



The countryside charity  
Oxfordshire

Campaigning to protect our rural county

Mary Hudson – Case Officer  
Oxfordshire County Council  
Via webform

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**RE: MW.0115/21 - Revised application, phasing plans and updated information on need, landscape, transport, ecology, flooding, water supplies, drainage and climate change relating to planning application reference**

**Extraction and processing of sand and 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 inert fill Land at White Cross Farm, Reading Road, Cholsey, Oxfordshire.**

Dear Mary Hudson

The Committee of South Oxfordshire District of CPRE objects to this proposal.

The current consultation is on further information sent by the applicant in response to the Objections given last year by Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and Chilterns Conservation Board.

Although the applicant has provided additional information about the proposal, we believe the fundamental reasons for our original objections remain.

1. The site is directly adjacent to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

CPRE supports the objections from Wallingford Town Council, Cholsey Parish Council, SODC and OCC to this application on the basis this site is not suitable for aggregate extraction, because it is within the setting of the Chilterns AONB, a designated exceptional landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are precious enough to be safeguarded in the national interest.

OCC considers 'the development to conflict with national and local landscape policies.' The key landscape planning policies from the NPPF (2021) are:

- Para 174 a) requires planning decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.
- Para 174 b) requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- Para 176 requires that great weight is given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



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- Para 177 requires permission for major development in the AONBs to be refused other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can demonstrate that the development is in the public interest.

CPRE contends that the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) underestimates the impact of the gravel extraction on the setting of the Chilterns AONB, and overestimates the benefits of the mitigation proposed and of the restoration of the site.

We also support the comments by the Chilterns Conservation Board: 'This proposal harms the AONB during the operational and restoration periods. Harms to the setting [of the AONB] will be clear, with a denuded and quasi-industrial landscape juxtaposed with the AONB'.

2. The proposal is contrary to the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan

We note the proposed development is contrary to recent South Oxfordshire Local Plan, Policy ENV1 and Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan Policy E3, and planning permission should be refused.

3. This proposal would considerably damage the visual amenity of this important recreational area.

CPRE disagrees with the revised LVIA's Summary of Key Responses to Regulation 25 requests. This fails to acknowledge the site lies within the setting of the Chilterns AONB, is part of the designated ecological area Thames Wallingford to Goring Conservation Target Area for increasing the biodiversity of scarce wildlife habitats, and is within sight of historic and Listed Buildings at Mongewell, which are within the Chilterns AONB. In particular, we cannot agree with point 4 in the Summary: 'The site itself has a very limited zone of actual visual influence. Views into and out of it are limited'. Indeed, the site is very visible from the, heavily used, Thames Path National Trail and from the Carmel College site at Mongewell. The view from the Thames Path looking south across the proposed site is exceptional and a prime example of beauty of the iconic Thames River corridor (don't forget this is within a few miles of setting of Wind in the Willows).

4. This proposal would damage the considerable recreational value of the Thames and Thames Path

The Thames Path is a very popular National Trail long-distance walking and running route. The section between Cholsey and Wallingford, which passes through the White Cross Farm site, is also heavily used by local people for recreation, exercise and observing wildlife. Spending time beside the river helps people improve their mental and physical health. This part of the Thames is also heavily used by river users (fishing, boating, canoeing and bathers) the attraction of these activities is to spend time in the tranquil and natural environment – this would be destroyed by the proposed industrial works on this site. It is worth adding that the bright blue flash of kingfishers is regularly seen along these banks – a memorable sight!

The proposed bunds and straw bales, even if temporary for 6 years, will make only a marginal amelioration of the damage to the views and atmosphere of this part of the Thames Path.

Yours sincerely

The Committee of South Oxfordshire District of CPRE