NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

AN APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A CLAY QUARRY INCLUDING THE USE OF AN EXISTING ACCESS FROM THE A19, THE CONSTRUCTION OF A CROSSING OVER NATIONAL ROUTE 65 OF THE NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK, THE EXTRACTION AND EXPORTATION OF CLAY AND RESTORATION USING IMPORTED INERT MATERIALS TO AGRICULTURE AND NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST INCLUDING WATERBODIES AND WETLAND HABITATS

AT

LAND ADJACENT TO AND TO THE WEST AND NORTH OF THE CURRENT ESCRICK QUARRY TO THE SOUTH WEST OF ESCRICK IN NORTH YORKSHIRE

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Introduction

Plasmor Limited (Plasmor) is part of the privately owned Plasmor Group of Companies whose headquarters are in Knottingley, West Yorkshire. They supply a comprehensive range of concrete products to the construction and landscape markets throughout the UK.

Clay is currently extracted from Hemingbrough Quarry by Plasmor for use in the production of ultra lightweight material (expanded clay) for use in the manufacture of building blocks at their Heck Plant to the south west of Hemingbrough.

Prior to Hemingbrough Quarry clay was extracted from Escrick Quarry which was part of the former Escrick Brick & Tile works.

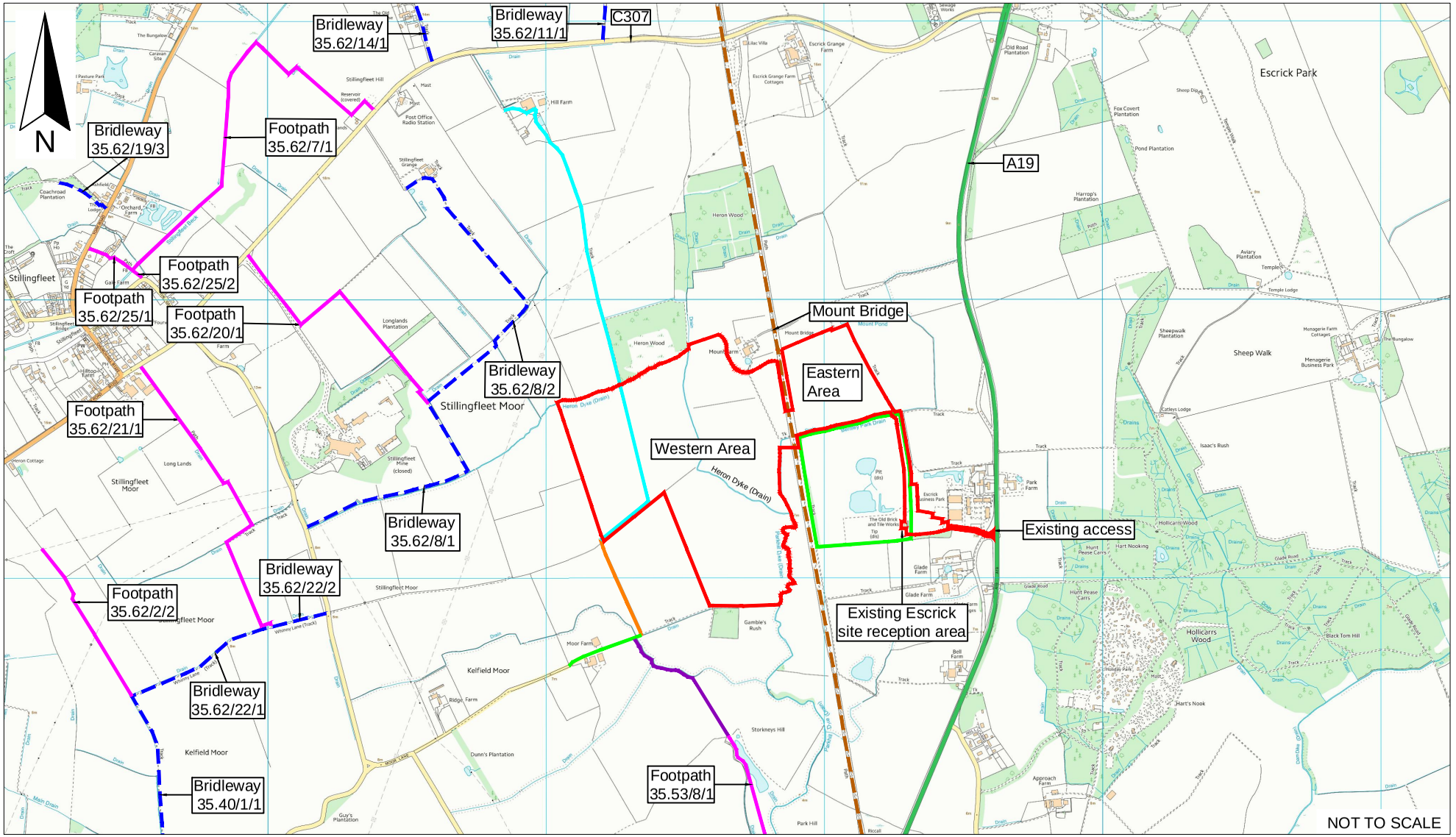
The Escrick Brickworks was demolished in 2006 and the former quarry area is being restored by Escrick Environmental Services using imported restoration materials to a mountain bike skills centre with amenity fishing and wildlife conservation and is referred to in this report as the current Escrick site (Figure NTS1).

Based on the current rate of clay extraction the clay available at Hemingbrough Quarry will run out in approximately 5 years.

To provide for the continued manufacturing operations at the Heck Plant Plasmor need to secure a longer term source of clay for use at the Heck Plant. Plasmor have identified that clay at the proposed Escrick site is suitable for use at the Heck Plant.

The proposed Escrick site is made up of two areas (western area and eastern area) which are separated by National Route 65 (NR65) of the National Cycle Network (Figure NTS1). The site is currently in agricultural use to grow a range of crops.

Planning permission is being sought by Plasmor for a quarry to extract and export clay following which the land will be progressively restored to agriculture and nature conservation interest including water bodies and wetland habitats using inert materials. It is proposed to continue using the existing access from the A19 to access the proposed Escrick site and to construct a bridge over NR65 of the National Cycle Network to access the western area of the proposed Escrick site. The area the subject of the application for planning permission is approximately 63 hectares.



Key / Notes

- The planning application boundary
- The current Escrick site
- National Route 65 of the National Cycle Network
- Approximate route of bridleway 35.10/11/2
- Approximate route of bridleway 35.40/11/1
- Approximate route of bridleway 35.62/9/1 (to be diverted)
- Other footpaths in the area of the site
- Approximate route of footpath 35.40/12/1
- Other bridleways in the area of the site

Figure NTS 1: The site and surrounding area

This document summarises in non- technical language the information in the Environmental Statement which accompanies the application for planning permission which has been submitted to North Yorkshire County Council.

Site location and description

The proposed Escrick site is located approximately 1.7km south south west of the village of Escrick and 1.4km east south east of Stillingfleet.

There are isolated residential properties located in the areas surrounding the proposed Escrick site. The nearest residential property is Mount Farm which is located approximately 55m from the north east site boundary of the western area. Glade Farm and Cottages and Bell Farm are located approximately 95m south and 470m south of the proposed site access respectively. Moor Farm is located approximately 420m south west of the proposed Escrick site and Hill Farm is located approximately 1.2km to the north west of the proposed Escrick site.

The land surrounding the site is generally in agricultural use. There are a number of Public Rights of Way in the vicinity of the proposed Escrick site (Figure NTS1). NR65 of the National Cycle Network runs in a generally north to south direction between the eastern area and the western area of the site. Bridleway 35.62/9/1 runs in a generally southerly direction from Hill Farm and crosses the western area of the site before turning south westerly and running along the southern boundary.

There are a number of drains adjacent to or crossing the Escrick site (Figure NTS1). Heron Dyke (Drain) flows in a generally easterly direction along the northern boundary of the western area of the site. Parkhill Dyke (Drain) which flows in a generally southerly direction along the southern part of the eastern boundary of the western area of the site. Bentley Park Drain flows in a generally westerly direction along the southern boundary of the eastern area and between the eastern area and the current Escrick site.

The majority of the site is located in Flood Zone 2 which is defined as land having between a 1 in 100 and a 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding. There is an area in the north west of the site which is located in Flood Zone 1 which is defined as land having less than a 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding. An area to the south east of the site is located in Flood Zone 3 which has a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding. A small

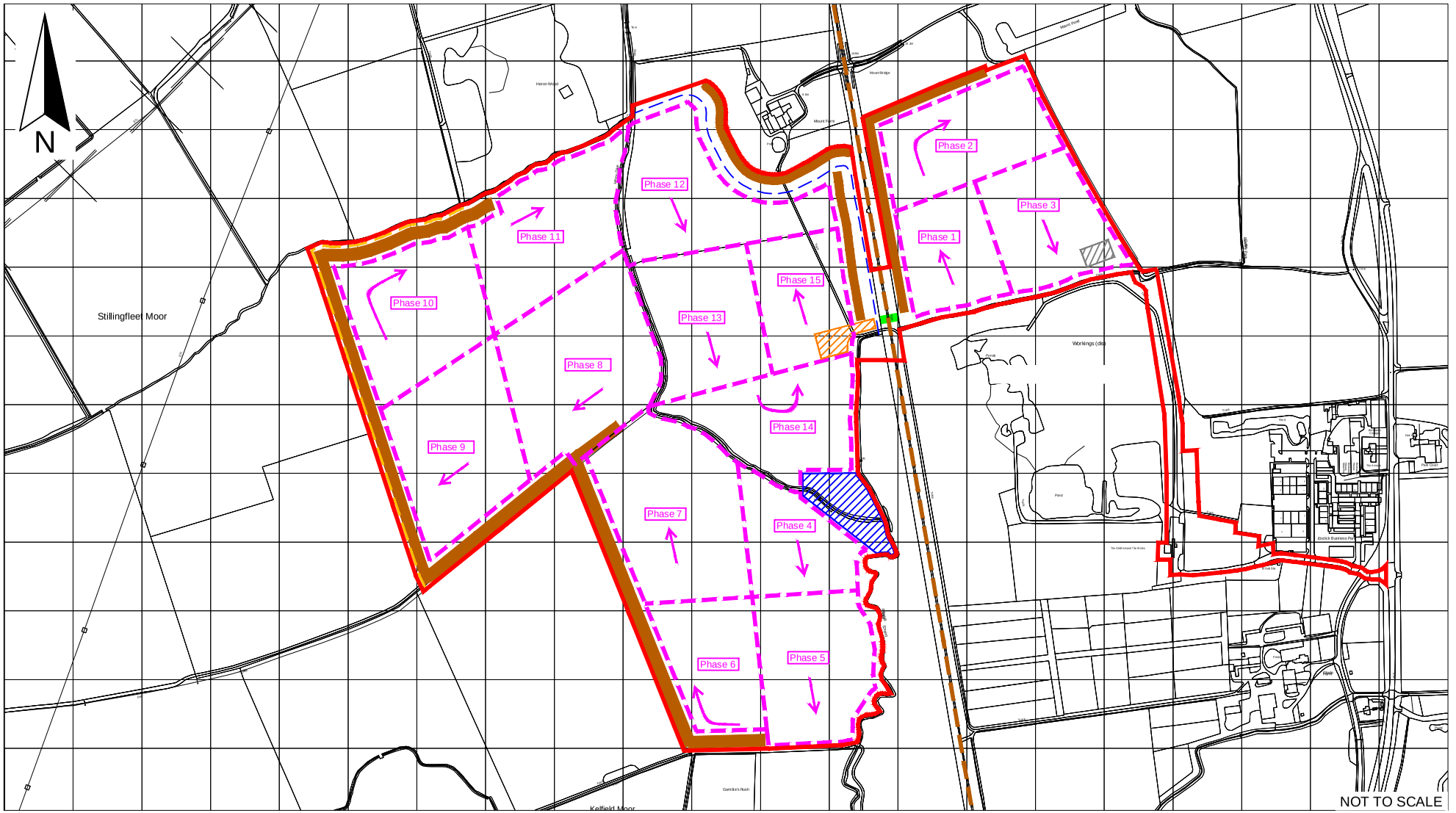
area in the south of the site is identified as an area benefiting from flood defences.

Skipwith Common Site of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserve is located approximately 3.1km south east of the proposed Escrick site. Acaster South Ings SSSI is located approximately 2.8km north east of the proposed Escrick site. There are five Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation within 2km of the proposed Escrick site the closest of which is the York and Selby Cycle Track SINC which comprises verges of the route of NR65 of the National Cycle Network in the area of the site. Heron Wood SINC is located approximately 180m north of the proposed Escrick site and Riccall Dam SINC is located approximately 450m south of the western area of the site.

The proposals

The main elements of the proposed development are:

- Extraction of clay from the eastern area and the western area of the site. The proposed operations at the Escrick site will generate approximately 6,000,000 tonnes of clay suitable for use at the Heck facility operated by Plasmor. Based on the operations at the Heck facility it is anticipated that the clay will supply Heck for 20 to 30 years.
- Clay will be extracted in phases with the eastern area of the site extracted first followed by the western area. Screening bunds constructed using onsite soils will be used to minimise the visual impacts of the proposed extraction operations (Figure NTS 2).
- The site will be restored in stages using imported inert materials. It is anticipated that up to 2,670,000m³ of inert restoration material will be imported to the site for restoration and that the restoration operations will be completed within six years of the completion of mineral extraction operations.
- Access to the proposed Escrick site is from the existing access onto the A19 which is the access to the current Escrick site. Vehicles from the site will pass through a wheelwash before accessing the A19.
- It is proposed that Heron Dyke (Drain) which currently runs through the site will be permanently diverted around the north-east perimeter of the western part of the site.

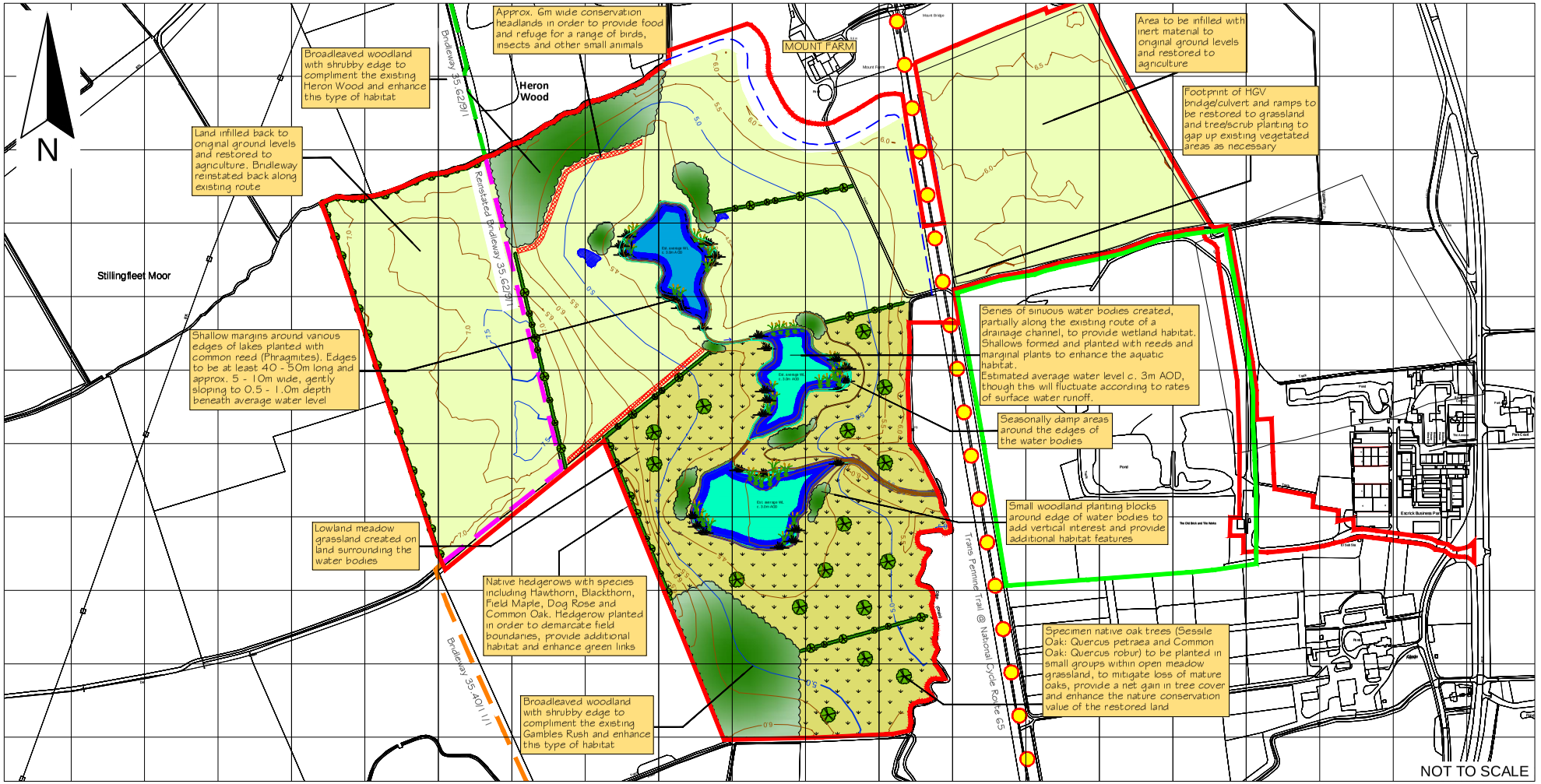


Key / Notes

- The planning application boundary
- Phase 3 — Proposed mineral extraction phase
- Proposed direction of mineral extraction
- Mobile plant storage area
- Proposed diverted route of Heron Dyke (Drain)
- Proposed screening bund
- Approximate exclusion area due to archaeology
- National Route 65 of the National Cycle Network
- Proposed diverted route of Bridleway 35.62/9/1
- Indicative location of the bridge which will be constructed over National Route 65 of the National Cycle Network
- Mobile mess facility

Figure NTS 2: Showing the proposed phasing of the clay extraction operations

- NR65 of the National Cycle Network will be temporarily diverted to allow for the construction of the bridge which will provide access to the western area and temporarily diverted during the removal of the bridge once operations have ceased. Bridleway 35.62/9/1 will be temporarily diverted during mineral extraction in the western area. Both public rights of way will be reinstated.
- The restoration design is based on the principle of progressive restoration to agriculture, water bodies, wetland habitats, grassland, woodland and hedgerows and will provide biodiversity gain at the site (Figure NTS3).



Key / Notes

- The planning application boundary
- The current Escrick site
- Seasonally damp areas: sown with emorsgate seeds: em8 'meadow mix for wetland'
- Proposed restoration contours (@ 0.5m intervals)
- Trans pennine trail & National Route 65
- Lowland meadow grassland: seeded with emorsgate seeds: em10 'tussocky meadow mix'
- Bridleway 35.62/9/1 reinstated along existing route
- Diverted route of Heron Dyke (Drain)
- Proposed native broadleaved woodland with shrubby edges
- Land reinstated to approximate original ground levels and restored to agriculture at existing ALC grade
- 6m wide conservation headland to provide habitat and food for birds, insects and other animals
- Proposed species rich native hedgerows with occasional trees (mainly oak)
- Water bodies with shallows planted with common reed and marginal aquatic vegetation
- Isolated, unconnected ponds to provide a habitat suitable for newts and other amphibians

Figure NTS 3: Proposed Restoration

Need for the proposals

The light weight blocks that are produced from expanded clay manufactured at the Heck Plant provide valuable thermal insulation, construction and health and safety benefits.

To provide for the continued manufacturing operations at the Heck Plant and the long term stability of the company there is a need to secure a longer term source of suitable clay.

The clay that is used at the Heck Plant must be of a particular quality to produce the lightweight material. The clay at the proposed Escrick site has been tested and is suitable for use at the Heck Plant. The proposal would provide a secure supply of clay to the Heck facility for between 20 and 30 years as the available reserves at Hemingbrough are nearing exhaustion.

There is a need for the phased restoration of the proposed Escrick site as part of the clay extraction operations. Ensuring a high quality restoration of extraction sites is an important objective of both National Planning Policy and North Yorkshire Planning Policy. The importation of inert restoration materials to the site is driven by the need to restore the site and to restore the land to agricultural use together with nature conservation. The restoration of the site will provide habitats for biodiversity gain.

The restoration of the proposed Escrick site will provide the opportunity for inert materials originating within North Yorkshire to be managed close to where they arise thereby meeting the aspirations of the proximity principle and self-sufficiency.

Alternatives

Alternatives to the proposed development have been considered to confirm that the proposed development is the most appropriate option.

Alternative sites have been considered. The potential for alternative sites is limited due to the particular quality of the clay which is needed and the need for the source to be within 30 miles of the Heck facility in order to be economically viable.

Various alternative site designs have been considered relating to the area of the proposed clay extraction, surface water management, access to the site and restoration. The final design has been based on the most environmentally acceptable and deliverable option for the site.

It is considered that mineral extraction at the proposed Escrick site is the only viable option to secure the longer term supply of clay to the Heck Plant in the timescales necessary prior to the exhaustion of the clay at the current Hemingbrough Quarry.

Environmental issues

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the effects of the development on people and the environment has been carried out by technical specialists. The scope of the EIA has been agreed with North Yorkshire County Council and where necessary the scope of the assessments have been agreed with interested parties. The results of the assessments are reported in an Environmental Statement (ES) and a summary of the findings is presented here.

The control measures that form an important part of the proposals to prevent or minimise the effect of the proposed development on the environment are described in the ES.

Traffic, transport and public rights of way

A transport statement has been prepared as part of the ES. Surveys to measure the existing traffic flows on the A19 and an assessment of the access to the site and the traffic levels generated by the development were undertaken.

Access to the proposed Escrick site is from the existing access onto the A19 which is used to access the current Escrick site. A bridge will be constructed over NR65 of the National Cycle Network to gain access to the western area of the site.

HGV movements associated with the exportation of clay from the proposed Escrick site will be on average 120 per day (60 HGVs in and 60 HGVs out) which equates to approximately 12 movements per hour for the clay extraction. The importation of inert restoration materials will generate on average 80 HGV movements per day (40 HGVs in and 40 HGVs out) which is equivalent to 8 HGV movements per hour. There is sufficient capacity at the access junction and A19 to accommodate the proposed traffic movements from the development and the safety of the junction has been assessed and found to be acceptable.

It is concluded that there are no reasons why the proposed development should not be granted planning permission on highway safety or traffic grounds.

Landscape and visibility

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the proposed development has been undertaken. The initial stages of the development such as soil stripping, screening bund construction and construction of the bridge over NR65 of the National Cycle Network would result in temporary significant effects on the local landscape. On the removal of the bridge the area will return to its current appearance. Clay extraction and restoration operations at the site would not result in significant impacts on landscape character or quality. Following restoration and aftercare effects on landscape would be beneficial due to the biodiversity enhancements and the generally open rural character of the site.

There will be significant short term effects on the rights of way crossing or adjacent to the site and the two properties closest to the western area during soil stripping and bund construction. Views of the operations will be largely screened. On completion of restoration and the removal of the screening bunds the visual effects on the residential properties will be beneficial.

Water resources

An assessment of the potential impact of the proposed development on water resources has been undertaken. It is concluded that it is unlikely that the quarry dewatering operations will have a significant impact on surface water or groundwater levels and there is no risk of settlement from the short term effects of dewatering. It is proposed that the site will be restored using on site soils and overburden and imported inert restoration materials which will not have a significant adverse effect on the quality of groundwater. Mitigation measures have been proposed to minimise the risk of the operations resulting in an impact on water resources such as water management during dewatering, storage and handling of fuels and oils together with restoration methods. It is considered that the proposed mineral extraction and subsequent restoration of the proposed Escrick site will not result in a significant impact on water resources at or in the vicinity of the site.

Flood risk

A flood risk assessment for the site has been undertaken. During mineral extraction there will be a significant increase in flood storage capacity at the proposed Escrick site. In the long term as the site will be restored to original ground levels or lower there will be an increase in flood storage capacity compared with pre-development conditions resulting in an overall net benefit in respect of flood risk at

or in the vicinity of the site as a result of the proposed development.

Land contamination

An assessment of the potential for any previously contaminative uses of land within the site has been undertaken. Historical maps have been reviewed and there are no known sources of contamination at the site as it has comprised open fields since at least 1851. It is considered that there will be no unacceptable impact associated with land contamination.

Ecology and biodiversity

A number of ecological surveys have been undertaken at the site for a range of species including amphibians, reptiles, birds, bats and badgers. A tree survey has also been undertaken. A habitat survey of the wider area was carried out.

The site is considered important for hedgerows, common toad, birds, bats and brown hare. Due to the progressive nature of the operations at the site it is concluded that the development can be undertaken with minimal impact on the ecological interest at the site. The restoration of the site will introduce a mosaic of habitats and will result in a significant positive effect on the biodiversity at the proposed Escrick site.

Cultural heritage

An assessment of cultural heritage has been undertaken. The proposed Escrick site has been subject to archaeological investigation to establish any areas of high archaeological potential. Two areas of the site have been identified as of local archaeological importance. One area of archaeological importance will not be subject to clay extraction and preserved in the ground. In the other area a scheme of archaeological investigation will be undertaken prior to the extraction of the clay. It is concluded that the measures proposed will be effective in mitigating the impacts of the development and will contribute to local archaeological archives hence there will be no residual effects on known cultural heritage assets.

Soil resources and agricultural land

A soil survey has been undertaken at the proposed Escrick Site. A large proportion of the site is classed as best and most versatile agricultural land. The proposed Escrick Site will be restored partially to best and most versatile land and partially to nature conservation and wetland habitats. All of the soils will be used sustainably for restoration to high quality agriculture and nature conservation.

Noise

A noise assessment has been undertaken to calculate the predicted noise levels for the operations at the site. It is concluded that with suitable noise control measures the noise levels will be below the limits set in guidance for mineral operations. There will be no adverse impact at noise sensitive properties resulting from noise from the proposed development.

Amenity

There is the potential for impacts on amenity from the site as a result of dust, mud on the road and lighting produced as a result of the proposed development.

Dust emissions from the site can be controlled to a standard that ensures that there will be no significant impact on amenity. Mud on the road can be controlled through good site maintenance and the installation of a wheel wash at the site access. The lighting will only be used when the site is operational and will be directed downwards to minimise the visibility of the light.

Conclusions

Extensive technical studies have been undertaken to define the environmental conditions at the site and the surrounding area on which to base robust assessments of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed development.

The studies have demonstrated that the proposed development can be undertaken without having unacceptable effects on the environment and will provide a suitable beneficial restoration of the site. The continued operation of the Heck Plant will provide for economic and social benefits.