

Erin Insight

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Quarry plan cuts close to Crewson's Corners

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The project may be called Hidden Quarry, because of the trees that would surround it, but opponents say the impact of the pit operations will be anything but hidden in the coming decades.

The site owned by James Dick Construction Limited (JDCL) is on Highway 7, at the Sixth Line of Guelph-Eramosa Township. It is 1 km east of Rockwood and 2 km from the hamlet of Crewson's Corners, at the western tip of the Town of Erin.



Stephanie De Grandis, whose farm is next to the proposed quarry, believes the project can be defeated on scientific grounds.

JDCL has applied for a licence to excavate 30 metres below the water table. Instead of keeping water out of the pit, which was one of the challenges in their unsuccessful proposal for the Rockfort Quarry on Winston Churchill Boulevard, they would allow water to fill to its natural level. They would conduct underwater blasting and remove up to 700,000 tonnes of limestone per year from the 100 acre property.

The Concerned Residents Coalition (CRC) has been formed to fight the application, and they had about 250 people out to their second public meeting, held in Acton last week.

Linda Sword, who helped launch CRC, said possible impacts on Crewson's Corners residents include noise, dust, vibration from the blasting (expected 15-30 times per year) and additional truck traffic on Hwy. 7, which could bring 26 additional trucks per hour through downtown Acton.

Crewson's Corners includes Erin Township's first stone house (1833) and stone barn (1847), designated as having cultural and architectural significance. Originally built by stonemason Morgan Crewson, at a time when most Erin residents lived in unhewn log shanties, they have been restored as part of an estate

housing development.

Halton Region has a long-term plan to build a truck bypass to the north of Acton. Near Crewson's Corners, eastbound trucks on Hwy. 7 could be directed onto the Erin-Halton Hills Townline, then back down the Fourth Line to rejoin Hwy. 7 on the other side of Acton, where they could proceed to Trafalgar Road.

CRC has a campaign to raise funds and provide lawn signs, and plans to continue canvassing door-to-door in September. CRC and others have raised numerous concerns with the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and the Township. Dozens of letters were sent to MNR by the April 15 deadline, including objections from the municipalities of Milton, Halton Hills and Halton Region.

JDCL Vice-President Greg Sweetnam says that the site is ideal for a quarry, that it has long been identified for aggregate extraction in the county's Official Plan and that they have kept neighbours informed of their plans. He noted that anyone who did not get comments in to the MNR can still have input during the rezoning process.

CRC hopes to persuade Guelph-Eramosa councilors to reject JDCL's request to rezone the land from Agricultural to Extractive Industrial, a move that could trigger an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) fight.

"You need at least one strong OMB-defendable reason to say No," said guest speaker Tony Dowling, Vice-President of Gravel Watch, an Ontario group that monitors the industry. "You are going to need money. It's like David versus Goliath – do you have enough stones to slay the giant?"

Dowling pointed out that NIMBY not only stands for "Not In My Back Yard", but also "Next It Might Be You". He said things have changed in recent years, with several pit proposals being turned down.

CRC expects to need \$350,000 in the coming years, since they may need to hire experts for further studies and lawyers.

JDCL has submitted several studies in support of its application, covering issues ranging from hydrogeology to dust and noise. They will respond to objection letters, and may do further studies or make changes to improve its application. CRC is scrutinizing the Township's Peer Reviews of JDCL studies and is pushing for additional studies on the cultural heritage and visual impacts.

They say blasting will be felt by 315 homes within a 2.7 km radius, with risk of foundation and window damage. They have a study that shows homes within 1 km of a quarry are at risk of losing 20-30% of their market value.

Stephanie De Grandis, a microbiologist and business person who has a farm near the site, is leading CRC's scientific attack. She is skeptical of JDCL's assurances that her ponds will not be affected.

"How can it not affect the water?" she said. The site is near Blue Springs Creek, and there are Provincially Significant Wetlands adjacent. She said JDCL's plan to protect them is not appropriate.

De Grandis said underwater blasting is not common in the industry, and that it will increase the vibrations by 30%.

"It will be like feeling an earthquake," she said. "We think we'll defeat it on the science."

Like the Rockfort Quarry, this site is on the Paris Moraine. CRC is concerned not only about contamination of water near the surface, but that blasting may damage the rock barrier that protects the deeper aquifers, putting springs and household wells at risk. They want well water monitoring to start now, to set a baseline for its quality.

"The earth we walk on is the epidermis, and what's underneath is the life blood of the earth," said meeting co-host Harry Wilson. "If we mess with that, we are in trouble."

More information on the JDCL studies and a link to an on-line petition opposing the quarry, are available at www.hiddenquarry.ca. They are also on Twitter with the #crockwood hashtag, and on Facebook: STOP the Hidden Quarry.

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