

REF: 2520/PB/Letplan/mjs

13th July 2023

HILLCROFT, PENTRE BYCHAN: DISCUSSIONS WITH COAL AUTHORITY

It is proposed to construct a single property at the above site.

In May 2021 GroundSolve Ltd (GSL) issued a report on mining issues at the site, which related to an old mine shaft, which had been capped in 2001.

However, on consultation by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) with the Coal Authority (CA) the application has been refused.

The main reason stated, being that the shaft potentially affected the proposed development, despite it being capped with a 6m by 6m reinforced concrete cap.

The GSL report recommended that to address any residual risk presented by the shaft that the house be piled to ensure that should any shaft collapse occur then the property would be unaffected long enough to enable any remedial works to be undertaken.

It was also recommended that the pile design be extended to construct a contiguous bored pile wall along the western gable end to protect the property from any future shaft collapse.

However, this strategy still did not satisfy the CA. Consequently, planning was resubmitted with a new house layout that placed the house outside the zone of influence of the shaft.

However, the CA are still not satisfied with this approach.

Therefore, a discussion was held between Mike Scott of GSL and the CA, which is summarised below.

The CA were satisfied that the new proposal did not present a risk to the property itself. However, they insisted that the shaft be remediated, as it was in a garden area.

GSL then pointed out that the shaft had always been in a garden area, and they had allowed it to be capped under permit in the first place.

Despite this they still insist on remediation.

GSL then discussed what further remediation could be carried out.

Drilling and grouting of the shaft was discussed. However, one of the main reasons the shaft was treated in the first place was that artesian water pressures were coming out of the shaft into the garden. Therefore, drainage works were undertaken as part of the capping works to drain the site. Therefore, drilling and grouting was not considered by GSL to be a sound option.

The only other feasible option would be to install a concrete plug within the shaft at rock head. However, the drainage issue would still exist, and this would involve breaking out the cap and excavating to 12m under water to install the plug. Something that would be extremely expensive for one property.

GSL consider that these are the only feasible remediation options.

Therefore, the CA concluded that they consider the site to be undevelopable.

The only possible solution they could suggest was that the Local Authority withdraw the planning condition.

Since we consider the CA to be being unreasonable, based on 40 years of dealing with mining issues, then this course of action is suggested as the last way forward, unless you want to consider legal advice.

In the first instance, a meeting with the Local Authority planning department may be useful.

We trust this is satisfactory, should you have any queries please call Mike Scott on 01244 661361.

Yours sincerely,

M J Scott

BSc (Hons), MSc, FGS, C Geol