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For the attention of: Gwyn Humphreys – Case Officer
Wrexham County Borough Council

[By email: planning@wrexham.gov.uk]

10 July 2024

Dear Gwyn

Re: P/2024/0105

New arrival point to pontcysyllte aqueduct world heritage site, including parking, landscaping, pathways, signage, drainage ponds and additional fencing; CAR PARK, QUEEN STREET, CEFN MAWR, WREXHAM, LL14 3NN

Thank you for your notification of 3 July 2024 seeking the views of the Coal Authority on the above.

The Coal Authority is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. As a statutory consultee, the Coal Authority has a duty to respond to planning applications and development plans in order to protect the public and the environment in mining areas.

The Coal Authority response: **Material Consideration**

I have reviewed the proposals and confirm that the application site falls within the Coal Authority's defined Development High Risk Area. Therefore, within the application site and

surrounding area there are recorded coal mining features present at surface or shallow depths. The risk these features may pose should be considered as part of the planning process.

The Coal Authority records indicate that within, or within 20m of the planning boundary, there are 6 mine entries (3 x on-site mine entries; 3 x off-site mine entries). The Coal Authority hold no treatment details for these mine entries and therefore should be considered as untreated mine entries. Due to the historic source plans used to record their current locations, these could vary by several metres. The Coal Authority is of the opinion that building over the top of, or in close proximity to, mine entries should be avoided wherever possible, even after they have been capped, in line with our adopted policy:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-on-or-within-the-influencing-distance-of-mine-entries> Based on the nature of this current application however, it would appear that no build development is proposed.

In addition, the application site also lies within an area of both recorded and probable historic unrecorded shallow coal mining, plus coal seams of workable thickness infer to outcrop at or close to the surface of the site that may have been historically worked from the surface. These coal mining features currently present a significant risk to public safety and surface stability for the proposed development.

The planning application is accompanied by a Phase I Geo-Environmental Desk Study Report (10054502-ARC-XX-XXX-RP-GE-01001, Revision: 01, January 2024) prepared by Arcadis Consulting (UK) Limited. The Report has been informed by an extensive range of sources of historical, geological and coal mining information.

It should be noted that the study area (Figure 2-1) is larger than the current application site (Drawing No: 10054502-ARC-XX-XXX-DR-LA-00001, Revision P04 – Site Location Plan) therefore additional mine entries to that which we have previously outlined above, have been identified by the report author.

Having carried out an in-depth review of the available information, the Report identifies that there is currently a risk from former coal mining activity at this site. Recommendations have been made that Intrusive ground investigation are required to confirm the presence and extent of any shallow voiding beneath the site, and to investigate the location (and condition) of the recorded on-site mine entries. The findings should

inform the extent of any remedial and / or mitigation measures required to ensure the proposed development will be safe and stable (Planning Policy Wales, paras. 6.9.23 - 28). As no built development is proposed as part of this planning application, we would have no objections to the site investigations being carried out post decision but prior to commencement of development.

It would be prudent to carry out a positional review of the mine entries in order that the best plot position can inform the intrusive investigations.

The intrusive site investigations should be designed and undertaken by competent persons to ensure that these are appropriate to assess the ground conditions on the site to establish the coal-mining legacy present and the risks it may pose to the development and inform any mitigation measures that may be necessary.

The applicant should be aware that Permission is required from the Coal Authority Permit and Licensing Team before undertaking any activity, such as ground investigation and ground works, which may disturb coal property. Please note that any comments that the Coal Authority may have made in a Planning context are without prejudice to the outcomes of a Permit application.

Mine Gas

Wherever coal resources or coal mine features exist at shallow depth or at the surface, there is the potential for mine gases to exist. These risks should always be considered by the LPA. The Planning & Development team at the Coal Authority, in its role of statutory consultee in the planning process, only comments on gas issues if our data indicates that gas emissions have been recorded on the site. However, the absence of such a comment should not be interpreted to imply that there are no gas risks present. Whether or not specific emissions have been noted by the Coal Authority, local planning authorities should seek their own technical advice on the gas hazards that may exist, and appropriate measures to be implemented, from technically competent personnel.

Sustainable Drainage

It should be noted that where SUDs are proposed as part of the development scheme consideration will need to be given to the implications of this in relation to the stability and public safety risks posed by coal mining legacy. The developer should seek their own advice from a technically competent person to ensure that a proper assessment has been made of the potential interaction between hydrology, the proposed drainage system and

ground stability, including the implications this may have for any mine workings which may be present beneath the site.

Surface Coal Resource

The Coal Authority's records indicate that surface coal resource is present on the site, although this should not be taken to imply that mineral extraction would be economically viable, technically feasible or environmentally acceptable. As you will be aware those authorities with responsibility for minerals planning and safeguarding will have identified where they consider minerals of national importance are present in your area and related policy considerations. As part of the planning application decision making process consideration should be given to such advice in respect of the indicated surface coal resource.

The Coal Authority Recommendation to the LPA

In light of the above, the Coal Authority recommends the imposition of the following conditions:

1. No development shall commence until;

a) a scheme of intrusive site investigations has been carried out on site to establish the risks posed to the development by past coal mining activity, and;

b) any remediation works and/or mitigation measures to address land instability arising from coal mining legacy, as may be necessary, have been implemented on site in full in order to ensure that the site is made safe and stable for the development proposed. This should include the submission of the approved layout plan to illustrate the exact location of the on-site mine entries, if found within the site, including the grid co-ordinates and calculated zone of influence. The plan should also illustrate the zone of influence of any mine entry recorded as being within influencing distance of the site.

The intrusive site investigations and remedial works shall be carried out in accordance with authoritative UK guidance.

2. Prior to the occupation of the development, or it being taken into beneficial use, a signed statement or declaration prepared by a suitably competent person confirming that the site is, or has been made, safe and stable for the approved development shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval in writing. This document shall confirm the methods and findings of the intrusive site investigations and the completion of any

remedial works and/or mitigation necessary to address the risks posed by past coal mining activity.

This is our recommendation for condition wording. Whilst we appreciate that you may wish to make some amendment to the choice of words, we would respectfully request that the specific parameters to be satisfied are not altered by any changes that may be made.

The Coal Authority has **no objection** to the proposed development **subject to the imposition of the conditions** to secure the above.

It is also requested that the following Informative Notes are included on any planning permission granted:

1 – Mine entries

Any form of development over or within the influencing distance of a mine entry can be dangerous and raises significant safety and engineering risks and exposes all parties to potential financial liabilities. As a general precautionary principle, the Coal Authority considers that the building over or within the influencing distance of a mine entry should wherever possible be avoided. In exceptional circumstance where this is unavoidable, expert advice must be sought to ensure that a suitable engineering design is developed and agreed with regulatory bodies which takes into account of all the relevant safety and environmental risk factors, including gas and mine-water. Your attention is drawn to the Coal Authority Policy in relation to new development and mine entries available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-on-or-within-the-influencing-distance-of-mine-entries>

2 - Ground Investigations

Under the Coal Industry Act 1994 any intrusive activities, including initial site investigation boreholes, and/or any subsequent treatment of coal mine workings/coal mine entries for ground stability purposes require the prior written permission of The Coal Authority, since such activities can have serious public health and safety implications. Failure to obtain permission to enter or disturb our property may result in the potential for court action. In the event that you are proposing to undertake such work in the Forest of Dean local authority area our permission may not be required; it is recommended that you check with us prior to commencing any works. Application forms for Coal Authority permission and further guidance can be obtained from The Coal Authority's website at: www.gov.uk/get-a-permit-to-deal-with-a-coal-mine-on-your-property

3 - Shallow coal seams

In areas where shallow coal seams are present caution should be taken when carrying out any on site burning or heat focused activities.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

D Roberts

Deb Roberts *M.Sc. MRTPI*

Planning & Development Manager

Disclaimer

The above consultation response is provided by the Coal Authority as a statutory consultee and is based upon the latest available data and the electronic consultation records held by the Coal Authority since 1 April 2013. The comments made are also based on the information provided to the Coal Authority by the Local Planning Authority and/or information that has been published on the Council's website for consultation purposed in relation to this specific planning application. The views and conclusions contained in this response may be subject to review and amendment by the Coal Authority if additional or new data/information (such as a revised Coal Mining Risk Assessment) is provided by the Local Planning Authority or the applicant for consultation purposes.

In formulating this response the Coal Authority has taken full account of the professional conclusions reached by the competent person who has prepared the Coal Mining Risk Assessment or other similar report. In the event that any future claim for liability arises in relation to this development the Coal Authority will take full account of the views, conclusions and mitigation previously expressed by the professional advisors for this development in relation to ground conditions and the acceptability of development.