



**APPENDIX F EAST SUSSEX CC EIA SCREENING OPINION**



Transport and Environment

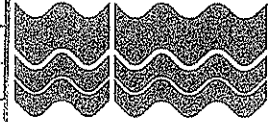
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30 August 2012

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PS/2012/1081  
AR/AT

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Dear Mr Nicoll

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)  
(ENGLAND & WALES) REGULATIONS 2011**

Review of mineral planning permission MR/6. British Gypsum Limited, Brightling and Mountfield Mines, East Sussex.

The County Council has now formally adopted its Screening Opinion for the proposed development at the above site. The Opinion has concluded that, based on the information provided, the proposed development does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment.

This decision does not indicate the acceptability of the proposal in environmental terms and the Council can require further details or information in connection with environmental considerations to enable it to determine the application.

Yours sincerely

  
Tony Cook  
Head of Planning

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**SELECTION CRITERIA FOR SCREENING  
SCHEDULE 2 DEVELOPMENT**

**Site Address:** British Gypsum Ltd, Brightling and Mountfield Mines, East Sussex.

**Description of Development:** Review of Mineral Planning Permission reference MR/6.

*The following are the selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 developments, as set out in Schedule 3 of the 2011 Regulations.*

**Size of the Development:**

Does the proposal exceed sizes suggested in 2/99?  Yes  No

Is the proposal significantly in excess of 2/99?  Yes  No

**Further Details/Comments:** *The development is considered as 2(b) underground mining and is located within the High Weald AONB, a sensitive area under the above regulations, and therefore requires screening. 2/99 indicates that all new underground mines will generally require EIA and also that other extractive industries such as sand, clay and gravel are more likely to require EIA where they would cover over 15 hectares or involve the extraction of over 30,000 tonnes of mineral per year. Although neither of these descriptions accurately relates to the ROMP process, the extent of the MR/6 permission is over 4000 hectares and extraction is currently around 150,000 tonnes per annum (tpa), although it has approached 1 million tpa at peak output during the 1990s.*

**Cumulation with other Development:**

Will the proposal be undertaken in conjunction with other development?  Yes  No

**Details:** *Established activities at the Robertsbridge Works site near Mountfield will continue however the Mountfield Mine was closed and concrete capped in the 1990s and extraction of gypsum now takes place at Brightling only. Other activities at the Brightling Mine site are ancillary to the extraction of gypsum, although the transportation of the mineral to the Works site via overland conveyor is covered by a separate planning permission.*

Will there be any cumulative impact?  Yes  No

**Details:** *The extraction of gypsum at Brightling and transportation via overland conveyor to Mountfield provides raw materials for use at the Works site. Although at present this is only a proportion due to the ongoing importation and use of desulphogypsum and also foreign gypsum, the Brightling Mine therefore contributes to increased noise, dust and vehicle movements at the Robertsbridge Works site.*

**Use of Natural Resources:**

Will any natural resources be lost?  Yes  No

Details: *The continuation of mineral extraction activities would by definition lead to the loss of gypsum and anhydrite reserves. At current extraction rates (around 150,000 tpa) the applicant considers there to be in excess of 100 years reserves within the area covered by MR/6. Production would need to increase more than three-fold for reserves to be depleted by 2042. No additional above ground development is proposed.*

Will their loss be significant?  Yes  No

Why: *The loss of these reserves is not significant environmentally as the "room and pillar" method of extraction ensures long term geological stability.*

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**Production of waste:**

Will the proposal generate waste?  Yes  No

Will this be significant in terms of impact on the site?  Yes  No

Will this be significant in terms of off-site impacts?  Yes  No

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**Pollution and Nuisances:**

Will the proposal cause any pollution/nuisance?  Yes  No

Will it be short term (during construction)?  Yes  No

Will it be medium term (first 12 months of use)?  Yes  No

Will it be longer term?  Yes  No

Are the impacts significant?  Yes  No

Details: *The bulk of activity occurs deep underground and does not affect other land uses. Blasting activities appear to have no adverse impact on residents within the MR/6 red line. Above-ground activities are limited and take place near the mine adit which is approximately 400 metres from the nearest residential properties.*

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**Risk of Accidents:**

A higher than average risk of accident during construction?  Yes  No

A higher than average risk of accident during operation?  Yes  No

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**Location of Development:**

Does the site have an existing land use?  Yes  No

Details: *The site has permission for winning and working of gypsum, as set out in MR/6. The Robertsbridge Works is also located within the site and has permission for a gypsum processing and plasterboard manufacturing facility and associated development.*

Is there an abundance of natural resources in the area?  Yes  No

Are they of high quality?  Yes  No

Do they have regenerative qualities?  Yes  No

Can the natural environment absorb the proposal?  Yes  No

*The site is located within the High Weald AONB and contains a number of SSSIs, an SNCI and large areas of Ancient Woodland. However, with the exception of the area immediately around the Brightling Mine adit, all development takes place between 100 and 300 metres underground and has no impact on the landscape. It is noted that an Environmental Assessment or Statement was not required at the time of the MR/6 review.*

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**Extent of the Impacts:**

Will the impacts extend beyond the site?  Yes  No

How far beyond the site? *This is dependent on the routing of vehicle movements to/from the site. Some indirect impacts including noise and potentially dust along the route of the conveyor and at Robertsbridge Works site but these activities are covered by separate planning permissions.*

What size of population will be affected? *Likely to be small.*

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**Transfrontier Impacts:**

Are there any impacts beyond the national boundary?  Yes  No

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**Magnitude and Complexity of the Impacts:**

Are the impacts of greater scale or complexity than other applications?  Yes  No

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**Probability of the Impacts:**

Are the impacts very likely to occur (100%)?  Yes  No

Is there less chance of them occurring (50%)?  Yes  No

Is there limited chance of them occurring (25%)?  Yes  No

Which impacts, if any, are very likely to occur?

*The loss of gypsum and anhydrite reserves, the continued impact on local ecology and landscape quality, the continued vehicle movements and the indirect impacts on the conveyor route and the Robertsbridge Works site are all likely to occur.*

*Despite no complaints whatsoever to date, there remains a small possibility that blasting operations may cause some nuisance in the future.*

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**Duration, Frequency and Reversibility of the Impacts:**

Will the impacts last beyond the construction phase?  Yes  No

Will the impacts be frequent?  Yes  No

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Are any impacts reversible?

Yes  No

Which ones: *The impacts of the associated vehicle movements and the indirect impacts on the conveyor route and the Robertsbridge Works site will cease once extraction has ceased.*

Are any impacts irreversible?

Yes  No

Which ones: *The loss of gypsum and anhydrite reserves is irreversible.*

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**Conclusion:**

Is an Environmental Statement required?

Yes  No

Further Comments: *Although the extraction of gypsum and anhydrite is a very intensive activity, the substantive processes take place between 100 and 300 metres underground and have either no impact or a negligible impact above ground. The extraction methods ensure long term geological stability whilst the overland conveyor negates the need for HGV movements. Above-ground activities are therefore limited and the site around the Brightling adit is effectively isolated from residential properties. An Environmental Statement or Assessment was not required at the time the mineral permissions were reviewed for MR/6. Despite the scale of the development and the sensitive location, although the proposal will have environmental effects these are unlikely to be significant within the meaning of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.*

Case Officer: ANDREW THOMPSON

Authorised by: TONY COOK

Signature: 

Signature: 

Date: 30/08/12

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