

Further submission from the Southern Whangarei Action Group (SWAG) on GBC-Winstone Ltd. Application to place overburden on the Pegram Block



The Whangarei District Council file reference is LU1700100.

This submission presented by Graham Barton on behalf of SWAG.

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1. Dust.

TSP monitoring¹ does not explain why outdoor surfaces (eg outdoor furniture, vehicles) in nearby Acacia Park properties attract noticeable levels of dirt and dust. The Ministry for the Environment is quite clear: Quarrying is one of the human activities that cause air pollution.

Overburden placement (i.e. all activities as described in the Dust Management Assessment) on the Pegram Block is likely to cause an increase in the dust nuisance experienced by nearby residents.

Dust is not only a nuisance - it's a health hazard.

Extracted from World Health Organisation (WHO) Fact Sheet September 2016 - Ambient Air Quality & Health² -

“ Particulate Matter (PM) affects more people than any other pollutant. Mineral dust is a major component of all PM. The most health-damaging particles are those with a diameter of 10 microns or less, ($\leq PM_{10}$), which can penetrate and lodge deep inside the lungs. Exposure to particles contributes to the risk of developing cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, as well as of lung cancer. Small particulate pollution has health impacts even at very low concentrations – indeed no threshold has been identified below which no damage to health is observed. ”

Although — “ ... the application includes a Dust Management Assessment in Appendix 12 of the application. That assessment confirms that the proposal will comply with the permitted activity standard under Section 9.1.4 of the Regional Air Quality Plan for Northland. That permitted activity standard requires that: ‘(a) The discharge shall not result in any offensive or objectionable dust deposition, or any noxious or dangerous levels of airborne particulate matter, beyond the boundary of the subject property.’...”

— any level of airborne small particulate matter ($\leq \text{PM}_{10}$) is a danger to health. The smaller the particle the greater the health risk. The AECOM assessment¹ tells us that the existing average 24-hour average PM_{10} concentrations is less than $8\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. The data sample of Otaika PM_{10} monitoring (Figure 1.) covers only 34 days. On 5 of those days the concentration of PM_{10} exceeded $10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. One day was over $15\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Almost twice the average. Averaging a data sample which may contain very high and very low numbers can be misleading. (If I have the car headlights on half the time and off half the time is the road lit on average with one headlight?). The AECOM assessment provides no assurance that the 24-hour average concentration of airborne small particulates ($\leq \text{PM}_{10}$) produced by overburden placement will not increase; only that it is highly unlikely to produce a more than five-fold increase. Very large quarry trucks (not road vehicles) using the haul roads may create airborne PM as small as 2.5 microns ($\text{PM}_{2.5}$).

Such dust cannot be contained within the boundary of the Pegram Block. What would be a reasonably safe distance from the Pegram Block boundary to avoid the adverse health effects of PM when the earthwork seasons are in progress over the next 35 years?

WDC has a smoke-free policy on sports grounds in the interests of protecting the environment and everyone's health³. WHO has designated airborne PM a 'Group 1 Carcinogen' - as is secondhand tobacco smoke. It seems to us if smoking is banned on Otaika Sports Park then so should an activity that may result in any increase in particulate pollution; especially small respirable particles ($\leq \text{PM}_{10}$). Particles of less than 100 microns in size are inhale-able. Is it acceptable in 2018 to subject young people playing sport to the possibility of ingesting more dust ($< \text{PM}_{100}$) than can reasonably be avoided? We can never totally eliminate the danger; but if it's reasonable to have a smoke-free policy then it's reasonable to have a dust-free policy, which means overburden placement should be restricted to the Active Zone.

And so the properties adjacent to the Pegram block should also not suffer any decrease in the ambient air quality in terms of the concentrations of airborne PM caused by new mineral extraction activities. Some adjacent properties are home to families with small children who are particularly vulnerable.

2. Landscape and Visual Effects.

It is clear from the Boffa Miskell Assessment and the evidence of Mike Farrow that a significant number of established residences adjacent to the Pegram Block would, as a result of the consent being granted, experience very long term, high impact, adverse visual effects that cannot be remedied or

mitigated. Indeed proposed mitigation measures could add to the adverse effects by the adoption of a “shelter-belt” approach using exotic screening in a 10 metre boundary strip.

Quarrying is generally large-scale, long-term and highly intrusive resulting in permanent changes to the landscape. (English Tourist Board)

3. Noise.

We would like the noise limits across the site for both enabling and general works to be the limits specified for the MEA area (ME3 overlay 55dB L_{Aeq}) and the countryside zone (50dB L_{Aeq}) in the District Plan. If this is not practicable because, for example, work involves frequently crossing the boundary then the Countryside limit should prevail. We note that Mr Runcie recommends the ME3 overlay limit should prevail but that Marshall Day (Mr Wilkening; March 2018; Para 8.39) believe ME3 Overlay noise limits are not achievable:

“I have predicted noise levels for the continuous use of the smaller equipment, and have found that, while noise levels could be reduced by 2 to 4 decibels, compliance with the 55 dB L_{Aeq} noise limit would not be achievable due to the close proximity to some houses.....”.

Noise is very subjective; not everyone is affected in the same way. So there is no doubt that allowing construction noise limits for the enabling works would likely result in unreasonable adverse noise effects for surrounding residents. (Mr Runcie; 14 March 2018; Para 5.13). SWAG are totally opposed to any possibility of unreasonable adverse noise effects on nearby residents.

4. Summary.

The proposal would result in millions of tonnes of unwanted quarry waste being dumped in an operation that would not be out of place in a 3rd-world country. It would be a very visible, dirty, dusty, noisy very long term operation in close proximity (<500 meters) to more than a score of homes in Acacia Park and Smeatons. Does this exemplify care for people, communities and the environment? Or is it the CPO (Cheapest Practicable Option)?

Mr Lines maintains that such an operation is not unusual (Para 11.9): “Large fills such as that proposed for the Pegram Block are not an unusual part of the operations of a quarry or opencast mine. Fills such as this are readily constructed in other parts of the country.” Yet no examples have been given. Mr Wilkening asserts (para 8.41) that construction noise limits should apply since it is - “unreasonable to apply the operational noise limits to activities

that are not part of the normal operation of an overburden disposal area.” So is this application usual or unusual?

As far as we are aware no other new overburden disposal project has seen so much material deposited so close to so many existing neighbouring residences over so long a timescale - with the added prospect of more to come. We know this proposal will not accommodate all the overburden of the Otaika quarry; it opens the door to the real possibility that the Pegram Block will be in continual use for overburden placement for generations to come, even into the next century.

Those residents with views of the Pegram Block enjoy the relative tranquility of living near typical countryside on the edge of a small city with the attributes and characteristics listed by Mr Hartstone (para 8.13) in his quote from Chapter 5 of the District Plan. For those residents the high amenity value of a rural outlook will be unreasonably adversely affected for decades. Will their health suffer in years to come because of small airborne PM from haul roads - dust they can't even see? Similar health concerns could be shared by users of Otaika Sports Ground. Would we see young people playing 90 minutes of football when quarry trucks are using the unsealed haul roads (perhaps 50 or more traffic movements) and the wind is blowing from the west?

Will anyone suffer hearing loss that could possibly be associated with noise from the heavy equipment on the Pegram Block - or will they simply be unreasonably adversely affected? Will residents' enjoyment of their property be unreasonably compromised because the adverse effects of overburden placement mean the Pegram Block no longer resembles a farm. What will it really be like living within sight of an unsustainable dinosaur industry? Shouldn't the planning and regulatory system ensure that incompatible land uses don't adversely impact each other? If there are incompatible land uses which risk adverse impact shouldn't they be separated by an adequate and permanent buffer?

SWAG strongly objects to the application for the reasons stated above.

In the unlikely event consent is granted; perhaps the following conditions could be considered.

1. No Saturday working (Otaika Sports Park is primarily used at weekends)
2. Sprinklers installed for use on all haul roads.
3. The requirement to cease work when dwellings may be adversely affected by dust be expanded to include Otaika Sports Park (when in use).

4. Continuous dust monitoring ($\leq PM_{10}$) at several points on the Pegram Block boundary with audible alarms (like a tsunami warning) if dust reaches potentially dangerous concentrations.
5. The speed limit on all haul roads set at 10kph. to reduce dust.

References

- 1 - AECOM Memo Assessment of Off-site Effects associated with Overburden placement on the Pegram Block- 25 Sept. 2017
- 2 - <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs313/en/>
- 3 - <http://www.wdc.govt.nz/FacilitiesandRecreation/Parks/Pages/default.aspx>