



**LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF MINERAL
EXTRACTION AT SITE SG-08 ON GOOSE EYE FARM, EYNHAM, WEST OXFORDSHIRE**

Prepared for Dustin Dryden c/o Johnston Cave Associates (Architects)

by

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Contents

	Page
1	Introduction..... 1
1.1	Background..... 1
1.2	Scope of Report..... 1
1.3	Structure of Report 1
2	Landscape Policy Context..... 2
2.1	National Planning Policy Framework..... 2
2.2	National Planning Practice Guidance..... 3
2.3	County Minerals Planning..... 3
2.4	Local Policy..... 3
3	Local Landscape Context 5
3.1	Introduction 5
3.2	Local Topography 5
3.3	Landscape Features/Land Uses..... 6
3.4	Published Landscape Character Assessments – National Character..... 7
3.5	Published Landscape Character Assessments – County Character 8
3.6	Published Landscape Character Assessments – District Character..... 9
3.7	Local Landscape Character..... 10
4	Existing Visibility..... 11
4.1	Introduction 11
4.2	Views from Roads and Public Rights of Way 12
4.3	Views from Private Residences..... 13
4.4	Existing Visual Baseline: Summary 14
5	The Proposed Development..... 15
5.1	Description of the Proposals..... 15
5.2	Proposed Landscape Design and Mitigation..... 17
6	Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the Proposed Development..... 17
6.1	Introduction 17
6.2	Visual Appraisal of the Proposals..... 17
6.3	Landscape Features..... 18
6.4	Landscape Character: Impact Assessment..... 19
7	Review against Landscape Aspects of Planning Policy 20
7.1	Introduction 20
7.2	National Planning Policy Framework..... 20
7.3	Regional Mineral Policy 20
8	Conclusions 21
9	References 22

HDA DRAWINGS

HDA 1 - Site Location and Landscape Planning Designations

HDA 2 – Aerial Photograph

HDA 3 - Published Landscape Character Areas

HDA 4 - Local Landscape Character Areas

HDA 5 - Existing Visibility - (includes PROWs)

Appendix 1 – Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan; Part 1 – Core Strategy – Wording of Policies M3 and M4.

Appendix 2 – Natural England National Character Area Profile 108 – Upper Thames Clay Vales (extracts)

Appendix 3 – OWLS: Parish Plans for Hanborough and Cassington and descriptions of three Landscape Types: Lowland Village Farmlands, River Meadowlands and Wooded Estatelands

Appendix 4 – West Oxfordshire District Council Landscape Character Assessment – Character Area 11. Eynsham Vale (pages 67-71)

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Hankinson Duckett Associates (HDA) was instructed in September 2015 by Dustin Dryden, the owner of Goose Eye Farm (via Johnston Cave Associates (Architects)) to assess the landscape and visual issues which may arise from potential mineral extraction at Site SG-08. Site SG-08 was identified in a 'call for sites' preceding the publication of Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (OMWLP) Part 1 – Core Strategy, Proposed Submission Document (August 2015) (Ref 1). This report supports a Representation in objection to the OWMLP particularly considering the effects of potential mineral extraction on the existing property of Goose Eye Farm and the surrounding area of the Lower Evenlode Valley to the north of Eynsham, in West Oxfordshire.

1.1.2 This report relates primarily to the landscape and visual aspects of potential mineral extraction at Site SG-08, though it will also highlight concerns relating to traffic, ecology, hydrology and other issues. Specifically, this report will address the likely impacts of potential mineral extraction on the landscape character and visual amenity of residential, motorised and non-motorised users of the area in the vicinity of Site SG-08.

1.1.3 For the purposes of this report, Site SG-08 is as identified in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) produced by Scott Wilson for Oxfordshire County Council (Ref 2). Site SG-08 is split into three parcels (refer to Plan HDA 1) as follows:

- **Area A** – This northern parcel (140ha) lies to the east of Lower Road and is bound to the north by the River Evenlode, where it lies south of the Cotswold (Oxford-Worcester) Railway Line, and to the south by the land around Goose Eye Farm.
- **Area B** – This central parcel lies to the west of Lower Road and is bound to the north by Church Road and extends to the south to a tributary of the River Evenlode, north of City Farm.
- **Area C** – This southern parcel lies to the east of Lower Road to the south of the land at Goose Eye Farm and north of land at Eynsham Mill.

1.2 Scope of Report

1.2.1 The site was visited during September 2015 to gain familiarity with the potential mineral site and its landscape setting. A review of background documents has been undertaken, including Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council planning policy documents, guidance and consultee responses to previous versions of the OMWLP. The approach to the assessment is based upon latest guidance, and upon HDA's extensive practical experience of assessment work.

1.3 Structure of Report

1.3.1 This report is structured to consider the issues as follows:

1. Introduction.

2. **Policy context:** Sets out the landscape aspects of planning policy against which the potential mineral site should be assessed.
3. **Local context and landscape character assessment:** Description of the local area, the context of the potential mineral site and the character of the wider area.
4. **Existing visibility:** An appraisal of the existing visibility and context of the views of the potential mineral site.
5. **The assumptions for the proposed mineral extraction:** A description of the likely proposals for potential mineral extraction at Site SG-08;
6. **Landscape and visual appraisal:** An assessment of the relevant aspects of the potential mineral extraction proposals.
7. **Review against policy:** Reviewing the potential mineral extraction proposals against landscape aspects of policy and guidance.
8. **Conclusions:** A summary of the report and other aspects of potential mineral extraction.

2 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

2.1.1 The 'National Planning Policy Framework' (the Framework) (Ref 3) sets the context for county and local authorities' revised development plan policies. The Framework sets out the government's vision for the achievement of sustainable development and identifies three strands to policy guidance – social, economic and environmental – the latter seeking to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment.

2.1.2. The Framework sets out "*the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play*" which are described in twelve "*core land-use planning principles (that) should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking*". The following principles from Paragraph 17 are considered to be relevant to this landscape and visual assessment.

- *"Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of lands and buildings;*
- *Take account of the different roles and character of different areas,recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;*
- *Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework."*

2.1.3 Section 11 of the Framework addresses 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. Paragraph 109 of the Framework states:

"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- *Protecting and enhancing valued landscape,....."*

2.2 National Planning Practice Guidance

2.2.1 The 'National Planning Practice Guidance' (the Guidance) (Ref 4) was launched as a web-based resource on 6th March 2014. The Guidance supports and informs the Framework, and Paragraph 059 from the 'Minerals section (Reference ID: 27-059-20140306) sets out what should be included in a landscape strategy and thus is of relevance to this response. It states:

A site specific landscape strategy to accompany applications for either a new site or any significant extension to an existing working site should include:

- *Defining the key landscape opportunities and constraints;*
- *Considering potential directions of working, significant waste material locations, degrees of visual exposure, etc.;*
- *Identifying the need for additional screening during operations;*
- *Identifying proposed after uses and options for the character of the restored landscape.*

2.3 County Minerals Planning

2.3.1 Oxfordshire County Council has responsibility for minerals (and waste) planning in the county. The current Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan was adopted in July 1996 and is clearly out of date. The Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 1 – Core Strategy (Ref 1) has been in preparation since 2006 and will provide the planning strategies and policies for the supply of minerals in Oxfordshire for the period to the end of 2031. **Policy M3** identifies broad locations – strategic resource areas – within which it is proposed that future working for sharp sand and gravel, (soft sand and crushed rock) should take place. Within these strategic resource areas, sites for working will be allocated in the Site Allocations Document (Part 2), taking into account all the other relevant policies of the Core Strategy. The Site Allocations Document will be prepared after adoption of the Core Strategy, which is scheduled for July 2016. The wording of Policy M3 in relation to sharp sand and gravel is set out at Appendix 1.

2.3.2 **Policy M4** of the Core Strategy sets out the criteria that will be used to assess potential sites for inclusion in the Site Allocations Document and the wording of this policy is set out at Appendix 1.

2.4 Local Policy

2.4.1 The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (adopted June 2006, Ref 5) sets out West Oxfordshire District Council's (WODC) current planning policies and proposals for development and land use for the period up to 2011. The District Council is currently in the process of replacing the adopted Local Plan, and the Local Plan 2031 (Ref 6) was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 14th July 2015 and is scheduled for independent examination commencing on 23rd November 2015. (This followed public consultation for six weeks from 27th March to 8th May 2015).

2.4.2 Lower Road forms the western extent of the Oxford Green Belt (Policy NE5 in the 2011 Local Plan to be replaced by Policy OS2 in the 2031 Local Plan), therefore Areas A and C of Site SG-08 are within this policy area. The Conservation Area of Church Hanborough (Policy BE5 in the 2011 Local Plan and Policy EH7 in the 2031 Local Plan) coincides with the northernmost field of Area B of Site SG-08. To the north of the A4095 lies the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Policy NE4 in the 2011 Local Plan and Policy EH1 in the 2031 Local Plan). Also to the north of the A4095, Blenheim Palace is designated under Policy BE11 in the 2011 Local Plan and Policy EH7 in the 2031 Local Plan, as one of the sixteen 'Parks and Gardens of Specific Historic Interest' in West Oxfordshire. Parts of the park are also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (Policy NE14 in the 2011 Local Plan and Policy EH2 in the 2031 Local Plan). Eynsham Hall, which lies 3.2km to the west of Site SG-08, is also a Historic Park, but there is no intervisibility between the park at Eynsham Hall and Site SG-08, and they are not physically connected in the way that the River Evenlode/Glyme connects Blenheim Palace intrinsically to Site SG-08.

2.4.3 Development affecting the setting of a listed building is addressed in Policy BE8 in the 2011 Local Plan and Policy EH7 in the 2031 Local Plan and policy guidance for Ancient Woodlands, such as those of Pinsley Wood and Burleigh Wood is addressed in Policy NE14 of the 2011 Local Plan and Policy EH2 of the 2031 Local Plan. Local landscape character is covered by Policy NE3 in the 2011 Local Plan which states:

“Development will not be permitted if it would harm the local landscape character of the District. Proposals should respect and, where possible, enhance the intrinsic character, quality and distinctive features of the individual landscape types.”

2.4.4 Within the 2031 Local Plan, Local Landscape Character is addressed in Policy EH1, which states:

“The quality, character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire’s natural environment, including its landscape, cultural and historic value, tranquillity, geology, countryside, soil and biodiversity, will be conserved and enhanced.

New development should respect and, where possible, enhance the intrinsic character, quality and distinctive natural and man-made features of the local landscape, including individual or groups of features and their settings, such as stone walls, trees, hedges, woodlands, rivers, streams and ponds. Conditions may be imposed on development proposals to ensure every opportunity is made to retain such features and ensure their long-term survival through appropriate management and restoration.

Proposals which would result in the loss of features, important for their visual, amenity, or historic value will not be permitted unless the loss can be justified by appropriate mitigation and/or compensatory measures which can be secured to the satisfaction of the Council.

*Special attention and protection will be given to the landscape and biodiversity of the Lower Windrush Valley Project, the Windrush in Witney Project Area and the **Wychwood Project Area.**”*

2.4.5 The extent of the planning designations described above are shown on Plan HDA 1 and the implications of the potential mineral extraction proposals on these policies will be considered in Section 7.

3 LOCAL LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Goose Eye Farm lies in the Lower Evenlode Valley, 0.75 miles (1.2km) to the south-east of the village centre of Church Hanborough, which in turn lies 5 miles (8km) to the north-east of the town of Witney in West Oxfordshire. Lower Road, which connects the A4095 in the north with the A40 to the south, lies parallel to and to the west of the River Evenlode, and is 350m to the west of Goose Eye Farm (Plan HDA 1). The potential mineral extraction site known as Site SG-08 extends to both sides of Lower Road to the north, south and west of Goose Eye Farm and extends to 215.4ha.

3.1.2 Site SG-08 is predominantly arable farmland in open countryside as defined by WODC Policy NE1. The site does not have any recognised landscape designation, except it falls within the Wychwood Project Area (a project that aims to restore the landscape character and mix of habitats associated with the Royal Hunting Forest of Wychwood) and the land is within Environmental Stewardship schemes. However, the site does lie to the south of the World Heritage Site of Blenheim Palace. The Evenlode valley is visually contained by rising ground to the west and east, therefore the Study Area, in respect of this assessment, has been defined as the approximate zone of visual influence as shown on Plan HDA 1) and thus includes a broad swath of land surrounding the potential mineral extraction site.

3.2 Local Topography

3.2.1 Goose Eye Farm lies within the broad, flat, north-south orientated valley of the River Evenlode, immediately adjacent to the western bank of the river. The eastern edge of the valley is defined by a ridge of rising land topped by Purwell Farm (at 90m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)) and extending northwards, where Burleigh Wood forms a wooded skyline (maximum height of 102m AOD). The western edge of the valley rises to another shallow ridge, topped by the village of Church Hanborough, where the church with its distinctive spire, lies at 95m AOD. The confluence of the River Evenlode and the River Glyme, which flows through the parkland of Blenheim Palace, lies approximately 1km to the north of Site SG-08. The confluence of the River Evenlode and the River Thames lies approximately 2.2km to the south of Site SG-08.

3.2.2 The valley bottom location of Site SG-08 is reflected in its topography which forms a large flat area with a barely perceptible slope except along its western edge where the landform rises towards the ridge topped by Church Hanborough. Generally, levels

across Site SG-08 range between 70m AOD in the north by Mill Farm to 64m AOD in the south by Eynsham Mill over a distance of 3.3km (gradient of 1 in 550). To the west, Site SG-08 rises to 90m AOD to the south of Dreydon House on the southern edge of Church Hanborough, whereas the eastern edge of Site SG-08 is formed by the River Evenlode, where at Goose Eye Farm the land lies at about 65m AOD.

3.2.3 A large percentage of Site SG-08, along its eastern edge, lies within Flood Zone 3b, the functional floodplain. The SFRA (Ref 2) states that 68.45ha of Site SG-08 lies within Flood Zone 3b, which represents 31.8% of the site area. The SFRA goes on to state that “*there are no formal flood defences along this section of the watercourse (The Evenlode).*” Environment Agency comments regarding Site SG-08 (in the SFRA) are:

“The site lies upstream of Eynsham where the Environment Agency have recently completed Partnership works to reduce flood risk. In this area, the Environment Agency apply stringent requirements to minimise the loss of flood storage and flow.”

3.3 Landscape Features/Land Uses

3.3.1 The land use in the area is mixed agriculture with large woodland blocks predominantly in the north; however Site SG-08 itself is almost exclusively arable, except for one field of grassland in the north-east corner of Site SG-08. The presence of fields in arable cultivation immediately adjacent to the river seems unusual, particularly given their low lying valley floor location within Flood Zone 3b and thus there is an expectation for these fields to be waterlogged which is likely to limit arable productivity. The underlying gravely soils are thus likely to be free draining which would alleviate any perceived water-logging issues. The large-scale arable fields are bound with species-poor, gappy hedgerows with isolated hedgerow trees, predominantly oaks.

3.3.2 Plan HDA 2 (aerial photo) shows the distribution of vegetation across Site SG-08, including trees lining the River Evenlode and Lower Road, particularly the narrow belt of trees along the western side of Lower Road. Vegetation has the potential to influence views from adjacent visual receptors. Plan HDA 2 identifies Site SG-08 and shows its relationship with the surrounding rural landscape, elements of which form the key components that contribute to the landscape character of the area. Land use and topography have been used as a basis for identifying variations in local landscape character, which is summarised on Plan HDA 4.

3.3.3 The large blocks of woodland within the northern part of the study area, including Pinsley Wood to the north-west, Burleigh Wood to the north-east, with Bladon Heath beyond that, are all ancient woodland. These northern woodland blocks in combination with the woodland to the south around Eynsham Mill, all afford enclosure to the study area. To

the south-west of the study area lies an active aggregates recycling site at New Wintles Farm.

3.3.4 Isolated farmsteads are scattered around the margins of Site SG-08, some of which have been established for many years as reflected by their Listed Building status. Listed buildings adjacent to Site SG-08 include Mill Farm, Eynsham Mill and City Farm (refer to Plan HDA 1).

3.4 Published Landscape Character Assessments – National Character

3.4.1 Natural England have revised the National Character Area (NCA) profiles (Ref 7), though England is still divided into the 159 'Character Areas' as originally defined in the eight volumes of 'Countryside Character' (Ref 8). The site is located within NCA 108 'Upper Thames Clay Vales' (pages 6, 15-19 & 42-45 of Ref 7 are reproduced at Appendix 2; the NCA covers the extent of Plan HDA 3). The NCA covers a large geographical extent, so the degree to which it is appropriate to this localised assessment can be limited. However, some aspects of the following key characteristics (taken from the revised profile in Ref 7) are of relevance to Site SG-08:

- *"Low-lying clay-based flood plains encircle the Midvale Ridge. Superficial deposits, including alluvium and gravel terraces, spread over 40 per cent of the area, creating gently undulating topography. The Upper Jurassic and Cretaceous clays and wet valley bottoms give rise to enclosed pasture, contrasting with the more settled, open, arable lands of the gravel.*
- *The large river system of the River Thames drains the Vales, their headwaters flowing off the Cotswolds to the north..... Where mineral extraction takes place, pits naturally fill with water, and limestone gravels from the Cotswolds give rise to marl formation.*
- *Woodland cover is low at only about 3 per cent, but hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees are frequent. Watercourses are often marked by lines of willows.....*
- *In the river corridors, grazed pasture dominates, with limited areas of historic wetland habitats including wet woodland, fen, reedbed and flood meadow.....*
- *Gravel extraction has left a legacy of geological exposures, numerous waterbodies.....*
- *Wetland habitat attracts regionally important numbers of birds including snipe, redshank, curlew and lapwing and wintering wildfowl such as pochard.....The area also supports typical farmland wildlife such as brown hare, bats, barn owl, tree sparrow and skylark."*

3.4.2 It is interesting to note the key characteristic above relating to river corridors, as this is contrary to the character of the Lower Evenlode Valley where grazing pasture does not dominate, and areas of flood meadow habitat have been replaced with arable cultivation. The references to mineral/gravel extraction highlight that this is a predominant land use in this NCA, leading to the frequent occurrence of large waterbodies usually at the expense of traditional grazing flood meadows.

3.5 Published Landscape Character Assessments – County Character

3.5.1 Oxfordshire County Council published the ‘Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study’ (OWLS, Ref 9) in 2004. For a County-wide study, the OWLS report provides a remarkable level of detail with its landscape types being similar to those in the District-wide assessment (see Section 3.6). A strong correlation therefore exists between the boundaries of the character areas in the County study and those in the District-wide assessments. The OWLS report places Site SG-08 across three Landscape Types; the Lowland Village Farmlands type is aligned north-south to either side of Lower Road, The River Meadowlands encompasses land to either side of the River Evenlode and the Wooded Estatelands coincides with the higher land to the western and eastern edges of the Study Area (Plan HDA 3 and full descriptions of these areas are in Appendix 3). The key characteristics for each of the three Landscape Types are as follows:

Lowland Village Farmlands

- *"Overview – A variable, often large-scale farmed landscape closely associated with village settlements;*
- *A varied gently rolling and almost flat topography;*
- *Medium to large-sized arable and hedged fields;*
- *Thinly scattered hedgerow trees, with are mostly ash;*
- *Ash, willow and poplars fringing ditches and streams;*
- *Prominent village settlements scattered throughout the area."*

River Meadowlands

- *"Overview – This is a linear riverine landscape with a flat, well-drained alluvial floodplain. It has pastoral character with meadows, wet and semi-improved pasture;*
- *Flat, low-lying topography with seasonally flooded alluvial floodplains;*
- *Meandering river channels;*
- *Grazing meadows and small fields of permanent pasture;*
- *Riparian character with a strong pattern of riverside willows and tree-lined ditches;*
- *Sparsely settled with a few roads."*

Wooded Estatelands

- *"Overview – A wooded estate landscape characterised by arable farming and small villages with a strong vernacular character;*
- *Rolling topography with localised steep slopes;*
- *Large blocks of ancient woodland and mixed plantations of variable sizes;*
- *Large parklands and mansion houses;*
- *A regularly-shaped field pattern dominated by arable fields;*
- *Small villages with strong vernacular character."*

3.5.2 These characteristics highlight some important features of the landscape in the vicinity of Site SG-08. The General Description for the Biodiversity of the Lowland Village Farmlands provides a good summary, stating:

This is a fairly large landscape type, occupying around 5.5% of the rural county. Although it is largely dominated by arable farming, it still supports a range of locally important habitats including deciduous woodland, plantations, semi-improved grassland, species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined watercourses. There are also some ancient semi-natural woodlands, parkland, species-rich hedgerows and neutral and wet grassland. Parts of the landscape type are associated with mineral extraction, and this has resulted in a number of flooded gravel pits which are particularly important for wintering wildfowl and other bird species they attract.

3.6 Published Landscape Character Assessments – District Character

3.6.1 The West Oxfordshire district-wide ‘Landscape Character Area Assessment’ (District LCA, Ref 10) is very similar to the OWLS report, with the landscape types in the vicinity of the site following similar boundaries in both studies. The District LCA places Site SG-08 in Character Area 11 (CA11) ‘Eynsham Vale’, with the area to the south being in CA12 ‘Lower Windrush Valley and Eastern Thames Fringes’, the area to the north-west being in CA6 ‘Lower Evenlode Valley’ and the area to the north-east being in CA4 ‘Eastern Parks and Valleys’ which coincides with the parkland of Blenheim Palace.

3.6.2 The District LCA then identifies a number of more subtle variations in local landscape character across each CA, therefore CA11 has been sub-divided into eight further landscape types, with Site SG-08 lying across three landscape types of ‘Floodplain Pasture’ (northern part of Site SG-08), ‘Semi-Enclosed Rolling Vale Farmland’ and along the river ‘Semi-Enclosed Flat Vale Farmland’ (Plan HDA 3). A full description for CA11 is included at Appendix 4; however, the key characteristics considered being the most pertinent to Site SG-08 and its immediate surrounds for each of the three landscape types are as follows:

Floodplain Pasture

- *“Typically located immediately adjacent to rivers and minor watercourses on land prone to flooding, particularly in winter;*
- *Distinctively flat, low-lying land (below 70m AOD);*
- *Predominantly under permanent pasture with only occasional cultivated land;*
- *Riparian character, with strong pattern of ditches often lined by willow;*
- *Landscape structure provided by lines and groups of mature trees, with willow and alder conspicuous;*
- *Intimate, semi-enclosed and pastoral character;*
- *Remote and tranquil with limited intrusion by people or buildings;*
- *Moderate to low inter-visibility.”*

Semi-Enclosed Rolling Vale Farmland

- *“Low-lying land off floodplain floor (generally above 70m AOD) with a discernible raised landform;*
- *Well-drained, productive land underlain by river terrace gravels;*
- *Mostly large-scale fields under arable with regular field boundaries but some smaller-scale pattern and pasture (especially around settlements);*
- *Stronger structure of hedgerows, trees and occasional belts or blocks of woodland;*
- *Semi-enclosed character;*
- *Moderate inter-visibility.”*

Semi-Enclosed Flat Vale Farmland

- *“Drained and cultivated land (arable or reseeded grassland) within the floodplain;*
- *Distinctively flat and low-lying;*
- *Network of ditches;*
- *Stronger landscape structure of willow-lined ditches, hedgerows and occasional woodland blocks;*
- *Semi-enclosed character with moderate to low inter-visibility.”*

3.6.3 As a Conservation Area Appraisal or Village Design Statement have not been prepared for Church Hanborough, there are no published assessments of landscape character for the village at a local scale.

3.7 Local Landscape Character

3.7.1 Building upon the published Character Assessments for the area, a more localised landscape character assessment can be summarised as below and is illustrated on Plan HDA 4. An aerial photograph illustrating land use and vegetation cover is also included at Plan HDA 2. The County and District's assessments provided breakdowns of their character areas into smaller scale landscape types which have been classified on the basis of factors such as soils, landform, vegetation, land use and settlement pattern. This more detailed assessment reviews the published descriptions of these character types to define Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs). These are assessed to determine the potential for impacts on their identified landscape character from the potential proposals for mineral extraction in Section 6.4.

3.7.2 Site SG-08 and its immediate area has been divided into eight LLCAs as follows:

- **Floodplain Pastures** – In the District LCA, the Floodplain Pasture landscape type was restricted to the fields up and downstream of Mill Farm, whereas in this local assessment, the fields around Goose Eye Farm have also been included as being distinct from the surrounding arable land. The landscape is strongly influenced by the river, which is defined within the landscape by lines and groups of mature trees, particularly willows and alders;
- **Flat Vale Farmland** – This LLCA encompasses the majority of the study area and coincides with the extent of arable land in the flat, low-lying, Lower Evenlode

valley. It has similar characteristics to those described in the District LCA for the Semi-Enclosed Rolling Vale Farmland. This is a very open landscape, but with enclosure being provided by adjacent blocks of woodland (defined as a separate LLCA) and the rising ground to west and east. The field pattern is rectangular with overly maintained hedges or ditches forming the boundaries to the large cultivated fields. A sub-division has been included within this LLCA coinciding with the extent of the Functional Floodplain (having similar characteristics to the Semi-Enclosed Flat Vale Farmland of the District LCA);

- **Eynsham Mill Pastures and Wet Woodland** – Occupying the southern end of the study area, this area warrants a LLCA of its own due to the combination of pastures, gardens and wet woodlands ;
- **Purwell Farm Ridge Farmland** – The western edge of this LLCA is formed where the landform rises more steeply from the flat valley floor. It is an area of predominantly arable farming within large, regular-shaped fields;
- **Church Hanborough Pastures** – The western extent of the study area is predominantly pasture land (most of it coincides with an organic farm), particularly the smaller fields to the north and south-west of the village and extending towards Freeland.
- **Valley Woodlands** – The large woodlands of Pinsley Wood and Burleigh Wood, together with smaller woods near Purwell Farm and north-west of City Farm punctuate the Flat Vale Farmland and form wooded skylines, providing enclosure to the valley;
- **Hanborough Business Park** – At the northern end of the study area, this triangular area bound by the A4095, Lower Road and the railway, has been considered as a separate LLCA as it has such a different land use to the rest of the Vale Farmland. Intervisibility between this LLCA and Site SG-08 is restricted due to the intervening railway line on embankment;
- **Church Hanborough Village** – This LLCA has been defined as the built development and gardens of the village, which is a smaller area than the defined Conservation Area.

3.7.3 Site SG-08 lies almost exclusively within the Flat Vale Farmland LLCA, with only the northern part of Area A lying within the Floodplain Pastures LLCA.

4 EXISTING VISIBILITY

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section describes the locations from which Site SG-08 is currently visible, and the context of those views. The visual assessment was carried out in late summer, when leaf cover provides a high degree of screening. It should be noted that, given the deciduous nature of vegetation in the area, it is likely that for at least six months of the year during winter, visibility into Site SG-08 is likely to be greater than described here. Plan HDA 5 summarises the extent of visibility of the site (without mineral extraction). The following paragraphs describe the existing views and visual amenity from the key visual receptors within the vicinity of Site SG-08, together with an assessment of the sensitivity of each receptor to the type of development proposed.

4.1.2 The baseline landscape assessment of Site SG-08 has identified that the local landscape is a flat valley landform enclosed to east and west by rising land. By virtue of its valley

location, there are some opportunities for long-distance views into Site SG-08, particularly from the surrounding higher ground at Purwell Farm to the east and from Church Hanborough to the west. These views are possible particularly from two public footpaths in the vicinity of the site. Residents in properties (private views) and users of Lower Road which lies adjacent to the three areas of Site SG-08 (public views) also have views into and across the site. The differentiation between private and public views is made to highlight that private views are likely to be experienced by a limited number of receptors, however, public views are likely to relate to large numbers of receptors engaged in enjoyment of the landscape for its own sake, and thus may be given more weight.

4.2 Views from Roads and Public Rights of Way

4.2.1 Lower Road forms the eastern boundary of Area B of Site SG-08 and the western boundaries of Areas A and C of Site SG-08. Although it is only a 'B' category road, it is a major route between the A4095 and the A40, used extensively by HGVs (including lorries operated by local companies such as Agrivert and Smiths). The frontage of Area B with Lower Road is lined with a belt of trees along its full length (1.35km) which provides good screening of this part of Site SG-08 in the summer, except where field entrances allow views into Site SG-08. Areas A and C have long frontages with Lower Road (1.7km and 1.6km respectively), but in contrast to the western side of Lower Road, the eastern side of the road is bound only by a thin hedge and this is overly maintained to a height of about 1.2m. The lack of height to the roadside hedgerow does not afford the site much screening therefore there are opportunities for views across the site towards the rising ground on the eastern side of the river. Motorised users tend to be of 'Medium' to 'Low' sensitivity to the type of change proposed, depending on whether their journey is for pleasure or work respectively, and their views tend to be transient.

4.2.2 There are no footways along Lower Road and the verges are raised above the height of the road, therefore to ensure the road drains to the adjacent fields, drainage channels have been cut through the verge, which makes walking along the verges difficult. The problems associated with walking along the verges, together with the high levels of fast traffic along Lower Road make it unpleasant for use by pedestrians, therefore there are not likely to be many non-motorised users on Lower Road.

4.2.3 Site SG-08 is only crossed by one public right of way, Bridleway 206/11 across the southern end of Area C, between the east side of Lower Road, north of New Wintles Farm, east towards Eynsham Mill. Users of this bridleway have open, unhindered views north and south for the 400 metre length that crosses between the arable fields that encompass this southern end of Area C. As walkers tend to have a higher appreciation

of the landscape around them, they are assessed as having 'High' sensitivity to the type of change proposed.

4.2.4 Footpath 238/5 between Church Hanborough in the north and City Farm in the south (it becomes Footpath 206/10 to the south of the parish boundary, which is formed by a tributary of the River Evenlode) forms the western boundary of Area B of Site SG-08. For the length of this footpath that immediately adjoins Site SG-08 (800 metres), users are separated from the site by a hedgerow, which along the higher northern section of the footpath (for 400 metres) has been left to grow tall (about 4m high). To the south of the barns surrounded by poplars, where the footpath starts to go downhill, the hedge has been trimmed to 1-1.5m in height and thus for about 400 metres, open views eastwards into Site SG-08 are possible.

4.2.5 The section of Footpath 238/5 to the north of the parish boundary (and north of City Farm; a length of 450m) crosses a field that has been restored from a former tip, and this field is all that separates the footpath from the most southern field of Area B of Site SG-08. As the restored field and Site SG-08 are only separated by a post and wire fence, open views across the flat landscape are possible from this section of Footpath 238/5 of Site SG-08. To the south of the parish boundary where Footpath 238/5 becomes Footpath 206/10, mature trees lining the west-east aligned tributary of the River Evenlode which screen views northwards into Areas B and C of Site SG-08.

4.2.6 Purwell Farm sits upon the hilltop to the east of Site SG-08. Footpath 152/6 connects Purwell Farm with Cassington to the south-east and where this footpath continues to the north of the farmstead, views towards Site SG-08, from the higher ground east of the River Evenlode, are possible. However, Footpath 152/6 only extends as far as the river and therefore, in effect, is a no-through route and as such, appears to be rarely used.

4.2.7 Footpath 238/4, which becomes Footpath 238/2, links Church Road, near the former Piggery, with Lower Road along the eastern edge of Pinsley Wood. From this footpath it is possible to have views into Area A of Site SG-08 over the top of roadside vegetation.

4.3 Views from Private Residences

4.3.1 Private views from residential properties of Site SG-08 are possible from the following properties:

- Goose Eye Farm lies between Areas A and C of Site SG-08, and the northern façade of the house forms part of the boundary to Area A. Due to its close proximity, it is possible for residents to have open views particularly into Area A and to a lesser degree into Areas B and C of Site SG-08 from this property.
- Mill Farm is a cluster of properties (at least four dwellings, one of which is a Listed Building) set off Lower Road and partly screened from the northern end of Area A

of Site SG-08 by agricultural barns. The properties would have varying degrees of visibility into the site.

- College Farm lies at the junction of Lower Road and Church Road and includes at least two properties, both of which have open views into the adjacent Area A of Site SG-08 and beyond the road vegetation into Area B.
- Willow Cottage Kindergarten (referred to on maps as Owls Leat) lies at the entrance to Goose Eye Farm, and thus is in close proximity to all three Areas of the site. The building (non-residential) is surrounded by close-board fencing and vegetation, so although open views are restricted, users would still have partial views into the site
- New Barn Farm is located to the south of Owls Leat and has views particularly from first floor windows to the south into Area C and through the break in vegetation on the opposite side of Lower Road into Area B.

4.3.2 The sensitivity of the receptors within these residential properties to change of the type proposed is generally regarded as 'High' due to their close proximity to Site SG-08 and their open views. Those properties with glimpsed views of the site include the following:

- New Wintles Farm lies on the west side of Lower Road at the southern end of Area B and has views restricted to those from first floor windows due to roadside and garden vegetation. Views are therefore not from their principal living rooms.
- Purwell Farm occupies a prominent hilltop location with glimpsed views restricted due to adjacent vegetation and farm buildings.
- City Farm includes a pair of cottages and a cluster of dwellings in a courtyard of converted barns and The Bungalow. Vegetation along the parish boundary screens most views north, but there may be glimpses to the east into Area C.
- Properties in Church Hanborough are also in prominent hilltop locations, but again, views into Area B are restricted due to intervening vegetation. Dreydon House has open views southwards into the higher parts of Area B.

4.3.3 The sensitivity of receptors within these residential properties to change of the type proposed is generally regarded as 'Medium' due to their more restricted views. Eynsham Mill is surrounded by vegetation, therefore there are no views of Site SG-08 from this property.

4.4 Existing Visual Baseline: Summary

4.4.1 Site SG-08 has an expansive visual envelope encompassing the whole of the Lower Evenlode Valley. The key visual receptors to the potential impacts of Site SG-08 are those users of the immediately adjacent Lower Road who could have the potential to be significantly affected by proposed mineral extraction operations due to their close range views. Road users have been assessed as having 'Medium' to 'Low' sensitivity, depending on the purpose of their journey (pleasure or work respectively). Users of Footpath 238/5, between Church Hanborough and the parish boundary to the north of City Farm, are assessed as having 'High' sensitivity and also have the potential to be significantly affected by proposed mineral extraction as this path forms the western boundary of Area B. Footpath 238/5 appears to be well used as evidenced by wear on

the ground, and as such, is valued. Users of Footpath 152/6 to the north of Purwell Farm also have the potential to be affected by the proposals, but not significantly due to the greater distances from the site and the footpath being a dead-end.

- 4.4.2 The residential properties along Lower Road, thus immediately adjacent to Site SG-08, are assessed as having 'High' sensitivity and thus have the potential to be adversely affected by the proposed mineral extraction, whereas those properties further from the site or partially screened by vegetation are assessed as having 'Medium' sensitivity. All properties identified are relatively close to Site SG-08.

5 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Description of the Proposals

- 5.1.1 Site SG-08 has been put forward by mineral operators, Hanson Aggregates, as a potential extension to their existing operations at Cassington. However, Site SG-08 is not physically connected to the existing pit to the east of Cassington or to the potential mineral site of SG-20, which lies to the south of the private grounds at Eynsham Mill. It appears unlikely that a transport route or conveyor belt would be permitted between the existing and potential sites given the presence of Eynsham Mill. In addition, any connections between Areas C and A of Site SG-08 would be resisted given the private land ownership at Goose Eye Farm, lying between these two areas. Generally, connectivity between the three Areas of Site SG-08 will be problematic particularly given the presence of the busy Lower Road. Any perceived advantages in treating Site SG-08 as an extension of an existing quarry therefore appear to be overly exaggerated.

- 5.1.2 No estimates of the total yield of sand and gravel from Site SG-08 are provided, though an estimate of 1.5 million tonnes is provided for Area A. Without more detailed information regarding the quantity and quality of the mineral resources at Site SG-08, it is difficult to argue for or against the feasibility of this site being included in a future Site Allocations Document. Given that the remaining requirement to be provided for in this Plan Period for the whole County is 5.366 million tonnes, it can be argued that the potential (unknown) reserves from Site SG-08 are not proven to be required. Historically, production of sharp sand and gravel has been concentrated in the northern part of the County; the Core Strategy states that "*over the last 10 years an average of 74% of production has been from northern Oxfordshire*" and that around Cassington "*there are concerns about the rate and intensity of mineral working in the area and the consequent cumulative impact on local communities, generation of traffic, including on the A40, and impacts on local rivers and groundwater flows.*" If these issues are already recognised within the consultation Core Strategy, then it seems that the inclusion of Site SG-08 as a potential site should not be considered any further in this Plan period. As suggested in the Core Strategy it seems commonsense that the majority of the requirement for sharp

sand and gravel should be sought from the southern part of the County, to enable local supplies of aggregate for planned housing and economic growth in that part of the County.

- 5.1.3 The boundary of Site SG-08 extends to over 215ha which represents a large scale area for potential mineral extraction that could be phased over many years, leading to high levels of disturbance to the local community for a long period of time. Although Site SG-08 is a large site, it is unlikely that mineral extraction could take place across the whole area, as there will be the need to provide offsets between the extent of extraction and residential properties and to potentially sensitive landscape features, such as the river and mature trees. The offsets from residential properties to mitigate against potential noise and air quality impacts can be 100m, and given the number of properties in close proximity to the site (as set out in paragraphs 4.3.1 and 4.3.2), this would sterilise a large proportion of the potential reserves. Similarly, offsets from the River Evenlode may need to be at least 20m, if not more, to avoid disruption to ground and surface water flows in the area.
- 5.1.4 The unsuitability of Site SG-08 for inclusion in any future Site Allocations Document is supported by the fact that Areas A and C of Site SG-08 coincide with the Oxford Green Belt and the northern field of Area B coincides with the Conservation Area of Church Hanborough. Some of the proposed extraction area would also be located within the Functional Floodplain as indicated by Environment Agency maps. Although sand and gravel working is the only form of mineral extraction that can take place in the functional floodplain, provided a sequential test is undertaken, the presence of the floodplain is likely to have serious constraints on the working of the site. Any development likely to displace flood water (including stockpiles) will need to be located on land that is outside the functional floodplain. This may limit the visual mitigation that can be afforded to potential extraction areas through the use of bunds.
- 5.1.5 The access to Site SG-08 has not been proposed, but is likely to be from Lower Road. Lower Road is a very busy route and provides a link between two very heavily used roads, the A40 to the south and the A4095 to the north. Lower Road has several hazards that make it incompatible for the likely increases in the amounts of traffic that could be generated by Site SG-08. Towards the northern end of Lower Road is a low bridge where the Cotswold Railway passes over the road. At this point, the carriageway narrows such that HGVs have to drive in the middle of the road requiring opposing to traffic to give way. At the Lower Road/A4095 junction, visibility is limited, making egress for HGVs extremely difficult. Lower Road is a particularly dangerous road as its straight alignment encourages fast speeds and overtaking manoeuvres which lead to several accidents per year. Lower Road, together with the inadequacies of the surrounding local

road network, make them unsuitable for increased levels of HGV traffic. The A40 has major capacity issues which may encourage HGVs to divert onto less suitable roads (possibly through Cassington).

- 5.1.6 During extraction, the stripping of soils and overburden (during the normal soil handling season, between May and September) would result in the tops of excavators and dump trucks being visible across the valley over the existing boundary hedges. Any proposed noise bunds or acoustic fencing erected whilst operations are carried out would be incongruous features in their own right and though they may visually conceal machinery, these features are not characteristic of the area and would limit the long distance views currently enjoyed across the valley. The use of bunding and its location would be severely constrained by flood plain considerations and thus the bunds' effectiveness in the screening of sensitive receptors would be reduced.

5.2 Proposed Landscape Design and Mitigation

- 5.2.1 The restoration of Site SG-08 will need to be to an after-use that is appropriate to the location. It is likely that the mineral operator will propose that restoration is to large water bodies (due to the water table) and the appropriateness of this after-use is discussed. The restoration proposals are likely to include ground modelling and landscape planting to help reduce the visibility of the extraction operations and to assimilate the site into the surrounding landscape. Again, the appropriateness of such alterations into a landscape that is generally flat and open with limited amounts of planting, which on the whole is restricted to the margins of large field boundaries, has been assessed.

6 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 The description of likely impacts resulting from the potential extraction of sand and gravel has been subdivided into impacts on visual receptors and impacts on existing landscape features on and around the site, together with impacts on local landscape character. Impacts on existing landscape features, together with the effects of new features or planting, relate strongly to the residual impact on landscape character.

6.2 Visual Appraisal of the Proposals

- 6.2.1 In this section, the potential for mineral extraction has been evaluated, including an assessment of all visual receptors with the significance of their visual impacts described where necessary. The visual assessment is based upon two key visual receptor groups, PROWs and residences in the vicinity of the site.

PROWs

- 6.2.2 The sensitivity of walkers using Bridleway 206/11 and Footpath 238/5 is assessed as 'High' as users of footpaths are generally partaking in recreation, where an appreciation of the surrounding landscape is important to them. Open views into the site and beyond across the broad valley are possible from these rights of way. These direct and close range views of extraction activities on the site warrant an assessment of 'Moderate Adverse' to 'Substantial Adverse' significance of effect. The effect on the amenity of footpath users would be experienced for the duration of extraction activities on those parts of the site closest to these receptors.
- 6.2.3 From the other footpaths identified in Section 4.2 above, views into the site would not be as significant, either being reduced to glimpses due to intervening vegetation or due to their distance from the site.
- 6.2.4 Users of Lower Road have restricted views into the site on its western side, due to dense roadside vegetation, but views to the east are more open, extending across the valley towards the rising ground on the eastern side of the river. Unmitigated views of mineral extraction would be 'Moderate Adverse' as a result of the High magnitude of change, however, if these views are screened by temporary soil bunds or more permanent planting, then the long distance views would be compromised.

Private Residences

- 6.2.5 Residential receptors in properties along Lower Road have been assessed as experiencing severe impacts as a result of potential mineral extraction in the area. The residents of Goose Eye Farm, Mill Farm, College Farm and New Barn Farm are those properties in closest proximity to the site, but may be screened from operations by temporary bunds or acoustic fences, though these are likely to be intrusive features in their own right, particularly if viewed at close range. Any short term 'Substantial Adverse' impacts could reduce as the long-term permanent planting proposed as part of the restoration scheme starts to mature. It may be possible that the views of the restored lakes from adjacent properties, footpaths and roads would be desirable, however it is likely given their water level in relation to the surrounding landform and with vegetation planted to help screen the operations phase, that, like the river, they will not be visible from the adjacent landscape except from more elevated positions. Lakes would not be consistent with the local landscape character and thus may have an adverse impact on the identified visual receptors and the visual amenity of users of the local landscape.

6.3 Landscape Features

- 6.3.1 The landform of the Evenlode valley, within which Site SG-08 lies, forms a coherent landscape with a strong sense of place, forming an integral setting to the hilltop village of

Church Hanborough. Mineral extraction within Site SG-08 is likely to result in the loss of hedgerows and possibly several mature trees. It would not be possible to retain those hedgerows which cross Site SG-08 without sterilisation of large quantities of resource. Where possible, retention of landscape features should be encouraged, provided this does not place significant constraints on the working and final restoration of the site. The retention of existing mature trees on isolated islands of higher ground should be avoided as this is not characteristic of the local landscape.

6.3.2 The Lower Evenlode valley has been included in the Wychwood Project Area (see Figure 8.2 of the WODC Local Plan 2031 – Ref 6), therefore there is future policy backing for the planting of woodland blocks in the area and certain proposals for blocks of woodland similar in size to those at Pinsley Wood and Burleigh Wood would not look out of character in this valley. However, it is anticipated that a restoration scheme for Site SG-08 would not be able to accommodate such blocks of woodland as planting would be restricted to the margins of water-bodies, thus contrary to the type and form of planting that would be encouraged as part of the Wychwood Project.

6.3.3 The ancient woodlands of Pinsley Wood and Burleigh Wood are not immediately adjacent to Site SG-08, but there may be issues regarding the changes to the hydrological demand of the retained trees caused by the lowering of ground levels that will need to be considered in any potential application for mineral extraction in the area.

6.4 Landscape Character: Impact Assessment

6.4.1 The potential extraction of sand and gravel from Site SG-08 is likely to have a significant impact on the character of the area's landscape. These impacts may be considered to be temporary, however the duration of extraction is likely to take place over many years, prolonging impacts on the local community. During extraction, the stripping of soils and overburden and the creation of stockpile mounds can be highly intrusive activities which would be contrary to policy.

6.4.2 It is unlikely that the site could be restored to its original land use without the import of inert material. Given the lack of availability of such inert materials, particularly with policy guidance towards the recycling of secondary aggregates, together with the extended length of time it would take to restore the site and the transport issues associated with the importation of this material, a water-based scheme seems the most likely restoration option. However, this assumption to restore the site to large lakes, is likely to look out of place in this agricultural landscape. Proposals for large waterbodies would not respect the existing character of the area.

6.4.3 It may be argued that a range of wetland habitats would deliver a net gain in biodiversity, but this needs to be balanced against the loss of good quality, productive agricultural land. Although former mineral workings along the A40 have been restored to lakes and may be considered by some to be well assimilated into the landscape, an increase in areas of water in the Lower Evenlode valley will make these large bodies of water more visually dominant resulting in an unacceptable cumulative impact. Large water bodies are likely to look incongruous, particularly as the site is not visually well contained and is easily perceived from the main vantage point of Lower Road. The transition from arable fields to a water-based restoration scheme will be a marked change in the landscape character of the area.

7 REVIEW AGAINST LANDSCAPE ASPECTS OF PLANNING POLICY

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This section addresses the planning policy context relevant to Site SG-08 and whether the proposals for mineral extraction would be contrary to those policies. Of particular relevance to the landscape aspects of policy pertaining to this site is the importance placed upon the local landscape character.

7.2 National Planning Policy Framework

7.2.1 The proposals would not conform to the Framework (Ref 3), in particular the core principles at Paragraph 17, as the proposals would not *“take account of the different roles and character of different areas,recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”*. The restoration proposals, to a water-based scheme, are unlikely to be in keeping with the local agrarian landscape character, and the introduction of planting, though having some benefits to wildlife, may restrict the currently open views across the valley changing the perception of the broad valley landform.

7.2.2 Section 11 of the Framework addresses ‘Conserving and enhancing the natural environment’ and it is considered that the proposals are not consistent with Paragraph 109 which guides development to ensure it contributes to and enhances the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. The proposals would permanently replace productive arable land with incongruous waterbodies. This would not respect the open and locally valued landscape of the Lower Evenlode valley, and during the extraction of the mineral, activities such as soil stripping, storage and machinery working would appear out of context with the tranquil valley landscape.

7.3 Regional Mineral Policy

7.3.1 It is considered that the Lower Evenlode valley should not be included in the identification of the strategic resource area of the Thames and Lower Windrush valley within Policy M3 of the OMWLP. The Lower Evenlode valley is physically detached from the Thames and

Lower Windrush valley where existing activity is already concentrated. When the Lower Evenlode valley, and specifically Site SG-08, are assessed against the criteria in Policy M4, they score very poorly. The quantity and quality of the mineral resource in the Lower Evenlode valley is questionable and encroachment into new areas of extraction should be resisted when more accessible reserves have been identified in southern Oxfordshire, close to where demand is required. Any perceived advantages in Site SG-08 being an extension to an existing quarry are exaggerated, particularly given the likely resistance of third party landowners to conveyors over their land and the visual intrusion associated with conveyors over Lower Road.

7.3.2 Criterion d) of Policy M3 considers restoration, and within this report it is questioned whether a scheme that replaces productive arable fields with water-filled lakes would be wholly appropriate for the agrarian landscape of the Lower Evenlode valley. It is also questionable whether the primary road network is suitable or capable of accommodating the increases in HGVs likely to result from mineral extraction in the area. Any locational advantages in resources being close to areas of significant demand are lost if the existing road network is already at capacity (particularly the A40).

7.3.3 Site SG-08 does comply with criterion h) of Policy M4 in that it avoids the Cotswold AONB, however this designated area only lies a short distance from the site, to the north of the A4095. Policy M4 criterion i) specifically flags up the potential for impacts arising from the extraction of minerals in the Lower Evenlode valley on the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation, such that this area should be avoided.

7.3.4 Given that Site SG-08 occupies part of the Church Hanborough Conservation Area and encroaches upon the setting to the remainder of this historic village, this would be contrary to criterion j) of Policy M4. Significant adverse impacts on the local landscape character, water quality, flood risk and groundwater flow, agricultural land and soil resources, local transport networks, land uses sensitive to nuisance, such as the Willow Tree Nursery, on the residential amenity and human health of the residents along Lower Road and in Church Hanborough are likely to arise from the potential extraction of minerals at Site SG-08, and would thus be in conflict with criterion k) of Policy M4.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1.1 The potential extraction of sand and gravel from Site SG-08 would cover a significant area of the Lower Evenlode valley (215ha), permanently changing an area of open fields that are visually exposed, into an assumed water-based restoration scheme that will not be in keeping with the local landscape character. Extraction activities would occupy the valley over a prolonged period of time and would generate adverse impacts such as noise, traffic generation and dust throughout its period of operation. It is recognised that

these operational impacts of extraction will not be permanent, but for many sensitive visual receptors, such as users of rights of way that cross or lie in close proximity to the site, these impacts would be significant over the lifetime of the extraction activities.

- 8.1.2 Site SG-08 does not lie within a designated landscape, but the Lower Evenlode valley is a tranquil, agrarian landscape with elements of scenic beauty that have similarities to those of the Cotswold AONB which lies in close proximity to the north of the site. The Lower Evenlode valley is currently unaffected and visually disconnected from existing areas of mineral extraction, thus once any part of the valley is established as an acceptable land use as a resource for sand and gravel, the impact of extraction is likely to be extensive and long term.
- 8.1.3 The restoration landform and associated planting would be a permanent effect on the landscape and may not necessarily be a positive enhancement of the landscape structure of the valley and could restrict views across the open valley. These marked changes in landscape character would effectively be long term adverse impacts which will significantly affect the enjoyment of the open valley landscape.
- 8.1.4 In summary, the extraction of minerals from Site SG-08 has the potential to cause adverse impacts over a long period of time on sensitive visual receptors such as those using the local right of way network or the many residents in properties along Lower Road. Resultant changes to the land-use would not be characteristic of this part of the Lower Evenlode valley thus leading to a permanent adverse effect on the landscape character of the open valley landscape.

9 REFERENCES

1. Oxfordshire County Council (August 2015), '**Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 1 - Core Strategy**' (Proposed Submission Document).
2. Scott Wilson for OCC (April 2010), '**Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**'
3. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (March 2012), '**National Planning Policy Framework**' (the Framework)
4. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (March 2014) '**National Planning Practice Guidance**' (<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/minerals/>)
5. West Oxfordshire District Council (Adopted 16th June 2006), '**Local Plan 2011**'

6. West Oxfordshire District Council (submission 2015), '**Local Plan 2031**'
7. Natural England (June 2014) '**National Character Area Profile: 108. Upper Thames Clay Vales**' (available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/>)
8. The Countryside Agency (now Natural England) (1999) '**Countryside Character, Volume 7: South East and London**'
9. Oxfordshire County Council (2004), '**Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study**' (OWLS)
10. Atlantic Consultants (1998) '**West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment**'

APPENDIX 1

**Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan; Part 1 – Core Strategy
Wording of Policies M3 and M4**

APPENDIX 1

OXFORDSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN: PART 1 – CORE STRATEGY

1 **Policy M3: Principal locations for working aggregate minerals**

The principal locations for aggregate minerals extraction will be within the following strategic resource areas, as indicated on the Minerals Key Diagram:

Sharp sand and gravel

- The Thames, Lower Windrush and Lower Evenlode Valleys area from Standlake to Yarnton;
- The Thames and Lower Thame Valleys area from Oxford to Cholsey;
- The Thames Valley area from Caversham to Shiplake.

Specific sites for working aggregate minerals will be identified within these strategic resource areas in the Minerals & Waste Local Plan: Part 2 – Site Allocations Document.

2 **Policy M4: Sites for working aggregate minerals**

Specific sites for working aggregate minerals within the strategic resource areas identified in policy M3, to meet the requirements set out in policy M2, will be allocated in the Minerals & Waste Local Plan: Part 2 – Site Allocations Document, in accordance with the following criteria:

- a) Consideration of the quantity and quality of the mineral resource;
- b) Achieving a change over the course of the plan period in the balance of production capacity for sharp sand & gravel between the strategic resource areas in western and southern Oxfordshire to more closely reflect the distribution of demand within the county;
- c) Priority for the extension of existing quarries, where environmentally acceptable (including taking into consideration criteria d) to m)) and after consideration of criterion b), before working new sites;
- d) Potential for restoration and after-use and for achieving the restoration objectives of the Plan in accordance with policy M10 (restoration of mineral workings);
- e) Suitability & accessibility of the primary road network;
- f) Proximity to large towns and other locations of significant demand to enable a reduction in overall journey distance from quarry to market;
- g) Ability to provide more sustainable movement of excavated materials;
- h) Avoidance of locations within or significantly affecting an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- i) 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 proposals 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;

- j) Avoidance of locations likely to have an adverse effect on designated heritage assets, including World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas, or on archaeological assets which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to a Scheduled Monument;
- k) Avoidance of, or ability to suitably mitigate, potential significant adverse impacts on:
 - i. Locally designated areas of nature conservation and geological interest;
 - ii. Local landscape character;
 - iii. Water quality, water quantity, flood risk and groundwater flow;
 - iv. Agricultural land and soil resources;
 - v. Local transport network;
 - vi. Land uses sensitive to nuisance (e.g. schools and hospitals);
 - vii. Residential amenity and human health; and
 - viii. Character and setting of local settlements
- l) Potential cumulative impact of successive and/or simultaneous mineral development, including non-mineral development, on local communities;
- m) Ability to meet other objectives and policy expectations of this Plan (including Policies C1 – C11) and relevant policies in other development plans.

APPENDIX 2

National Character Area 108 – Upper Thames Clay Vales

APPENDIX 3
OWLS Landscape Character Assessment

APPENDIX 4
West Oxfordshire LCA – CA11