

## PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT

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### GWRHYD QUARRY, PONTARDAWE

Application for the re-siting and use of a general storage unit and the siting and use of a masonry saw, employee welfare facilities, units for general storage and sheds for housing masonry saws (retrospective)

Artisan Stone Supplies Limited



Carter Jonas

## PLANNING APPLICATION

This planning application has been prepared on behalf of Artisan Stone Supplies Limited, for submission to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council pursuant to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The application seeks permission for the re-siting and use of a general storage unit and the siting and use of a masonry saw, employee welfare facilities, units for general storage and sheds for housing masonry saws (retrospective).



**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Client: Artisan Stone Supplies Limited**

**Client or Job Number: J0054597**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This planning application has been prepared on behalf of Artisan Stone Supplies Limited (the applicant), for submission to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPT) pursuant to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 1.2 The application seeks permission for the re-siting and use of a general storage unit and the siting and use of a masonry saw, employee welfare facilities, units for general storage and sheds for housing masonry saws (retrospective) on land which forms part of Gwrhyd Quarry, Pontardawe, near Swansea.

## 2.0 THE APPLICANT

- 2.1 Gwrhyd Specialist Stone Quarry is the trading name of Artisan Stone Supplies Limited, which was founded in 2006, with the mission to:

*Provide the highest quality, Welsh Blue Pennant Natural Stone to the Building and Landscape Industries, throughout Britain, whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff.*

- 2.2 The applicant has operated Gwrhyd Quarry since 2014 under a lease agreement from Marshalls Mono Limited, the freehold owner of the Quarry.
- 2.3 The company has a work force of around 18 staff based in South Wales, with administration split between Gwrhyd Quarry and their Northamptonshire office.

## 3.0 THE SITE

- 3.1 The application site is within a small part of the approved Gwrhyd Quarry, approximately 4 miles north of Pontardawe. The access into the site is centred on National Grid Reference SN 735 089. The location of the site is shown on Plan number J0054597-22-04a
- 3.2 The quarry comprises an active building and dimension stone quarry with associated mineral waste tips stockpile areas, processing areas for the cutting and dressing of the stone, together with restored areas that sit within peripheral agricultural land.
- 3.3 Access to the application site and wider quarry is via a gravel surfaced track from the Gwrhyd Road.
- 3.4 The site originally formed part of a hill farm run by Mr and Mrs W H Davies who established the quarry in early 2000, before it was acquired by Marshalls Mono Limited in August 2008, with the applicant securing a lease for the operation of the quarry in 2014.
- 3.5 The quarry comprises reserves of Blue Pennant Sandstone, a subgreywacke or lithic sandstone with high quartz grain content.
- 3.6 Blue Pennant Sandstone remains among the best slip resistant paving available, with the stone products produced at the quarry retaining its “non-slip” properties as they wear. The applicant states that the stone has been independently tested and is completely frost resistant and has extremely low abrasion values making it one of the most durable materials available. Elsewhere, in non-masonry markets, Blue Pennant Sandstone is extracted as “high PSV” (polished stone value) aggregate for its use in high specification road surfacing due to its skid resistance and hard-wearing properties.

- 3.7 At Gwrhyd Quarry, the Blue Pennant Sandstone is extracted from beds which occur naturally at the quarry face. It is available in a riven format and is completely unique in colour which will vary from rust and ochre browns through to the coolest blues and greys. Variations in colour and texture are a natural feature of the stone.
- 3.8 The high quality of the Pennant Sandstone extracted from Gwrhyd Quarry has resulted in a sustained demand for its use as paving, walling and masonry products such as windowsills, hearths, mantels, and all types of Flagstones. The stone is also sold for dry stone walling products. Stone from the quarry has been used in many high-profile building projects, including at the main entrance of Swansea's National Waterfront Museum.

## 4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 Gwrhyd Quarry became established in January 2000 following the granting of planning permission, on appeal in October 1999, for the extraction of pennant sandstone.
- 4.2 The site has the benefit of several planning permissions for the winning and working of the mineral. Key permissions are set out in Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Planning History**

| Permission Reference       | Decision Issue Date                                                      | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| APP/76930/A/99/513254/T/P3 | 12/10/1999                                                               | The extraction of Pennant Sandstone, trimming and dressing stone to provide quality paving, stone slates, cladding, and walling stone                                                                                                                                                                             |
| P/2002/0256                | 07/05/2002                                                               | An extension to the area of the quarrying operation to accommodate a temporary waste mound                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| P/2002/0318                | 07/05/2002                                                               | Section 73 application to amend the phasing of the scheme and to provide for a temporary waste mound.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| P2005/1308                 | 15/12/2005                                                               | Section 73 application to amend condition M of planning permission reference (PP ref:) APP/76930/A/99/513254/T/P3. (Related to lorry movements)                                                                                                                                                                   |
| P2006/1445                 | 12/12/2006                                                               | Increase of HGV movements to seven on any working day under Condition 1 of PP ref: P2005/1308                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| P2010/0026                 | 18/08/2011                                                               | Proposed restoration, quarry lateral extension and erection of new saw shed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| P2012/0270                 | 17/07/2012                                                               | Proposed schemes under condition 33 and 34 of PP ref: P2010/0026 - Pollution prevention measures and surface water arrangements                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| P2013/0592                 | 08/08/2013                                                               | Details relating to conditions 55 (site liaison committee) and 56 (technical working party) of PP ref: P2010/0026 granted on 18 August 2011                                                                                                                                                                       |
| P2017/0036                 | 06/02/2018<br><br>25/06/2019<br>(Revision 1)<br>to incorporate approvals | Variation of Condition 15 of PP ref: P2010/0026 to allow for:<br>a) An output of 750 tonnes of dimensional blockstone and/or masonry products per working week for the duration of the planning permission (a maximum of 2x24 tonne carrying capacity vehicles and 5x20 tonne carrying capacity vehicles per day) |

| Permission Reference | Decision Issue Date      | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      | under PP ref: P2018/0580 | b) The removal of 700 tonnes per working week of aggregate produced from the waste stone resulting from the dimensional stone and masonry production process for a limited period of 2.5 years (a maximum of 7x20 tonne carrying capacity vehicles per day)                                                                       |
| P2018/0580           | 25/06/2019               | Application for the discharge of conditions 4 (Operational phasing), 9 (Daily records), 16 (vehicle control signage), 17 (control of deleterious material on the highway), 31 (landscaping plan), 34 (stocking area plan), 38 (soil storage volumes plan) and condition 44 (restoration strategy) attached to PP ref: P2017/0036. |

Source: Neath Port Talbot Planning Portal

- 4.3 PP ref: P2017/0036 is the principal planning permission used for development management purposes.
- 4.4 The planning permissions allow the use of several buildings at the site to enable the processing of the extracted mineral into cut dimension and building stone products of varying specification.
- 4.5 Most of the buildings at the site benefit from planning permission.
- 4.6 A small number of associated ancillary buildings and plant have been installed in connection with the processing of extracted mineral and the day-to-day running of the site and provision of facilities for on-site personnel. This type of ancillary development is fundamental to the operation of mineral sites and will often benefit from permitted development rights, albeit prior approval may first need to be obtained from the mineral planning authority. As these few ancillary buildings are already in place, a planning application is now being submitted to 'regularise' this ancillary development and to obtain the necessary planning consent.

## 5.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 Retrospective planning permission to sought for:

*The re-siting and use of a general storage unit and the siting and use of a masonry saw, employee welfare facilities, units for general storage and sheds for housing masonry saws (retrospective).*

- 5.2 Details of these are provided in Table 2 below.
- 5.3 For completeness, details of those buildings at the site which already benefit from planning permission and are to be retained at the site are included at Appendix C.
- 5.4 The locations of the buildings in Table 2 and at Appendix C are shown on the Site Layout Plan and the Building Layout Plan, Plan numbers J0054597-22-04a and J0054597-22-05a.

**Table 2: Details of buildings for which permission is being sought**

| Building Reference | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Dimensions <sup>1</sup>                                                         | Photo                                                                                |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B5                 | <p><b>Store 1 (yellow)</b></p> <p>Store 1 is used for general storage purposes.</p> <p>It is a portacabin style structure.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>10.0m x 3.0m x 2.3m</p> <p>30m<sup>2</sup></p>                               |    |
| B6                 | <p><b>Store 2 (white)</b></p> <p>Store 2 is used for general storage purposes.</p> <p>It is a portacabin style structure located immediately adjacent to Store 1 (ref B5).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>10.0m x 3.0m x 2.3m</p> <p>30m<sup>2</sup></p>                               |   |
| B7                 | <p><b>Store 3 (relocated)</b></p> <p>Store 3 is used for general storage.</p> <p>It is a portacabin style structure.</p> <p>It benefits from PP ref: P2017/0036) but has been relocated approximately 20 metres to the north-east from its original location to enable a slightly larger staff parking area. Therefore, it is included within this application.</p> | <p>5.6m x 2.0m x 2.3m</p> <p>11.2m<sup>2</sup></p> <p>(Existing Floorspace)</p> |  |

<sup>1</sup> Dimensions are given as: Length x Width x Height (internal or eaves)

| Building Reference | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Dimensions <sup>1</sup>                          | Photo                                                                                |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B8                 | <p><b>Employee Welfare Facilities</b></p> <p>The building provides essential toilet facilities for those employees working at the application site.</p> <p>It is a portable steel container style structure.</p> <p>The block is connected to the water supply from a borehole on site, which also feeds into the farmhouse building. Foul drainage from the site toilets gravitates to an existing cess pit.</p> <p>The cess pit is periodically emptied by a licenced tanker for disposal off site at an appropriately licenced facility.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>4.0m x 3.0m x 2.3m</p> <p>12m<sup>2</sup></p> |    |
| B10                | <p><b>Jumbo Saw Shed</b></p> <p>The Jumbo Saw Shed is proposed to house the new 2.5 metre Jumbo Saw (a cutting saw), which is utilised to cut large blocks of Blue Pennant Sandstone extracted from the quarry. Sawing of such large blocks tends to take lengthy periods of time due to the durability of the stone, so specialist saws are required for this process. Furthermore, given the size of some blocks, it is more appropriate for the saw to be movable to enable multiple cuts to be made at different sections of the blocks.</p> <p>The saw sits on steel beams that rest on top of concrete block walls to the sides and to the rear, which enable the saw to travel side to side and forwards and backwards. The walls measure 8 metres by 7.4 metres.</p> <p>The Jumbo Saw Shed will have a roof canopy installed with 6.0 metre eaves height (to provide appropriate clearance for the travelling saw) which extends across from the Main Production Shed (ref B9) and is supported on a steel frame with steel box profile cladding of the same specification and colour as the main production shed. The roof canopy will extend beyond the concrete block walls to afford cover for operatives of the saw.</p> | <p>11.2m x 10m x 6m</p> <p>112m<sup>2</sup></p>  |  |

| Building Reference | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Dimensions <sup>1</sup>                              | Photo                                                                               |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                    | The total building footprint which will include the roof canopy extends to 11.2 metres by 10 metres.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                      |                                                                                     |
| B11                | <p><b>Wire Saw</b></p> <p>Similar to the Jumbo saw, the wire saw is employed to make multiple cuts into large blocks of Blue Pennant Sandstone. Due to the accuracy required as well as the time required to make the necessary cuts into the large blocks, the saw incorporates components that enable the blocks to be moved to suit the wire saw position required.</p> <p>Free standing cutting saw and infrastructure frame surrounded by safety fencing.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>10.0m x 7.5m</p> <p>75m<sup>2</sup></p>           |   |
| B15b               | <p><b>Saw Shed and Control Box</b></p> <p>The Saw Shed houses cutting saws mounted on steel frames that rest on the concrete floor of the building. The Control Box adjoins the northern end of the Saw Shed and contains the electrical control panel for the saws within the Saw Shed.</p> <p>The building is a steel framed structure with a domed slightly sloping roof. The roof and the upper section of the building is clad in corrugated steel sheets.</p> <p>The process water used by the saws within the building drains along bespoke drainage channels within the floor of the building into the settlement lagoon located to the south of the Special Cuts Shed (ref B05).</p> | <p>16.5m x 3.0m x 3.65m</p> <p>49.5m<sup>2</sup></p> |  |

## 6.0 SUMMARY

- 6.1 This planning application seeks retrospective planning permission to retain and a small number of buildings and plant which are an essential part of, or ancillary to, the extraction and processing of Blue Pennant Sandstone from Gwrhyd Quarry, which has been operational for more than 20 years.
- 6.2 The buildings are located within the existing complex of buildings and plant close to the entrance of the quarry and which spatially and visually form part of the established processing area.
- 6.3 The high quality of the Blue Pennant Sandstone extracted from Gwrhyd Quarry has resulted in a sustained demand for its use as paving, walling and masonry products such as windowsills, hearths, mantels all types of Flagstones.
- 6.4 To meet the continued demand for cut product, there has been a requirement to install additional specialist saws on site. Furthermore, each product type has its own unique production process, each of which requires employment of a range of specialist cutting equipment. For example, larger architectural products require the employment of the wire saw, which make accurate pre-determined cuts in large boulders, while smaller bespoke stone products require smaller saws to enable the smaller rock to be shaped into the appropriate dimensions with specialist cutting apparatus.
- 6.5 To facilitate a safe working environment, each saw has its own bespoke operator protection equipment in place, which can require large areas of additional space around the saw. Process water is also required for the cutting process and the additional room required for the collection and drainage of this process water into a closed loop circulation system is also taken account of when process buildings, including the Jumbo Saw Shed that are the subject to this application, are designed.
- 6.6 The enclosure of these saws within the Saw Sheds detailed in Table 2 above, has the benefit of providing both visual and acoustic screening of the stone cutting operations.
- 6.7 The welfare facility is required for the benefit of site personnel and has purposely been positioned close to all the production buildings for ease of access. The temporary and portable nature (i.e. steel lorryback style) of the welfare unit has regard to the fact that the quarry when exhausted will be restored back to agricultural use, at which point the welfare facility will be easy to disconnect and relocate from the application site.
- 6.8 The storage buildings are located away from the processing buildings to enable ease of access away from production machinery. As with the welfare facility, the temporary and portable nature (i.e. portacabins) of the storage buildings will enable easy relocation from the application site when the quarry is restored.
- 6.9 The ancillary development is fundamental to ongoing operations at Gwrhyd Specialist Stone Quarry and is appropriately located within it and, in conclusion, planning permission should be granted.

## APPENDICES

### **A Planning Application Form and Certificates**

- A.1 Application Form
- A.2 Certificates

**B    Application Plans**

| Plan Reference  | Title                |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| J0054597-22-04a | Location Plan        |
| J0054597-22-05a | Building Layout Plan |

## C Approved Buildings to be retained at the Site

| Building Reference | Description                                                                                                                                                       | Photo                                                                                 |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B1                 | <b>Main Site Office/Reception</b><br>Steel container building suspended on steel support structure with steel access stairs.<br>Approved under PP ref: P2017/0036 |    |
| B1                 | <b>Open Visitor Parking</b><br>No buildings.<br>Approved under PP ref: P2017/0036                                                                                 |   |
| B2 & B3            | <b>Farmhouse &amp; Stables</b><br>Pre-dates mineral permissions but is referenced in PP ref: P2010/0026                                                           |  |
| B4                 | <b>Welfare Building</b><br>Comprises 3 x interlinked portacabin buildings.<br>Approved under PP ref: P2017/0036                                                   |  |

| Building Reference | Description                                                                                                                                                                                              | Photo                                                                                 |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B9                 | <p><b>Main Production Shed</b></p> <p>Pre-dates mineral permissions but is referenced in PP ref: P2010/0026.</p>                                                                                         |    |
| B13                | <p><b>Storage shed</b></p> <p>Original farm buildings utilised for storage.</p> <p>Pre-dates mineral permissions but is referenced in PP ref: P2010/0026.</p>                                            |   |
| B15a               | <p><b>Special Cuts Shed</b></p> <p>Open fronted steel framed shed with sloping roof. Roof and walls are clad with steel box profile sheets. Concrete floor.</p> <p>Approved under PP ref: P2017/0036</p> |  |

