

Controversial plans to expand major quarry in Edinburgh approved

Controversial plans to expand a major quarry in Edinburgh have been approved despite the concerns local residents.

The Ravelrig quarry, located west of Balerno, has been granted planning permission to start mining the rock under a parcel of land to the south of its current site.

It came after a debate which raised concerns about the long-term impact on local residents – with councillors ultimately saying they felt the material in the quarry was vital to helping solve the housing crisis..

Opened in 1984, the quarry has almost exhausted the rock under its current location, with the site's manager saying that mining would have to cease within a couple years if the new planning permission was not granted.

Stephen Cowan, a manager at Tarmac, which owns the quarry, told councillors: "This is very much a resource question we have here at Ravelrig. We'll run out in two or three years, and then the site will then be restored.

"There will be little chance of going back once the site is restored. It's almost infeasible. The time is now to say, 'is there any more we can get out?'

"That's not to say that you should just permit anything at any

quarry. The extension we've designed makes sure that the blasting doesn't come any closer to Balerno."

He said that the expansion to the quarry would keep it running for up to 24 years. Under the planning permission for the site, the quarry would then be rewilded over a period of two years.

Tarmac produced an animated video for councillors, which showed how the site would be expanded and later restored.

During the expansion, a treeline adjacent to the A70 will be widened and a temporary earth berm will be built, in order to hide the sight of construction equipment from the surrounding area.

Once the quarry is deep enough for construction equipment to be out of site, the berm will be removed.

The restored quarry will be turned into a small lake, with lookouts, circular paths and bike trails around it. Cowan said informational signs could be produced to help explain the history of the site.

Conservative councillor Joanna Mowat, who represents the city centre, said: "I think the need for aggregate, the need for materials to build in a city with a growing economy, a housing crisis and an identified need for 40,000 new homes is still there.

"If we have quarries that are local, that can provide that material, it's very good principle that we provide that material as close to the point of use as possible.

David Key, SNP councillor for Fountainbridge/Craiglockhart, said: "This is clearly a relatively small expansion in a very deep well to provide 24 years of mining.

"And it's also a great community engagement as well. The restoration plan is feasible. I'm very happy to support this."

Councillors approved the planning permission, which officers recommended, unanimously.

Some locals in Balerno have raised concerns over the expansion, citing worries that the expansion will make the blasting more perceptible.

Edinburgh Live reported that one local, John Watson, said: "For people here, if they hit the wrong rock seam then it could start giving people issues.

"You're just as well giving in to it because you're not going to stop it. Nobody wants it but I can't see you being able to stop it."

Cowan told councillors that the expansion to the quarrying site had been designed to make sure blasting did not come closer to Balerno than it already was, demonstrating this to them with a map.

At the same council meeting, planning permission for an expansion of the Bonnington Mains quarry, which officers also recommended approving, was denied.

Councillors cited local concerns and a lack of confidence over restoration plans in denying the expansion planning permission.

Also earlier in the meeting, the Ravelrig quarry was given permission to amend parts of its earlier planning permission to increase the power of the blasts used in mining.

By Joseph Sullivan Local Democracy Reporter