Dewars Farm Quarry, Ardley, Oxfordshire

Planning Application for

Volume 1: Planning Statement

Planning Application by

Smith and Sons (Bletchington) Ltd

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by GMKC Ltd on behalf of Smith and Sons (Bletchington) Ltd, hereby referred to as 'Smiths' (the Applicant), in support of a planning application to extract mineral from land to the north-east of Dewars Farm Quarry, between Ardley and Middleton Stoney in Oxfordshire. Following extraction, the site will be restored to agricultural land and nature conservation using imported inert and indigenous materials.

1.2. Dewars Farm Quarry is operated by Smiths, an independent family-owned business operating in Oxfordshire for over 100 years. Smiths have been quarrying at Ardley for many years, with the current quarry at Dewars Farm since 2004. Smiths are a leading producer and supplier of primary and recycled aggregates to the construction and allied industries in Oxfordshire and the surrounding Counties. Smiths operate sand, gravel and limestone quarries, producing a wide range of aggregate products, for delivery by their own fleet of lorries across the region.

1.3. Dewars Farm Quarry has recently received the British Aggregates Association 'Quarry of the Year 2022' award for its high operating standards. This is the second year in a row that Smiths has won this award, with their Gill Mill Quarry winning the previous year.

1.4. Due to market demand, the rate of extraction has been high and the permitted reserves within Dewars Farm Quarry have been worked out at a quicker rate than originally anticipated. The exiting quarry is permitted to operate until 2028, although it is now expected that reserves will be depleted before the end of 2024. Hence, this application for permission to extend the quarry operations has been brought forward at this time.

1.5. The nature of the planning application is such that it falls within the scope of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations), it is therefore accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES forms Volume 2 of the application documents and comprises technical assessments to identify and respond to any significant environmental effects that may arise as a result of the proposed development.

1.6. This Planning Statement and its appendices form Volume 1 of the application documents. It makes an assessment of the proposed development against planning policy contained within the Development Plan as well as other documents that are considered to be material to the determination of the application. The Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the ES, application forms, application drawings, and covering letter, which comprise the

application. The application is submitted to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), as the Local Planning Authority.

1.7. The proposed extension to the north-east of Dewars Farm Quarry has been nominated and considered as an Allocated Site within the previous Oxfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste Local Plan process.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

2.1. Dewars Farm Quarry is located between the villages of Ardley and Middleton Stoney, 3km south of junction 10 of the M40 motorway and 4.5km north-west of Bicester, in Oxfordshire (see attached Site Location Plan drawing reference no. DF/408/21). The quarry comprises mineral extraction, mineral processing, stockpiling areas, site offices and welfare facilities, storage sheds and is accessed from the B430.

2.2. The entire Application Site measures circa 56 hectares and comprises three main components:

1) Extension area – circa 37 hectares of intensive arable agricultural land separated into two fields by a discontinuous hedgerow and post and wire fencing, located to the north-east of the existing quarry;

2) Retention of existing infrastructure – the existing processing plant, site offices, weighbridge and supporting infrastructure within the existing quarry will be retained to support the development of the extension area;

3) New internal haul road – this will connect the extension area to the processing plant within the existing quarry.

2.3. The northern phases of the existing Dewars Farm Quarry have been restored to a high standard, with grass seeding complete and hedgerows planted. An attenuation pond has been created in the eastern part of the quarry, whilst mineral extraction and subsequent restoration take place within Phases 6, 7 and 8, along the southern part of the quarry. The central hub of the quarry includes the site access from the B430; parking areas; and the site offices, weighbridge and staff facilities.

2.4. The extension area is situated between the Viridor Ardley Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) and the M40 motorway, as shown on the attached Site Context Plan (drawing no. DF/408/22). The village of Bucknell is located at least 700m to the east. The extension area is bordered to the north by the Chiltern Main Line between Banbury and London Marylebone; to the west by the Gagle Brook, which continues south and runs between the extension area and the existing quarry; and to the south-east by a watercourse and series of ponds known as 'Trow Pool'.

2.5. The nearest residential properties to the extension area are Upper Farm, located circa 400m to the south-east; Ashgrove Cottages, circa 800m to the west; Woodlands Farm and Homelands Farm, circa 650m to the north-east; Bucknell Lodge, circa 950m to the south; and Dewars Farm, circa 1.2km to the south.

2.6. The extension area slopes gently from 109mAOD in the north to 97mAOD in the south (see attached Existing Site Plan dwg ref: DF/408/23). The site lies within Flood Zone 1, which has the lowest probability of flooding (less than 1 in 1000 probability) from rivers and seas. The site does not lie within a Source Protection Zone.

2.7. 'Trow Pool' is located to the immediate south-east of the extension area and designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). A series of small ponds lie to the north-west of the extension area, these are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a LWS. The site is located to the immediate south of the Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI and north-east of the Ardley Trackways SSSI (which covers the exiting quarry). Digging Copse, an Ancient Woodland, lies 500m to the north-east. The site is not located within the Green Belt or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

2.8. Trow Pool Water Tower, a stone-built structure constructed in 1909 and a Grade II Listed Building, is located circa 250m to the east of the site. Middleton Park, which is a Grade II Listed Park and Garden, is located 2km to the south-west and contains Middleton Stoney Castle, which is a Scheduled Monument. Further local Scheduled Monuments include an Anglo-Saxon defensive fortification (Ringwork) at Ardley Wood on the edge of Ardley village, 1.6km to the north-west of the site; and military and defence infrastructure from the 'cold war' period located at the former Upper Heyford Airbase, 2.7km to the west/north-west of the site. Other Listed Buildings are located at Ashgrove Farm and within the nearby villages of Ardley, Bucknell and Middleton Stoney.

2.9. Conservation Areas located near the proposed development site, include Ardley, 1.2km to the north-west; Upper Heyford, 1.8km to the west; Fewcott, 1.9km to the north-west; RAF Bicester 3.7km to the east; Chesterton, 4km to the south-east; and part of central Bicester 4.6km to the south-east.

2.10. Several Public Rights of Way (PROW) border the existing quarry and proposed extension area, including the following (see Public Rights of Way drawing reference no. DF/408/20, within the LVIA):

- Bridleway 109/27/20, which runs east from the B430, between the EfW and existing quarry, connecting to Bridleway 297/6/10;
- Bridleway 297/6/10, which runs between the existing quarry and extension area, continuing south-east to bridleway 148/6/10 and Trow pool;
- Bridleway 148/6/10 runs south of Trow Pool and continues eastwards as Bridleway 148/6/20 towards Trow Pool Water Tower;
- Bridleway 109/26/40, which borders the western boundary of the extension area running alongside the Gagle Brook, continuing north across the railway line and beyond;
- Footpath 297/8/10, which borders the eastern and southern boundaries of the existing quarry, linking Trow Pool to Dewars Farm and the B430 in Middleton Stoney village;
- Footpath 148/10/10 which runs from the northern end of Trow Pool south-west through Trowpool Spinney towards Middleton Stoney; and
- Footpath 148/3/10 traverses the northern edge of the extension area from the bridleway on the western boundary to east where it passes under the motorway and continues towards Bucknell village.

3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

3.1. The proposed development involves mineral extraction, infilling and restoration using site derived and imported inert materials to agricultural land and nature conservation. It comprises the following three component parts:

- **Extension Area** – The main part of the development is the extension area to the north-east of the existing Dewars Farm Quarry. This extension area is anticipated to yield circa 3.6 million tonnes of limestone, which will be excavated and transported via dump trucks to be processed within the existing quarry.

- **Retention of supporting infrastructure within the existing quarry** – The existing site access, offices, weighbridge, staff facilities, processing plant and stocking area will be retained to support the development of the extension area.

- **New internal haul road** – A new haul road is proposed to be constructed between the processing plant and extension area. This will be used to transport as dug mineral for processing, storage and onward sale, as well as to transport infill material into the extension area for restoration purposes.

Extension Area

3.2. The proposed development will involve the extraction of circa 3.6 million tonnes of limestone from the Middle Jurassic White Limestone Formation of the Great Oolite Group. The site will be restored to agricultural land and nature conservation, using a combination of imported inert and site derived materials.

3.3. It is proposed that the limestone within the extension area will be worked out at an average rate of circa 450,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) to a maximum depth of 11m below ground level. At this anticipated rate, the extension area will be worked out within approximately 8 years. The void space created by the extraction of limestone will be infilled using a combination of site derived materials, comprising soils, overburden and processing fines; and imported inert restoration materials, which comprise excavation and demolition waste materials from local construction projects. The use of circa 1.3 million m^3 of imported inert materials, alongside onsite materials, enables the site to be restored at levels similar to the exiting site topography, providing high quality agricultural land and appropriate water management. Without these restoration materials, much of the restored site would be under water and it would not be

possible to achieve the aim of returning the northern part of the site to the current landowner to continue its agricultural use.

Geology

3.4. The site is underlain by off-white, light grey to yellowish oolitic and peloidal limestone of the Ardley Member of the Middle Jurassic White Limestone Formation. The Ardley Member is exposed beneath thin soils over much of the proposed extension area. The upper 1-2 metres of limestone are generally non-intact rubbly and clayey 'brash'. Unproductive overburden in the eastern part of the site comprises up to 4m of clay and limestones of the Bladon Member of the White Limestone Formation and the overlying Forest Marble Formation. This overburden will be used in the infilling and restoration of the site. Superficial deposits are absent with the exception of alluvium along the course of the Gagle Brook at its eastern tributary.

3.5. The Ardley Member reaches a maximum thickness of 7.3m in the extension area and is underlain by a further 3-5m of limestone and clay of the Shipton Member. A clay horizon lying at the base of the Ardley Member marks the base of the productive limestone sequence. The geological sequence gently dips to the southeast.

3.6. The quarry produces a range of crushed and graded limestone products from the Ardley Member. The sequence is worked on 3 benches, the lowest being a bed of strong cemented limestone ('Bottom bed') which supplies gabion stone products.

3.7. Borehole investigations have shown that the geological sequence to be worked in the proposed extension is similar to the existing quarry and it will be worked in a similar manner. Overburden, clay horizons and quarry waste, in addition to imported inert waste, will be used in restoration of the quarry void.

3.8. Further details of the geological sequence can be found within the Mineral Resource Assessment (Appendix A) and the Hydrological and Hydrogeological Impact Assessment (see chapter 2 of the Environmental Statement).

Working Scheme

3.9. The site is proposed to be progressively worked and restored in 5 areas or phases, beginning in the south and working towards the north (see Working Areas drawing reference no. SBARDQ2211-DG1). This provides the optimum situation for water and material management, as well as enabling the southern nature conservation area to be restored at the earliest opportunity. The staged working and restoration of the extension area is summarised below:

Preliminary Works: Initial works will include soil stripping within Area 1 in the south and along the route of the haul road. The haul road and crossings will be constructed, as well as soil storage bunds. The fixed processing area within the existing quarry will be established. Soil stripping will also take place within parts of Areas 2 to 5 as the development moves into Stage 1.

Stage 1: During Stage 1, mineral extraction will take place within Area 1, whilst soils are stripped within Area 2 and continue as necessary in parts of Areas 3, 4 and 5. Overburden will be excavated within Area 2 as it is required for the infilling and restoration of Area 1. The silt lagoon will be constructed in Area 5. As groundwater is encountered during excavation works, it will be pumped out of the working area to enable a dry dig, and into silt lagoons where it will be stored. These lagoons enable fines to settle out prior to the water being discharged at a suitable flow rate into local ditches and watercourses.

Mineral will be dug out using an excavator and larger blocks of limestone will be broken with the use of a secondary breaker before being placed within dump trucks, which transport the 'as dug' mineral to the processing plant within the existing quarry.

Stripped soils will be stored within perimeter bunds, alongside the haul road and within the soil storage area in the southern tip of the extension site.

Stage 2: This stage will see mineral extraction progressing into Area 2. Infilling will commence within Area 1 using mostly site derived materials, namely overburden from other areas of the extension site. A groundwater pond will be constructed as Area 1 is infilled and restored. Soil stripping of Area 3 will progress ahead of extraction within Area 3. Additional soil storage areas are established.

Stage 3: During stage 3, mineral extraction progresses into Area 3, whilst infilling with site derived and imported materials, commences in Area 2. Restoration progresses within Area 1 with the creation of groundwater ponds. Overburden is extracted within Area 4 for restoration within Area 2 and soil stripping progresses in Area 4.

Stage 4: Mineral extraction moves into Area 4; infilling takes place within Area 3, alongside temporary topsoil storage and the creation of silt lagoons within Area 3; infilling and restoration progress within Areas 1 and 2; attenuation ponds are constructed within these restored areas and soil stripping progresses through Area 5.

Stage 5: Mineral extraction takes places within Area 5, in the very north of the extension site; infilling commences within Area 4; Area 3 is used for temporary soil storage and is partial restored; restoration of the nature conservation areas is completed.

Stage 6: Mineral extraction is complete within the extension site. Infilling commences within Area 5 and continues within Area 4. Area 3 can be restored as soils are removed for restoration of the agricultural land. A groundwater interception drain is installed along the northern boundary of Area 5, which connects to a groundwater drainage pipe running through the eastern part of the site.

Stage 7: During the final stage of the development infilling and restoration of the site is completed, with final soil placement, seeding and planting. The internal haul road is decommissioned and downgraded to an agricultural access track. Extraction of the remaining workable mineral below the processing plant and site offices can take place as the plant and machinery are removed from site and final restoration of the main quarry takes place.

<u>Soil Handling, Soil Bunds and Standoffs</u>

3.10. Top and sub soils will be stripped prior to mineral extraction and stored in accordance with best practice within soil storage bunds located around the site perimeter, or within a designated temporary storage area, such as that in the very southern part of the extension area (as shown on the attached Site Wide Operations Plan drawing reference no. DF/408/24 and Working Areas drawing reference no. SBARDQ2211-DG1). These bunds will be constructed to a maximum height of 3m for topsoil and 5m for subsoil and replaced during site restoration.

3.11. Standoffs and perimeter soil storage bunds will provide mitigation against potential amenity impacts such as noise, air quality and visual impacts to receptors such as users of the PROWs to the north, west and south; the SSSIs and LWS to the north and west; the Gagle Brook and woodland to the west; Trow Pool to the south-east; and existing planting along the eastern boundary will provide a buffer to the eastern site boundary and the M40 motorway.

Retention of Existing Quarry Infrastructure

3.12. The extension area will be supported by the existing infrastructure within the existing Dewars Farm Quarry, including the site access onto the B430; site offices and staff parking and welfare facilities; weighbridge; HGV parking; plant and vehicle maintenance; processing; storage and stockpiling (see drawing reference no. DF/401/00559/001).

3.13. As dug mineral will be transported in dump trucks from the extension area via the newly constructed haul road, to the processing plant with the existing Dewars Farm Quarry. Here the mineral will be crushed, washed and screened and stored appropriate to product size prior to sale and onward transport off site.

3.14. The existing Incinerator Bottom Ash Aggregate storage operation (planning permission 19/01724/CM (MW.0081/19)) will continue unaffected by the proposed development.

3.15. At the current rate of extraction and sale, the permitted reserves within Dewars Farm Quarry will be worked out before the end of 2024. As such, Smiths have identified the need for additional reserves to come forward prior to the permitted 2028 end date. In effect, this extension area will see the overall site extended in terms of duration by a further 8 years.

Internal Haul Road and Crossings

3.16. As explained above, the mineral extracted from the proposed extension area will be transported via dump trucks along a newly constructed internal haul road to be processed within the existing quarry. The new internal haul road will run from the existing quarry, in a north-east direction, through a triangular field and into the south-western boundary of the extension area, where it will continue north along the western boundary. This haul road will cross a buried water main, bridleway and the Gagle Brook. The crossings of the water main and stream have been designed by structural engineers to ensure the water main and stream are adequately protected and that the crossing points can safely support the weight of the dump trucks transporting mineral from the extraction area to the processing plant and infill material back to the quarry void.

3.17. The haul road will measure circa 10m in width and be flanked either side by soil storage bunds approximately 3m in height. These will be seeded to soften their visual impact. The bunds will reduce the potential for noise, dust and visual impacts to users of the local bridleways/footpaths. The bunds will be tapered towards the crossing point to enable appropriate visibility of the crossing and its approach.

3.18. The crossing of the haul road and bridleway will be designed to ensure a safe crossing for users, with gates and signage or traffic lights to allow quarry traffic to pass freely when the bridleway is not in use and to stop quarry traffic when a bridleway user wishes to cross.

Plant and Machinery

3.19. No blasting will take place within the extension area, instead the consolidated rock will be broken out at the working face using an excavator. Any larger material will be broken down using a secondary breaker before being loaded into articulated dump trucks for transport to the processing plant.

3.20. Mineral processing will be undertaken within the existing quarry. The processing plant will comprise a screener and crusher, which will be fed by the dump trucks tipping into a hopper. The processing plant and stockpiling areas will be located in phases 6, 7 and part of phase 5 of the existing quarry.

3.21. The imported infill material will be deposited directly within the excavation void. Upon placement, a dozer will be used to move and compress the restoration material in place.

Timescales and Duration

3.22. It is anticipated that the extension area will be worked out and restored within a total of 12 years. Subject to gaining the necessary permissions in a timely manner, it is anticipated that preparatory works will begin at the end of 2024 or beginning of 2025, with extraction taking circa 8 years, from 2025 to 2032 and restoration of the extension site being completed 4 years later, by 2036. A final year to complete soil placement, planting and removal of plant and machinery, takes completion of restoration to 2037.

Staff

3.23. The existing quarry supports 11 employees and an additional 4 or 5 contract staff during the busy months. The proposed development will continue to support these existing members of staff. It is not expected that additional staff will be required.

Hours of Operation

3.24. The site will operate within the following hours, other than dewatering and emergency maintenance:

07:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday

08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays

No operations on Sundays or Public Holidays

Highways and Access

3.25. The site will be accessed via the existing quarry access onto the B430, which is part of the Oxfordshire Lorry Route Network and operates safely with the established movements generated at the quarry. The existing quarry access is suitable in terms of layout and design. The existing quarry operates with no restrictions to daily HGV movements. The proposed extension will operate at a similar extraction rate to the existing and the additional operation of importing infill material for restoration can be accommodated with minimal effect upon HGV movements.

3.26. The proposed development is expected to generate an average of 316 HGV movements per day, as set out below:

Activity	Average Loads	Average Movements
Mineral extraction	98	196
Imported Infill	60	120
Total average	**158**	**316**

3.27. This is comparable to the permitted HGV movements for the existing quarry (Planning Permission 18/01610/CM and 15/01660/CM) and sits comfortably within the daily fluctuations currently experienced. This application is accompanied by a Transport Statement (see Volume 2: Environmental Statement), which concludes that in highway and traffic terms, the proposed development effectively represents a continuation of the existing permitted activities in terms

of vehicle movements, albeit with the inclusion of infill imports, and that the local road network is of a suitable standard to safely accommodate the proposed operations, as well as other HGV activity in the area.

3.28. HGV's accessing the quarry currently do so to / from the north and south, albeit the majority of movements are to the north and via junction 10 of the M40 motorway. The Transport Statement supporting this application, concludes that the proposed development will not result in any intensification of use or impact to the local highway network.

3.29. During pre-application discussions and formal pre-application advice from OCC, the Highways Authority stated that they would request a routing agreement to prevent HGV's turning right in and left out of the site, to prevent HGVs travelling through Middleton Stoney. This is due to existing highway constraints in the centre of Middleton Stoney village and the B430 / B4030 junction being a busy route for vehicular access between the Heyfords and Bicester. This is an area of concern to local residents and Middleton Stoney Parish Council, as raised by the community during our community engagement consultation. Smiths are keen to work with their neighbours and with the Highways Authority to minimise disturbance where possible.

3.30. The Transport Statement concludes that the highway network is suitable and has capacity to support the proposed development based on the existing distribution of traffic to and from the site. The B430 forms part of the Oxfordshire Lorry Route Network and therefore is deemed suitable and recommended for use by HGVs. As a result, this route is used by many operators, not only Smiths own HGVs and those associated with Dewars Farm Quarry.

3.31. Notwithstanding the foregoing, Smiths are willing to enter into a routing agreement, subject to the Highway Authorities' confirmation that this would not create an unacceptable impact to the north, or trigger mitigation measures on the highway network.

Water Management

3.32. The proposed development has been designed to ensure that groundwater and surface water are adequately managed throughout both the operational stage (mineral extraction and infilling) and upon restoration.

3.33. As the limestone lies partly below groundwater, a dry working area will be maintained by dewatering. The groundwater level will be supressed to enable the limestone to be excavated and the imported inert backfill to be placed in dry conditions. During the operational period,

groundwater and rainfall falling in the excavation area will flow to a sump in the quarry floor. From here it will be pumped to a settlement pond in the northern part of the extension area. Although the water extracted from the quarry void is not anticipated to have a significant amount of suspended sediment, the water will pass through a settlement pond to enable any sediment present to settle.

3.34. From the settlement pond, the water will flow along a small open ditch to the south-eastern part of the site, from where the water will infiltrate into the surrounding in situ limestone, fed into the stream above Trow Pool or into the Gagle Brook. As the site is progressively restored and the attenuation ponds are created, the water will flow into these attenuation ponds and then into the infiltration ponds formed against exposed limestone faces in the south-eastern boundary. Attenuation ponds are designed with an allowance for a 40% increase in rainfall intensity to account for the potential impacts of climate change.

3.35. Following significant storm events, when the rate of discharge from the attenuation ponds exceeds the rate of infiltration, surface water will be discharged into the Gagle Brook in the south-western corner of the extension area.

3.36. Surface water runoff from the land surrounding the excavation void will be channelled to attenuation ponds, from where the water will be discharged via a controlled outlet into the infiltration ponds.

3.37. During restoration a drain will be installed along the northern perimeter of the quarry, which will intercept groundwater flowing from the north, around the backfilled void, along the eastern side of the extension area, to the south-eastern corner of the site. Here it will discharge into the watercourse that feds into Trow Pool.

3.38. The contours of the proposed final landform have been designed to be very similar to the existing contours. Therefore, most of the rainfall landing on the restored landform will run off to the west. The runoff will be intercepted by an infiltration ditch created within the in-situ ground. The infiltration ditch will flow to the south and discharge any remaining water into the main attenuation pond. Water will only be permitted to discharge from the attenuation pond into the infiltration ponds at or below than the greenfield runoff rate. A swale will enable any water that does not infiltrate into the exposed limestone rockfaces, to be discharged into the Gagle Brook.

Mitigation Measures

3.39. The development has been designed to minimise potential adverse effects to the environment and to nearby amenity receptors. Noise, air quality and visual effects are greatly reduced by distance from the extraction site and processing areas. Nearby residential properties are at least 400m from the site boundary and therefore well mitigated by distance, intervening topography and existing vegetation. Other sensitive receptors include users of the local Rights of Way network, including the footpaths and bridleways that border the site; and users of Trow Pool to the south-east.

3.40. Soil storage bunds have been designed to be located around the perimeter of the extension area and along the haul road. These bunds will provide suitable mitigation to potential amenity effects such as noise, air quality and visual. Existing and new / enhanced planting will also provide mitigation to potential visual effects from nearby Rights of Way and from Trow Pool. Operational management of the site will further minimise potential adverse effects by limiting the hours of operation; managing vehicle speed limits; and by using modern, well-maintained plant and equipment.

Ecology

3.41. Great Crested Newts (GCN) have been recorded locally to the development site and although the extension site itself offers limited suitable habitat for GCNs, the surrounding semi-improved grassland areas may provide terrestrial habitat. A buffer zone of at least 10m will protect this habitat along the western boundary of the extension area. However, the proposed new haul road will traverse the grassland area to the south-west of the extension area, resulting in some loss of semi-improved grassland. As recommended with the Ecological Impact Assessment, the proposals are entered into the District Level Licencing Scheme for GCNs, which provides compensation for any habitat loss. In addition, the restoration scheme will provide habitat enhancement for GCNs through the creation of ponds and suitable terrestrial habitats.

3.42. The following measures have been adopted to mitigate and/or compensate for identified ecological effects, including the removal of habitats that might support foraging bats, grass snake and nesting birds:

- Woodland edges and retained hedgerows will be protected in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012, through the establishment of appropriate root protection zones. Buffer zones are established to the site boundaries, with a buffer zone of at least 10m to running watercourses and the Trow Pools.
- Precautionary working methods will be adopted with regard to reptiles and nesting birds to prevent killing, injury or damage/destruction to active birds' nests.
- The site will be entered into the District Level Licensing Scheme for great crested newts. This will avoid the need for great crested newt surveys, compensation or monitoring.
- Loss of hedgerow and semi-improved grassland will be compensated for at the restoration phase. Restoration will also deliver a number of other habitats including woodland, scrub, calcareous grassland, wet grassland, ditches, seasonal and permanent waterbodies/ponds.

Restoration

3.43. The extension area will be restored progressively using a combination of site derived materials, comprising quarry fines, overburden and soils; and imported inert materials, such as clays and silts excavated from local construction projects. The imported restoration materials will mostly originate from local construction projects within a circa 15 mile radius of Dewars Farm Quarry and will include the areas of Banbury, Bicester, Brackley and Buckingham. The importation of non-recyclable inert materials is solely for the purpose of supplementing site derived materials to deliver the proposed restoration profiles. The site will be restored primarily to agricultural land with surface water management and additional biodiversity enhancements, particularly within the nature conservation area in the south.

3.44. The northern part of the site will be returned to agricultural land. In order to achieve a high-grade restoration, the landform has been designed to reflect existing levels, but with improvements for surface water drainage purposes. The soils in this part of the site will be enhanced using suitable sub soils and on-site materials to increase the substrate. The topsoils stripped at the outset will be replaced within this part of the site, providing an improvement from Grade 3b to Grade 3a where possible.

3.45. The southern part of the extension area, under Smiths freehold, is being restored to nature conservation and will not require the original topsoil replacement. As such, these can be used to greater benefit within the north and instead sub soils and limestone fines will provide a suitable substrate, particularly for establishing calcareous grassland.

3.46. The restoration scheme provides significant biodiversity enhancement, comprising a mosaic of grassland, including calcareous grassland; permanent ponds; seasonally wet areas; as well as grassland, scrub and woodland mosaic, all on southerly facing topography which should provide good conditions for species-rich grassland to develop; as well as enhancement to existing boundary planting, drainage ditches and public access.

3.47. The proposed development has been assessed against the Natural England Biodiversity Net Gain Metric version 3.1, with the following results (see Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, December 2022 at Appendix D):

- Net gain of 22.88% habitat units – recorded increase of 33.00 habitat units.
- Net gain of 622.12% hedgerow units - recorded increase of 6.67 hedgerow units.
- Net gain of 90.93% river units – recorded increase of 10.31 river units.

3.48. The parts of the existing quarry that are unaffected by the proposed development, will continue to be worked out and restored in accordance with the approved restoration scheme (drawing reference no. 234/DF/5C) under planning permission 18/01610/CM (MW.0102/18). Those areas of the existing quarry that lie within the application site boundary are required to support the extension area and therefore this will be the final phase to be worked out and restored (the area is defined on drawing no. DF/408/24B, the Interim Restoration Scheme is shown on drawing no. DF/408/28 and the final Restoration Scheme for the existing quarry is shown on drawing no. 234/DF/5C).

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

3.49. Potential amenity impacts upon users of the PROWs which border the site boundaries will be mitigated be the installation of soil storage bunds and adequate buffer zones / stand offs. In addition, existing and enhanced boundary planting will assist in mitigating amenity effects upon users of PROW 109/26/40 to the west and PROW 148/10/10 to the south-east of the extension area.

3.50. PROW 297/6/10, which runs along the south-west boundary of the extension area, will cross the proposed route of the internal haul road. The haul road design and crossing point are designed to minimise impact to users of the PROW. Soil screen bunds will be located alongside the haul road, minimising potential visual, noise and air quality effects. The Applicant has liaised with the Rights of Way Officers at OCC with regard to the crossing of the PROW. It has been agreed that a gate and traffic light / signage system will adequately protect and warn users of the crossing and enable the safe stopping of vehicular traffic when the crossing is in use. Details of the crossing design can be further discussed and agreed with the ROW Officer by planning condition. In addition, suitable speed limits on the haul road will ensure safe and efficient transport of material and adequate stopping distances at the crossing point.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1. The Proposed Scheme falls within Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regs). As such, the planning application is supported by an Environmental Statement (ES), which can be found in Volume 2 of this application. The ES is in accordance with the EIA Regs and has been informed by pre-application advice from Oxfordshire County Council, as well as from feedback from the local community in response to a face-to-face public exhibition and an online exhibition. The following assessments are included in the ES:

Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Flood Risk
Landscape and Visual Impact
Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain
Archaeology and Cultural Heritage
Traffic and Highways
Noise
Air Quality
Agricultural Land and Soils

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

5.1. During the development design process and preparation of the planning application, engagement has been carried out with Oxfordshire County Council and with the local community.

5.2. Prior to the submission of this application, the Applicant held a face-to-face public exhibition at Middleton Stoney village hall. This was well attended by the local community, with visitors from Middleton Stoney and Bucknell villages. In addition, the exhibition material was also made available online, via Smiths company website. The exhibitions provided the opportunity for the local community to review plans and details of the proposed design of the development and to submit comments and feedback.

5.3. The comments and queries received largely focus on the following key areas: Highways and traffic, visual screening, protection of agricultural land, amenity impacts (noise and dust0, protection of Trow Pool, cumulative impact, and public access (footpaths). The key comments made by the community in response to the both the face-to-face and online exhibitions are provided at Appendix B, alongside the Applicant's response.

5.4. In addition, the Applicant has engaged closely with the County Rights of Way Officer to mutually consider the best way to maintain public access and ensure safety of all users during the development. Through these discussions, the ROW Officer highlighted a desire to improve the PROW between Upper Heyford and Bicester, to support large scale development in these settlements and to provide the necessary infrastructure for green travel. OCC hope to provide a surfaced track which will support pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists for business, commuting and recreational uses. Smiths are supporting OCC with this project.

6. PLANNING POLICY

The Development Plan

6.1. In accordance with Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2. The Development Plan relevant to the proposed working of an extension at Dewars Farm Quarry, for mineral extraction and restoration with inert materials, comprises the following documents:

- **Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (OMWLP): Part 1 - Core Strategy (Core Strategy), adopted in September 2017.**

  The Core Strategy provides the overarching planning policy framework for Oxfordshire for the period to 2031. It sets out the Council's spatial vision, key objectives and overall principles for development in the County.

  The Core Strategy provides a policy framework for identifying sites for new minerals and waste development. OCC are now working towards a combined Local Plan, which will incorporate the Core Strategy and Site Allocations Documents. The Core Strategy will remain in place until superseded by the new Single Plan, which is proposed to be adopted in March 2026.

- **Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (saved policies), adopted in July 1996.**

  The Local Plan was adopted in July 1996 and covered the period to 2006. It is due to be replaced by the new Minerals and Waste Local Plan, proposed to be adopted in March 2026. 16 policies of the Local Plan have been 'saved', pending the adoption of the Local Plan. These 'saved' policies are site specific and do not relate to Dewars Farm Quarry or the Ardley area.

- **Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (CLP) 2011 – 2031 (Part 1)**

  The Cherwell Local Plan was adopted in July 2015, with Policy Bicester 13 being re-adopted in December 2016. It provides strategic planning policy for development and land use across Cherwell.

- **Cherwell Local Plan 1996**

  The 'saved' policies of the 1996 Local Plan form part of the Development Plan.

6.3. Other documents which have been taken into consideration in the development of this scheme where relevant, include the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW)
- Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Development Scheme (Thirteenth Revision) December 2022
- Local Aggregates Assessment for Oxfordshire, November 2021
- Non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – also relevant to the determination of planning applications.

6.4. The Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan is now being prepared as a single combined document, which will incorporate the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations Documents. Work on the partially prepared Part 2: Site Allocations Document has now ceased. OCC have commenced a new 'Call for Sites', which will begin a new Local Plan preparation process. The Issues and Options (Regulation 18) Consultation is due in the Summer of 2023 and the Plan is proposed to be adopted in March 2026.

6.5. The application site was nominated as a proposed extension to Dewars Farm Quarry in the previous OMWLP process and was considered in the Site Options Appraisal dated January 2020, which formed part of the consultation draft of the Site Allocations Plan at that time (under site reference CR-13). It lies within the north-west Bicester Minerals Strategic Resource Area. The site was assessed as 'green' under a RAG scoring in both Stage 1a (high level assessment) and Stage 1b (detailed assessment), however not progressed to a Preferred Area as it was not expected to *"come into use until 2029 and would give only 2 years of extraction within the plan period."* For this reason, it was concluded that *"it would be better to consider allocating this site in a later review."* This conclusion indicates that OCC is supportive of this site in principle. Time has moved on and as set out above, the permitted reserve at Dewars Farm Quarry is going to be exhausted sooner than expected. As the extension area is now required from 2024, a re-assessment during the Local Plan process is considered necessary and is expected to conclude that there are no constraints, in principle, to this site being allocated.

6.6. The OMWLP Core Strategy reflects the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement for the provision of a landbank of permitted reserves of crushed rock of at least 10 years supply. This is needed to maintain a steady and adequate supply of aggregates. The Core Strategy also identifies 'principle locations' for aggregate mineral extraction within Strategic Resource Areas (SRAs). Dewars Farm Quarry and the extension site lie within the north-west of Bicester SRA and receive further support in the Core Strategy as priority is given to extensions to existing sites.

6.7. The most recent Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA), which provides forecasts of the demand for aggregates; an analysis of supply options; and the rate of future provision, was published in November 2021 and utilises data to the end of 2020. It sets out that the provision figure for crushed rock will remain at 0.778mtpa, despite the 3-year sales average increase to 0.893mt. The LAA recognises that, at the end of 2020, the permitted reserves of crushed rock were 7.15Mt, which gave a landbank of 9.19 years, which is below the 10-year requirement as set out

in the NPPF. It identifies a need for further reserves of crushed rock over the Plan Period (to 2031) of 0.895Mt. This need for additional reserves will have grown, as the permitted reserves will have depleted over the 2 years that have passed since the LAA data was provided (end of 2020). As such, new reserves are required to be permitted to assist OCC in meeting its annual provision and to ensure a continuation of supply of aggregate to the market.

Planning Policy Assessment

6.8. The material considerations with regard to the proposed development include the following matters, which are discussed below:

- principles of sustainable development
- need for additional mineral reserves
- location
- climate change, flooding and water environment
- local amenity
- agricultural land and soils
- biodiversity and nature conservation
- landscape and visual impact
- historic environment and archaeology
- highways and rights of way
- restoration and aftercare

Principles of Sustainable Development

6.9. According to the NPPF the *"purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development"* (paragraph 7), which means meeting the needs of the present, without compromising the needs of future generations. The three interdependent overarching objectives of sustainable development, that need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, are:

- *Economic* - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
- *Social* - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and
- *Environmental* - to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment.

6.10. As addressed below, the proposed development meets the three objectives of sustainable development through ensuring there is an adequate and steady supply of mineral to support economic growth, thereby meeting the demand for housing and infrastructure in the local area; providing and protecting jobs; improving and creating open spaces that support the health and well-being of the local community; enabling inert materials to be put to a useful purpose; protecting and enhancing the natural environment; and providing high quality agricultural land, with long-term biodiversity benefits.

6.11. Policy C1 of the MWCS sets out that "*a positive approach will be taken to minerals and waste development in Oxfordshire, reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and the aim to improve economic, social and environmental conditions of the area."* It goes on to say that *"planning applications that accord with the policies of this plan will be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise."*

6.12. As the proposed development meets the objectives of sustainable development and complies with the Development Plan, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF and Policy C1 of the MWCS, the planning application should be approved without delay.

Need for Additional Mineral Reserves

6.13. Minerals are an essential and finite resource, as recognised within the NPPF (Chapter 17, Paragraph 209):

"It is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation".

6.14. Accordingly, at paragraph 211, the NPPF states that, when determining planning applications, *"great weight should be given to the benefits of mineral extraction, including to the economy".* Paragraph 213 of the NPPF goes further in requiring that Mineral Planning Authorities (MPAs) *"should plan for a steady and adequate supply of aggregates by …maintaining landbanks of at least 7 years for sand and gravel and at least 10 years for crushed rock*". The landbank requirement is a minimum requirement to indicate when reserves are becoming scarce. Importantly, there is no maximum landbank.

6.15. The MWCS sets out a vision that:

"*There will be a sufficient supply of aggregate materials available to meet the development needs of the county with a world class economy, and make an appropriate contribution to wider needs, provided from the following sources (in order of priority):*

- *secondary and recycled aggregate materials (where practicable);*
- *locally produced sharp sand and gravel, soft sand, limestone and ironstone; and*
- *import of materials such as hard crushed rock that are not available locally."*

6.16. The MWCS contains 12 objectives, which includes to "*Make provision for a steady and adequate supply of sharp sand and gravel, soft sand and crushed rock over the plan period to meet the planned economic growth and social needs of Oxfordshire."*

6.17. The MWCS acknowledges that "*Oxfordshire is one of the few places in the south east of England where there are resources of rock, and provision figures will enable the County to continue to make an appropriate contribution towards local and wider requirements for crushed rock."*

6.18. Policy M2 sets out the required provision of aggregate minerals over the plan period, including 0.584 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) of crushed rock, which equates to 10.512 million tonnes. The policy also states that permission will be granted for aggregate mineral working to enable a landbank of at least 10 years for crushed rock, taking into account the need to maintain sufficient productive capacity to enable these rates to be realised.

6.19. The Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA) 2021, which includes sales data up to the end of 2020, calculates that the provision level should be maintained at 0.778mtpa. The existing permitted reserves to the end of 2020 will provide for a landbank of 9.19 years for crushed rock, which is short of the NPPF set 10-year minimum. Further, the LAA identifies a need for a further 0.895Mt of crushed rock reserves during the Plan Period (to 2031). This will have increased further as the LAA data was from the end of 2020, which is now over 2 years ago.

6.20. In order to provide for a *"steady and adequate supply"* of aggregate, a Mineral Planning Authority must ensure that new reserves are permitted to replace those that are exhausted. Whilst Dewars Farm Quarry benefits from planning permission to the end of 2028, at the current level of demand, it is anticipated that the existing permitted reserves will be exhausted by the end of 2024. It is therefore essential that new reserves are identified and permitted urgently to ensure that this quarry can continue to supply mineral to the local market at the current rate.

6.21. The urgency of this need is supported by the permitted reserves for crushed rock in Oxfordshire having fallen below the required 10-year landbank, as set out in the latest LAA (data from the end of 2020). It is important to note that landbanks are *"principally a monitoring tool to provide a mineral planning authority with early warning of possible disruption to the provision of an adequate and steady supply of land-won aggregates"* (PPG paragraph 080). The PPG goes on to say that *"there is no maximum landbank level and each application for minerals extraction must be considered on its own merits regardless of the length of the landbank. However, where a landbank is below the minimum level this may be seen as a strong indicator of urgent need" (author's underlining).* Additionally, the NPPF is clear that it is the responsibility of MPAs to ensure that competition if not stifled by allowing landbanks to be bound up in very few sites (paragraph 213g).

6.22. The proposed extension site at Dewars Farm Quarry is expected to yield circa 3.6 million tonnes of limestone over 8 years (at an annual production rate of circa 450,000 tonnes), which would enable Dewars Farm Quarry to continue to supply limestone to 2032, one year beyond the Plan Period. The MWCS refers to the flexibility to allow for changes in demand for locally supplied aggregates. Such flexibility requires sufficient reserves from multiple sites with limited restrictions on output.

6.23. The proposed development site was nominated for consideration as a mineral development site in the Site Allocations Document (Part 2 of the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which has now ceased progression). Whilst the draft Site Allocations Document has no weight in planning decisions, the assessment carried out and rating applied to this site, provide relevant information on how the Council considered this site during the most recent site appraisal process. The site was rated as 'green' under a RAG scoring in both Stage 1a (high level assessment) and Stage 1b (detailed assessment), within the Site Options Appraisal (January 2020). At that time, it was not progressed to a Preferred Area as it was not expected to *"come into use until 2029 and would give only 2 years of extraction within the plan period."* For this reason, it was concluded that *"it would be better to consider allocating this site in a later review."* This conclusion indicates that OCC is supportive of this site in principle.

6.24. As explained above, the permitted reserves at the quarry have been worked out at a faster rate than originally expected. A further review would take into account the now urgent need for additional reserves and the imminent exhaustion of permitted reserves at this site. The site was assessed as 'green' in the Site Options Appraisal and is therefore considered an appropriate site

in principle. It should now be considered an appropriate time for this site to be allocated and to seek planning permission to ensure a continuation of supply.

Location

6.25. The NPPF recognises that minerals are a finite resource that can only be worked where they are found. This is also acknowledged within the MWCS, which sets out the strategic approach to identifying future supplies of aggregate minerals, stating that proposals for new quarries or extensions to existing quarries should be located within Strategic Resource Areas (SRAs). The SRAs, set out in Policy M3, are broad locations where future mineral working should take place.

6.26. The supporting text of policy M3 explains that the SRAs are "*drawn based on available geological information broadly to encompass areas of potentially workable mineral deposits which, in terms of extent and probable depth of mineral, have the potential to provide new mineral working sites either in the form of new quarries or large extensions to existing quarries".*

6.27. The application site at Dewars Farm Quarry lies within the SRA to the north-west of Bicester. Policy M3 states that "*specific sites (new quarry sites and/or extensions to existing quarries) for working aggregate minerals within the strategic resource areas will be allocated in the Minerals & Waste Local Plan: Part 2 – Site Allocations Document, in accordance with Policy M4."*

6.28. Policy M4: Sites for Working Aggregate Minerals, sets out the factors that will be taken into account when allocating specific sites in the Site Allocation Document (now to be a single combined Local Plan). The application site was put forward to and considered by Oxfordshire County Council for consideration as an allocated site. However, ahead of sites being allocated in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan, it is relevant to consider applications against the factors set out in Policy M4:

a) the quantity and quality of the mineral resource;

6.29. It is expected that the proposed development of the extension site will yield circa 3.6 million tonnes of limestone. The excavated limestone will be suitable for a range of crushed and graded limestone aggregate products, with the strong cemented 'bottom bed' supplying gabion stone products. Clay and marl overburden and interburden will be used as on-site fill and restoration material.

b) priority for the extension of existing quarries, where environmentally acceptable (including taking into consideration criteria c) to l)), before working new sites;

6.30. The development is an extension to an existing mineral site. It makes use of the existing services and infrastructure already available within the existing quarry, including the site office, weighbridge, staff facilities, processing plant and road access. As an extension to an existing site, it is granted priority over new sites, where environmentally acceptable. Consideration of criteria c) to l) is addressed below.

c) potential for restoration and after-use and for achieving the restoration objectives of the Plan in accordance with policy M10;

6.31. The development area will be infilled using site derived and imported inert materials to restore the site to a combination of agriculture and nature conservation, with significant biodiversity net gain.

6.32. The site will be restored in a phased manner, ensuring restoration is carried out in a timely manner, with the existing soil resources being protected and reused on site. The proposed restoration scheme (see Proposed Restoration Scheme drawing reference no. DF/408/25) complies with Policy M4 and M10 and will provide a high standard of restoration, as can already be seen within the restored northern phases of the existing quarry.

d) suitability and accessibility of the primary road network;

6.33. The development will continue to utilise the existing quarry access onto the B430, which connects the village of Ardley and the M40 motorway junction to the north, with Middleton Stoney and Weston-on-the-Green to the south. The exiting access is suitable for the proposed type, number and frequency of vehicles that will continue to serve the quarry.

6.34. The development will have no material impact on the operation and safety of the adjacent road network.

e) proximity to large towns and other locations of significant demand to enable a reduction in overall journey distance from quarry to market;

6.35. Dewars Farm Quarry is located circa 4.5km north-west of Bicester, 12km south of Brackley, 16km north of Oxford, 17km south-east of Banbury, all of which are areas of proposed housing growth and therefore where demand for aggregates will be generated. The quarry is well located for this local market and with suitable transport connections.

f) ability to provide more sustainable movement of excavated materials;

6.36. Dewars Farm Quarry is well located for access to the strategic highway network, with a purpose built access onto the B430 and within close proximity to areas of growth such as Bicester, Banbury, Brackley, Kidlington and Oxford. This minimises HGV miles for the transport of mineral products from the quarry.

6.37. There are limited alternative modes of transport available for the movement of material and staff to and from the site. However, Smiths are investigating and implementing a number of energy efficient measures across the business, including energy and fuel monitoring; phased replacement of plant with more fuel-efficient options; investigating alternative fuel options; and backhauling of materials.

g) avoidance of locations within or significantly affecting an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

6.38. The closest Area of Outstand Natural Beauty (AONB) to the application site, is the Cotswolds AONB, which lies 13.5km to the south-west at the closest point. The application site therefore lies at a sufficient distance from the AONB for there to be no significant effects.

h) avoidance of locations likely to have an adverse effect on sites and species of international nature conservation importance and Sites of Special Scientific Interest; in the case of locations within the Eynsham / Cassington / Yarnton part of the Thames, Lower Windrush and Lower Evenlode Valleys area, it must be demonstrated that there will be no change in water levels in the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation and the proposal must not involve the working of land to the north or north east of the River Evenlode; in the case of locations within the Corallian Ridge area, it must be demonstrated that there will be no change in water levels in the Cothill Fen Special Area of Conservation;

6.39. Dewars Farm Quarry is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), called the Ardley Trackways SSSI, which is designated for its geological interest. The proposed development will not adversely impact on the existing SSSI and will provide the potential opportunity for further geological investigation of the Middle Jurassic sauropod and theropod dinosaur fossilised trackways in the underlying geological sequence.

6.40. To the immediate north of the extension site lies the Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI, designated for geological and ecological interest and another area of the Ardley Trackways SSSI lies circa 250m to the north-west. The development will have no effect upon the geological interest and

mitigation measures have been designed into the scheme to ensure there will be no significant impacts upon any ecologically important habitats and species by virtue of hydrological effects.

i) avoidance of locations likely to have an adverse effect on the significance of designated heritage assets, including World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens and Registered Battlefields, or on archaeological assets which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to a Scheduled Monument;

6.41. Trow Pool Water Tower, which is located circa 250m to the east of the site, is a Grade II Listed Building. The application site lies within the setting of the water tower, however the setting is already influenced by the existing quarry, EfW and M40 motorway, immediately adjacent to the water tower. The extension site is largely screened at ground level by existing vegetation. As such, the proposed development will have minimal effect upon the water tower and its setting.

6.42. Other Listed Buildings, located at Ashgrove Farm and within the nearby villages of Ardley, Bucknell and Middleton Stoney, will not have direct views of the development site. Due to the distance and intervening vegetation and other built development, including the M40 motorway, there will be no significant impacts to the Listed Buildings or their settings.

6.43. Middleton Park Grade II Listed Park and Garden, contains Middleton Stoney Castle, which is a Scheduled Monument and is located 2km to the south-west of the application site. The development would not result in a detrimental effect to these assets due to the distance and intervening development between them and the application site.

6.44. Conservation Areas located near the proposed development site, include Ardley, 1.2km to the north-west; Upper Heyford, 1.8km to the west; Fewcott, 1.9km to the north-west; RAF Bicester 3.7km to the east; Chesterton, 4km to the south-east; and Bicester 4.6km to the south-east. Most will be unaffected by the proposed development due to their distance from the application site. Ardley Conservation Area will not be significantly affected due to the distance to the development site. Although development traffic will pass through the village of Ardley and close to the Conservation Area, the number of vehicle movements associated with the development will be similar to those for the existing quarry and therefore this will not result in a significant impact when compared to the baseline situation.

j) avoidance of, or ability to suitably mitigate, potential significant adverse impacts on:

- **i. locally designated areas of nature conservation and geological interest;**
- **ii. non-designated heritage assets;**
- **iii. local landscape character;**
- **iv. water quality, water quantity, flood risk and groundwater flow;**
- **v. best and most versatile agricultural land and soil resources;**
- **vi. local transport network;**
- **vii. land uses sensitive to nuisance (e.g. schools & hospitals);**
- **viii. residential amenity & human health; and**
- **ix. character and setting of local settlements;**

6.45. Existing and proposed mitigation measures will ensure that any potential impacts upon the environment or local amenities are not significant. The environmental assessments submitted with this planning application demonstrate that the development will not result in significant adverse impacts upon the receptors listed above.

k) potential cumulative impact of successive and/or simultaneous mineral development, including with non-mineral development, on local communities; and

6.46. The extension site will be worked and restored in a phased manner and whilst there will be working within the extension site concurrently with restoration within the existing quarry and the retained use of supporting infrastructure, these cumulative impacts have been assessed within the Environmental Impact Assessment and deemed to be not significant. Further, cumulative impacts with other local proposed or committed development has been assessed and considered not significant.

l) ability to meet other objectives and policy expectations of this Core Strategy (including policies C1 – C12) and relevant policies in other development plans.

6.47. Consideration of compliance with Policies C1-C12 is addressed below.

6.48. Policy M5: Working of aggregate minerals, explains where permission for mineral working will be granted prior to the adoption of the Sites Allocation Document, including *"where this would contribute towards meeting the requirement for provision in policy M2 and provided that the proposal is in accordance with the locational strategy in policy M3."* As set out above, the proposed development would contribute to the provision set out in policy M2 and meet the locational strategy of policy M3.

6.49. The application site is located within the Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA), as designated within the MWCS. Policy M8 states that "*mineral resources in the Minerals Safeguarding Areas shown on the Policies Map are safeguarded for possible future use."* This demonstrates the importance and protection placed on identified mineral resources.

6.50. Policy M10: Restoration of mineral workings, sets out the requirement to restore mineral workings to *"a high standard and in a timely and phased manner to an after-use that is appropriate to the location and delivers a net gain in biodiversity".* The extraction of mineral from the development site, with infilling and restoration using indigenous and imported inert materials will be carried out to a high standard, as evidenced by restoration of the completed phases of the existing quarry carried out by Smiths. The phased restoration of the application site will ensure it is delivered in a timely manner and significant biodiversity enhancement and net gain will be provided by the proposed restoration scheme, as detailed within the Ecological Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment accompanying this planning application.

Climate Change, Flooding and Water Environment

6.51. Core Policy C2: Climate Change requires that planning applications for minerals or waste development take account of climate change for the lifetime of the development, including by providing flexibility for future adaptation to the impacts of climate change. Policy ESD1 of the CLP also requires new development to include measures to mitigate climate change, for example by minimising the risk of flooding and the use of sustainable drainage methods and reducing the effects of the development on the microclimate through the provision of green infrastructure including open space, water and planting.

6.52. The development will continue to make use of existing and new low energy plant and machinery where possible; back loading of HGV's will be undertaken where possible to avoid running empty vehicles; the use of excavation wastes for infilling; and the water attenuation properties that a quarry void will provide assists in climate change flexibility and resilience.

6.53. Further climate change resilience is provided by a number of initiatives that Smiths are investigating or have already implemented, including the following:

- Monitoring of energy usage across the business which highlights key areas of usage and how energy usage can be reduced and provides a baseline to demonstrate improvements going forward;

- Monitoring fuel usage in HGV's in order to target driver training and reductions where possible;
- Trialling HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil), a biofuel as a low-carbon diesel alternative;
- Energy assessment audit at their Enslow Head Office and depot and their Gill Mill site;
- In discussions to trial hydrogen on demand system, which is a dual fuel system that can be retrofitted onto mobile and static plant and HGVs;
- Introducing an electric vehicle policy for all company cars, which will then be rolled out to vans and pick ups;
- Investigating green energy as part of a Head Office refurbishment;
- Phased replacement of mobile plant with more fuel efficient plant, which in a recent example provided a 35% more fuel efficient loading shovel than the model it was replacing;
- Utilising biodegradable tree shelters.

6.54. The proposed restoration scheme for the extension site will provide significant amounts of additional green infrastructure, which will assist in providing a site that is adaptable to climate change effects.

6.55. Policies C3: Flooding and C4: Water environment, seek to protect water resources in setting out that minerals and waste development should, where possible, be located in areas with the lowest probability of flooding and that they will need to demonstrate there will be no unacceptable adverse impacts upon the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater. This is also reflected in policy ESD6, ESD7 and ESD8.

6.56. The site will be restored back to original ground levels using on-site and imported inert materials. These materials will result in a lower permeability than the limestone they will replace, which has potential to increase surface water run-off following restoration. As such the restoration scheme is designed to provide a landform and drainage ditches that adequately manage surface water run-off, in addition to attenuation ponds, which will receive and retain surface water flows and enable an outflow rate at or below the pre-development greenfield rate (with a 40% increase in rainfall intensity assumed to account for the potential impacts of climate change). This will ensure that surface water is adequately managed on site and the development does not result in any increased flood risk.

6.57. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (FZ1), as defined by the Environment Agency, which is assessed as having a greater than 1 in 1000 year annual probability of river flooding, which is the lowest risk. A Hydrogeological and Hydrological Environmental Impact Assessment and Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out for the proposed development (see Volume 2: Environmental Statement), which concludes that alterations to the groundwater and surface water regimes during the excavation and restoration phases will be fully mitigated. The development has been designed to ensure no increase in flood risk as a result of the development. Further, there will be betterment achieved due to the provision of greater attenuation of rainfall runoff peak flows. The development therefore accords with policy C2 of the MWCS and policy ESD1 of the CLP.

6.58. The importation of inert infill material will be regulated by the Environment Agency via an Environmental Permit. The works will be managed by suitably trained staff with the necessary technical competence and qualifications. Robust acceptance criteria and procedures will be implemented to ensure that the imported material is as described on Waste Transfer Notes, is as permitted by the Environmental Permit, is fit for purpose and will not cause environmental harm. As such, the development complies with policies C2, C3, C4, ESD6, ESD7 and ESD8.

Local Amenity

6.59. Policy C5: Local environment, amenity and economy, requires that applications demonstrate there will be no unacceptable adverse impact upon the local environment; human health and safety; amenity of sensitive receptors; and the local economy.

6.60. Chapter 15 of the NPPF (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment) refers specifically to amenity in the following paragraphs:

"174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water, or noise pollution or land instability…"

6.61. The Environmental Statement includes impact assessments for noise, air quality, landscape and visual impact, and highways and traffic. Each assessment concludes that the potential impacts upon receptors will not be significant and where necessary will be adequately mitigated. Mitigation measures include a minimum distance between the excavation limit and residential

properties; soil screen bunds along the eastern, western and northern boundaries providing mitigation from visual, noise and dust impacts; phased working and restoration of the site; processing within the existing quarry; control of hours of operation; traffic management; and monitoring of noise and dust levels during the operational phase.

6.62. The development will not result in an adverse impact on the amenity of local residents and other users of the area and is therefore in accordance with planning policy C5 and the NPPF.

Agricultural Land and Soils

6.63. The NPPF aims to protect agricultural land through the following paragraphs:

"174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land and of trees and woodland;".

6.64. MWCS Policy C6: Agricultural land and soils, requires that minerals and waste development demonstrate that they take account of best and most versatile agricultural land. It goes on to state that proposals make provision for the management and use of soils to maintain agricultural land quality and soil quality.

6.65. This application is accompanied by an Agricultural Land Quality and Soils Impact Assessment (see Volume 2: Environmental Statement), which makes an assessment of the existing agricultural land classification and soil quality against the proposed development and restoration scheme. The site contains 0.7ha of Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) sub-grade 3a (good quality) and 32.8ha of sub-grade 3b (moderate quality) soils. Grades 1, 2 and 3a are considered Best and Most Versatile (BMV) and therefore warrant protection.

6.66. It is proposed to restore the site to a combination of agricultural production and nature conservation. The stripped and protected soil profiles will be reinstated within the northern part of the site, where restoration to agriculture is proposed. By utilising the soils also stripped from the southern part of the site, which are not required within the nature conservation area, the soils within the northern agricultural area can be enhanced and it is anticipated that ALC sub-grade 3a can be achieved across much of the agricultural restoration area, thereby creating an improvement in agricultural soil quality across the site. The restoration of 20ha of BMV land

would lead to a direct, permanent, moderate beneficial effect on BMV agricultural land, which is significant. In order to achieve this, the handling, transportation and storage of soils will be carried out in accordance with best practice measures in order to retain and protect the integrity of the soil structure, and this will be followed by a five-year period of aftercare.

6.67. The addition of biodiverse habitats, including ponds, wetlands, woodland scrub planting, and tussocky grassland, will result in a comparative reduction in agricultural land of approximately 13.5ha. Accordingly, the Agricultural Land Quality Assessment concludes that the residual effect on BMV agricultural land will be a direct, permanent, minor adverse effect. This minor adverse effect is weighed against the improvement in agricultural soil quality in the northern part of the site (permanent restoration of 20ha of BMV land, which is a moderate beneficial effect).

Biodiversity and Nature Conservation

6.68. Policy C7: Biodiversity and Geodiversity and policy ESD10, set out that minerals and waste development should conserve and where possible deliver a net gain in biodiversity. They reflect the protection offered through the NPPF and the Environmental Act to sites and species of international nature conservation importance, for example Special Areas of Conservation and European Protected Species. Policy C7 also sets out that development will not be permitted if it would cause significant harm to sites including SSSIs, ancient woodland, aged or veteran trees, Nature Conservation Sites, Local Wildlife Sites, Local Geology Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), and protected, priority and notable species or habitats, unless the harm can be avoided, mitigated or as a last resort, compensated for.

6.69. There are several protected sites located adjacent to and within close proximity to the application site, including the existing Dewars Farm Quarry, which is designated for its geological interest and known as Ardley Trackways SSSI. It is a nationally important site which has revealed the presence of an array of fossilised trackways from a herd of sauropod dinosaurs and several theropod dinosaurs from the Middle Jurassic (approximately 165 million years ago). The Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI, which borders to northern boundary of the extension area, is designated for its exposure of Jurassic rocks and the biological interest associated with limestone grassland, scrub ancient woodland and wetland habitats. These and other local sites have been assessed for potential impacts as a result of the proposed development (see Environmental Statement) and where necessary the development has been designed to minimise potential impacts and additional mitigation measures will be taken where necessary.

6.70. The proposed development will not adversely affect the features of geological interest within the existing Dewars Farm Quarry, other than to delay the exposure and investigation of potential dinosaur trackways beneath the site office and processing plant area, as this area will be the last to be worked. The proposed development will provide the opportunity for the extension area to also be investigated for further trackways and therefore enable greater study of these features of geological interest.

6.71. Ecological surveys have been carried out for protected, priority and notable species and habitats within or neighbouring the site. There is potential habitat on site and therefore potential impact or disturbance to nesting birds, bats, grass snakes and Great Crested Newts (GCN). GCNs have been recorded nearby and have the potential to be present within the nearby ponds, including within the Ardley Fields LWS. Grassland and hedgerows provide potential habitats for GCNs whilst on land. As such, the development is being assessed through the District Licensing Scheme. This scheme enables the potential impact of the development upon European Protected Species to be assessed and compensated for through a financial contribution which is used to provide compensation habitat off site. In addition, the following mitigation measures will be adopted to mitigate and compensate for identified ecological impacts:

- Woodland edges and retained hedgerows will be protected through the establishment of appropriate root protection zones.
- Buffer zones are established to the site boundaries, with a buffer zone of at least 10m to running watercourses and the Trow Pools.
- Precautionary working methods will be adopted with regard to reptiles and nesting birds to prevent killing, injury or damage/destruction to active birds' nests.
- The site will be entered into the District Level Licensing Scheme for great crested newts. This will avoid the need for great crested newt surveys, compensation or monitoring.
- Loss of hedgerow and semi-improved grassland will be compensated for at the restoration phase.
- Restoration will also deliver a number of other habitats including woodland, scrub, calcareous grassland, wet grassland, ditches, seasonal and permanent waterbodies/ponds.

6.72. The proposed restoration of the site provides significant biodiversity gains in terms of the creation of species-rich grassland, woodland, ponds and ditches. The results of the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment, using the Biodiversity Metric 3.1 (the full report can be found at Appendix D) are summarised below:

- Predicted net gain of 22.88% habitat units, a recorded change of +33.00 habitat units.
- Predicted net gain of 622.12% hedgerow units, a recorded increase of +6.67 hedgerow units.
- Predicted net gain of 90.93% river units, a recorded increase of +10.31 river units.

6.73. The restoration scheme will contribute to UK and Oxfordshire biodiversity targets, as well as benefitting a range of wildlife species and groups. The development is therefore in accordance with the NPPF, Policy C7 and ESD10, which seek to protect and enhance biodiversity and nature conservation.

Landscape and Visual Effects

6.74. Policy C8: Landscape, of the MWCS states:

"Proposals for minerals and waste development shall demonstrate that they respect and where possible enhance local landscape character, and are informed by landscape character assessment. Proposals shall include adequate and appropriate measures to mitigate adverse impacts on landscape, including careful siting, design and landscaping. Where significant adverse impacts cannot be avoided or adequately mitigated, compensatory environmental enhancements shall be made to offset the residual landscape and visual impacts."

6.75. Policy C5: Local Environment, Amenity and Economy also requires that such developments will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the local environment and amenity of residential and other sensitive receptors from visual intrusion and light pollution.

6.76. Policy ESD13 of the CLP also seeks to protest and enhance the local landscape, "*through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows."* It goes on to say that "*Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:*

- *Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside;*
- *Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography;*
- *Be inconsistent with local character;*
- *Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquility;*
- *Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features; or*
- *Harm the historic value of the landscape."*

6.77. The application site is not located in any areas of nationally or locally designated landscape importance. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is submitted as part of the Environmental Statement, which considers the impact of the proposed development on the local landscape character and assesses the impact on views from local residential properties, viewpoints, and users of the Public Rights of Way network.

6.78. During the construction and operational phases of the development, the main visual impacts will be on the users of public rights of way immediately adjacent to the northern and southern site boundaries. These effects are likely to be of moderate to major significance and adverse in nature. There are also likely to be some moderate visual effects upon the M40 motorway to the east of the site, although views of the development will reduce as the new planting on this boundary matures. The visual impacts of the development upon receptors in the wider landscape are predicted to be minor to negligible.

6.79. Upon completion of restoration, much of the site will returned to its predevelopment land use and character, resulting in residual visual effects that are likely to be negligible and neutral in nature. However, there is the potential for some beneficial visual effects resulting from enhanced planting and the management of part of the site for nature conservation.

6.80. The LVIA concludes that whilst the development will have a significant adverse impact upon the landscape character within the site due to changes in topography and land use during the extraction phase, the effects on the wider environment are predicted to be minor or negligible. All adverse effects will be temporary in nature during the 12-year period of extraction and restoration.

6.81. At the completion of quarrying operations and landform restoration, the magnitude of landscape change within the site, compared with the pre-development situation, will be slightly adverse prior to the establishment of newly planted hedgerows and woodland. However, in the fullness of time, the maturing hedgerows and woodland plantations are likely to have a major

beneficial impact upon the character and biodiversity value of the site, and a moderate beneficial impact upon the character and biodiversity value of the surrounding landscape.

Historic Environment and Archaeology

6.82. The NPPF sets out that an applicant is required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. This may require a desk-based assessment and, where necessary, field evaluation.

6.83. Policy C9 of the MWCS states that minerals and waste development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated that they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the historic environment. Great weight Is given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, including scheduled monuments and listed buildings; non-designated heritage assets; and their settings. This is reflected within CLP policy ESD15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment.

6.84. A Historic Environment Assessment (HEA) has been undertaken to assess the potential effects of the proposed development upon the historic environment, including designated and non-designated heritage assets. The HEA combines information from a Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment (HEDBA), Geophysical Survey Report and Trial Trenching Report.

6.85. The HEA concludes that the proposed development would remove any archaeological remains which may be present within the study site, this includes an assemblage of late Mesolithic flint artefacts. This would result in a moderate adverse effect, which is significant. However, these impacts will be adequately mitigated by a programme of archaeological works, which will comprise archaeological excavation and recording of the identified archaeological remains of interest. These works have been agreed with the County Archaeologist and are set out within a Written Scheme of Investigation (see Historic Environment Assessment within the Environmental Statement).

6.86. None of the local listed buildings located within close proximity to the application site have significant intervisibility with the site, although the tiled pitched roof of the water tower at Trow Pool is visible from the very northern part of the extension area. It is assessed that the development would change a small part of the setting of Trow Pool Water Tower, however it is not considered that this change would harm its significance. It is not considered that the proposed development will have a significant impact upon other local listed buildings or their setting, due to the distance and intervening vegetation and other built development, including the M40 motorway.

6.87. Considering the benefits of producing an accurate record of archaeological remains as part of the development, the development will make an appropriate contribution to the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment, in line with the requirements of policy C9. proposal is in accordance with the NPPF and with Policies C9.

Highways and Rights of Way

6.88. Policy C10: Transport of the MWCS requires minerals and waste development to make provision for safe and suitable access to the advisory lorry routes in ways that maintain and, if possible, lead to improvements in the safety of all road users; the efficiency and quality of the road network; and residential and environmental amenity, including air quality.

6.89. The proposed development will be accessed via the existing quarry access onto the B430, which is defined as a 'local access route' on the Oxfordshire Lorry Route Map within the MWCS. The existing quarry access lies circa 3km from Junction 10 of the M40 motorway and is a purpose built priority access designed to serve the type and frequency of HGV traffic associated with the quarry. It is deemed appropriate to continue to serve the quarry and the proposed extension.

6.90. The Transport Statement concludes that the road network is of a sufficient standard to acceptably accommodate HGV traffic. The proposed development will see the same size, number and frequency of HGVs as currently access the site under the permitted mineral development. Ultimately there will be no change in highways and transport terms.

6.91. The location of the quarry is well suited to serve its market, particularly with large scale development taking place and proposed to continue within Upper Heyford, Bicester and Banbury. The site is also well located to receive incoming inert materials for restoration, from local construction projects.

6.92. The NPPF is clear that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be *severe* (paragraph 111).

6.93. As set out in the supporting Transport Statement, the development has been designed to minimise transport and highways impacts. Back hauling will be used wherever possible, which means HGVs exporting mineral will also be used to import inert infill material. This makes best use of each vehicle load and minimises the number of HGV movements on the local highway network, which in effect reduces fuel usage and therefore climate change impacts.

6.94. Based upon the proposed mineral reserve, capacity for inert infill, rate of extraction and importation of suitable fill material, the development is expected to generate a cumulative average of 158 HGV loads / 316 HGV movements per day, assuming no back-hauling.

6.95. The Transport Statement includes analysis of collision data, traffic flows and HGV impact, and concludes that the development will not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or a severe residual cumulative impact upon the road network.

6.96. Policy C11: Rights of way, advises that the integrity and amenity value of the rights of way network shall be maintained and if possible retained in situ in a safe and useable condition. There are several Public Rights of Way (PROW) that border the site and one that crosses the internal haul road. All PROWs will be protected during the operational phase of the development by suitable standoffs from the works and potential amenity impacts mitigated by existing and proposed planting and the location of soil storage bunds which will act to screen the mineral workings.

6.97. The crossing of PROW 297/6/10 and the internal haul road will be controlled by gates and signage to ensure the safety of the PROW users and site personnel. The crossing point is designed to ensure potential impacts are minimised whilst maintaining sufficient visibility of the oncoming crossing by all users.

6.98. Upon restoration of the site, improvements will be made to the local PROWs by the creation of a new public access route around the ponds of the nature conservation part of the site, which will connect to the existing PROW and Trow Pool. This will provide increased accessibility to open space and nature, which also provides benefits to the health and wellbeing of the local community.

Restoration and Aftercare

6.99. The NPPF sets out that in considering proposals for mineral extraction, minerals planning authorities should "*provide for restoration and aftercare at the earliest opportunity, to be carried out to high environmental standards".*

6.100. Policy M10 requires that minerals workings are restored to a high standard and in a timely and phased manner to an after-use that is appropriate to the location and delivers a net gain in biodiversity. It also sets out that restoration and afteruse must take into account, inter alia, the characteristics of the site; the character of the surrounding landscape; the amenity of local communities, including opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and provide local

amenity and recreation; the capacity of the local road network; the quality of agricultural land; soil resources; flood risk; water quality; conservation and biodiversity enhancement.

6.101. The proposed development has been designed to be worked in 5 stages, which will be worked out and restored progressively in a phased manner. The rate of working and restoration will be dictated by market demands and the availability of suitable restoration material, however it is expected that the site can be worked out within circa 8 years with restoration completed circa 4 years later. The predicated rates of working and the quarry design will ensure that the site is managed with minimal environmental and amenity impact and restored within a timely manner.

6.102. The extension site is agricultural and as such the restoration scheme has been designed to restore the majority of the site back to agriculture, with biodiversity enhancement being focussed within the southern section of the site. Extraction will commence in this southern area, meaning that restoration of this area will take place first. It will be restored using primarily site derived materials, namely overburden from the extension site. This will ensure that the nature conservation area can be restored and planted at an early stage, giving it the best opportunity to establish itself early and during the working of the rest of the site.

6.103. The agricultural soils will be carefully stripped and stored in accordance with best practice, ensuring that they are protected for use during restoration of the site. As the nature conservation area does not require topsoil, the soils from this area will be used within the agricultural area to enhance and improve the grade of the soils across the rest of the site and thereby provide an improvement in the agricultural land upon restoration.

6.104. The proposed habitat creation will be compatible with the wider landscape and will benefit the wider community.

6.105. The principal of restoring the site using imported inert material is supported through the National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW), the Waste Management Plan for England (WMP), and the MWCS. Policy W6 gives priority to the use of inert waste that cannot be recycled as infill material to achieve the satisfactory restoration and afteruse of active or unrestored quarries.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. Smith and Sons (Bletchington) Ltd operate Dewars Farm Quarry to a very high standard. The permitted reserves are being worked out quicker than expected due to high market demand. As such, additional local reserves are required urgently.

7.2. Agricultural land to the north-east has been identified as suitable for mineral extraction and was put forward as a potential site for crushed rock under a previous 'Call for Sites' for consideration within the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The site has been assessed as suitable in principle for mineral extraction. It is now the right time to bring forward an application for mineral extraction with restoration to agriculture and nature conservation, using site-derived and imported inert materials.

7.3. There is an identified need for additional mineral reserves in Oxfordshire, as set out within the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy and the most recent LAA. This development will ensure the continued supply of crushed limestone and gabion stone to the local construction industry and assist OCC in meeting its annual provision for aggregate mineral supply. The proposed extension to Dewars Farm Quarry will enable the release of further mineral reserves to ensure a continuation of supply to the local market. Utilising existing infrastructure minimises further impacts to the local environment and community and maximising extension opportunities reduces the need for new quarry sites.

7.4. The extension site currently has limited ecological value and the development will not result in any significant adverse impacts upon the local amenity or environment. It will bring forward economic benefits in terms of the continuation of mineral supply to the construction industry; social benefits in terms of employment to site workers and indirectly to the wider economy and support services; and environmental benefits in terms of facilitating the recovery of waste in the infilling and restoration of the quarry void, and the added landscape and ecological features provided as part of the site restoration scheme. It therefore accords with the NPPF's sustainable development objective.

7.5. The development complies with the individual policies within the Development Plan as well as the Development Plan when read as a whole, therefore planning permission should be granted without delay.

Drawings