

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL  
ISLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL  
APPEAL

by

READY MIXED CONCRETE LIMITED

Inspector: F. C. Sabin, B.Sc., M.I.C.E., M.F.P.I.

Date of Inquiry: 12th May, 1961.

File No; 676/4020/5138.

Whitehall,

London, S.W.1.

May, 1961

To the Right Honourable Henry Brooke, M.P.,  
Minister of Housing and Local Government.

Sir,

I have the honour to report that on Friday 12th May, 1961 I held an inquiry at the town hall, Islington into an appeal by Ready Mixed Concrete Limited, under section 16 of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, against the refusal of the London County Council, to permit the erection of a ready mixed concrete, storage and batching plant on 0.8 acre of railway land west of Rufford Street, Islington.

#### Reasons for Refusal

1. The proposal is contrary to the provisions of the county development plan, which zones the site as railway land with a residential area alongside.
2. The proposal would adversely affect the amenities of the occupants of adjacent flats by reason of increased noise caused by the necessary processes and the traffic generated by the operation of the business.

This report consists of a description of the site and surroundings, a summary of the representations made at the inquiry, and my conclusion and recommendation. Lists of appearances, documents, plans and photographs are attached.

#### THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1. York Way runs north from the east side of King's Cross Station and after  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile crosses the railway on a viaduct 300 yards long to continue towards Camden Road. Randell's Road branches off eastwards at the south end of the viaduct and at 200 feet Rufford Street curves north and then east. On one side of Rufford Street is a 14 foot wall to the railway land and on the other a 6.-storey block of flats 50 feet high standing directly against the pavement. Along the eastern leg of the street the flats are 4 storeys high. The neighbourhood is predominantly residential over developed, and depressing. Practically all the property is at least 80 years old.
2. The appeal site consists of 0.8 acre of railway land forming the slope of the cutting on the approach to the tunnel whose portal is in the line with the entrance. This is on the corner of Rufford Street and from it a track leads slightly downhill to the side of an old mortuary with entrances alongside to its upper floor and a basement below. This building is 170 feet long and 22 feet wide and is in a ruinous condition, not having been used for at least 25 years. Between the foot of the slope and the railway is a retaining wall some 18 feet high. The northern half of the site abuts upon the yard of an office cleaning business, and the access to the yard is by a covered way under No.1 Rufford Street.

3. Three pairs of passenger line tracks enter the tunnel and opposite numerous tracks fan out into carriage, engine, and goods sidings extending westwards beyond the viaduct for 500 yards. Some 280 yards to the north the railway tracks enter another tunnel. Smoke issues almost continuously throughout the day from these tunnels and everything in the vicinity is smoke grimed. During the frequent occasions when locomotives stand on the sidings close by blowing off steam, it is difficult to carry on a conversation on the site.

#### THE CASE FOR THE APPELLANTS

4. In 1952 the company had only two sites in the London area; Bedford and Poplar. Now they have 9 more; Blackfriars, Greenwich, Crayford, Iver, Wembley, Edmonton, Wapping, Dagenham and Northfleet. A plant at Fulham is about to start and another will be ready in Croydon next year, bringing the total to 13. The output in thousands of cubic yards has been as follows:-

<u>Whole Industry in G.B.</u>		<u>Company's in Greater London</u>
1951	187	50
1958	2,003	-
1959	2,718	376
1960	4,879	540
1961	-	650 (estimated)

The company produce 85 per cent of the ready mixed concrete used in the London area.

5. The important elements in the industry are the location of the raw materials in relation to the centre of demand, and the time taken to deliver the concrete. B.S.S. specified that the concrete shall be discharged at the building site within 1½ hours of the lorry being loaded and the water added. A vital factor in the price to the consumer is the haulage charge. This increases at the rate of 1/1 per mile per cubic yard. At 7 miles from Edmonton or 2 miles from Blackfriars the price is 77/7. From a plant at King's Cross it would be 74/- which is 5 per cent cheaper, for much of the traffic congestion in the central area would be avoided. Of a number of sites investigated during the last 3 years only this and one alongside Regents Canal were possibilities. The latter was in an industrial zone but has recently been leased to someone else. British Railways who own the appeal site have agreed to lease it for 21 years.

6. Notwithstanding that the site will be an expensive one to develop, the company accept it because no alternative can be found. Structures will have to be carefully piled because of the railway retaining wall alongside and the Piccadilly tube beneath. Also much of the embankment will have to be excavated and a new retaining wall built to support Rufford Street and the property alongside.

7. Five aggregate storage hoppers 70 by 17 by 18 feet deep will be built at the southern end with their curb at about road level, and from beneath then the conveyor will rise at a gradient of 1 in 8 to the production tower at the northern end. The whole plant would be placed close to the railway retaining wall.

8. The two-lane road to the tower will fall at 1 in 15 from the entrance. Paved areas will be provided at the hoppers and at the tower for manoeuvring vehicles. The tower is 25 by 20 feet and of its 50 foot height only the top 19 feet will project above the wall along Rufford Street. Its capacity is 400 cubic yards per working day from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

9. The following vehicle movements would occur:-

	<u>Lorries</u>	<u>Capacity</u>	<u>No. of trips each in and out</u>	<u>Total Trips</u>
Aggregate	15	12 cu.yd.	3	90
Cement	7	10 ton	1	14
Concrete	15	6 cu.yd.	5	<u>150</u>
				254

Aggregate lorries will tip into the hoppers and leave. Cement comes in tankers which connect to a pipe at the base of the tower through which the cement is blown by compressed air to the top. The tanker then climbs the ramp empty on its way out. Mixer lorries come in empty and back under the tower to fill, and then climb the ramp loaded.

10. Only ordinary vehicles servicing will be done here, major repairs and overhauls being done at Fulham. A small building for stores, canteen and toilets will be required. The estimated cost is:-

	<u>£</u>
Foundations	26,000
Superstructures	40,000
Lorries	<u>90,000</u>
Total	156,000

11. Since the application was refused the company have consulted acoustic experts. Sound pressure records were taken on two days in November, 1960 and showed that the background noise varies between 64 and 72dB and that there is a rapid succession of high level noise in the loud zone between 75 and 90dB, the majority of which comes from the railway. At Blackfriars, with batching plant, mixer vehicle, compressor and conveyor all working, 86dB was recorded. This dropped to 68dB when everything ceased, which is about the average background at the appeal site. The noise of a mixer lorry with its drum full and rotating and its engine running was tested at Elstree with and without a wall between it and the instrument. The results were 66 and 76dB. It can be assumed that one of these lorries climbing a gradient of 1 in 15 might emit a noise of the order of 88dB.

12. The following noises are unlikely to be noticeable outside the site:-

- a. Mixer lorries returning empty and running down the incline.
- b. The conveyor mounted on rubber rollers and driven by a small motor in the tower.
- c. Tipping of aggregate through a height of 3 to 15 feet into hoppers lasting only 15 seconds and occurring once every 9 minutes.

13. The records show that the noise reaching Clarence Terrace would be increased by about 10dB. Hence the new proposals for sound proofing not indicated on the submitted plans but shown on the amended plans. The Elstree lorry test showed that 10dB could be reflected by an intervening wall. It is therefore proposed to have the entry to the loading bay from the north side, add a 100 foot extension and line the whole with a 12 inch cavity wall having fibre tiles on the inside and cover it with a concrete ceiling. In addition, in order to reduce the noise of loaded mixer lorries climbing the incline, a reflecting canopy is proposed on top of the retaining wall alongside the incline. The level of noise generated on the site would then be no greater than any existing noise.

14. Although the neighbourhood to the east is zoned residential, it contains the visual assortment of non-conformers, particularly the transport depot just northeast of the site. Presumably because the site is zoned as railway land, any type of railway use could be made of it, and that might involve something really objectionable. The company's scheme is quite mild compared with the railway. The tower would be 80 feet from the nearest dwelling in Rufford Street and there is no possibility of cement dust being blown away from it. From street level less than the top 19 feet would be visible. The route of all vehicles calling at the site would be past the flank of the service station in Randell's Road to and from York Way, and not through the residential area.

#### THE CASE FOR THE COUNCIL

15. The proposal has twice been refused by the county council, first in March and later in August, and on both occasions with the borough council's agreement. Because the site is zoned as railway land, it does not follow that industrial use should be permitted. When the Minister approved the county development plan he reduced the amount of land allocated for industry. If the proposal applied to a site in an industrial zone it would almost certainly be approved. Being so close to Clarence Terrace, the project would result in complaints of noise. The adjacent transport depot is comparatively innocuous, being used for garaging and servicing vans which leave in the early morning and return in the late afternoon. It has an established use going back to the days of horse drawn vehicles.

16. It is accepted that another ready mixed concrete plant would be useful in central London, that the amended plans are an improvement on those submitted, and that a plant below street level would be better than one at street level. That the railway do not require the land is not a reason for allowing any type of development instead. Any alternative use should have regard to adjacent development. The most suitable here would be a warehouse with a low occupancy rate.

17. Having decided that they must have a plant within close proximity of King's Cross, the company have not looked any further. That they have been unable to find an alternative site is not therefore surprising. But the council are not convinced that a plant must necessarily be placed within this area; one a few miles to the northwest or to the east would probably be just as useful. If they had intended using the railway and thereby reducing traffic congestion on the roads, there might have been a particular advantage in having a site alongside, but the tracks here are main passengers ones, there is no siding, and even had there been, the company would not have used it.

18. They hope that noises created by their operations on the site would be drowned by others created by the railway. But is existing noise any excuse for more? Obviously this would raise the level of background noise considerably. The canopy on the wall might reflect some of the noise, but that not reflected would be an addition to the existing and thereby life in Rufford Street would be that much more trying for the residents.

#### INSPECTOR'S CONCLUSIONS

19. When electric or diesel traction has completely replaced steam, smoke will no longer drift continuously over this area, neither will there be any blowing off of steam from stationary locomotives. The remaining railway noises would be the rumbling of trains, shunting and whistling. The neighbourhood would then be considerably quieter and more pleasant. But that will probably not happen for another 20 years, in which time there is a possibility of the area being redeveloped. In that

case new dwellings would be likely to be sited farther back from Rufford Street than is Clarence Terrace.

20. Accepting that Rufford Street is in a noisy position, on the company's investigations I would be willing to take a chance on their operations not increasing the noise level. Whether they would be increasing the amount of industry in central London is a debatable point, for a ready mixed concrete plant would replace numerous individual plants which would otherwise be required wherever building is in progress, and should not therefore increase the number of workers employed in making concrete.

RECOMMENDATION

21. That the appeal be allowed, because any additional noise resulting from the scheme can be contained so that no loss of amenity should result.

I have the honour to be,  
sir,  
Your obedient servant,

F. C. SABIN

Inspector

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANTS

Sir D. Walker Smith, Q.C.,

Mr. D. P. Kerrigan

They called:

Mr. N. Davis

Mr. F. E. Bennett

Mr. E. G. Markolew

Mr. L. C. Gale, F.R.I.C.S.,  
M.T.P.I.

- Counsel instructed by  
Messrs. Linklaters and Paines,  
Solicitors, Barrington House,  
59-67 Gresham Street, E.C.2.

- Technical Director of Appellant  
Company.

- Development Engineer of Appellant  
Company.

- of Messrs. Harry Stanger's  
Laboratories, Elstree, Acoustic  
Consultants.

- Planning Consultants.

FOR THE PLANNING AUTHORITY

Mr. J. B. Cass

He called:

Mr. S. K. Sturdy, A.R.I.C.S.

- Solicitor, Legal Department,  
London County Council.

- Planning Officer.

### DOCUMENTS

- DOCUMENT 1 - Persons present at the inquiry.
- " 2 - Notification of the inquiry.
- " 3 - Petition of objection from 85 residents in Rufford Street.
- " 4 - Proof of evidence by Mr. Davis.
- " 5 - Proof of evidence by Mr. Bennett.
- " 6 - Proof of evidence by Mr. Markclew.
- " 7 - Proof of evidence of Mr. Gale.
- " 8 - Record of sounds at site on 22nd and 24th November, 1960.

### PLANS

- PLAN A - Location of ready mixed concrete plants in the London area.
- " B - Submitted plan.
- " C - Submitted sections.
- " D - Amended plan.
- " E - Amended section.
- " F - Existing land uses.
- " G - Development plan zoning.
- " H - Graphs of sound level recordings.
- " I - Position of hopper in relation to Clarence Terrace.

### PHOTOGRAPHS

- PHOTOGRAPH 1 - Ready mixed concrete plant at Bristol.
- " 2 - Ready mixed concrete plant at Bristol.
- " 3 - Mixer lorry.
- " 4 - View looking down conveyor belt.
- " 5 - Cement lorry discharging into silo.
- " 6 - Mixer lorry loading concrete.
- " 7 - Control panel.
- " 8 - View of site from tunnel portal.