

Proposed Whitecross Quarry Development: on land at White Cross Farm, Nr Wallingford, Oxfordshire

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REFUSED

DATE: 03/09/2024

APPLICATION No: P21/S3961/CM, (MW.0115/21)



Non-Technical Summary (NTS)

Re-submission of a Planning Application to allow the extraction and processing of sand & gravel including the construction of new site access roads, landscaping and screening bunds, minerals washing plant and other associated infrastructure with restoration to agriculture and nature conservation areas using Imported Inert Fill.



Site Description

The proposed quarry planning application covers approximately 19 hectares of land that lies within the Parish of Cholsey, in the County of Oxfordshire.

The re-submitted application area comprises the same agricultural land (currently used for arable and livestock grazing purposes) as a previous application for mineral development with a marina after-use. There are no buildings on the site other than a derelict barn.

The site is bounded by the A329 (Reading Road) to the west and A4130 (Nosworthy Way - Wallingford By-pass) to the north, which is situated on an embankment. The eastern site boundary is formed by the southerly flowing River Thames, with a narrow strip of woodland forming the southern boundary.

There is one Public Right of Way (the Thames Path National Trail) within the landholding. This Public Right of Way travels north south along the bank of the River Thames.

Proposed Operations & Typical Plant & Equipment

The proposed mineral extraction operations will comprise River Terrace Sand & Gravel extracted using a tracked excavator loading a dump truck that feeds the mineral wash plant. The mineral is washed and screened to produce a range of sands and single sized gravels.



Environmental Impact Assessment

Independent specialist consultants have carried out technical studies using recognised techniques to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed development. This work is called an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The full results of these are published in the Environmental Statement (ES), which can be seen at the offices of Oxfordshire County Council, as well as on the council web sites.

This Non Technical Summary (NTS) highlights the main elements of the ES, thus for a more detailed comprehensive assessment of the proposals please consult the full EIA.

Ecology

On-site baseline	Habitat units	74.97
	Hedgerow units	9.22
	River units	0.00
On-site post-intervention (including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	98.30
	Hedgerow units	24.11
	River units	0.00
On-site net % change (including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	23.11%
	Hedgerow units	161.56%
	River units	0.00%
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Off-site post-intervention (including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Total net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	17.33
	Hedgerow units	14.89
	River units	0.00
Total on-site net % change plus off-site surplus	Habitat units	23.11%
	Hedgerow units	161.56%
	River units	0.00%

Assessment of Impacts:

The ecological specialists have concluded that the proposals will have no negative impact on the nearby AONB's.

There will be limited habitat loss to allow the development of the quarry, however, the restoration scheme would provide diverse and locally scarce (UK BAP) habitats such as a pond, wet woodland and reedbed habitat. The site restoration proposals are likely to have long term, benefits to biodiversity with a phased progressive restoration that will allow certain habitats to recover quickly and swiftly re-colonise the worked and backfilled areas.

The assessment concludes that by implementing the recommended protection measures the proposed minerals development will not have a significant impact on habitats or species.

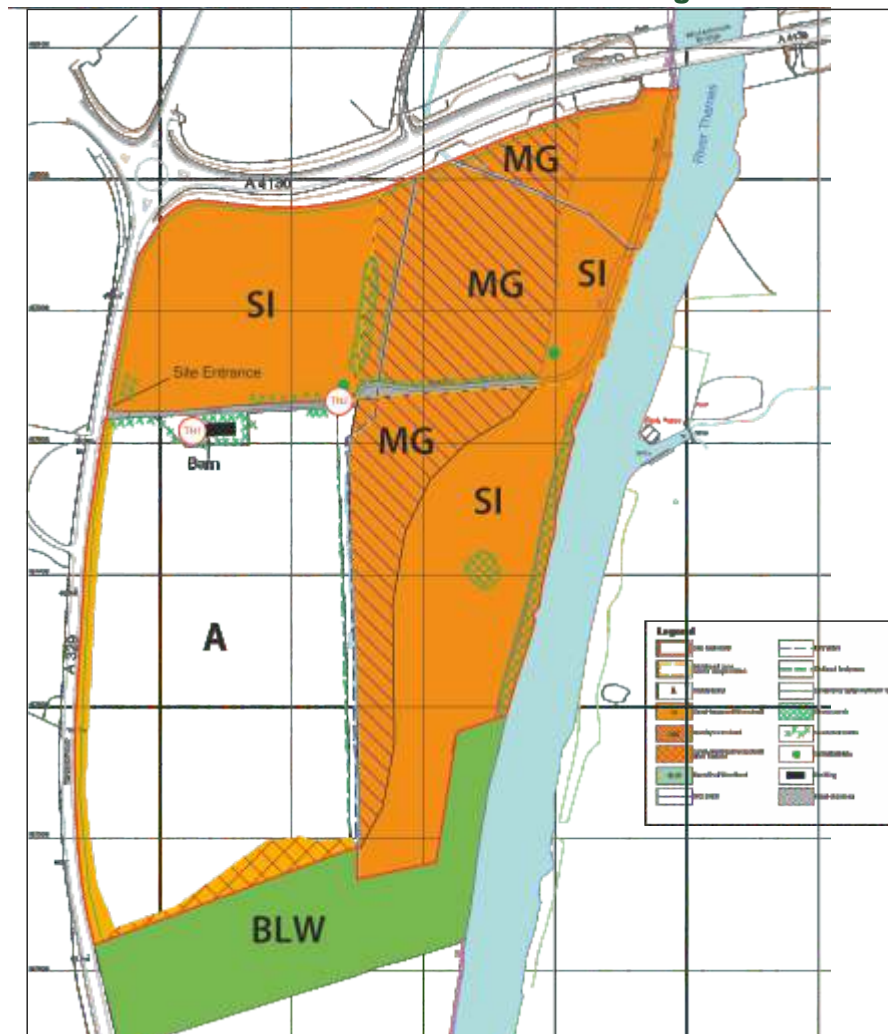
Proposed Environmental Protection Measures include:

- Retention of vegetation and mature trees around the site boundaries.
- Retention of hedgerow and trees in the central part of the site
- Maintain undisturbed habitat margins from extraction areas to site boundaries.
- Buffer Zone of 30m margin to the River Thames providing wildlife with continued habitat and foraging.
- Installation of bird, bat and barn owl boxes.
- Monitoring of groundwater, noise and dust around the site margins and as part of the normal site operations.



Noise Monitoring

Current Site Habitats and Ecological Features



Public Rights of Way

Thames Path:

The Thames Path will remain open through the quarry development and the site restoration.

It is proposed that a permissive footpath will be created as part of the restoration to link the Thames Path with the Reading Road, along the northern boundary of site.

Groundwater, Surface Water & Floodrisk

Sand and gravel workings are classified as Water Compatible Development in the NPPF.

The detailed flood risk assessment has shown that the proposed quarry development will have no flood risk impacts on any third parties or downstream of the proposed development.

Flood Risk

All quarry plant, soil storage bunds and buildings will be located off the floodplain.

Flood modelling shows no increase in the water levels during the extraction or restoration phases and indicates a marginal reduction in flood water levels during the mineral extraction.

Groundwater

So the mineral can be extracted 'dry', it will need to be de-watered. De-watering and discharge during the construction period would be controlled under a permit

Protection Measures

No working on the floodplain or discharge of water during flood warnings.

To maintain the integrity of the Thames riverbank a undisturbed buffer margin of 30m will be maintained.

Archaeology & Cultural

The cultural heritage assessment has concluded that the proposed quarry development is not likely to result in a significant impact upon the heritage assets within or near to the site.

Desktop and field studies have been undertaken and the potential impacts of the operations have been assessed.

The results from the archaeological evaluation concludes that the archaeology present is not of such significance to preclude the proposed development.

RAF Benson - Safeguarding

The proposed site lies within the safeguarding area of RAF Benson, thus the operations must ensure that they do not present any potential hazards to aircraft in the local area.

All ponds and lagoons will be kept to a minimum and will be engineered to discourage flocking birds. The site restoration has been designed to create a balance between nature conservation, agricultural operations and bird strike hazard management.



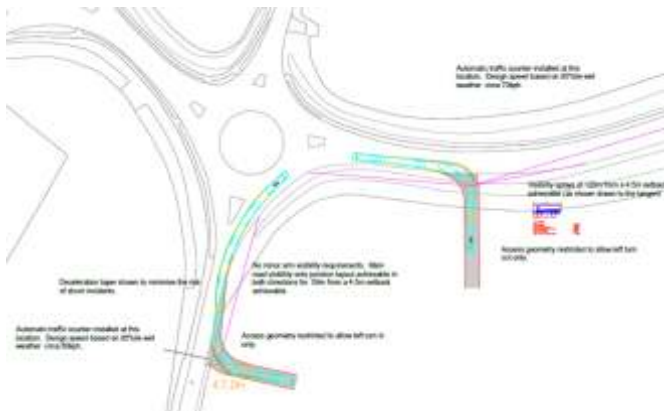
Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning

Highways and Transport

Construction Phase

The proposed access for the construction phase will be provided via a left in from Reading Road and left out onto Nosworthy Way (Diagram shown below). This arrangement would direct all construction traffic straight onto the preferred HGV routes as part of the strategic road network (A-roads and Motorways).

The additional movements created during the construction phase are predicted to equate to an increase of less than 0.6% on Reading Road and 0.3% on Nosworthy Way of the existing traffic flows.



Quarry Entrance and Exit design

Landscape and Visual Impact

The proposed development that has been considered in respect of its potential effects on landscape and visual matters/ receptors involves two stages.

Stage A- a temporary period of mineral development

Stage B- the proposed permanent restoration phase of the operation.

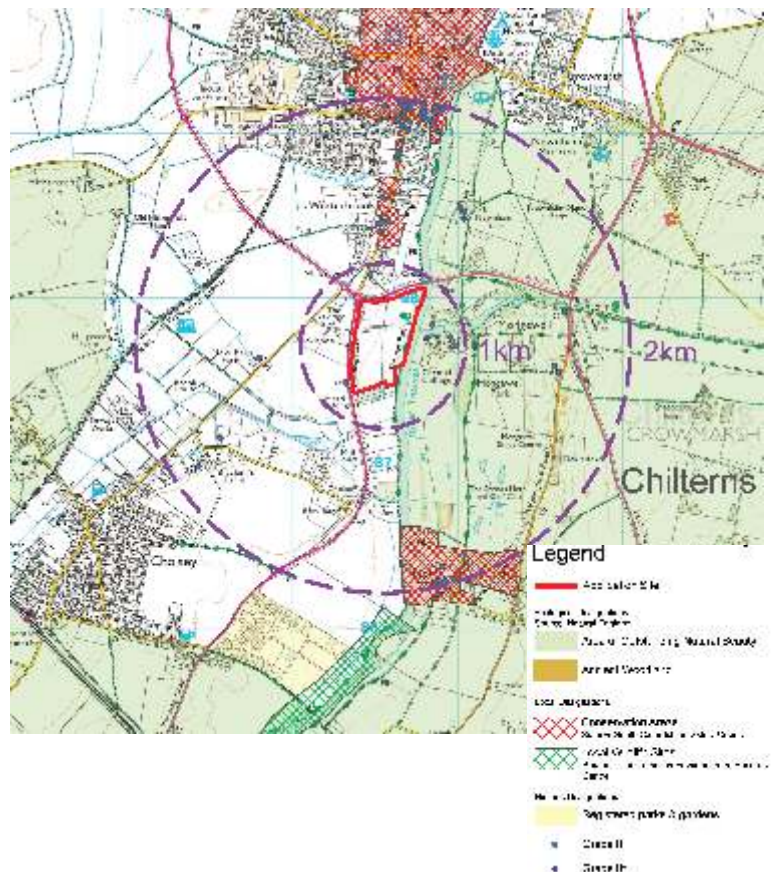
Overall it is assessed that the temporary Stage A will result in Slight to Moderate Adverse temporary effects. No Significant Adverse effects are assessed to occur as a result of the proposed restoration of the site.

The site is generally well screened from existing and potential visual receptor views. However, the raised A4130 section, users of the Thames Path and boat users on the Thames may have views into the site.

It is considered that both the proposed quarry and the recently opened New Barn Farm Quarry site are separate and well contained within their individual landscape settings. It is assessed that no cumulative visual or landscape effects on either the physical fabric or character of the landscape or any special values attached to it would occur.

Construction Phase Vehicle Movements

	Sand & Gravel -Tonnes	550,000
	Time period in years	3-4
	Tonnes per year	140,000
	Working days per year	245
Average over 1 year	Tonnes per day	571
	Tonne capacity truck	20
	Deliveries per day	28
	Two-way movements	56
	Deliveries / hr	3
	Two-way movments/ hr	6



Air Quality



Background Noise and Dust Monitoring Locations

Soils & Agriculture

Over the whole application area (19ha), about 48% is identified as Best and Most Versatile and 52% is Grade 3b or lower.

It is considered that the overall value of the land following the minerals development, with the restoration to agricultural land with habitat creation will be significantly greater than the current situation, since the areas will contain a wide range of species and habitats that are considered a priority within the UK and Oxfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan.

The land is farmed for arable crops in only one field, with the remainder grazed by cattle during the summer months. The creation of new habitats, and the restoration of the the best and most versatile agricultural land will ensure no soils impact from the development

Standard best practice dust control measures, as described in National Planning Policy Guidance would be used on site. These would include agreeing a dust management plan with the Minerals Planning Authority and monitoring any dust emissions. The air quality assessments confirm that by using standard best practice and following relevant guidance there will be no air quality or dust issues created throughout the working and restoration phases of the site operations.

Noise

During the construction phase, the processing plant will be located away from any residential property, situated near the site entrance and roundabout on the by-pass. It is predicted that there will be no noise impact from plant or loading of lorries.

All vehicles working on the site will have silencers that will be well maintained and all mobile plant will be fitted with white noise reversing alarms not reversing beepers. Noise monitoring will be carried out on the site to assess the noise levels during operations.

Location	Background Noise Levels (dB) L _{Aeq,1hr}	Predicted Worst Case (dB) L _{Aeq,1hr}	Difference Background Noise	Difference NPPG Max 55 dB
Elizabeth House	46	49	+3	-6
Meadow Farm	46	49	+3	-6
Waterside Court	56	53	-3	-2
Whitecross House	56	51	-5	-4
Winward House/ Mead Furlong	48	53	+5	-2
Founders House Carmel College	44	50	+6	-5
Mansion House Carmel College	44	49	+5	-6

Carefully located soil screening bunds will also ensure that no noise will be carried off site. A series of noise predictions have been made at noise sensitive locations around the proposed site, these have been assessed against the criteria set out in the NPPF (Government Guidance). All the predicted noise levels refer to 'worst case' scenarios, when the operations are undertaken at their closest distances to sensitive properties and therefore have the greatest influence on the noise levels at these locations.

The results indicate that the proposed operations can be undertaken without exceeding acceptable Government noise limits.

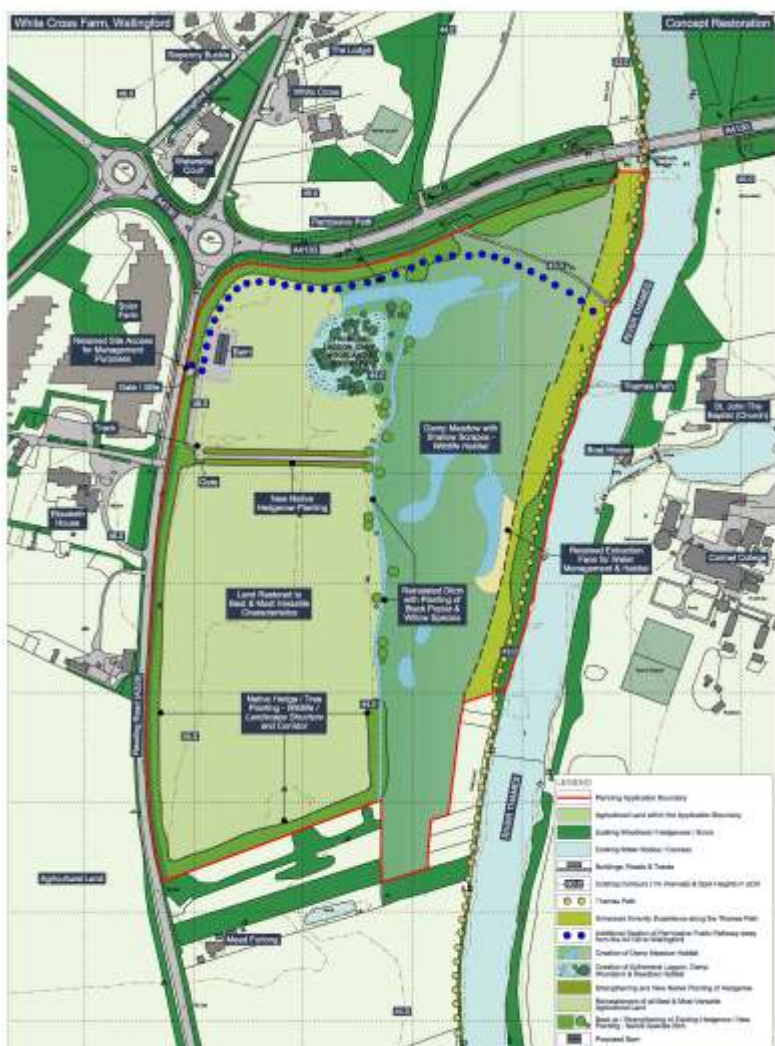
Phased Extraction Scheme

Prior to any materials being dug from the site, infrastructure including a new site entrance, processing plant and lagoons together with internal haul roads would be constructed. Soils and clays will be stripped and stored around the perimeter of the site to be used in the site restoration.

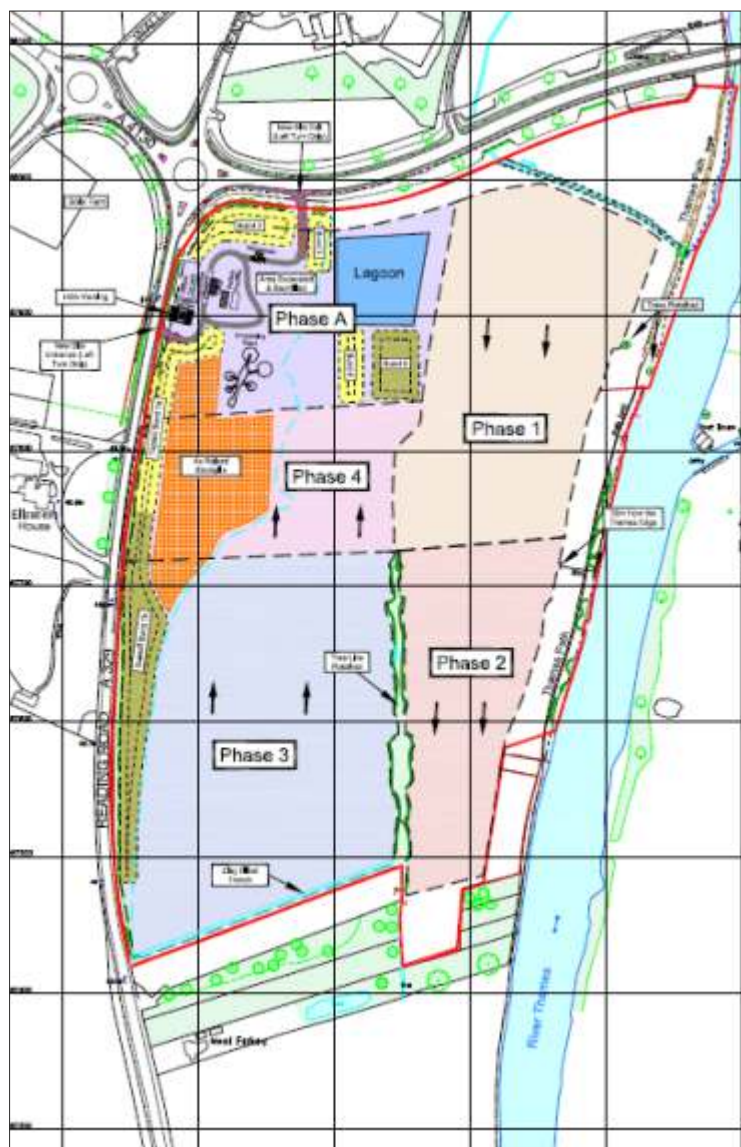
Margins around the site boundaries would remain unworked to ensure no impacts to the boundary trees and hedgerows. The sand and gravel will be extracted in “campaigns” and the the backfilling will take place using imported inert fill materials as art of the resotoration to original ground levels.

Construction Key Facts

- Quarry working over 4-5 years
- Extraction area 15.5ha
- Extract 550,000 tonnes of sand and gravel
- Sales output 140,000 tonnes per annum
- Import 2900,000m³ inert backfill
- Finalising restoration and landscaping in Year 5/6
- Total development timescale no more than 6 years



Proposed Restoration



Proposed Phased Working Scheme

Quarry - Hours of Working

Monday to Friday	0700 to 1800 hours
Saturday	0700 to 1300 hours
Sundays & Bank Holidays	Closed

Need & Alternatives to the Scheme

It is necessary to consider planning policies and any related guidance concerning the extraction of minerals in Oxfordshire together with Government planning policy (within the NPPF). This confirms the need for new mineral sites located in the southern part of the County, together with the national need for sand and gravel resources. The scheme is therefore considered to be in line with local and government planning policy.

There are a limited number of quarry sites in Oxfordshire, mainly located in the northern (Windrush Valley) part of the County. However a new facility has been opened that forms a long-term strategic facility at New Barn Farm, however this is not able to meet the aggregate needs of the county on its own.

Alternatives

- Do nothing but lack of supply to the local construction industry
- Develop sites in other parts of the county, however much of the southern part of Oxfordshire is covered by AONB designations.
- There are very few available and suitable areas of land with adequate road access and mineral resources in the vicinity of the south Oxfordshire area.



Technical Advisors

Air Quality	Vibroch Ltd
Groundwater	Hafren Water Ltd
Traffic	David Tucker Associates
Noise	Vibroch Ltd
Ecology	Windrush Ecology
Soils	RG Burton
Landscape	Kedd Ltd
Geology	Greenfield Enviro
Flood Risk	Edenvale Young
Archaeology	CgMS
Planning Consultants	Greenfield Enviro

The Future

If planning permission is granted for this development, the operations would be monitored by Oxfordshire County Council and other specialist organisations.

The operator will commit to monitoring air quality, noise emissions and the local water environment to ensure that there will be no impacts from the proposed operations.

The quarry will be able to provide a short term benefit to the local building sector by providing raw material for construction and building projects.

For Further Information Contact:

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The NTS will be available on the website:
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk