

The Environment at Ibstock – a closely guarded secret?



Brick manufacture has taken place at Ibstock Leicester since 1830, when the principal activity was coal mining. Leicester is not only the largest factory within the Ibstock group, it is also the location of the head office of Ibstock Building Products, which has sister companies in Glen Gery Brick across "the pond" and other CRH companies.

Leicester has seen many changes over the years, more recently to convert from an extrusion process to a soft mud process making frost resistant simulated handmade and stock bricks in one of the widest ranges of colours and textures in the industry. The conversion to soft mud proved so successful that the site was doubled in size at the end of 1997, it is now one of the largest brickmaking sites in the UK. The Leicester site has had a formalised quality assurance system registered to ISO 9001 for many years.

Ibstock has grown rapidly in size with the acquisition of Tarmac Brick (1995) and Redland Bricks (1996); the assimilation of these businesses into Ibstock has been the primary focus of attention both inside and outside of the company. It has been all too easy to overlook the changes that have quietly taken place right on the doorstep of the head office.

Within easy walking distance of the busy head office you will find:



A nature reserve equipped with special gates inserted into the fences at regular intervals, to make the area more accessible for recreational use by local residents with their dogs.

Sparrow Woods, named after Alderman J J Sparrow who served Ibstock for 70 years (including 19 as a Director) and who was responsible for the planting of trees at the works entrance in the 1930's. This is a newly planted section of 18.5 acres of the National Forest on a restored quarry where Ibstock have planted 4500 trees, these comprise approximately 40% Alder, 20% Oak,

20% Silver Birch and 20% minor species including Cherry and Rowan. The local community and local school children were invited to a tree planting day during National Tree Week in 1997. Ibstock Leicester was presented with a certificate of commendation in the 1998 Business and Environment Awards issued by North West Leicestershire for this work.

A pond that has been used by the RSPB for the rehabilitation of birds, including swans, and which is surrounded by a landscaped area with trees.

An area of land which is managed specifically to protect some Southern Marsh Orchids because the risk of transplantation was considered too great to guarantee their survival. proposed strategic plan envisaged many years ago. There were no materials imported onto the site, the results have been achieved solely from those at hand.

Housing surrounds 3 sides of the site, an extensive landscaped bund has been built which discretely conceals the factory area from adjacent housing, reducing both visual and noise intrusion.

The quarry is located approximately 35m below ground level dramatically reducing any sound or dust generated by these activities. Various clays are taken from the different layers, these burn a red, cream or buff colour, and all are transported via the internal roadways to the:



- stockpiling area. The possibility of disturbance to the local community is further reduced by a restriction on the hours of working. In dry weather haul roads are wetted using a water bowser to reduce dust.
- Clay stockpiling areas are surrounded by an array of 7 permanent high-efficiency water sprays for dust suppression in dry weather. A permanent dust monitoring station is located nearby to the clay stocking area to detect any airborne particulate matter.
- The quarry also serves the purpose of a catchment area for rainfall from the factory roofs and recycled water from the process. This is such an efficient operation that no additional water is required either from mains water or groundwater for the process itself. This same area receives all surface waters arising on the site; the possibility of any contamination leaving the site is dramatically reduced. A small amount of water is abstracted from a settling pond, fed by a minor stream, for dust control of the quarry haul roads.
- A football pitch is located adjacent to the main entrance, this is used by the local community.



The site is virtually self contained in terms of resources. Natural gas comes into the site via an underground pipe. Sand plus small amounts of inert pigments are brought in by road and added to the clay.

Employees are given the opportunity to have a half hour guided tour of this extensive site so that they can fully enjoy the significant environmental achievements.

The management team has continued to explore other means of enhancing the local environment. Most recently the site has pioneered a new technique for the reduction of Hydrogen Fluoride in kiln exhaust gases, using a low cost sustainable technology. Reductions of over 60% were noted in a case study which resulted in an award under the Environmental Technology Best Practice Programme and has established Leicester as the model for others to follow.

