### Key Issues:
In 2018 Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions UK Ltd prepared an Environmental Statement on behalf of Tarmac, who were seeking to re-open a partially worked limestone quarry - Cornforth Quarry - in County Durham. Whilst the quarry had the benefit of two extant, but very old planning consents, before working could recommence an updated, modern set of planning conditions was required to be submitted to and approved by the Minerals Planning Authority (in this case, Durham County Council), via a process known as ‘Review of Old Mineral Permission’ (ROMP).

The Environment Act 1995 sets out the legislative requirements for re-starting an old quarry, which includes adhering to the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, requiring the preparation of an EIA to inform the draft schedule of updated conditions. This case study considers how the provisions of EIA legislation are applied to a very discrete area of planning law, where the principle of development is not in question (the approval is already in place), but rather how the assessment process is used to inform and shape updated planning conditions to ensure that the site is worked in an environmentally acceptable and responsible manner.

### Purpose of the project:
- To permit the re-opening of Cornforth Quarry – an old, partially worked limestone quarry originally granted planning permission in 1947 and 1962 – there was a requirement to agree an updated, modern set of planning conditions.
- Submission of an updated schedule of conditions including restoration masterplan must be underpinned by an Environmental Impact Assessment.

### Description of the project:
- Re-commencement of quarrying operations at Cornforth Quarry in County Durham to extract ~10.5 million tonnes (mt) of aggregate over ~17.5 years.
- Quarry covers an area of 121 ha, straddling the A1(M), which was built after planning consent was originally issued.
- Site already partially quarried with extraction operations last taking place ~30 years ago.
- Large parts of the site had been allowed to naturally regenerate.
- Former quarried parts of the site used as a testing ground for a construction vehicle company.
- Site located in close proximity to the village of West Cornforth, with the nearest residential receptors being located ~200 m away.
- Quarry located in an area with a strong history of limestone extraction.
EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt:
Legislation associated with the Review of Old Mineral Consents in England is complex and cuts across several other areas of planning and associated environmental regulation. One such area is the need to prepare and submit a fully scoped EIA when preparing an updated schedule of planning conditions. However, unlike ‘regular’ planning applications, where EIA is used to inform whether a development will have significant adverse effects and therefore, whether the principle of the development is permissible, EIA associated with a ROMP review submission has a subtly different focus. With ROMP submissions, the principle of the development is not in question. The site has planning consent which cannot be removed without full compensation being paid to the mineral operator by the MPA. As such, the EIA process is used to demonstrate that a specified schedule of conditions will allow a site to be worked in a manner which would not give rise to any significant adverse effects. Notwithstanding this subtle difference, Wood E&IS’s experience has been that the EIA scope cannot be reduced / minimised simply because planning consent is in place. Indeed, the nature of the site in this case study – a naturally regenerated former quarry – meant that some environmental disciplines were wide in scope and complex to assess e.g. biodiversity. Wood E&IS’s involvement in the Cornforth ROMP EIA has also demonstrated that the EIA process has an even more focused role in designing how such sites can be worked in an acceptable manner. For example, given the close proximity of some residential receptors (which had been built after the consent of mineral extraction), the blasting assessment was used to ‘test’ the acceptability of a range of blasting design options including how far extraction should stand-off from the housing. The option that gave rise to least impact was designed into the site’s working method and associated blasting conditions drafted to reflect this.

In summary, the key learning point is that even though the principle of development is established and accepted, EIA was at the heart of designing an acceptable scheme for working of the quarry.

Lessons learnt continued:

Contact details
The contact details of the author of this case study are as follows:

- Mrs Claire Brown
- Technical Director, Wood Environment and Infrastructure UK Ltd
- Claire.brown@woodplc.com or 01743 342084 / 07975 720091
- Claire acted as planning advisor and assisted with EIA co-ordination.

For access to more EIA case studies and hundreds of non-technical summaries of Environmental Statements visit:
https://www.iema.net/eia-quality-mark/eia-quality-mark-case-studies