

Brandy Hill Quarry Expansion

Social and economic

As a resident of Brandy Hill for some 20 years, I have seen a steady increase in the number of quarry trucks on Brandy Hill Drive.

When we first moved to the area, to escape the traffic of Newcastle city, we had relatively few trucks by today's numbers, and enjoyed free movement along Brandy Hill Drive along with pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. Sadly, with the increased truck movements and extended quarry operating hours, it is no longer safe to use this road as we have in the past, and the reduced facility has had an impact on locals and visitors alike.

I moved my family to Brandy Hill for the safe, rural lifestyle, and I'm sure the other 700 odd local residents of Brandy Hill reside here for the same reasons, however, this lifestyle has eroded with the increase in quarry traffic and will be further eroded if the proposed expansion is approved.

Property values are, of course, impacted with a degraded living environment.

Traffic and Transport

Brandy Hill Drive is a relatively narrow, two-lane road with no road shoulders to speak of and only a few refuge areas, and these are bus stops, of sorts, inadequate for the purpose and risky for the users, our school children. In addition to using the bus stops, to get to the stops many children are forced to walk along the edge of the road, as there are few footpath areas. One such section of the road is a narrow culvert with a metre or two of shoulder and a steep embankment either side offering no chance escape should a vehicle wander slightly, and children are forced to walk this increasingly dangerous route daily.

The quarry exiting immediately onto a 100km per hour cross street, Clarencetown Road, is absolutely ludicrous given the time it takes for a quarry truck to cross the intersection and the lack of visibility west bound vehicles on Clarencetown Road have of the quarry exit, due to a rise in the road's surface. I'm led to believe it takes a loaded truck around 20 seconds to cross the intersection and a vehicle traveling west at 100km per hour has 6 seconds of reaction time, at best. Statistically, this situation is an accident that will happen.

Any increase in truck movements will, indisputably, lead to an increase in the likelihood of an incident, and an incident with a loaded B Double quarry truck will be a serious one.

The proposition of having trucks on the road 24hrs per day and 7 days per week is, as I'm sure Hansen realises, self-defeating. The number of trucks proposed will severely degrade the road surface in a short time frame, especially in wet weather, this damage will need to be repaired constantly to maintain a satisfactory road surface.

The increased frequency of road works and the associated 40kph speed zones will slow truck movements considerably thereby diminishing any advantage the additional time frame for movements, afforded.

As a motorcyclist, I am familiar with the dangers a poor road surface creates, especially at night. Dodging potholes and trucks at night is a recipe for disaster.

Noise and Vibration

Although our house is situated some distance from the quarry, we are in a direct line of site and often feel the effects of blasting i.e. rattling windows.

As the quarry end of Brandy Hill Drive runs through a hollow, the noise of laden and empty trucks is made worse by the echo this gully creates. It takes several minutes to traverse this section of the road and in all likelihood, the proposed increase in trucks will see several vehicles on this section of road at the one time. With no respite in vehicle movements, even at night, this is of great concern.

Brandy Hill Drive has a poor road surface and is clearly struggling with current traffic levels. The number of potholes and patches evidences this. An increase in the number of heavy vehicle movements as proposed in the expansion will, without doubt, destroy the surface in a very short space of time and a poor road surface creates more truck noise.

Dust and Air Quality

In Brandy Hill, we have enjoyed air quality that has seen fungus and lichen thrive; good indicators of air quality.

The increase in diesel trucks will be a threat to this air quality.

Our area is subject to strong winds that often last for extended periods. Can the quarry guarantee that they can contain the dust in the large area they plan to clear, with their proposed "water spraying"?

Visual

The proposed number of trucks on our roads all day, every day, will be visually and emotionally draining.

Our area is zoned Rural / Residential and not heavy industry.

In summary, what we residents can look forward to should approval be granted:

1. Diminished use of Brandy Hill Drive, surrounding roads and facilities
2. Greater threat to lives of road users be they drivers or pedestrians
3. An increase in the danger of accidents involving our school children
4. Driving on constantly deteriorating and poorly maintained road surfaces
5. Greater frequency of road works and truck lineups at these works
6. Lines of slow moving trucks on 80, 90 and 100kph roads and the associated risk of accident caused by overtaking drivers.
7. Decreased air quality with increases in diesel emissions and quarry dust
8. House and property values lessened
9. Sleep deprivation
10. Relentless truck sightings and noise

I strongly urge the Department of Planning and Environment to favour the welfare of the residents of Brandy Hill and surrounding areas, over Hansen's greed and blatant disregard for so many aspects of our lives, and disallow this expansion.

To approve such a one sided application would, in my opinion, be a serious error of judgment with grave consequences.

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