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SAHARA SANDPIT
MELKSHAM
SN12 7QX

INSTALLATION OF AN ADDITIONAL SILO

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

November 2025

CLIENT

Melksham Minimix Ltd

PROJECT

Erection of an additional silo

REPORT TITLE

Supporting Statement

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Melksham Minimix Ltd ('the applicant') in respect of a planning application for the erection of a concrete silo on land at the Melksham Minimix depot, on the former Sahara Sandpit, Melksham, SN12 7QX.
- 1.2 The application site comprises an established concrete batching compound which was recently acquired by the applicant. Under existing operations and owing to the infrastructure available, the business targets small to medium scale projects within the local area. The proposed development will provide an opportunity for the rurally based business to expand upon its product potential with a view to expanding into wider markets.
- 1.3 The purpose of this statement is to describe the development proposal in the context of both its setting and the planning policy framework. Notwithstanding this, the document contains a Design and Access Statement to accord with Wiltshire Council Validation Checklist requirements. This Statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2 describes the site, the surroundings and planning history;
 - Section 3 explains the proposed development;
 - Section 4 explores relevant planning policy at both national and local level;
 - Section 5 assesses the proposed development against relevant planning policy
 - Section 6 comprises the Design and Access Statement for the development proposal; and
 - Section 7 provides the overall summary and conclusions.
- 1.4 It is demonstrated that the proposed development is in accordance with national and local planning policy and guidance and should be approved.

2. DESCRIPTION AND PLANNING HISTORY OF THE SITE

Site Description

- 2.1 The proposed Site is located on Sandridge Hill A3102, between the township of Melksham and the village of Westbrook to the east, in Wiltshire. The site comprises an extant concrete processing operation, located on the former Sahara Sand Quarry. The site is a rectangular parcel of land, benefiting from extensive deciduous boundary woodland that screens the majority of existing operational activities.
- 2.2 The existing operation consists of compacted areas of bare earth and tracks, including stocking areas interspersed with woodland and scrubby fringe. The site is accessed off the A3102 via a metalled road. The access is shared with the group of three buildings located directly beyond the western boundary. The internal access to the operational area proceeds along the eastern site boundary through the woodland margins.
- 2.3 Located centrally within site woodland is the aggregates recycling area with associated operational plant and stockpiles. Within the northwest corner of the site is a single storey building circa 18 x 30m, fringed by woodland on the northern and western elevations. To the east of the building are stockpiles and aggregate storage bays. Beyond, along the northern site extent are several portacabins, silos and ancillary structures.
- 2.4 The ground levels gently undulate across the site, ranging from approximately 98m AOD to 103m AOD.

Site context

- 2.5 The A3102 runs west to east along the southern boundary of the former quarry. The site is located on the western extent of Sandridge hill, the ridgeline plateauing at c.100m AOD. Melksham is located 1.8km to the west, with the village of Westbrook 2km to the northeast.
- 2.6 Immediately to the south of the site entrance is Morass Wood, which extends to the east, the landform falling away towards the large-scale Sandridge Solar Farm. Approximately 2km to the south is the Craysmarsh Solar Farm and Airfield, with the adjacent hamlet of Redstocks, accessed from the Bath Road A365.
- 2.7 Approximately 300m to the southeast of the site is the Grade II listed Sandridge Tower, enclosed within the northern extent of Morass Wood. To the east of the site is Sandridge Lane, a cul-de-sac leading to Sandridge Farm, with several adjacent dwellings.
- 2.8 To the immediate west of the site is Sandridge Park, an extensively wooded and enclosed parkland. Within the park are a number of dwellings, including The Old Coach House, a Grade II listed building, located c.380m to the west.
- 2.9 To the immediate north of the site is an open area of made ground associated with historic quarrying operations. To the north is the deciduous woodland of Hanging Wood, which visually encloses the ridgeline. Beyond, the landform gently rolls, before climbing towards the wooded slopes of Bowden Hill, circa 3km to the north of the site.
- 2.10 To the northeast the landscape is dominated by a number of interlinked woodlands on higher land including Prickmoor Wood, New Plantation, The Brake and Silverstreet Wood.

Public Rights of Way

- 2.11 The site is not accessible via any public right of ways (PRoW) or other rights of access.
- 2.12 The nearest PROW comprises MELW56, located 125m to the east. The PRoW proceeds from the A3102 in a northerly direction before redirecting back towards Sandridge Lane to the east. Footpath MELW52 proceeds slightly further to the east, beyond the dwellings on Sandridge Lane.
- 2.13 To the north of the site, beyond Hanging Wood, is a parallel network of bifurcated routes; MELW48 and MELW47 proceed along the valley floor, with footpath MELW48 continuing over higher ground towards Frogditch on a northwest/southeast alignment.
- 2.14 The wider footpath network is fairly extensive, providing linkages back towards Bowden Hill to the north, west towards Melksham and south beyond the Sandridge Solar Farm back towards Redstock. Due to distance and intervening vegetation, the wider footpath network is unlikely to be impacted by the proposals.

Designations

- 2.15 The site is not subject to any statutory landscape or ecological designations. The site is located between two National Landscape Areas: the North Wessex Downs circa 5.5km to the east, and the Cotswolds NLA circa 10km to the west.
- 2.16 The site and much of the surrounding local landscape is however designated as a Special Landscape Area, under saved policies from the West Wiltshire District Plan (2004).
- 2.17 Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are landscapes of County importance and are a non-statutory designation given status through Local Plan policy. Much of Wiltshire's countryside, outside of the New Forest National Park and National Landscape Areas, is designated as a SLA.

Planning History

- 2.18 The planning history of the site is summarised in the table below:

W/95/00425/FUL	Importation of inert filling material to aid restoration of sandpit	Granted 12 September 1995
W/96/00007/WCM	Temporary waste transfer and recycling station	Withdrawn
W/96/00514/EUD	Open air storage of equipment materials and plant	Appeal dismissed 16 April 1998
W/97/00869/FUL	Extend mineral working with restoration using imported fill	Refused 23 December 1997
W/98/00584/FUL	Review of mineral planning permissions determination of new conditions	Determined 9 October 1998
W/05/09021/WCM	Section 73 application to continue tipping operations without compliance with Condition 3 of permission W95/00425 to extend the period of operation to 31.12.2014	Granted 17 November 2005
W/06/09012/WCM	Installation of a concrete batching plant	Refused 9 November 2006

W/07/09010/WCM	Importation of inert filling material to aid restoration of sand pit without compliance with condition 01 of planning permission 05/09021	Granted 8 August 2007
W/10/02974/WCM	Lawful Development Certificate for an existing use or operation for crushing and storage of inert materials with weighbridge	Withdrawn 26 August 2011
W/10/03223/FUL	Metal clad garage, store and workshop	Refused 2 February 2011
W/11/02393/FUL	Detached workshop, garage and store	Withdrawn 8 November 2011
W/11/02436/WCM	Importation, processing, handling and storage of inert materials and retention of weighbridge and ancillary activities and facilities	Appeal Allowed 16 August 2012
W/12/00992/FUL	Consolidation and relocation of existing businesses with Change of use of former sand pit to form compound, including erection of building for storage of plant hire and civil engineering equipment and vehicles with associated workshop, office and welfare facilities and processing plant for recycling construction/demolition materials. Proposal includes retention of a weighbridge	Granted 3 December 2012
14/07457/WCM	Section 73 Application - Importation of Inert Filling Material to aid restoration of sandpit, without compliance with Condition 1 (variation of phasing of site operations) 3 (extension of time within which to complete restoration) 5 (aftercare) and 14 (Geological exposure) of planning permission W/07/09010 dated 8th November 2007	Granted October 2014
18/09462/FUL	Low level 'mini mix' mobile concrete plant including cement silo, aggregate bays and other ancillary development (generator, control cabin and ground works including drainage provision).	Granted

- 2.19 In February 2019, the LPA granted planning permission¹ for a *“Low level ‘mini mix’ mobile concrete plant including cement silo, aggregate bays and other ancillary development (generator, control cabin and ground works including drainage provision)”*.
- 2.20 The Supporting Statement to the application describes that the concrete plant is *“... small in scale, designed to serve the local area ... supplying domestic scale construction works ... The plant would not be able to supply major development sites as it will not have the capacity to do so”*.

¹ Planning application 18/09462/FUL. Approved 14 February 2019.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 Melksham Minimix Ltd seek planning permission for the erection of an additional silo to feed into the existing concrete batching plant to facilitate an expansion of the business operation.
- 3.2 The proposed development comprises the installation of a 120-tonne split vertical silo, with a maximum height of 13.9 metres. The silo would be installed to the rear of the existing batching plant, adjacent to the retaining wall.
- 3.3 The silo would be installed at a lower-ground level, some 2-3 metres below typical ground levels in the surrounding area. This serves as a benefit to reducing overall impact of the silo height.
- 3.4 Installation of the proposed silo will enable the applicant to diversify and grow their business. The split silo will present opportunities to sell a wider variety of concrete mixes with a blended, more environmentally friendly cement. In addition to this, the applicant will be able to produce a liquid screen, responding to growing market demands, which cannot be produced on site owing to the available plant.
- 3.5 Coupled with the expanded products and opportunity to increase output, the applicant envisages that the installation would increase employment opportunities in due course, expanding on the 14 personnel currently employed at the site.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.6 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was introduced on 12 February 2024 and extended to include minor planning application on 2 April 2024, as directed by the Environment Act 2021 and amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The fundamental purpose of BNG is to achieve a minimum of at least 10% biodiversity enhancement as part of most development proposals.
- 3.7 There are however exemptions, as set out in government guidance², for development which falls below the threshold for BNG. In this instance, the development is exempt from BNG as it is below the following threshold:

A development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat
- 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows

- 3.8 The development would take place on bare ground, stripped of soils, currently in use for the production of concrete. The proposed development would not require the removal of any vegetation. The site would comprise 'artificial unvegetated / unstepped surface' which carries a score of zero within the latest Defra BNG Metric.

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>

4. PLANNING POLICY

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.

National Planning Policy Framework

4.2 The first National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into force in March 2012 and largely replaced the planning policy statements and minerals policy statements, excluding matters relating to waste development. Subsequent updates have been undertaken, with the latest version of the NPPF published in December 2024 and updated in February 2025.

4.3 The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The NPPF establishes that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states:

“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) **an economic objective** - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- b) **a social objective** - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- c) **an environmental objective** - to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”*

4.4 To ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, the NPPF puts the *“presumption in favour of sustainable development”* at the heart of the Framework.

4.5 The presumption in favour of development means that, for decision-taking, as per paragraph 11(c), development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or specific policies within the Framework provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed.

4.6 Paragraph 85 provides that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Paragraph 88 expands on this by recognising the need for planning decisions to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas as well as the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

- 4.7 Paragraph 161 of the NPPF states that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts. It should contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience whilst encouraging the reuse of existing resources. Paragraph 163 requires that planning applications consider the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 4.8 The NPPF notes that decisions should “*play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions*” and “*Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way*”.

Development Plan

- 4.9 In the case of the proposal, the relevant documents which make up the development plan are as follows:
- Wiltshire Core Strategy (January 2015)
 - West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration - Saved Policies (June 2004)

Wiltshire Core Strategy

- 4.31 The Wiltshire Core Strategy was adopted in January 2015. The provides the overarching planning policy framework for Wiltshire for the period up to 2026. The following policies are considered to carry varying degrees of relevance to the proposed development.
- 4.32 Policy CP1 sets out the ‘Settlement Strategy’ for Wiltshire. The purpose of the policy is to identify the settlements where sustainable development will take place “... *to improve the lives of all those who live and work in Wiltshire*”. Allied to this, Policy CP2 provides the ‘Delivery Strategy’ for Wiltshire, with a principal focus on distributing housing and employment land requirements to appropriate settlements around the county.
- 4.33 Policy CP15 is titled ‘Melksham Community Area’ and sets out the spatial strategy for the town across the plan period.
- 4.34 Policies CP34 and CP35 relate to additional and existing employment land provision. The policies provide criteria for the approach to employment land within and outside of settlements.
- 4.35 Policy CP51 outlines the approach to development from a landscape perspective. The policy requires that development should “... *protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have a harmful impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures*”. Owing to the requirements of the policy and the potential effects of the development proposal, this application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
- 4.36 Policy CP57 sets out criteria for ensuring a high standard of design in all new developments.
- 4.37 Policy CP58 requires that development protect, conserve and where possible enhance the historic environment.

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration

- 4.38 The West Wiltshire District Plan was adopted in June 2004. Following the adoption of the Wiltshire Core Strategy in 2015, several of the Plan’s policies were superseded. Appendix D of the Wiltshire

Core Strategy confirms which policies remain 'saved' and relevant to inform decisions on planning applications within the previous administrative boundary of West Wiltshire District Council.

- 4.39 Policy C3 relates to 'Special Landscape Areas', within which the application site is located. The policy statement that *"... the landscape character of Special Landscape Areas will be conserved and enhanced and development will not be permitted which is considered to be detrimental to the high quality of these landscapes"*.

5. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The following section assesses the development characteristics against relevant national and local planning policy described in Section 4.

Principle of Development

- 5.2 As is demonstrated by the planning history detailed in Section 2 of this Statement, the application site is established for uses spanning industrial, mineral and waste operations. It is noteworthy that previously permitted site activities, namely aggregate recycling and land-raising, have now ceased, significantly reducing the intensity of operations on the site.
- 5.3 While the site does not lie within a settlement identified under Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy CP1, the development accords with the delivery strategy under Policy CP2 which provides for the re-use of previously developed land to minimise the need for greenfield sites. This is further reinforced by Policy CP34 which supports employment development outside settlement boundaries to retain or expand existing businesses.
- 5.4 The operation of the site now centres on concrete production via both the mini-mix and pumping businesses. The scale of the permitted plant dictates that the applicant targets small-scale, typically domestic, projects within the Melksham area.
- 5.5 The purpose of the proposed development, comprising the installation of a vertical silo, is to expand cement storage capacity, thereby increasing potential production opportunities. The proposed development is therefore entirely characteristic of the permitted and established use of the wider site.
- 5.6 The principle of development is therefore acceptable. Notwithstanding this, owing to the rural location and established nature of the site, the NPPF governs that planning decisions should support the *“sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas”*. Owing to these facts, the default position in the determination of this planning application must be positive, subject to a demonstration that the proposal will not result in any adverse effects to the surrounding environment, such to warrant a negative decision.

Landscape

- 5.7 Given to the scale of the proposed silo, the potential effects upon landscape and visual character is considered to be the primary consideration in the determination of this application. Owing to this, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by David Jarvis Associates Ltd in support of this planning application.
- 5.8 Recommendations arising from the detailed evaluation of landscape character and visual amenity have been directly addressed, in order to minimise, limit and avoid harm to identified receptors.
- 5.9 Using a best practice approach that responds to a recorded baseline within a defined study area, the LVIA demonstrates that the proposed development has been designed to minimise impacts on both landscape character and visual effects. In summary, the LVIA concludes that the proposed development will have no discernible effect on the landscape character of the study area.
- 5.10 Through accompanying visualisations, the LVIA demonstrates that the Silo will not break the surrounding treeline and benefits from significant screening provided by the existing woodland margins. Any visual effects will likely be restricted to the winter period when there is no leaf cover. Proposed mitigation, requiring that the silo is finished in a woodland tone, will restrict any potential visibility.

- 5.11 Identified visual effects are shown to be highly localised owing to the significant extant vegetation around the site and the enclosing nature of the surrounding woodland communities within the wider landscape.
- 5.12 No unacceptable harm to visual amenity or landscape character has been identified during the assessment. Analysis has shown that the proposals can successfully visually embed into their existing woodland context and only present the potential for limited winter visual effects.
- 5.13 Overall, the LVIA has demonstrated that the proposed development does not result in any adverse impact upon the surrounding landscape character or visual amenity. Significantly, the LVIA demonstrates that the silo would be screened from views by the established and mature woodland which bounds the site on all sides. On this basis, the proposed development is shown conserve the local landscape as required by Policy CP51 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and saved Policy C3 of the West Wiltshire District Plan.

Heritage

- 5.14 Sandridge Lodge, Sandridge Tower and the stables at Sandridge Park are Grade II listed Buildings. These are all positioned in excess of 300m from the application site.
- 5.15 Previous permission for the site restricted plant and machinery use to within a defined area. This would not be altered by this proposal. The proposed silo would be located within the existing site, at a lower ground level and screened from view by existing vegetation.
- 5.16 Owing to the siting, ground level and natural screening it is considered that the proposed development would not result in any harm to the Listed Buildings or their setting. The development is therefore considered to accord to Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy CP58.

Noise

- 5.17 The nearest sensitive receptor to the site comprises a residential property positioned approximately 210 metres to the west of the site. While there would be noise associated with the filling and discharge of cement, this would not be characteristic of the operation permitted and established by the horizontal silo.
- 5.18 As such, the proposed development is not considered to result in any adverse or cumulative noise effects beyond those already considered and deemed acceptable by planning application 18/09462/FUL.

Dust and Air Quality

- 5.19 The installation of an additional cement silo would not exacerbate any dust or air quality effect beyond those already considered and deemed acceptable by the LPA. Both the delivery and discharge of cement will be a fully enclosed process (as per existing operations). The only operations with the potential to generate dust relate to vehicle movements and the transfer of aggregate into the storage bays. While these activities may increase owing to alongside opportunities to expand concrete output, the applicant would continue to employ 'good practice' attenuation measures at the site (i.e. sheeting of vehicles, enforcing low speed limits and dampening down loose, dry materials during certain weather conditions).
- 5.20 While there may be potential for in-direct dust effects through increased concrete production, these can be routinely managed through existing site controls. The proposed development would not itself result in any direct dust or air quality effect.

Transport

- 5.21 Owing to increased storage capacity for cement, the development could result in a modest increase in the export of concrete products to the local market. However, any uplift in movement beyond the current baseline would be negligible in comparison to those experienced while the wider site comprised a landfill development.

Drainage

- 5.22 The proposed development would not have any effect upon existing site drainage arrangements or those engineered to accommodate the concrete batching plant.

6. DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

- 6.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Wiltshire Council Validation Checklist, the following section comprises the Design and Access Statement for the development proposal.

Use

- 6.2 The proposal is for the erection of a single, vertical split silo to complement the existing concrete batching plant and enable the applicant to provide a diverse mix and great quantity of product to enable business growth.

Amount

- 6.3 The proposed development would amount to less than 0.1ha of land, comprising only the footprint of the vertical silo.

Layout

- 6.4 The proposed silo would be positioned adjacent to the existing concrete batching plant within the established yard. The silo would be installed on ground some 2-3m beneath made ground comprising the former inert landfill.

Scale

- 6.5 The proposal comprises the erection of a single, vertical silo with a maximum height of 13.9 metres. The diameter of the silo would measure 3.6 metres and would carry a capacity of 120 tonnes for cement storage.

Landscaping

- 6.6 No landscaping measures are proposed as part of the development. As described in detail within the accompanying Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the site is bound by established, mature woodland which has the effect of screening the existing and proposed operation.

Appearance

- 6.7 The silo would not be enclosed by any existing building or cladding, lessening the overall bulk of the development. As detailed within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the structure would only be visible from within the operational site, with the boundary woodland screening the development from publicly accessible views. Mitigation recommended by the accompanying LVIA proposes that the silo would be finished in any appropriate colour to assimilate the structure within the woodland context. The proposed colour is to be agreed with the LPA.
- 6.8 Overall, the appearance of the proposed development reflects the functional purpose of the plant and is characteristic of the established use of the site.

Access

- 6.9 The proposed development would not result in any variation from approved and established access arrangements. There are no Public Rights of Way affected by the proposed development.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Melksham Minimix Ltd ('the applicant') in respect of a planning application for the erection of a cement silo on land at the Melksham Minimix depot, on the former Sahara Sandpit, Melksham, SN12 7QX.
- 7.2 The proposed development comprises the installation of a 120-tonne split vertical silo, with a maximum height of 13.9 metres. The silo would be installed to the rear of the existing batching plant, within the established yard area.
- 7.3 The purpose of the proposed development is to expand cement storage capacity, thereby increasing potential production opportunities. The proposed development is therefore entirely characteristic of the permitted and established use of the wider site. Coupled with the expanded products and opportunity to increase output, the applicant envisages that the installation would increase employment opportunities in due course, expanding on the 14 personnel currently employed at the site.
- 7.4 This Statement has assessed the proposed development against relevant planning policy at all levels. It has been demonstrated that the proposed development complies with policies contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and adopted and saved waste planning policy.
- 7.5 Taken as a whole, this application demonstrates that the proposed development can be implemented without any significant adverse effect upon the local environment, residential amenity, landscape or the highway network. Owing to this, it is maintained that the proposed development is acceptable and should be approved without delay.