

Grahame French  
Shropshire Council  
Shirehall  
Abbey Foregate  
SHREWSBURY  
SY2 0ND

Your Ref:  
Our Ref: gc\_130913\_Lea Quarry

13 September 2013

Dear Grahame

**13/03059/FUL Erection of a wood chip storage building; erection of a timber chipping building to process wood chip; installation of photovoltaic panels to both buildings Lea Quarry, Presthoke, Much Wenlock, Shropshire, TF13 6DQ**

**13/03159/FUL Erection of extension to the existing wood storage building; Infill existing storm water balancing pond and erection of extension to the existing drying shed; installation of 75 additional photovoltaic solar panels Lea Quarry, Presthoke, Much Wenlock, Shropshire, TF13 6DQ**

**13/03060/OUT Outline application for the erection of a visitor centre with parking facilities and new vehicular and pedestrian access (all matters reserved)**

**13/03243/FUL The continued use of the external timber storage areas as approved by planning approval reference 12/03034/FUL**

These applications have been considered by the membership of the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and by its Management Board at a meeting on 12 September.

**The AONB Partnership considers the piecemeal approach to planning on this important site highly unsatisfactory, and objects to these applications pending the production of a master plan indicating clearly the overall extent of intended development on the site, its environmental impact and all mitigation measures.**

Notwithstanding this, the proposed new build in the current applications amounts in its own right to major development and we would, therefore, expect the exceptional circumstances required in para 116 of NPPF to be fully demonstrated – which does not appear to be evident in the current documentation.

Furthermore, the design and materials of the new buildings are of an industrial nature and do not appear to take into account either the sensitivities of the location or recommendations of the AONB Partnership's Design Guidance for Agricultural Buildings. We believe, for instance, that the use of timber cladding and specific design of roofs and eaves will be vital to minimise the visual impact of all buildings on the site.

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The proposed visitor centre lies just outside the AONB. While we support this kind of development in principle and have no objection to its proposed location, the building envisaged in the application is relatively large. The proposed operating model of the centre is unclear. However, in our experience the provision of educational visits and visitor information invariably requires a substantial commitment of resources, and in all but very high volume sites can usually be accommodated within low-key facilities.

We are concerned that a building with an unnecessarily large impact could be erected without adequate consideration of its operation and then remain under-utilised – or subsequently converted for alternative uses on the basis of such under-utilisation. This would clearly be undesirable.

We also believe that the design and construction of all such visitor buildings should demonstrate the highest standards of sustainability, which the proposed steel construction and roofing material manifestly do not.

With regard to timber storage and infilling of the pond, we are unclear whether the protected species issues have been fully addressed, and are concerned that the County Ecologist's recommendations are fully adhered to before any permission is granted.

Yours sincerely

George Chancellor  
Chair, Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership