

REFUSED

DATE: 03/09/2024

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



**PROPOSED SAND AND GRAVEL EXTRACTION AND RESTORATION
– LAND AT WHITE CROSS FARM, WALLINGFORD, OXFORDSHIRE
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UNDER REGULATION 25 OF THE
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (EIA) REGULATIONS 2017**

STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

MARCH 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

The Regulation 25 request for further information from Oxfordshire County Council dates 22nd November 2021 includes a request for:

“Details of any climate change mitigation incorporated into the proposals, or confirmation that they have not been.”

The sections below therefore set out the main climate change considerations and mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the proposals.

2. MINERAL WORKING OPERATIONS

The application proposes a scheme of mineral extraction and exportation of processed sand and gravel that will be carried out over a 5 to 6-year period. The supply of the sand and gravel aggregate is driven by demand in the construction sector for construction aggregates and responds to the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (OMWLP) Core Strategy 2017, which plans to supply over 1 million tonnes of sand and gravel aggregate annually to meet the needs of the construction sector.

The County Council makes plans for the supply of aggregate minerals as there are no practical alternatives for their use in various elements of development construction. Whilst recycled aggregates can be used in certain low-grade aspects of development construction, processed mineral based products, like concrete, are needed to ensure safe and satisfactory development.

The most obvious potential climate change impact of the development is the road borne haulage of mineral to construction projects, which will result in the use of fossil fuels and the emissions to the atmosphere. Regarding haulage and haulage related emissions it should be noted that the proposals, which are temporary, are located close to the main markets for the processed sand and gravel. In particular, the development is well positioned to serve development needs in and around Oxford, Abingdon, Didcot and Wallingford. New housing construction could also commence in the near future at the adjacent Carmel College site, with new housing schemes already underway on the CABI-Cala Homes site just to the east of White Cross Farm and the Winterbrook housing scheme just to the west, both of which are accessed directly off the Wallingford by-pass. The sand and gravel supply from the proposal site will therefore serve the local construction market, rather than distanced markets, meaning that HGVs will have to travel relatively limited distances to deliver aggregate rather than travelling long distances which result in greater fuel usage and greater levels of resultant emissions to atmosphere.

At present a significant proportion of aggregate mineral used in south Oxfordshire has to travel from permitted/operational sites located in north Oxfordshire (as well as some supply from the Cotswold Water Park area – outside the county). It should be noted that the recently opened New Barn Farm Quarry operated by Grundon's is predominantly supplying Grundon's own fixed outlets and providing very little aggregate into the "open market". The proposal site will help shift the emphasis in sand and gravel supply from north Oxfordshire to south Oxfordshire, as per the policies of the OMWLP Core Strategy 2017 and will thus help reduce HGV mineral transport distances in the county by topping up supply in south Oxfordshire for a period of 5 years. In turn this will contribute to some reduction in HGV related emissions within the county.

In addition, when securing contracts to supply sand and gravel to construction projects, efforts will be made, wherever possible, to secure contracts to remove excess clean excavated soils and clays from construction sites to facilitate the restoration of the proposal site. These contracts may present opportunities for transporting excavated waste materials on a "backhaul" basis where HGV's delivering sand and gravel can return to the proposal site laden with excavated waste materials for use in the infilling and restoration of the worked-out areas of the site. Again, this has the potential to limit to some extent the number of HGV movements and thus reduce emissions from transport of mineral and waste.

3. RESTORATION AND PROPOSED END USES

The proposed end uses for the site involve a mixture of best and most versatile agricultural land, strengthened hedgerows and tree boundaries, and nature conservation uses in the form of damp meadows, lagoons, reedbeds and scrapes and native species rich tree planting.

The end-uses will make a positive contribution to both biodiversity as well as local agriculture. They are unlikely to make an adverse contribution to climate change and the proposed planting of trees and hedgerow species, along with the wet areas will make a modest contribution to offsetting climate change.

The proposed end-uses and the post-restoration drainage network, with drainage ditches linking with lagoons, reedbeds and damp meadows adjacent to the River Thames, will control and manage run-off such that discharges are not greater than the current agricultural run-offs and will not therefore exacerbate flooding in extreme climate change driven flood events. In fact, the post-restoration drainage system and interlinking features will make a small positive contribution in managing run-off during wetter periods of weather potentially driven by climate change.

4. CONCLUSION

The location of the site close to markets in south Oxfordshire and the potential to reduce HGV travel distances to markets (including reducing the reliance on aggregate being transported from north Oxfordshire and the Cotswold Water Park) will make a minor positive contribution to minimizing the effects of HGV emissions that lead to climate change.

The proposed “soft” end-uses and the drainage network will ensure that run-off is properly managed and is used to enhance the biodiversity of the site, with the control of run-off helping at times of climate change driven weather events.

The proposed planting of trees and hedgerows and the strengthening of existing boundaries with additional trees will lead to long-term vegetation of the site which will help offset climate change in the long-term.

Therefore, in overall terms, it is concluded that the development would not make an adverse contribution to climate change and would, in the long-term make a minor positive contribution to offsetting the wider effects of climate change in the County.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S J Rees'.

S J Rees B.Sc., M.Sc., C.Geol, FGS, MIQ
for Greenfield Environmental