

[REDACTED]

Sent: 16 April 2025 23:22
To: Planning Control
Subject: Planning application: NY/2025/0030/ENV FAO Amy Taylor (case officer)

Categories: [REDACTED]

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re the above planning application:
Land east of The Mill Yard, Burniston Mill, Coastal Road, Burniston, Scarborough

Frack Free Ryedale wish to **OBJECT** to the above application for the following reasons:

1 Application is in contravention of the NYCC Minerals and Waste Joint Plan

Back in 2022 North Yorkshire County Council, City of York Council and the North Yorkshire Moors National Park Authority adopted the Minerals and Waste Joint Plan. This determines what exploitation of minerals, including fossil fuels, is permitted.

The relevant policies include **M16: Key spatial principles for hydrocarbon development**, which states where proposals for surface hydrocarbon development meet other locational criteria set out in this policy, but fall within a National Park or an AONB or the associated 3.5km visual sensitivity zone around these areas, permission will not be granted for such proposals where they would result in unacceptable harm to the special qualities of the designated area/s or are incompatible with their statutory purposes in accordance with Policy D04.

We also refer you to the Minerals and Waste Joint Plan Policy **M17: Other spatial and locational criteria applying to hydrocarbon development**, which states:

Hydrocarbon development will be permitted in locations where it would not give rise to unacceptable impact on local communities or public health. Adequate separation distances should be maintained between hydrocarbon development and residential buildings and other sensitive receptors in order to protect against unacceptable adverse individual and cumulative impacts on amenity and public health, in line with the requirements of Policy D02. Proposals for surface hydrocarbon development, particularly those involving hydraulic fracturing, within 500m of residential buildings and other sensitive receptors, will only be permitted in following the particularly careful scrutiny of supporting information which robustly demonstrates how in site specific circumstances an unacceptable degree of adverse impact can be avoided.

The proposed site in Burniston lies just over 1 km outside the North Yorkshire Moors National Park boundary, which is less than the 3.5km visual sensitivity zone required by the policy. The nearest buildings are also considerably less than the 500m specified in M17.

Europa wants to use hydraulic fracturing (commonly referred to as “fracking”) to extract gas, despite calling it “proppant squeezing” in their documentation. The application uses this misleading terminology to avoid the term fracking, and exploit the current legal loophole based on the quantity of liquid injected.

However, internal communications emanating from Europa Oil and Gas reveal hypocrisy in the attempt to employ similar hydraulic fracturing techniques that are current prohibited under the government’s moratorium, which are fully documented in this Drill or Drop report: <https://drillordrop.com/2025/03/26/new-twists-in-the-f-word-debate/>

Furthermore, the process set out in the application meets the technical criteria for hydraulic fracturing as defined in the Minerals and Waste Joint Plan and compares to previous ‘Fracking’ operations halted under the moratorium, requiring equivalent regulatory scrutiny and planning assessment.

The Minerals and Waste Plan defines fracking as “the fracturing of rocks by injecting a pressurized liquid in order to extract oil or gas” and “for the purposes of the plan ‘hydraulic fracturing’ includes the fracturing of rock under hydraulic pressure, *regardless of the volume of fracture fluid used*”. [our italics].

2. Application does not meet UK legal requirements

The purpose of the current application is to see if gas can be extracted from the well through hydraulic fracturing. If successful, this would lead to the extraction and burning of fossil fuels. However, the application does not consider the climate impact of burning the fossil fuels once they are extracted as part of the application.

The Supreme Court ruling in the case of Finch (on behalf of the Weald Action Group) v Surrey County Council and others (UKSC/2022/0064) states that the council’s decision to grant planning permission for this project to extract petroleum was unlawful because the EIA for the project failed to assess the effect on climate of the combustion of the oil to be produced. Permission for fossil fuel extraction elsewhere in the UK (Surrey, Cumbria) has been turned down by the High Court because of the CO₂ and other emissions that would be produced.

3. Application is not sustainable, as required by The National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF states in paragraph 8c: an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Fossil fuel exploitation, including preparatory work for fossil fuel exploration, clearly fails in this regard, as it does not mitigate climate change or help the country move towards a low carbon economy.

3 Is this an ‘exploratory phase’ or ‘the largest onshore gas field in the UK’?

The argument that this is ‘just an exploratory phase’ and therefore very low impact is not sustainable, because the only purpose of the exploratory phase is to see if further exploitation of the fossil fuel can occur – exploitation that would, in Europa Oil and Gas’s words, would result in this area of coastline becoming **the largest on-shore gas field in the UK.**

Their intention to extract the large amount of gas further north will require more wells to be drilled and fracked north of the Burniston site. Europa plan to continue drilling for 20 years, the emissions from the burning of the gas they plan to extract will further add to the climate crisis, wrecking our planet for future generations.

Thus, the application needs to be viewed in the context of what the exploratory process would lead to if successful.

The granting of this planning application could also provide an argument that the North Yorkshire Council accepts the environmental impact of the gas extraction and that by allowing the appraisal to take place there is an at least implicit view that a full application is acceptable. Indeed, it may be impossible to reject such an application if the test well is approved.

It is also noted that a full environmental impact assessment has not been carried out.

4 Risk of earthquakes

The proposed site at Burniston is situated above a complex geological fault system which is hard to map, and any hydraulic fracturing in this area may lead to earthquakes, which happened when fracking took place in Preston New Road in Lancashire, using a similar quantity of injected liquid, and resulted in the current moratorium on hydraulic fracturing in the UK.

The impact that this could have on nearby properties, and the reputation of the area as a whole as a desirable tourist destination, could be extremely serious. Furthermore, the close proximity of this proposed development to the unstable cliffs nearby needs to be considered. The area is above the Peak fault line and the cliffs are fragile. Europa plan to drill and fracture the rock for miles underneath the whole area with a technique that involves fracturing the rock underground through injection of high pressure liquid, which may cause earth tremors, subsidence, or damage to the cliffs.

5 Detrimental impact on Heritage coastline, views, local properties and tourism

Hydraulic fracturing at Burniston will profoundly affect the character of this heritage coast, including visual intrusion – Europa proposes to build a well that is 100m tall – noise, dust, light

pollution (from gas flaring and compound lighting), and an estimated 1,050 HGV movements during the exploration phase alone (with far more if production were to go ahead). Gas flaring will also produce toxic fumes, unpleasant smells, and night-time light pollution. Many local people depend upon tourism for their livelihoods, but developing a major gas field in the area will put people off visiting this beautiful part of the country, reducing income from tourism and costing local jobs.

The proposed site at Burniston is also very close to residential properties and our National Park and Heritage Coast. The NYCC has a presumption against major development in the area, and the NPPF advises against “inappropriate development”.

The impact on property prices and the overall financial health of the area if this did indeed become ‘the biggest gas field in Europe’, as Europa are claiming, is hard to over-estimate.

Also, as stated above, there will be over 1,000 HGV movements required for the construction of the site, and tens of thousands more if the site went into full production (which is clearly the aim here). These journeys will entail turning across a busy main road on a blind corner in order to get onto the site and could very well cause accidents.

HGVs passing local dwellings and businesses will cause increased pollution from diesel emissions as well as damaging vibrations affecting the buildings along the route.

The well site will be lit at night, including the drilling rig which will be very high and difficult to screen. The gas flaring will be highly visible at night, as well as producing toxic fumes, and this increased lighting of the night sky causes significant distress to local people and the local wildlife – and will impact the ‘Dark Skies’ aspect of this beautiful area.

The proposal includes a 100 foot drilling rig in-situ for the entire testing period. This will be visible for many miles, all and around the coastline, land and sea and not least North Yorkshire National Park.

The site is adjacent to (if not part of) the Heritage Coast and it is simply unacceptable to have an industrial structure of this nature placed here. The Cleveland Way is used by many locals and tourists alike, whose enjoyment of this area will be severely impacted by this industrial development.

6 This development won't help reduce local gas bills

Europa Oil and Gas plans to sell any gas produced at Burniston on the open market, which may well result in this being exported to other countries. This means the gas won't be available locally and won't reduce gas bills for people in Yorkshire or the rest of the UK. The gas will financially benefit Europa and their shareholders, not residents. The price of gas is determined by global factors, and drilling on the North Yorkshire coastline will not bring down local bills.

Furthermore, the UK is transitioning to clean energy with the aim to be net zero in 2050, and we do not need more gas production, particularly in such a sensitive area.

We therefore urge the Planning Committee to reject this application.

David Davis
on behalf of
Frack Free Ryedale,
21, Pasture Lane, Hovingham,
YO62 4JT.

Frack Free Ryedale is a local community group based in Ryedale, North Yorkshire. The group was first established in 2016 to protect the area from the threats of industrialisation of our countryside and the development of hydraulic fracturing.