or proposals in the planning system. These include the Langage gas-fired power station and the new Sherford market town, located on the eastern fringes of Plymouth, and the Langage Farm Anaerobic Digestion plant, to the north-west of Lee Mill.
- 2.11 The site lies adjacent to, and crosses, the River Yealm which runs south from Lee Mill in a shallow valley until it reaches the Challonsleigh Plantation. As the river flows adjacent to the site it runs in a steep sided wooded valley until it reaches a point north of the quarry plant area where the valley widens marginally before Popple's Bridge and then runs through streamside woodland through Lotherton Ham and Treby Ham towards Yealmpton. The river discharges into Wembury Bay which is part of the Plymouth and Sounds Estuary Special Area of Conservation.
- 2.12 Wembury Point SSSI has been designated for intertidal plant and animal communities together with coastal sand, shingle and steep slopes of sea-cliff grassland and mixed scrub.
- 2.13 To the north of the site, the Dartmoor Special Area of Conservation has been designated SAC primarily for the presence of wet heaths and mire communities and sessile oak woodland with a rich bryophyte and epiphytic lichen flora. The South Dartmoor SSSI designation is for similar habitat, but also includes breeding birds such as red grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*), dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), winchat (*Saxicola rubetra*), and wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) which are uncommon in southern England.
- 2.14 The area of New England Quarry therefore represents an important watershed between the urban activities associated with Lee Mill, the A38 corridor, and landfill and quarrying operations, and the more rural landscape to the south.

## THE SITE

### Background

- 2.15 **Drawing 0350/02** illustrates in red the extent of the application area which extends to a total of 30.7 hectares. The blue boundary on the drawing demonstrates the extent of Viridor's ownership.
- 2.16 The access road for the development will link to the existing road network to the north at the slip road for the A38. The access road will run south between the western edge of the old partly restored Strashleigh Hams tip and the River Yealm. The access road will continue southwards into part of the Strashleigh Hams Ancient Woodland, before turning westwards to cross the River Yealm on a new bridge.
- 2.17 The quarry site consists of land to the west of the River Yealm that has been mothballed since 1994. The quarry and an area to the east of the river of rolling pasture all benefit from permission for the extraction of dolerite, as described in Paragraph 2.22 below.
- 2.18 The main quarry void is located on the south side of the development plateau area and is accessed by a steep narrow haul road. The void is approximately 40m deep and contains predominantly surface water (to a level of circa. 49m AOD). The series of semi circular quarry faces and benches rise to approximately 77m AOD.
- 2.19 To the east of the quarry void the land falls steeply down to the River Yealm, which retains natural woodland cover along its banks. To the west of the quarry void the land merges with the dissected plateau above the river valley. North of the quarry void at an average level of 60m AOD is a large, un-vegetated, and gently sloping area formerly used as a stocking area. Scrub vegetation has colonised the edge of the old stocking area, merging with the surrounding woodland. Beyond the scrub areas lie the site boundary and former landfill areas.
- 2.20 To the south of the quarry void is the quarry weighbridge area and site access close to Popple's Bridge.
- 2.21 Within the development site boundary, to the west of the quarry void, are three fields currently grazed under an agricultural tenancy rising to a high point of approximately 83 metres AOD.

### Site History

- 2.22 Section 10 of this ES includes a more detailed site history of the New England quarry and its surrounding land. The first map-based indication of a quarry in the area is shown on the 1886 Ordnance Survey map. It is understood that the quarry was expanded at some time between the First

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and Second World Wars, before it was brought under the control of the Planning Act in 1947 under the remit of the Interim Development Order.

- 2.23 In the last 60 years, the site has benefitted from a number of planning permissions associated with the extraction of dolerite from the site. Table 2-1 below summarises the major permissions relating to the application site:

Table 2-1: Summary of Major Planning Permissions

Detail	Permission Number	Permission Date
Quarrying	47/396	10.10.1947
Proposed Spoil Dumps	WB/367/562/54	31.12.1954
Proposed Spoil Dumps	WB/617/10A/55	29.04.1955
Use of land for winning and working of minerals and construction of river bridge	WB/8155/748/62	22.02.1963
Import quarry and processed stone waste and use on-site material to form an amenity bund	9.49.407.93	26.0.1993
Determination of Conditions	9/62/0425/92/3	18.04.1995
Determination of ROMP Conditions (Condition B1 removed in 2001).	9/21/62/001/98	24.01.1999

- 2.24 The approval of the IDO and ROMP conditions in the mid and late 1990s consolidate all the earlier permissions and provide an up to date working and restoration scheme and conditions for the quarry. A copy of the Decision Notice (ref. 9/21/62/001/98) is included at Appendix 2-1. The approved scheme allows for the expansion and deepening of the existing quarry void to a depth of 24m below OD (i.e. approximately 60 to 80m depth), the installation of a river crossing (to the immediate east of the former plant area) and the extraction of mineral from land to the east of the River Yealm to a depth of 24m below OD (approx. 95 metres deep). These features are shown on **Drawing 0350/04**. The proposed restoration scheme allows for the formation of two water bodies in the two quarry voids with an estimated water level of 37m AOD and a landscaped bund formed by quarry waste on land to the north of the existing quarry void with a maximum height of 81m AOD.
- 2.25 Whilst the quarry has not been operational since 1994 the permission for mineral extraction remains valid and capable of implementation.

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### Land ownership

- 2.26 The extent of Viridor's ownership is illustrated in red (the application boundary) and blue (other land within their control) on **Drawing. 0350/02**. Viridor do not control any other land within the area.

### Geology

#### *Regional Geology*

- 2.27 The British Geological Survey (BGS) (Sheet 349 - Ivybridge Scale 1:50,000 Drift Edition) indicates that the site is underlain by igneous diabase or dolerite, which is intruded into the surrounding Middle Devonian Slate. The intrusion trends east to west and the slates outcropping on the northern and southern sides of the site. The Middle Devonian Slates regionally dip steeply to the south. Normal faulting in the area is generally north northeast to south southwest.
- 2.28 The Dartmoor Granite is located approximately 3km to the northeast of the site. The granite was emplaced following intrusion of the quarried Dolerite, although the metamorphic aureole associated with the granite does not extend into the Dolerite and Slates on site. However, the slates are locally altered around contact with the Dolerite intrusion.

#### *Local Geology*

- 2.29 The lenticular Dolerite intrusion extends east to west through the centre of the site with slate outcropping to the north and south. Where exposed within the quarry, exposed rock faces have weathered due to oxidation of iron minerals to produce a brown colouration. In its fresh state, the Dolerite is grey blue to dark green and in general it is recorded as slightly weathered on the lower northern quarry bench, moderately weathered on the south of the quarry and highly weathered in the west.
- 2.30 The Engineering Geology Assessment of the site indicates that actinolite and anthophyllite, both naturally occurring asbestos minerals, are present along some of the local shear surfaces within the exposed Dolerite quarry faces.
- 2.31 The majority of the surface area to the north and west of the quarry void was observed to be overlain by weakly or non-vegetated fine to coarse granular made ground assumed to be spoil from the quarry process.
- 2.32 Only small scale faulting was observed within the quarry faces, indicated by slickensided joint faces and some small scale displacement. No major faults are recorded within the site or immediate surrounding area on the 1:50,000 geology map. The boundary between the Dolerite and the Slates was observed on the upper quarry benches on the south side of the quarry void, trending approximately east-west. The extent of the solid geology on site is recorded in Section 9.

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- 2.33 A band of Alluvium associated with the River Yealm runs along the eastern and northern site boundary, although does not appear to be present within the proposed development area.
- 2.34 Much of the quarry void has also been designated as a Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site (RIGS) due to the presence of gabbro intrusion into middle Devonian slate.

### Water Environment

- 2.35 Section 9 gives consideration to the ground water and surface water characteristics of the site. In respect of ground water (hydrogeology) the Environment Agency Groundwater Vulnerability Map shows that the dolerite intrusion and Devonian slates beneath the application site and the surrounding area are classified as a Minor Aquifer. The EA has also confirmed that the proposed development area does not fall within a Source Protection Zone.
- 2.36 With regards to surface water, New England quarry is located within the surface water catchment of the River Yealm and its tributaries, which includes an unnamed stream running along the northern site boundary and several further streams which flow through the woodland to the east of the Yealm.
- 2.37 The River Yealm runs along the eastern boundary of the site and flows in a southerly direction. The river originates on Dartmoor at an elevation 430m aOD and falls nearly 400m in just 10km, passing the application site at an elevation of between 37.5m aOD and 35m aOD. The river continues to flow to the south through the town of Yealmpton before entering the estuary.
- 2.38 The main part of the application site is outside of the flood plain of the River Yealm except for;
- a low lying area adjacent to the current site entrance in the south east of the site; and
  - a strip of land along the northern boundary.
- 2.39 Parts of the proposed access to the north of the site are also within the flood plain of the River Yealm. A comprehensive Flood Risk Assessment has therefore been undertaken, and is included at Appendix 9-8.

### Topography

- 2.40 The topography within the area of the development site is largely comprised of the rolling and undulating plain landscape with hill top elevations ranging from 80-120m AOD to the immediate west and 80-140m to the east. The plain is dissected at the location of the development site by the valley of the River Yealm (circa 30-40m AOD), running north to south. The Yealm valley is narrow at the position of New England Quarry and directly south, until Yealmbridge is reached. To the north the valley widens out around the Lee

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Mill area before becoming confined again towards the higher ground of Dartmoor.

- 2.41 A detailed consideration of topography in the context of landscape and visual impact is included at Section 11 of the ES.

### Public Rights of Way

- 2.42 There are no public footpaths or public rights of way across the application site.

### Nature Conservation

- 2.43 The north eastern corner of the site and much of the woodland to the north, south and east has been designated as Mackarell Parks, Southwood Woods and Strashleigh Ham County Wildlife Site (CWS) for the presence of ancient semi-natural woodland. The north western corner of the site has also been designated as New England Fields County Wildlife Site for the presence of marshy grassland habitats.
- 2.44 The extensive site consists of a range of different habitats of varying significance. The Ecological Impact Assessment at Section 12 of the ES considers in detail the full extent of nature conservation within the site, immediately adjoining it, and within the vicinity.

### Cultural Heritage

- 2.45 There are no statutory archaeological or cultural heritage designations within the application site. The Devon Historic Environment Record identifies eleven sites within the boundaries of the application site: the majority of entries listed are medieval or post-medieval in date and relate to settlement, transport, administrative or industrial activity.
- 2.46 All of these are derived from documentary or map-based sources, although many remain extant features in the landscape. The few undated sites probably also belong to post-medieval times. Prehistoric sites include chance finds, earthwork features and cropmarks. There are no recorded Roman or Saxon sites, although Domesday references to two sites are included, indicative of a populated landscape, at least in the late Saxon period.
- 2.47 Section 13 of the ES includes a full consideration of cultural heritage interest.