



The Coal
Authority



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For the Attention of: Ms H. Leach – Case Officer
Bury Council

[By Email: development.control@bury.gov.uk]

4 September 2023

Dear Ms Leach

PLANNING APPLICATION: 70002

Demolition of existing school buildings/temporary leisure centre and erection of a two storey temporary school building, external landscaping and associated site infrastructure at Site of Radcliffe Leisure Centre, Spring Lane, Radcliffe, Manchester, M26 2SZ

Thank you for your consultation letter of 18 August 2023 seeking the views of the Coal Authority on the above planning application.

The Coal Authority is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Dep Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. As a statutory consultee, the Coal Authority has a duty to respond to planning applications and development plans in order to protect the public and the environment in mining areas.

The Coal Authority Response: CLARIFICATION REQUIRED

The application site falls partly within the defined Development High Risk Area; therefore within the application site and surrounding area there are coal mining features and hazards which need to be considered in relation to the determination of this planning application.

More specifically, the Coal Authority's information indicates that the north western part of the site lies in an area where historic unrecorded coal mining is likely to have taken place at shallow depth. Voids and broken ground associated with such workings can pose a risk of ground instability and may give rise to the emission of mine gases.

Whilst it would appear that the proposed temporary school building may be located outside the Development High Risk Area, we note that the applicant has nevertheless submitted a Desk Study (May 2022, prepared Geotechnics Limited) in support of their application. We note that this report was produced to inform proposals for a new permanent school across the wider former leisure centre site.

Based on a review of relevant sources of coal mining and geological information, the Desk Study identifies the potential for shallow mining related instability and subsidence relating to unrecorded past mine entries and former workings. It goes on to recommend that investigations should be carried out at the site in order to determine the presence of shallow coal seams and any unrecorded mine entries or workings in the vicinity of proposed new school buildings.

The application is also accompanied by a subsequent Preliminary Ground Investigation Report (August 2022, prepared Geotechnics Limited), again to inform proposals for a new permanent school. This report indicates that intrusive investigations have been carried out at the site, including the drilling of boreholes to a maximum depth of 51.50m bgl.

The report advises that whilst coal was encountered in the boreholes, no evidence of any shallow coal mine workings was recorded. However, it does not provide a definitive conclusion that confirms that shallow coal mining legacy does not pose a risk of instability to development proposed at the site.

The Coal Authority's Planning & Development notes the findings of the investigations undertaken across the wider site. However, we must highlight that none of the boreholes drilled were in the locality of the part of the site where development is currently proposed. The applicant's technical consultants should therefore be requested to provide clarification as to whether or not they are satisfied that the results of the investigations detailed in the Preliminary Ground Investigation Report are sufficient to conclude that the site is safe and stable for the scheme of development currently under consideration by the LPA.

The Coal Authority would be pleased to receive for further consultation and comment any additional information submitted by the applicant regarding the above.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

James Smith

James Smith *BSc. (Hons), Dip.URP, MRTPI*
Planning and Development Manager

Disclaimer

The above consultation response is provided by The Coal Authority as a Statutory Consultee and is based upon the latest available data on the date of the response, and electronic consultation records held by The Coal Authority since 1 April 2013. The comments made are also based upon only the information provided to The Coal Authority by the Local Planning Authority and/or has been published on the Council's website for consultation purposes in relation to this specific planning application. The views and conclusions contained in this response may be subject to review and amendment by The Coal Authority if additional or new data/information (such as a revised Coal Mining Risk Assessment) is provided by the Local Planning Authority or the Applicant for consultation purposes.

In formulating this response The Coal Authority has taken full account of the professional conclusions reached by the competent person who has prepared the Coal Mining Risk Assessment or other similar report. In the event that any future claim for liability arises in relation to this development The Coal Authority will take full account of the views, conclusions and mitigation previously expressed by the professional advisers for this development in relation to ground conditions and the acceptability of development.