HRPC Representation about Application 22/00907/FULL

Retention of disused quarry for use as two firing ranges | Devon & Cornwall Constabulary Pondground Quarry Holcombe Rogus Devon.

Holcombe Rogus Parish Council (the Council) objects to this Application in its present form.

The Council understands that Devon and Cornwall Police have training obligations set by the Government and that this contributes to the safety of communities.

Since the last Permission to use Pondground Quarry as a Police Firearms’ training site expired in 2014, this Application should be considered as a new Application to be decided on its current Planning attributes.

Approximately one third of 35 local residents attending a Holcombe Rogus Parish Council Planning Committee meeting on 9th June expressed a desire for the cessation of the unauthorised firearms training at Pondground Quarry. This appeared to be a reaction to the current, increased firearms activity.

It has been noted that the intensified firing has created significant distress amongst school pupils in Holcombe Rogus and behavioural disturbance to animal stock nearer to the quarry.

In spite of what the Police Officers present on 9th June said, residents felt that there was more firing taking place at Pondground in the past two or three years of the unauthorised use of the site.

A resident presented a note of the frequency of firing since 2019 to support this view.

The Application asks for permission to fire between 9.00 and 17.00 on Mondays to Friday for an average of 3 days per week over 47 weeks a year; 141 days.

Paragraph 8 of the Applicant’s submitted Noise Management Plan refers to “Exceptional Circumstances” when “Devon and Cornwall Police may have to, from time to time, increase the frequency and duration of shooting, and indeed the type and number of weapons that are fired at Pondground Quarry.”

In the absence of a definition of “exceptional circumstances” this is unacceptable and has the potential to negate the requested duration and frequency stated in the Application.

The Application does not include a Noise Impact Assessment without which the effect on neighbouring properties can’t be judged.

Some nearby residents commissioned a professionally executed Noise Impact Assessment which has been included in the Application’s Associated Documents. When determining this Application the Council urges Mid Devon District Council to take note of its conclusion;

“…that the noise from the Police’s firearms’ training at Pondground has a significant adverse impact on local residents. The usual action to this in the NPPF would be to “avoid”; refuse permission if not mitigated.”

Pondground Quarry is within 200 metres of the Grand Western Canal; a Conservation Area and Local Nature Reserve. The effects of firearms’ training in the quarry may well have a deleterious influence on this sensitive area. Before determining this Application consideration should be given to calling for an Environmental Impact Assessment to be submitted by the Applicant.

The Council also questions the need for using a site that necessitates such long journeys for many Police Officers being trained. A site nearer the centre of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary’s area would be more logical. Could the Police explore the possibility of finding a more central site to improve their carbon footprint?

The Council objects to this Application in its present form since it fails to address the impact on the locality.