# EIA Quality Mark Case Study

## Boxgrove Quarry Restoration

### Key Issues –
- Pre-Application Advice.
- Landscape & Visual Impact.
- Regulation 19 Requests.
- Public Inquiry.

### Purpose of the project
Boxgrove Quarry is a former mineral working in West Sussex. The site was left unrestored following completion of the extraction of hoggin. Inert Recycling (UK) Ltd purchased the quarry with the intention of restoring the site with imported inert materials and returning the land to a mixed use of agricultural grazing, woodland, and wetland. It was also intended to operate an inert recycling facility on site during the restoration period.

### Description of the project
The restoration of Boxgrove Quarry will take five years to complete and during that time the site will manage approximately 1 million tonnes of inert waste. The site is located off the A285 in the village of Halnaker in West Sussex. To the north of the A285 is the boundary of the South Downs National Park. Distance views into the development site can achieved from Halnaker Hill and Long Down. A public footpath crosses the haul road at the entrance to the recycling facility.
**EIA Learning Outcomes**

**Lessons learnt**

A planning appeal into the refusal of West Sussex County Council to grant permission for the restoration of Boxgrove Quarry with the operation of an ancillary recycling facility was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate following a four day Public Inquiry. A number of lessons have been learnt during the course of this project which will be of value going forward. Some relate directly to the EIA itself whilst other planning matters are nevertheless important in shaping the Environmental Statement.

The Inspector was critical of two aspects of the scheme that had been arrived at following pre-application discussions with the planning authority, namely the siting of the recycling area away from the main quarry and the retention of screening bunds from the historic mineral operation.

A landscape and visual impact assessment was undertaken and formed part of the Environmental Statement submitted with the planning application. Unfortunately concerns from the landscape officer regarding the scheme (based on a perceived lack of information) did not become apparent to the applicant until the production of the planning committee report just prior to determination. However, despite being aware of these concerns of its officer it did not lead to a formal Regulation 19 request from the planning authority at any stage during the determination process. As part of the planning appeal process a new landscape and visual impact assessment was undertaken to address the concerns of the landscape officer. This formed part of the evidence of the appellant’s landscape witness.

During consideration of the appeal documents the Planning Inspectorate issued a Regulation 19 request calling for additional landscape and visual impact assessment of the area where the site office was to be sited. Despite the appellant’s landscape witness not identifying any significant landscape or visual impact associated with the proposed development the Inspector dismissed the appeal reasoning that the visual impact of on site HGV movements from viewpoints within the South Downs would spoil enjoyment of the National Park but not prejudice its purposes.

For future projects it has been learnt that pre-application advice for projects of this scale needs to be consultative across a range of key officers. Additionally applicants and planning authorities should be careful to follow EIA procedure as set out in Regulation 19 (now 22) to ensure the applicant is formally requested to provide additional information ahead of reaching determination. Finally the differing opinions between each of the appellant, the planning authority, and the planning inspector on landscape and visual issues highlight the complexities of assessment in this sphere when personal subjectivity allows for differing outcomes when following an agreed best practice methodology.

**Contact details**

Adrian Lynham  
Associate Director, WYG  
adrian.lynham@wyg.com  
023 8028 3226

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