

EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED BY THE
PLANNING AND COMPENSATION ACT 1991), SECTION 195**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING APPEALS (DETERMINATION BY
INSPECTORS) (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) RULES 2000**

PROOF OF EVIDENCE

OF

Mr Ross Blakemore

Appeal by Maurice Doe, CCW Services Ltd

Appeal Site: Broadway Farm, Broad Oak, Botley, Southampton, SO30 2EU

Planning Inspectorate Reference: APP/W175/X/23/3331326

Local Authority Reference: LDC/23/95111

Eastleigh Borough Council

Civic Offices

Upper Market Street

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February 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 I am a Technical Manager at Eastleigh Borough Council. As a Technical Manager I am responsible for procuring and managing the outputs of design consultants for planning, design and construction stages of large-scale building projects.
- 1.2 I have worked in the construction industry for 19 years, holding various positions, including Carpenter, Construction Site Manager, and Technical Manager. I have worked on construction projects of varying sizes including small housing projects, large housing developments and highways construction projects.
- 1.3 Part of my past and current roles was to witness and manage the installation of roads, parking areas and areas of hard landscaping. Part of my current role as a Technical Manager is to commission and analyse site investigation reports for development sites that investigate and analyse ground conditions and construction makeups. I also hold a BSc Hons degree in Construction Management.
- 1.4 My evidence is confined to the likely composition of the ground of the appeal site. I have not had any prior involvement with the decision making in this case. The planning history and planning matters are dealt with by Mr Gary Osmond and Mr John Saunders on behalf of the Council.
- 1.5 Although I appear as a witness on behalf of and am an employee of the Council, I understand my professional duty is to assist the Inspector by providing evidence which is true. I therefore confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

2. SCOPE OF EVDIENCE

- 2.1 I am familiar with the appeal site having carried out a site visit on 22 January 2024.
- 2.2 In preparing this Proof of Evidence I been provided with copies of Mr Heathfield's of G&M Technical Services, letter dated 28 February 2023 providing his assessment of the trial hole findings. I was also provided with copies of trial hole photos 1, 2, 3 and 4.
- 2.3 I have considered Mr Healthfield's statutory declaration (Core Document A5) (undated and unsigned) which says as follows:

Para 19. Photograph 1 [Exhibit 7] clearly shows the Tarmacadam on the surface with Photograph 2 [Exhibits 8 & 9] illustrating the 35cm and 40cm depth of hole with the concrete grasscrete just below the tarmacadam.

Grasscrete is a layer measuring some 25cm of hard core and rubble which formed the basis for the grasscrete set down in 2006. The Terram membrane is also visible at the bottom of the trail hole. Photographs 3 and 4 [Exhibits 10 & 11] show similar records of the below ground material.

Para 23. In conclusion, I personally carried out the engineering works in 2006 by the laying of the grasscrete. I repaired the surface in 2020 by laying tarmacadam on the top of the grasscrete and in February 2023 I dug the 4 trial holes and took the photographs which clearly show all the original works carried out in 2006 remain to this day.

- 2.4 From this I understood the Appellant has excavated and laid materials in line with the process described. Therefore, during my inspection of the trial holes, I was looking for distinct layers of terram membrane, hardcore, grasscrete and

tarmac. However, as I will set out below, I was only able to establish layers of terram, hardcore and tarmac and no layer of grasscrete.

3. EXAMINATION OF TRIAL HOLES

- 3.1 On 22nd January 2024 at 10:00am, I visited the appeal site to examine four trial holes excavated through a tarmacadam parking area. I visited the site with Gary Osmond, John Saunders, and Claire Dinnage, all of Eastleigh Borough Council.
- 3.2 The trial holes were located in areas in each of the four corners of the appeal site where an extensive area of tarmac has been laid. The purpose of the inspection was to visually verify my analysis of photographs of said trial holes previously provided by the Appellant in support of the appeal.



Image 1: Appeal site, image taken from Google Maps. The appeal site is orientated with trees to the north and east, and open field to the south and a compound to the west.

3.3 At the time of inspection, it was a dry and sunny morning. We were escorted to the location of the trial holes and were left to view each of the four holes in turn.

3.4 In this proof of evidence, I will use the following terms which I define as follows:

- a. "Grasscrete" this is a surface layer of concrete laid in a mesh or grid formation with organic soil laid in between to provide a growing medium usually for grass (or similar). A pictorial example of grasscrete is provided in Appendix 01.
- b. "Crushed Concrete Hardcore" this is a multi-use material that in the instance of this case has been crushed from its hardened form. A pictorial example of crushed concrete is provided in Appendix 02.
- c. "Tarmacadam" , this is a surface material comprising on stone aggregate and liquid asphalt often used for roads, parking areas and pathways. A pictorial example of tarmac is provided in Appendix 03.

3.5 In terms of the quality of each material, grasscrete is a material often used for vehicular parking areas in rural areas allowing a hard and durable surface to run motor vehicles on but has the softer appearance of a grassland area. Grasscrete is permeable in nature allowing surface water to permeate through the organic soil into the ground below.

3.6 Tarmacadam is a material used for roads, parking areas, and paths in urban areas. It provides a hard and durable surface to run all types of motor vehicles and non-motorised users. Tarmacadam is usually impermeable in nature not allowing surface water to permeate through and instead requires an underground drainage system to deal with the run-off.

- 3.7 Crushed Concrete Hardcore is a recycled stone aggregate material that is used for providing a hard and stable surface to lay all types of surfacing on top. Crushed Concrete Hardcore can be graded to many different sizes depending on the intended use.
- 3.8 In terms of methodology, I examined each trial hold visually and by hand as I am familiar with the visual and physical composition of each material. For ease of reference my proof of evidence adopts the same numbering as the Appellant.

Trial Hole 1: Southwest corner

- 3.9 Trial Hole 1 was located in the southwest corner of the appeal site. This is sample hole 1 on Core Document A2 and is exhibited by the appellant at A7.
- 3.10 This hole was excavated some time prior to our visit and was covered with a traffic cone. The time between excavation of the trial hole and my inspection should not have any impact on the composition of the materials and in turn would not affect my conclusions.
- 3.11 From visual inspection of the trial hole, I could see by eye that there was a layer of tarmac approximately 80-100mm thick. Below this there appeared to be a single layer of stone hardcore (crushed concrete) that had been laid on top of a geotextile membrane.
- 3.12 The depth of the trial hole between surface to geotextile was assumed to be between 300-400mm. Despite the hole being half full of water, there did not appear to be any presence of a grasscrete layer below the tarmac. By using

physical touch of my fingers, I was able to establish the material immediately below the tarmac was of a compacted, but loose to touch nature.

- 3.13 A grasscrete layer, if present, below the tarmac would remain of solid construction and show visible pockets of organic material in between the concrete grid/ mesh formation.



Image 2: Trial Hole 1 – tarmac layer and below this was a single layer of stone hardcore, the geotextile membrane is visible in this photo just below the waterline.

Trial Hole 2: Southeast corner

- 3.14 Trial Hole 2 was located in the southeast corner of the appeal site. This is sample hole 2 on Core Document A2 and exhibited by the appellant at A8 and A9.
- 3.15 This hole had also been excavated some time prior to our visit and was covered with a traffic cone. The time between excavation of the trial hole and my inspection should not have any impact on the composition of the materials and in turn would not affect my conclusions.
- 3.16 From a visual inspection of the trial hole, I could see by eye that there was a layer of tarmac approximately 80-100mm thick. Below this there appeared be a single layer of stone hardcore (crushed concrete) that had been laid on top of a geotextile membrane.
- 3.17 The depth of the trial hole between surface to geotextile was assumed to be between 300-400mm. Despite the hole being half full of water, there did not appear to be any presence of a grasscrete layer below the tarmac.
- 3.18 By using physical touch of my fingers, I was able to establish the material immediately below the tarmac was of a compacted, but loose to touch nature. A grasscrete layer if present below the tarmac would remain of solid construction and show visible pockets of organic material in between the concrete grid/ mesh formation.



Image 3: Trial Hole 2 tarmac layer and below this was a single layer of stone hardcore, the geotextile membrane is not visible in this photo because of the water.

Trial Hole 3: Northeast corner

- 3.19 Trial hole 3 was located in the northeast corner of the appeal site. This is sample hole 3 on Core Document A2 and exhibited by the appellant at A11.
- 3.20 This hole had also been excavated some time prior to our visit and was covered with a traffic cone. The time between excavation of the trial hole and my inspection should not have any impact on the composition of the materials and in turn would not affect my conclusions.

- 3.21 From visual inspection of the trial hole, I could see by eye that there was a layer of tarmac approximately 80-100mm thick. Below this I was not able to determine the visual makeup as the hole was filled to the top with water. By the use of my hand, I was able to establish that the layer below the tarmac was likely to be stone hardcore as it was reasonably loose to touch. I was not able to establish if a geotextile was present at the bottom of the trial hole, and I was not able to establish a depth.
- 3.22 From my feeling around below the water line with my hands and the evidence of loose stone material, I was able to conclude that there did not appear to be a presence of a grasscrete layer below the tarmac.
- 3.23 By using physical touch of my fingers, I was able to establish the material immediately below the tarmac was of a compacted, but loose to touch nature. A grasscrete layer if present below the tarmac would remain of solid construction and show visible pockets of organic material in between the concrete grid/ mesh formation.



Image 4: Trial Hole 3 tarmac layer, but and below this not visible in this photo because of the water.

Trial Hole 4: Northwest corner

- 3.24 Trial hole 4 was located in the northwest corner of the appeal site. This is sample hole 4 on Core Document A2 and exhibited by the appellant at A10.
- 3.25 The hole had been excavated some time prior to our visit and was covered with a traffic cone. The time between excavation of the trial hole and my inspection should not have any impact on the composition of the materials and in turn would not affect my conclusions.

- 3.26 From visual inspection of the trial hole, I could see that there was a layer of tarmac approximately 80-100mm thick. Below this there appeared be a single layer of stone hardcore (crushed concrete) that have been laid on top of a geotextile membrane. At the time of inspection, the geotextile membrane was buried below soil at the base of the trial hole. I was able to establish the presence of the geotextile by moving the soil away with my hand.
- 3.27 The depth of the trial hole between surface to geotextile was assumed to be between 300-400mm. There did not appear to be any presence of a grasscrete layer below the tarmac. By using physical touch with my fingers, I was able to establish the material immediately below the tarmac was of a compacted, but loose to touch nature.
- 3.28 A grasscrete layer if present below the tarmac would remain of solid construction and show visible pockets of organic material in between the concrete grid/ mesh formation.



Image 5: Trial Hole 4 tarmac layer and below this was a single layer of stone hardcore, the geotextile membrane is not visible in this photo because of soil that has buried it over time. Trial hole 4 is visually similar to trial hole 1.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Having examined each for the four trial holes in turn, it is my professional opinion that the area has been excavated to formation level with a layer of stone hardcore (crushed concrete) laid in one operation. The tarmac layer is a topping layer applied over the stone hardcore to provide a hard surface for the intended vehicles to run on.
- 4.2 I could not find any presence of a grasscrete surfacing layer below the tarmac running course. Should a grasscrete layer have been present prior to the tarmacadam layer being laid then the appearance within the trial hole would have showed a distinctive layer of solid concrete (grasscrete) or a layer of organic soil between the crushed concrete hardcore and the tarmacadam top layer.
- 4.3 In my opinion and experience it would not be advisable to lay tarmacadam directly over the top of a grasscrete finish as the organic soil areas would create soft spots that may cause the tarmacadam layer to sink or crack due to settlement and compaction from overrunning of heavy vehicles.
- 4.4 To lay tarmacadam in the area either the grasscrete would have had to be removed first or overlaid with another layer of crushed concrete hardcore to create the hard, even and stable surface.
- 4.5 For the reasons set out above, I am of the view that the geotextile, hardcore and tarmac were all laid during the same operation, and I was unable to find any evidence of grasscrete.