PART 2
PART 2 - PROPOSED AND CONFIRMED SITES

In this section I consider the objections made to those sites proposed or confirmed as minerals sites in the SMLP.

Preliminary considerations

2.1 There are several issues raised in the objections which address concerns held by objectors to many of the identified sites, relating to environmental matters. Although the detailed consideration of the issues will be different in each case, the principles underlying the commonly held basic concerns can be considered together. The main themes are: disturbance to local residents by noise associated with minerals working, air-borne dust and the irritation this could cause to health and living conditions generally, pollution of watercourses and ground water, visual intrusion and the effectiveness of screening and, albeit not in all cases, mineral extraction in areas which are covered by landscape protection policies in other development plan documents - district local plans and the structure plan. Other basic points raised by many objectors are the consequences for agriculture of the temporary or permanent loss of land to minerals working. Finally, in this list of broad or common objections is considerable concern about highway safety and the disturbance traffic, particularly lorries, can cause in local villages in running to and from quarries through the rural area.

2.2 It would be beneficial to consider these issues in general terms at the beginning of this chapter, in that it sets a common context for considering the objections raised to each of the sites, and it may save repetition of the same or very similar comments when addressing the matters of concern at each of the sites. For a general comment on these issues it will be sufficient to refer to this preface, and then go on to deal with the examination of the specific concerns on and around each site.

Noise

2.3 Mineral working almost exclusively takes place in the countryside which is, for the most part, remote from urban development and is generally quiet. Ambient noise levels in houses are typically low, which is seen to contribute significantly to the quality of life in the countryside and rural villages. Yet the countryside is not entirely silent. Roads, particularly heavily used ones, are a source of background noise in many areas. Farming activities are a source of noise, eg. livestock, and machinery such as tractors and combine harvesters, which can approach quite close to dwellings at times. Other sources of noise in the countryside include aircraft and railways.

2.4 Noise levels can be measured scientifically, but the response to noise is subjective. Very loud noises cause physical pain, and these may be universally recognised as unsocial. Below these levels it is difficult to predict with confidence whether a given level of noise would be unreasonably disturbing or not; what may be acceptable to some or even the majority, may be quite disturbing to others. Apart from its simple loudness (pressure) there are other factors such as its pitch and range, rhythm and tonal qualities.
2.5 Taking account of noise generating development is a proper concern for planning authorities. Because of the diverse nature of noise and the subjective nature of responses to particular sources, the Government has produced guidance for use by planning authorities to help them in determining whether a particular use or activity would be unduly noisy and, if so, whether measures could be taken to control the development to bring noise levels to within generally acceptable limits. PPG24 Planning and Noise (not listed as a Core Document of the inquiry) is based on research into the subject, and includes guidance on measuring background levels, predicting likely increases at noise sensitive locations, and effective mitigation. MPG11 The Control of Noise at Surface Mineral Workings (CD.20) gives particular consideration to the potential impact of minerals operations on noise sensitive locations. Sources of potentially disturbing noise include extraction equipment, mobile plant (lorries, dumpers, etc.), reversing alarms, and fixed plant (crushing and processing plant etc.). The potential for disturbance is also influenced by wind direction and strength and other meteorological factors.

2.6 MPG11 gives guidance on acceptable increases over background noise levels, recognising the generally quiet conditions in rural areas. Advice is given on how otherwise unacceptable increases may be mitigated, and how a planning authority can set, monitor and enforce control limits through conditions on a planning permission or, alternatively, through legal agreement. Mitigation can include planning the direction and sequence of working across a site, the creation of baffle mounds (bunds), installing acoustic fencing, using appropriate equipment and properly maintaining it, and limiting hours of operation. There are also quieter, or even silent, alternatives to the reversing alarms fitted to quarry vehicles which would meet health and safety at work requirements.

2.7 Using this advice and guidance, it is up to the MPA to consider the appropriate limits for each site, taking into account the proximity of working areas to noise sensitive properties. Appropriate noise levels can be set for the extraction phases and the sold stripping and restoration phases. The control levels for these various phases can be different, recognising that soil moving generally takes place only over relatively short periods and not very frequently.

2.8 In my view, there is adequate guidance for the MPA to predict noise levels at minerals sites and to control it within generally acceptable limits. I have based my assessment of the likely noise impact of working at the proposed sites on this published guidance, on the basis that the techniques exist to control noise where this may be necessary and the local planning authority has the means to impose and enforce those controls. Having said that, noise control in itself would not be the only consideration. For example, whereas noise may be mitigated by the creation of bunds, the bunds themselves may be unacceptable because of their impact on the local landscape. Therefore, the feasibility of noise control must be assessed against other considerations before it can be concluded that the measure would be acceptable.

Dust

2.9 Dust is a matter of concern to many objectors. It is claimed that dust can spoil the enjoyment of people using their gardens if it is regularly blown towards and across residential properties, and the nuisance would be compounded where it gets into houses and would be deposited on furniture. Furthermore, it is seen as a potential health hazard, aggravating or even precipitating respiratory problems, particularly in children.
2.10 Dust is a proper concern for a planning authority, but it also may be subject to control as a statutory nuisance under environmental health legislation. It is not the role of the planning system to duplicate other controls, but there are situations where the degree of disturbance is below that of a statutory nuisance, but which justify planning controls. This is recognised in MPG2 Applications, Permissions and Conditions (CD.A12).

2.11 Further guidance is available in the DoE publication The Environmental Effects of Dust from Surface Mines Workings, Volume 1 of which was lodged as a core document of the inquiry (CD.D7). This presents the findings of research into the issue and puts forward Dust Standards and Guidelines for use by planning authorities. As the report says "the definition of standards for dust is a particularly complex issue"; it depends, amongst other matters, on distance, wind strength, humidity, and particle size. I note many objectors draw particular attention to the strength of the wind in East Anglia, and how this has the potential to disperse dust over a very wide area. Also, as for noise, individuals have different attitudes to dust; what would be a cause for complaint by one may be seen as inconsequential by others.

2.12 However, dust is an issue which has been acknowledged for many years on minerals sites. The SMLP is largely concerned with aggregates minerals, with some chalk and clay extraction for the cement industry. There are no hard rock quarries with the associated blasting and crushing operations which can be significant sources of dust pollution. At sand and gravel sites several operations can be the source of dust. Soil handling during stripping and restoration phases can be dusty if not carried out under strictly controlled conditions which take account of wind strength and direction and the dampness of the soil. The working faces are generally not a source of dust as the material is usually damp when excavated. This is not a problem at all where there is wet working at a site. Whereas sand and gravel is generally processed wet and moved to stock piles whilst still wet, material can be blown off stock piles of sand in dry weather. The passage of vehicles over unsurfaced haul roads within the quarry can also stir up dust.

2.13 The findings of the DoE study are that dust can travel up to 1km where there are significant dust sources, but at these distances both the quantity and size of dust particles were lowest, and the concerns expressed were also the lowest. At these distances the dust arising was possibly indistinguishable from natural background levels. The most sensitive zone around a mineral site was found to be that closest to it, which varied in width up to 500m, but the average width of the zone of greatest disturbance was 175m. Indeed, as stated in section 1.2 of the report "the greatest proportion of dust emitted from mineral workings will largely deposit within 100m of sources".

2.14 Although dust may be generated from points within a quarry, it may not escape beyond the site boundaries; it may be confined by the rim of the workings themselves. However, there is still the potential for dust to be blown over the wider area. There are techniques which operators can employ to limit and control dust arisings and its spread. These include the construction of baffle mounds to interrupt the wind-flow, seeding of soil mounds, enclosing plant and machinery and spraying water on haul roads and stock mounds. Through the imposition and enforcement of planning conditions it is open to the MPA to insist that these measures are employed. Some of the sites discussed at the inquiry were extensions to existing quarries and, on my site inspections, I could see what potential there was for dust nuisance outside the quarry and the effectiveness of measures used to control them. The site inspections were carried out during the summer months, during hot and dry weather. I saw that there was no noticeable dust problem beyond the site boundaries. On
some sites there were no active control measures, and others had various water spraying systems or regular use of water bowsers with spray bars or plates. I acknowledge that these may not have been the windiest periods, but I consider that the potential for dust nuisance arising from quarries, if properly controlled, during these periods need be no greater than from the surrounding agricultural land.

2.15 The MPA appear to have taken an inconsistent view on the appropriate stand-off distance in the absence of any mitigation measures. For example, at Flixton (P158), a distance of 200m is set for some properties, yet 100m has been considered acceptable for others. Taking all of the above points into consideration, I consider 175m separation is a reasonable 'rule of thumb' as this reflects the findings of the DoE survey, and may be taken into account in the consideration of the proposed sites. The distance may, of course, be reduced where mitigation measures are seen to be necessary and effective but these must be also be assessed against other considerations; for example the visual impact of baffle mounds.

2.16 Finally on the topic of dust, some objectors also raised the matter of material being blown off lorries leaving a quarry, or arising from drying mud left by the wheels of lorries. Where this may be a problem it is open to the MPA to require that lorries are washed down before leaving the site, loads are sheeted over, and a wheel washer be installed and used at the exit of the site. These measures would address the concerns of those who raise objections relating to off-site dust problems arising from passing lorries.

Water pollution

2.17 A number of objections raised concerns that mineral extraction would lead to pollution of ground and surface water. For the most part, these concerns did not specify what would contaminate water courses.

2.18 MPG2 recognises the potential for minerals workings to cause problems of water supply, pollution and land drainage. The advice is, in broad terms, that the risks can be satisfactorily controlled by conditions on the planning permission, or through legislation operated by authorities other than the MPA, for example the Environment Agency.

2.19 Quarries extract the minerals naturally occurring at that site; that is ground water has flowed through and surface water over the minerals since they were laid down. Whilst they may not be chemically inert, the act of quarrying would not make the mineral react noticeably more vigorously with ground or surface water and hence this, of itself, would not give rise to pollution of water courses.

2.20 Extracted minerals are frequently processed by wet processes, which generally use a recirculatory system of taking water from a lagoon, passing it through the processing plant and then leading it away to another lagoon where material washed out of the minerals and carried in suspension (tailings), is allowed to settle out. The water returns to the supply lagoon to be fed back through the processing plant. When working properly, this system is self-contained and would not cause contamination. In my view, it is reasonable for the MPA to expect a system to function properly and therefore to be confident that no pollution will occur. Should the system fail and contaminated water reach a watercourse or enter the ground water it would be the responsibility of the Environment Agency to take action where this represented a pollution hazard.
2.21 Quarries may also have tanks of fuel, usually diesel, for the installed plant, vehicles and machinery. Should this escape onto the floor of the quarry, through accidental spillage or carelessness, it could represent a significant threat to the environment. However, where there is a perceived risk it is common practice to surround the tanks by an impregnable bund, of sufficient capacity to contain all the stored fluids in the event of a complete failure of the tanks. This form of containment can be required by the MPA, generally after consultation with the Environment Agency and other relevant bodies, through the imposition of planning conditions. Again, I consider it reasonable for the MPA to have confidence in these measures to contain any likely risk of pollution to ground and surface water.

2.22 Beyond these general considerations and the measures available to control or contain the likely risk, particular sites may have their own pollution potential, for example for specialist processing of extracted minerals. These should become apparent at the planning application stage and, where there is no other legislation to ensure the risk is properly regulated, planning conditions could require appropriate safeguards are installed before the plant is brought into use.

2.23 Some worked out minerals sites are restored, perhaps only in part, usually by backfilling with waste of some sort. Depending on the source and nature of the imported waste, this could present a considerable risk of pollution of groundwater. However, there is a rigorous system of monitoring and controlling the movement and disposal of waste under the Environment Protection Act 1990. Under this legislation waste disposal sites are controlled to ensure material with a known potential to cause pollution does not come into contact with ground water. The leachate from the emplaced wastes has to be managed and it is either processed on site before disposal or it is taken away for disposal elsewhere.

2.24 For the most part, these matters are not the direct concern of this Minerals Local Plan. However where the expected restoration of a site is dependant upon backfilling with imported material it is necessary to consider whether this is feasible in environmental terms. Such an assessment has to take into account the possibility of pollution. This subject is also examined in MPG2, which outlines the controls and safeguards offered by other legislation. I am content that adequate controls are available to safeguard the environment where imported wastes are to be used for the restoration of old minerals working. Consequently, this need not be an overriding objection where it is put forward as a proposal in the SMLP. Having said that, other factors relating to the importation and disposal of waste may be relevant.

Visual intrusion

2.25 A widely held view is that minerals sites are unsightly and are seen as scars in the landscape. This view forms the basis of many of the objections expressed by local residents.

2.26 I accept that people generally would prefer not to have views across and into a minerals site, either from their homes or from favourite view points along local lanes and footpaths. The visual impact of workings may be only temporary whilst extraction takes place, albeit perhaps up to 30 years - which is a significant proportion of an individual’s life time. However, the site can be backfilled and restored to its original contours, or at least new contours which are not significantly different. The disruption during extraction and restoration may last for several years, but progressive working and restoration, as is practised
on most modern sites, can minimise the area which is open and undergoing disturbance at any one time, and return land to its restored state as quickly as possible.

2.27 Not all of a minerals site need be seen by the public. The landform and features such as tree belts in the surrounding landscape may help to screen or minimise the impact. Where this is not so, workings may be screened by bunds, constructed from the topsoil and overburden removed prior to extraction commencing. Whilst the bunds might screen the workings I acknowledge that the bunds themselves are alien features in the landscape and may be almost as objectionable as a view of the quarry itself. Indeed, it may be better in some cases not to have screen bunds, allowing for the relatively short period working may take at any one spot. If bunds are to be used they can be grassed and designed to have shallow outer slopes, thereby giving a less severe appearance. The profile may also be further softened by tree and shrub planting either on, or in front of the bunds. However, this would only be of benefit where the trees had been planted in advance, or were left in place long enough to grow to a worthwhile size to be of any value as a screen.

2.28 Mineral extraction itself takes place behind the quarry face; that is, the machinery operates below natural ground level and the face is usually deep enough to screen the plant and machinery used. Also, once established, it is possible to site the processing plant and stock pile areas, seen by many as unsightly, on the quarry floor, thereby putting it below ground level and minimising its impact over the wider area. Whereas this may not hide the plant areas and stock piles entirely, as these feature will generally be retained for the whole life of the quarry, there is the opportunity here to establish some good screening either as bunds or tree belts, which may be retained as landscape features following closure and restoration.

2.29 I recognise and, to some degree sympathise with the concerns expressed by the objectors over the visual impact of mineral workings, and it is also a concern recognised by the MPA. However, harm may be unavoidable. Harm to a landscape, whether specifically protected by planning policies or not, can be a matter for regret, particularly if the views over a local landscape are familiar and held in regard locally. However the harm, which would be usually confined to a fairly small area, is not always permanent and has to be assessed against the wider needs of the County’s economy for minerals. For this reason the landscape impact of a proposed site cannot be regarded as an absolute or overriding objection; to do so could mean no new sites would be developed at all. This would have serious and unacceptable consequences for the lives of many more people across the County than would be affected by the quarry itself. Policy SMLP2 and Appendix 4 of the Plan include measures and guidance on how to minimise the harm, both during the working and on restoration, as far as possible. Subject to my recommendations for modification to this policy, and where I consider there is no fundamental landscape objection, I consider the Plan offers sufficient safeguards for the visual amenity of local residents and visitors to the County where mineral extraction may need to take place during the currency of this Plan.

**Areas of protected landscape**

2.30 PPG7 *The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development* (CD.A2) deals with the protection of the countryside and the use of landscape protection policies in the development plan. The general view is that the countryside should be protected for its own sake, irrespective of whether it is covered by protection policies. However, it is recognised that there are areas where the quality of the landscape is so special
that it merits particular protection policies. The Government guidance is that there is a hierarchy of protection policies, National Parks enjoying the greatest protection, followed by Areas of Outstanding National Beauty. These are national designations, recognising the quality of the landscape character of these areas as a national resource. Local designations, such as Special Landscape Areas, are not to be interpreted as strictly as the national designations.

2.31 However, minerals can only be worked where they are found and it is also the Government view that mineral development is an appropriate activity in the countryside. The corollary of this is that the fact a potential site is within an area of attractive countryside is not an automatic bar to the development. Mineral development is accepted even in National Parks. However, development in the protected areas must be justified according to need for the mineral, the degree of protection afforded by the policies and the likely impact of the scheme, both during the operating stages and on restoration. The development plan locally should reflect these considerations.

2.32 In my consideration of the objections to the SMLP, where landscape matters have been raised I have followed the above principles, taking into account both the Government advice and guidance contained in PPG7, and the policies of the SCSP which apply to landscape protection areas.

Effects on agriculture

2.33 The loss of agricultural land has been an objection raised to mineral working on several sites. Although we are in an era of agricultural surpluses and set-aside, this may not last and we will need good agricultural land in the future.

2.34 Whereas it is the Government's policy to safeguard the best and most versatile agricultural land (see PPG7 - CD.A2), it is also recognised in the same PPG that minerals can only be worked where they naturally occur, and hence loss of agricultural land to quarrying may be inescapable. However, as explained in MPG1 General Considerations and the Development Plan System (CD.A11), and in greater detail in MPG7 The Reclamation of Mineral Workings (CD.A16), mineral extraction is only a temporary use of the land; once the mineral is extracted it is available for another use after restoration. Where this happens it is the Government's policy that the long-term potential of the land should be preserved.

2.35 Modern quarrying methods separately strip and store top soil and overburden so that they are available for respraying after extraction has finished. Providing the handling and storage of the soils are carried out properly, and I have no reason to doubt that they cannot be handled properly on any of the sites examined in this report, it is possible to return land to agricultural use. Sometimes the restoration will follow backfilling with waste either from within the quarry (eg silt lagoon tailings) or imported waste to bring it back to its original levels and contours. Alternatively it may be successfully restored to agriculture at a lower level. The agricultural grade of the land after restoration is sometimes variable, but with a proper regime of aftercare, extending over five years or so, it should achieve a standard which is no worse that originally found on the land. This is the basis of the guidance given in MPG7; on many sites it should be possible to allow mineral extraction with no irreversible loss of land quality.
2.36 On some sites it will not be possible to restore the land to agriculture or forestry. For example where the mineral is worked below the water table and backfilling of the void is not feasible for practical or environmental reasons. MPs 1 and 7 accept that this may be the case and advise that the site should then be worked in a way which leaves it capable of another use. Nature conservation or recreation are seen as acceptable after uses.

2.37 Policy SMLP4 requires that sites will be restored to a state which is capable of supporting agriculture, forestry, recreation, nature conservation or public amenity. In this respect, the policies of the SMLP therefore conform with Government guidance and it is my view that, subject to other detailed considerations, the loss of agricultural land need not be an overriding objection to mineral extraction at any site.

Controlling lorry routes

2.38 Several points relating to lorries running to and from a quarry have been raised by objectors. The objectors contend that HGVs associated with quarrying can affect a far wider area than the immediate surroundings of the quarry itself. Lanes may be too narrow or twisting to safely carry large volumes of HGVs, or the roads may be of inadequate construction to bear the weight of regular quarry traffic. Lorries can also be disturbing in villages and urban areas where they are seen as noisy and a threat to the safety of pedestrians and other road users. There may also be the risk of damage to the fabric of buildings, particularly older ones, through collision or possibly vibration.

2.39 In response, the MPA point to policy SMLP3 which sets out the need to secure satisfactory routes for lorries as a pre-requisite for the granting of planning permission for mineral working. The aim of the draft policy being to identify specified routes onto the primary road network and to avoid unsuitable roads in the locality unless for making deliveries within the specified area.

2.40 The MPA argue in their response to the objections that such routing agreements can minimise the disturbance from HGVs: They have been used in the past and there is no reason to think that they would not be successful if used in connection with new sites, where appropriate.

2.41 I accept that agreements can be useful, and I do not doubt that they have been used effectively across the County in the past. However, as discussed in my examination of objections made to Policy SMLP3 (see Part 1 of this report) the legal basis for such agreements is, at best questionable. Circular 11/95 and MPG2 advise that planning conditions cannot be used to control activities on land which is beyond the ownership and control of the site with the planning permission; that is, planning conditions cannot control the right of passage over public highways. Similarly Circular 1/97 advises that planning obligations (either agreements or unilateral undertakings) can only be entered into where they are enforceable. Again, it is arguable if it is proper to seek to restrict use of the public highways; that is, over land which is not under the ownership or control of the holder of the planning permission. Where lorry drivers are employees of the quarrying company it may be possible for the company to insist that the specified routes are adhered to, but if there is no direct management relationship - for example owner-drivers, or drivers of vehicles from other companies - then this measure of control does not exist either.
2.42 Planning conditions and obligations or undertakings can, to some degree, offer some control over lorry routes, but they cannot be seen to be effective all of the time and in every case. The scope for actual controls is very limited, and may extend only to the design of a quarry entrance making it possible only to enter and exit in the one direction, and erecting signs advising drivers of the preferred route. Beyond this, under planning legislation it seems there are no enforceable controls over the routes which drivers of lorries may take to and from a quarry. Consequently, there is substance in the cases put by some objectors that agreements cannot be relied upon to control all lorry movements, however well-intentioned they may be.

2.43 However I also accept the County Council’s evidence that such agreements have minimised the problems in the past. MPG2 also accepts that such agreements have sometimes proved successful. Why this is so is not entirely clear, but it is possible that the quarry operators consider it is desirable in the interests of fostering better relations with the local community. Whatever the reason, operators are seemingly content to offer such agreements and, from the evidence of the MPA at the inquiry, such agreements have generally worked satisfactorily across the County in recent years. This may be particularly so where the excluded areas are well known and the majority of lorries are identifiable by the company livery and hence breaches of the agreement can be spotted by local residents and reported to the quarry manager for him to take action against the driver concerned. In which case I consider that, despite the shortcomings, and subject to my conclusions on Policy SMLP3(c) in Part 1 of this report, it is not unreasonable for the MPA to expect compliance with a routing agreement, whether entered into under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 or not, where one is negotiated.

2.44 Having said that, I consider the references in the Plan to routing agreements should not indicate that these will necessarily be achieved through a planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Where routing agreements are considered necessary, and are listed under the ‘Main Issues’ sections preceding each of the Inset Maps, the reference should be only to a voluntary agreement being sought. Such agreements may, of course, include ones made under Section 106 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where appropriate.

Other matters

2.45 Inspector’s Note. In my covering letter to the Chief Executive of the County Council I commented on the somewhat confusing layout of this part of the Plan document. There is no immediately discernable order to the way sites are listed in the Inset Maps; they are neither in alphabetical or numerical order, and the page numbers are in a different series to the Inset Map numbers. This was remarked upon more than once, informally, by objectors at the inquiry. I have commented that a clearer scheme of ordering or numbering, or even a comprehensive index would be a significant improvement for the user of the Plan. However, as the point was not the subject of a duly made objection I do not make a formal recommendation that the Plan be modified accordingly. For the purposes of this report, I deal with the sites in the order they appear on the Inset Maps in the Deposit Draft document, in numerical order.

2.46 The objectors raise several issues on some sites, and the cases have been supported by detailed evidence, on both sides. However, this is a report into the objections made
against the draft local plan; that is, it only considers the broad principle of development on the identified sites and not the detail. The role of this report is to consider and report upon whether the problems raised by objectors are capable of being satisfactorily addressed, within the context of the structure plan and other development plan policies, including those of the SMLP.

2.47 Where there are numerous individuals or interest groups who have made representations on a proposed site, rather than ascribe the points raised to individuals I have grouped the points together into broad topic areas, ensuring that all the points of objection which have been raised are covered. The fact that the point is only listed once, where it may have been mentioned by several objectors, does not imply that it has been treated with less concern by me. A good point is still a good point, whether it is made once or a dozen times. By the same token, it does not become more significant simply because it is repeated many times.

RECOMMENDATION

2.48 The SMLP be modified by deleting from the ‘Main Issues’ sections which precede the Inset Maps all references to lorry routing being restricted through a planning obligation. Where a lorry routing agreement is considered necessary, the reference should be to achieving this through a voluntary agreement.

INSET MAP 4

Objection No. 0327 South Norfolk District Council

Summary of objection

2.49 Suffolk County Council, in conjunction with Norfolk County Council, is urged to ensure there is continual monitoring of HGV traffic movements associated with this site. In view of the adverse effect this may have if short-cuts are taken through Alburgh and Starston en route to the A140.

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.50 The MPA’s only response to this objection is that site has a long-standing planning permission.

2.51 The details given on page 59 of the Plan indicate that the permission runs until 2042 - some 44 years. In the introduction to this part of my report, I note that it is very difficult for a minerals planning authority to use planning legislation to control effectively the routes taken by drivers of vehicles to and from a quarry. This has been done to some degree through voluntary agreements between the site operator and the MPA and such an agreement
may be effective in this case. However, this is something which is not dependent upon the SMLP and its policies; it is a matter which can be negotiated between the MPA and the operator at any time. This would seem to be something for discussion between the MPA and the objector. Alternatively, it may be something which the highway authority could control through weight restrictions on the affected roads. Again, this would seem to be something for the objector to raise with Norfolk County Council.

RECOMMENDATION

2.52 No modifications be made to the SMLP in response to this objection.

INSET MAP 5

P158 School Wood, Flixton

P159 Land south of School Wood, Flixton

P176 North of Flixton Hall, Flixton - Romneysfield

Objection Nos. See lists annexed to this section of the report (Annex 1).

Support No. 1092 Atlas Aggregates Ltd

Summary of the points of objection

2.53 Inspector’s note. These are three separate sites, which adjoin the present operations at Flixton (sites C5, C10 and C63). The sites have attracted different levels of interest from objectors, with the majority being made to P158 and P159. No representations have been made in respect only of P159 or P176. There is a degree of repetition in this section in that the same or similar points are listed under all three sites. This has been done so as to differentiate the range of objections made in respect of each site.

Site P158

Effect on residential and village amenity

- The proposed scheme would unreasonably disturb those living nearby on account of noise and dust generated by the workings.

- The associated lorry traffic would be unreasonably disturbing for the residents of Flixton village.
The associated lorry traffic would be unreasonably disturbing for the residents of Alburgh.

To avoid disturbing the residents of Flixton and Bungay, all traffic travelling north of Homersfield should use the A143.

Effect on the appearance of the area

- This is an area of outstanding natural beauty and should not be despoiled by mineral working.
- The development would result in the destruction of School Wood.

Effect on wildlife and ecological interests

- This area is the natural habitat for deer, badger setts and bird life, whose habitat is under threat from other rural practices.

Sites P158 and P159

Need for the development

- There should be greater emphasis on the use of other sources of aggregates

Effect on residential and village amenity

- The site would be noisy for local residents. The present Newport pit is noisy enough at the moment.
- There should be a 400m stand-off distance to make adequate allowance for noise and dust disturbance.
- Dust is a problem from sites in the vicinity at the moment. This is a particular problem for those who suffer from asthma.
- The development would be too close to the houses in Flixton.
- The movement of associated vehicles would be disturbing to local residents.
- Lorries passing the houses would be very disturbing, bringing noise and dirt.
- There is no objective reasoning to explain why the stand-off zone has been extended from 100m to 200m. Protection from noise and visual disturbance can be achieved with a 100m stand-off zone.

\[ I \text{ have taken this to be a reference to the Newport Allen Ltd site, C10 } \]
Effect on the appearance of the area

- The development would result in the destruction of Flixton Park and School Wood, which are features of the local landscape which should be preserved.

- The land would be an eyesore for many years.

- This is a Special Landscape Area where the emphasis should be on the protection of the visual amenity of the area.

- An area of unspoilt landscape would disappear.

- The trees on P158 are thought to be protected and should not be lost to mineral development.

Effect on wildlife and ecological interest

- The wildlife, such as deer, barn owls and badgers which currently live in Flixton Wood would be displaced and have nowhere else to go.

Highway capacity and safety

- The B1062 should not be a lorry route.

- Lorries on the road would represent a hazard for children walking to school and cyclists. There are no footpaths or cycle paths through the village nor safe crossing places.

- Lorries passing through the village of Flixton have caused damage to properties in the past.

Effect on the character of the area

- The scheme would result in the destruction of the environment.

- Concern is expressed over the area which lies between the newly planted trees and the houses on the edge of the village.

- The development would result in an increase in traffic through the village of Flixton.

- The scheme would create enormous disruption and disturbance with very little benefit to the locality.

- Local residents are totally opposed to any more industry or traffic growth in the area.
Impact on agriculture

- The proposed scheme would result in the loss of good agricultural land.
- Dust can be a problem for the mushroom farm at Flixton. This is a mile away and there are fears that the dust will carry disease for the crop, require the use of pesticides which would undermine the organic quality of the crop, and would cause problems for air filters in operation in the farm buildings.
- Dust from the extraction areas would blow onto crops, including hay, adversely affecting growth.

Effect on the water environment

- This is already a dry area. The working would lower the water table, with a consequential loss of newly planted trees.
- Derogation of the water table would affect newly planted trees and hay crops.

Restoration of the site

- The site should not be restored to wetland.
- Restoration by infilling with imported waste would not be feasible because of the proximity of the site to the River Waveney. Disposal of waste here would result in pollution of the water environment.

Other matters

- Atlas Aggregates will get rich at the expense of local residents.
- Archaeological features on the site should be protected.
- The development would result in severe devaluation of local properties.
- The site would be a dangerous playground for children.

Sites P158, P159 and P176

Need for the mineral

- The SMLP over-provides for the needs of the County by some 100% taking into account recycled aggregates, imported material and sea-dredged aggregates. There is no need to allocate these sites for development.
Effect on residential and village amenity

- Local residents are concerned about the loss of views from dwellings.
- The air in the area would be polluted by dust arising from the workings.

Effect on the appearance of the area

- The sites are within a Special Landscape Area. The present workings are a scar on the landscape. This would extend the damage.
- The woodland is important as a visual amenity locally. It should be retained.
- Extracted and processed material stockpiled on the site would be unsightly.

Effect on the character of the area

- The area would become a noisy industrial site.
- Local residents do not want an industrial site at the bottom of their gardens.
- The impact of the development on nature and the rural character of the area would last for a couple of decades and possibly for ever.
- Light pollution would be possible from the workings, to the detriment of the character of the area.

Highway capacity and safety

- The associated lorry traffic would create difficulties on the roads in South Norfolk.
- There would be implications for traffic through Bungay, Wortwell, Alburgh and Starston.
- Lorries will use the minor roads as short cuts.
- The B1062 should not be used as a lorry route. Increased traffic on this road would be dangerous and disturbing to local residents, and school children in particular.

Other matters

- Tree cover inhibits rather than prevents archaeological evaluation.
- Particulate matter would be deposited at the roadside.
- It is suspected that there is archaeological interest on the site.
Inspector's considerations

2.54 The MPA propose to change the list of matters under the 'Main Issues' section preceding Inset Map 5 by deleting the word 'prevents' and replacing it with 'inhibits' (PDA42 - CD.B5). The proposed change has been open to public consultation and has not attracted any counter objections. I propose to take the proposed change into account in my consideration of these objections.

2.55 Many of the points raised against one or all of the sites are similar and I propose to deal with all of the main areas of objection as if they applied to all of the sites, unless there are particular considerations applicable only to one or two of the sites. I will deal with the objections in the order of the broad topic areas listed above.

i. Need for the mineral

2.56 The MPA is under an obligation to show that the County would be able to meet the predicted demand for sand and gravel over the plan period. The production figures have been derived from Government planning guidance in MPG6 (CD.A15), which gives a regional apportionment for East Anglia. The share of this regional figure which Suffolk should meet has been agreed through the workings of the EAAWP. The national and regional figures, and therefore by extension the County's figures, already take into account aggregates which might come from alternative sources such as sea dredging, recycling and importation. The figures given therefore are for new land-won aggregates. I acknowledge that consumption in recent years has been below the predicted levels, but the figures allow for significant variations around an average. It may be just as likely that consumption would be above the average in future years.

2.57 It is indeed the Government's policy to encourage the use of recycled aggregates, and the SMLP supports this in its identification of sites where recycling takes place. However, even if all potential materials were recycled and found to be of a suitable quality, this would represent only a minority proportion of the overall need. It would still be necessary to make new materials available to the construction industry. In Part 1 of this report I have examined the predicted demand for sand and gravel in the County against the availability of supply from all sources. I have concluded that it is necessary for the MPA to identify new sites for sand and gravel production.

ii. Effect on residential and village amenity

2.58 There are several points under this group of objections. On disturbance from dust, I have considered the matter in some detail at the beginning of this section. I have come to the view that, in the absence of any mitigating measures, a stand-off distance of 175m would be sufficient to protect those living in the vicinity from an unacceptable level of nuisance caused by dust.

2.59 At my site visit, I looked at the extraction and operational areas of site C5. On a dry, sunny and breezy day there was no noticeable amount of dust arising from the extraction areas, the internal haul roads or the stock piles adjacent to the processing plant. Stronger winds might, of course, have disturbed some dust, but the DoE study referred to at the
beginning of this section takes these into account. I also saw that the site has dust control systems in place.

2.60 On the basis that the deposit under the proposed sites is similar to that being already worked, I consider that dust would not be a significant problem during the extraction and processing phases. Dust could be more of a potential nuisance during the soil stripping, bund forming and restoration phases. However, through the imposition of planning conditions, it is possible to ensure that such operations only take place during favourable conditions of humidity and wind direction to minimise the problems. Thereafter, the potential for soil particles to be blown off the soil mounds and bunds can be controlled by sowing grass on the surfaces. I do not consider that dust would be so great a problem as to justify rejecting these sites. I coming to this view I have not overlooked the particular concerns of those who live in the area and may have respiratory problems.

2.61 Whether the limit of extraction should actually be 175m or less from houses will depend on an assessment of the potential harm which might arise if the working areas approached any closer to local dwellings. However, to be consistent the eastern boundaries of P158 and P159 could be brought 25m closer to the houses and the 175m separation from the properties along the B1062 (ie The Old Tanhouse) and from Flixton Hall should cause the boundaries of P158 and P176 to be adjusted. This last point would exclude a portion in the northern corner of P158, and the southern sector of P176. Variations from this 175m figure would need to take into account the nature of the material being worked and whether it was wet or dry, the prevailing wind direction and likely strength, and the efficacy of any control measures which might be used by the operator to suppress dust. This would be a detailed point to be examined at application stage, were an application to be made, but it could also affect the estimated yield from sites P158, P159 and P176. I have no information to make an appropriate adjustment.

2.62 Many objections identify noise as a potential problem. This is a pleasant rural area, with relatively low levels of background noise. However, it is not entirely silent. The fact that the present sites can apparently be heard by local residents does not signify that newer operations cannot be brought under adequate control. Having said that, I note the MPA submissions that no formal complaints about noise from the present operations has been received. On the basis that there is a need for new land-won aggregates, minerals operations will have to take place somewhere in the countryside during the plan period. It would be unreasonable to apply noise control standards here which are more stringent than elsewhere in the County.

2.63 Advice on acceptable noise levels at surface mineral workings is contained in MPG11 (CD.A20). I refer to this in detail at the beginning of this section of my report. The conclusion I have drawn on the concern over noise is that sufficient advice and guidance exists in MPG11 and BS4142 (not a core document of the inquiry) that noise levels can be controlled on minerals sites at all stages of the operations to within generally acceptable limits, either by careful selection of equipment used, the use of screen bunds as noise baffles, the direction of working across a site, noise suppression equipment and the restriction of working hours. The appropriate noise control standards, taking account of the sources of noise, the tonal quality and the proximity to noise sensitive premises, can be imposed through planning conditions.

2.64 For the most part, the site would either be screened by retained peripheral trees, or would be too distant to be unduly intrusive in views out from local properties. Providing the
extraction proceeded towards the village, the depth of the excavations (about 10m on average) would screen much of the operation from view. Furthermore, it would be possible to construct suitably proportioned temporary screen bunds between the working areas and the houses. The height and location of the screens, if considered necessary, would be a matter for detailed consideration at planning application stage, taking into account the proximity of the workings to houses (influenced by geology, dust and noise control measures), and the effectiveness of the recently planted tree belts between the site boundaries and the village.

2.65 The proposed sites are being promoted as extensions to the present operations, rather than additional operations. Extracted material would be processed through the present plant on Site C5. This being so, the amount of disturbance to local residents is unlikely to be greater than that currently experienced. I appreciate that local residents in Flixtion might prefer there to be no associated traffic at all, but the road between Homersfield and Bungay (B1062) is a classified road, and it is to be expected that such a road would carry more than just local traffic. Highway evidence submitted on behalf of the MPA shows that this is not a particularly heavily trafficked road, and that the amount of HGV traffic is not disproportionately high. It may be that an informal agreement can be reached between the site operators and the MPA to divert a greater proportion of north-bound traffic to travel via Homersfield and the A143, but this would have to be assessed in the light of the implications for the residents of Homersfield.

2.66 The MPA's evidence also states that Norfolk County Council are looking at the effect of lorry traffic on villages in South Norfolk. Measures being looked into are speed and weight restrictions which may offer the kind of amelioration looked for. However, it is beyond the scope of this local plan to restrict freedom of access onto the public highways, either in Suffolk or beyond the MPA's boundaries into an adjoining county.

iii. Effect on the appearance of the area

2.67 Although attractive, the area is not designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but it is within a Special Landscape Area. Policy MP10 of the SCSP allows for mineral working in SLAs subject to two criteria; firstly there must be a proven need for the mineral, and secondly there should be no permanent adverse affect on the special qualities of the landscape. On the first point, I have examined the relationship between the projected demand for sand and gravel in Suffolk with the amount of permitted or committed reserves available. There is a shortfall of some 10.68mt and thus I consider there is a proven need for further supplies.

2.68 At my site visit I saw that this is a generally attractive area, with several elements in the landscape. For the most part, it is flat agricultural land with no outstanding features. The land rises gently across P176 towards Flixtion Hall, but not to any dominating height. School Wood, together with Long Plantation is a notable area of woodland to the north-west of Flixtion village. It is also significant to note that the current and recently restored sand and gravel workings are within the SLA, and therefore have to be seen as part of its appearance. In which case, this is not an entirely unspoilt area of landscape. The current sites are to be restored to lakes, with surrounding land used for agriculture and recreation.

2.69 The proposed workings would result in the loss of about half of School Wood. This is a fairly recent woodland, originally planted as a commercial plantation. The MPA do not comment on whether the woodland is covered by some form of statutory protection, but it
is not shown on the supporting plan as being covered by any of the categories of protection policy applying to other sites in the vicinity. Although a good screen, the woodland is of poor quality. In any event, trees could have been felled to realise the commercial value of the plantation. With a wide belt of trees being retained in the north-east corner of the site the extraction areas would be very well screened from view from the B1062 and, in the longer views from public footpath Flixton No.1 and bridleway Homersfield No.1 a substantial area of trees would remain as landscape features. Restoration proposals for the site may also include new planting.

2.70 It is proposed to restore site P176 to agriculture at similar levels to those at present. Therefore, there would be no permanent adverse impact here on the landscape. The other sites in this vicinity are proposed to be, or have already been, restored to wetland, agriculture and nature conservation areas. In my view, this would be compatible with both the restoration of the present sites and the quality of the landscape at present. The restored areas could be designed to be compatible with the former qualities of Flixton Park. Therefore, although the scheme may result in changes to the landscape, I consider these may not be either permanent or need they be detrimental to the quality of the area. In which case, I do not consider there is an overriding objection which would justify deleting these sites from the Plan.

2.71 The extracted material would be processed through the present plant area, and hence stockpiles are very unlikely to be located on the proposed new sites. Because the roadside trees are to be retained, the working areas would be well screened from view from the public roads. Views from the public footpath and bridleway could be screened by bunds at appropriate times and peripheral planting if this was considered necessary. In which case, the area need not stand as an eyesore for many years.

iv. Effect on wildlife and ecological interests.

2.72 Ironically, the present working area of site C5 is shown as a County Wildlife Site, and hence mineral working in this vicinity need not be incompatible with nature conservation. None of the proposed extension areas are classified as sites of particular wildlife interest. Indeed, a survey conducted in response to these objections revealed very little in the way of habitat, only badger foraging areas. I accept that other birds and animals may live in School Wood, but not all of this is proposed to be cleared, and alternative areas of woodland exist in the locality for any displaced wildlife to migrate into.

2.73 The restoration proposals include nature conservation areas and hence, in the longer term, the development of these areas could result in an overall enhancement in the quality and variety of wildlife habitats in the area.

2.74 No objections on wildlife and ecological grounds have been made to site P176

v. Highway capacity and safety

2.75 I appreciate that local residents would prefer there not to be HGVs on the road through Flixton. However, the B1062 is a classified road and, as such, it is suitable to carry such traffic. Suffolk County Council as highway authority has included the road in its Lorry Management Plan and concluded that it should be regarded as a Zone Distributor route.
2.76 As well as the Suffolk Lorry Management Plan, Norfolk County Council are also apparently looking at the means of discouraging lorries from using unsuitable roads. These initiatives should address the objections of lorries through inappropriate areas of Bungay, Wortwell, Starston and Alburgh. The fact that these initiatives are being pursued suggests to me that the problem is not solely attributable to lorries running to and from the quarries at Flixton. The proposed sites are seen to be extensions of the present Atlas Aggregates Quarry and therefore should not result in an intensification of the problems; at worst the present amount of HGV quarry traffic would be maintained.

2.77 I also appreciate that local residents perceive lorries as a threat to the safety of those walking or cycling on the local roads. However, the accident statistics supplied by the local highway authority show that there have been no serious personal injury accidents (PIAs) in Flixton involving HGVs, and only two slight PIAs attributable to lorries. No information has been provided to show if either of these involved lorries associated with the quarries. Whilst any accident is to be regretted and others should be prevented, I do not consider this level of accidents to be unusually high for a road of this type. The proposed schemes would not represent an intensification of traffic on the roads and hence I do not consider there would be an unacceptable level of risk for other road users.

2.78 Damage to property is also to be regretted, but there is no evidence to show that the risk of this happening in Flixton is any greater than on a similar stretch of road elsewhere.

2.79 No objections on grounds of highway safety or capacity were made in respect of site P158 on its own.

vi. Effect on the character of the area

2.80 The development, if it went ahead, would result in a change in the character of the area. It is likely that the development would take place as a series of progressive phases, with restoration following on closely behind once extraction has been completed in each phase. This will therefore be a managed change rather than a general destruction of the area. Once restoration is complete the landscape and character of at least P158 and P159 would be different, but that is not to say it would be unattractive. This would, of course depend upon the detail of the landscape design for the restored areas, and proper supervision of the works of restoration and aftercare. However, I am satisfied that current working and monitoring practices are capable of producing a well executed scheme.

2.81 It is likely that working across the whole of the extension sites would take many years, but it may be only a matter of four or five years between any one phase being opened up and then restored to either agriculture, nature conservation or recreational uses. I do not agree that the development would have a harmful impact for ever or even a couple of decades, although the changes brought about by the development would be substantial and effectively permanent. However, I consider that the change overall would not be so alien as to be unacceptable.

2.82 An assessment of the degree of disruption can only be a subjective one. I can appreciate that local residents may consider the noise, disruption and disturbance of these extension areas would be significant. However, taking into account the controls available to the MPA both under the policies of the SMLP and under planning legislation generally, I consider that the degree of disturbance is capable of being confined to within generally
acceptable limits. The scheme should cause no greater disturbance than the present quarries and there is no burden of evidence to show that these have had a wholly unacceptable impact on the local area.

2.83 As discussed under my consideration of the highways objections, the proposed sites are likely to be worked as extensions of the present site and therefore there is unlikely to be an intensification of traffic running through the village of Flixton. Should this be considered to be a significant problem both for the character of the village and the amenity of its residents, it would be open to the MPA under Policy SMLP2(m) to consider imposing restrictions on the number of associated vehicle movements. Similarly, the proposals would not represent a net growth of industrial type development in the rural area; it would maintain the same level of general activity across the plan period.

2.84 Because of the need to maintain adequate stand-off distances to safeguard against noise and dust emissions I consider it is highly unlikely that local residents would find industrial development "at the bottom of the garden". The MPA have the opportunity to insist upon buffer areas left as agricultural land and, in appropriate places, screen bunds and supplementary planting to ensure adequate physical and visual separation from nearby dwellings.

2.85 Whether the area between the newly planted trees and the edge of the extraction area is affected by the development is a matter for detailed consideration at application stage, but the drawing produced by the MPA to show the extent of the advance planting includes the notation that the area in question will remain as agricultural land. I have no further information on this but, in view of the need to maintain an adequate stand-off from the houses on the edge of the village and the edge of the working area, it is possible that this area will remain unaffected.

2.86 The MPA state that floodlighting in the extension area is unlikely, and this is not refuted by the objector. Policy SMLP2(o) gives the MPA the policy context to impose controls over floodlighting if it is considered that an installation would prove to be unduly disturbing either to the rural character of the area or the amenities of local residents.

vii. Impact on agriculture

2.87 P158 is woodland and hence not in agricultural production. No information has been provided on the grade of agricultural land found on P159 and P176, but I accept that it is capable of supporting a satisfactory crop. It is proposed to restore P176 to agriculture and hence there would be no long term loss of agricultural land from this site. Modern practices of soil stripping, storage, respraying and aftercare on restoration can create soil conditions as good as those which existed prior to extraction of the underlying minerals. P159 would represent the only total loss to agriculture. The MPA point out that MAFF have been consulted on the Plan's proposals and have not raised objections to this proposal. I have no information to indicate that this is a misplaced assessment, and hence must conclude that the loss of agricultural land is not unacceptable.

2.88 According to the DoE study on dust at surface mineral workings referred to at the beginning of this section of my report, the mushroom farm, at more than 1km distance, would be hardly affected by dust arising from these sites, if at all.
2.89 With adequate stand-off distances or dust control measures, or a combination of the two, I consider that crops on surrounding land, including hay crops, would not be unduly affected by dust blowing off the sites.

viii. Effect on the water environment

2.90 The present sites have been worked below the water table and hence there is relevant experience of the likely effect working in a similar manner may have on land surrounding the extension areas. The evidence from the MPA is that the degree of de-watering would be unlikely to affect newly planted trees on neighbouring land. If trees would be unaffected then grass for hay is also likely to be unaffected.

ix. Restoration of the site

2.91 Restoration to wetland may be a change in the landscape of the area, but it need not be unacceptable. This is a river valley setting and appropriate planting and shaping of the banks could create an acceptable landform, supporting plant and bird life and other animals which may be found in a river valley habitat. The present sites are to be restored at least in part to lakes and wetland, and the restoration of P158 and P159 could be integrated into this earlier restoration to create a suitable landform which, in time should mature into a sympathetic landscape.

2.92 It is proposed to use imported inert materials to restore at least parts of P159 to above the level of the water table. If the materials are indeed inert then, by definition, there need be no concerns over contamination and pollution of groundwater and the water courses. However, very little material is truly inert, although it may have a very low potential to contaminate, rather than actually pollute surrounding areas, and hence may be acceptable. Disposal of waste material is subject to licensing control by the Environment Agency, who are the agency responsible for safeguarding water resources. Any deposition of waste here would have to meet the environmental controls imposed by the Agency.

x. Other matters

2.93 Safety at quarry sites and the prevention of unauthorised access by children is a matter for other legislation. I am satisfied that there is a duty of care on the quarry operators to ensure that children are prevented from entering the quarry and using it as a playground. The objector has not brought forward evidence of this kind of problem happening at the present quarries, nor that it could not be controlled properly through a combination of education and preventative measures.

2.94 There is seemingly no known archaeological interest in the site, although the possibility of evidence being found on the site should not be overlooked. Policy SMLP1(d) offer a policy context to safeguard the interest in any potential archaeological remains.

2.95 The MPA have correctly referred to the Government’s view on the role of the planning system, as expressed in PPG1 (CD.A1). The potential effect of new development on the value of a property is not a legitimate land use planning concern. What is of concern is the effect upon an individual’s amenities. However, property values can be influenced by
a perceived impact upon the amenity of a property. It is my view that adequate measures can be put in place to adequately protect the amenities of those living in the vicinity from an unacceptable level of harm.

2.96 As for the effect on property values, the fact that Atlas Aggregates may make a profit is not a planning argument. We live in a society which encourages commercial enterprise both for the wider benefit of the community in that it ensures goods and services are provided at competitive prices and for the financial benefit of the producer companies and their shareholders - be they individuals or institutions such as pension funds etc.. The important considerations are whether the degree of change produced by new development would be unacceptable and whether the amenities of those in the vicinity would be detrimentally affected to an unreasonable degree. It is my view that the degree of change would not be unacceptable and the amenities of local residents can be adequately protected.

2.97 It is not clear what is meant by ‘particulate matter’, but I take it to mean dust, mud or sand and gravel falling from lorries, rather than exhaust particles from diesel engines, or any other form of particles. The route to and from the processing area is well established and, with no intensification of output being proposed, dust, mud or dropped material would not be any worse than at present. I accept that local residents may find even the present level a nuisance, but there is no evidence to show that this is at excessive levels. At my site visit I saw that there was some sandy material along the road, but I do not consider that all of this can be attributed to the lorry traffic from the quarry. This is an area of sandy soils and sand, stones and dust are found along the roads in such areas naturally, having been washed off fields and verges by rain etc.. If the situation did get materially worse, to the point that it was unreasonable, it would be open to the MPA to require wheel washing and vehicles wash-down facilities to be installed and used at the site before vehicles entered the highway.

2.98 The proposed change to the ‘Main Issues’ section addresses the point over the wording of the archaeological access considerations.

Conclusions

2.99 Drawing these points together, I consider there is sufficient evidence of need to support the inclusion of additional sites to meet the County’s need for sand and gravel over the plan period. Whereas development of these sites would create change to the appearance of the area, I consider this need not be so unsympathetic and incongruous as to be incompatible with the landscape quality of the area, although careful attention will have to be given to details of the design both during the working stages and for the eventual restoration. The amenities of the local residents and the village generally will either not be significantly affected, or they can be adequately safeguarded through design of the scheme and imposition of controls on the development. This would include careful consideration of the depth of the stand-off zones from all residential property, taking into account the efficacy of noise and dust control measures. Wildlife, ecological and agricultural interests would not be so seriously affected that it would justify rejecting these sites. All other matters raised by the objectors can be adequately safeguarded or controlled through the policies of the SMLP or other relevant legislation.
RECOMMENDATIONS

2.100  i. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA42, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

   ii. The boundaries of sites P158, P159 and P176 be modified to show consistent stand-off zones from all residential property.

   iii. An appropriate modification be made to the estimated yield from the three sites, taking account of the boundary adjustments recommended above. The adjusted yield figure be carried through into Table 10 and paragraph 3.8.1.

[INSET MAP 7]

Objection and counter objection Nos. - see list annexed to this part of the report (Annex 2).

Support Nos. 0178 Mr W H Saunders; 0273 Mrs B K Kent; 0484 Allen Newport Ltd; 0319 J M J Ball; 1159 Pelican Trustees; 1236 Cambridgeshire County Council

2.101 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Demand for the mineral

- There is no guarantee that the minerals extracted at this site will be used for development of Red Lodge. The Red Lodge developers may have existing contractual obligations to obtain supplies from minerals operators other than the one at Red Lodge.

- An absolutely unnecessary development on the edge of the village.

- The whole area of Forest Heath has its share of waste fill sites, gravel works etc and do not need any more.

- The need for minerals is unproven especially in view of the proximity of other gravel sites in the vicinity.

- The proposed area of 66.6 hectares appears excessive and the need for development of this size must be well proven to justify inclusion in the minerals plan.

- The sponsors of the scheme do not need the money and it is therefore unnecessary.

- Re-use / recycling of materials (minerals) should be more actively pursued.
Coastal dredgers are sitting idle as demand on minerals has recently decreased. These should be reactivated.

The road construction programme has declined and this should be reflected in a reduction in the amount of minerals to be provided for in the Plan.

There is already a 20ha site for minerals in Red Lodge. This should be sufficient to meet needs.

ii. Effect upon the landscape

- The scheme will result in the loss of the trees presently on the site.

- The proposal is for a three metre excavation below a one metre topsoil layer. This will have a dramatic effect upon the landscape with huge banks of topsoil stored during the aggregate removal causing a blot on the landscape.

- A well established area of special interest would be destroyed. This area is part of the Breckland landscape.

- This is one of the few pieces of land adjoining the A11 which is not already developed.

- A vast track of beautiful countryside will be destroyed if this plan goes ahead.

- The site is within an area of protected landscape and hence it is inappropriate to develop it for a sand and gravel quarry.

iii. Impact upon village and residential amenities

- This area is supposed to be quiet country area where people relax and live - not an open and commercial extraction area.

- A peaceful, rural Suffolk village will be ruined.

- There is excessive development in the area.

- The whole area would be spoiled.

- This development should not be looked at in isolation - there are other activities going on in the area which are slowly destroying it.

- It will have an unacceptable impact upon rural life and safety.

- The local environment would be destroyed.

- There would be an increase in heavy duty traffic (lorries) passing through the village, causing damage to properties. Damage is already caused through shaking by laden
and unladen lorries passing through the village. Any increase will cause further
damage, particularly to older properties.

- There would be the possibility of damage to the fabric of buildings, roads, soil
  structure etc. despite promises of "full restoration of the site".

- This proposal would result a further increase in traffic on top of the increased traffic
due to the local airbases. The result would be intolerable, causing noise, air and
  vibration to the properties and people in the community of Worlington and adjacent
  villages.

- A new childrens' play area has just been built within 300 yards and residential homes
  are within 200 yards of the proposed site. The scheme would cause a serious
  increase of visual and audible pollution to the area together with additional dirt and
dust in the air. This would give Red Lodge an unacceptably low grade environment
  in which to live and bring up children.

- The area concerned is huge and cannot do other than impinge greatly on the everyday
  life of the village.

- It would be within 200 yards of the Red Lodge village centre.

- The safety of village life must remain paramount.

- The proximity of the site to residential properties would mean that the dust, dirt and
  traffic would have an adverse impact on suffers of asthma and other chest complaints.

- Heavy traffic would damage road surfaces and grass verges.

- Local roads will become covered with dust, grit and mud - contractors are very lax
  at clearing up after themselves.

- The village and surrounding area of Worlington is acknowledged to be peaceful and
  rural. In the past few years the traffic volume has increased significantly. A large
  percentage of this increase is due to commuters and commercial HGVs taking short
cuts through Worlington to avoid congestion in Mildenhall and Barton Mills at peak
times. In particular local residents are alarmed at the use by motorists and lorry
  drivers of Golf Links Road as a bypass.

- Lorries will still take a short cut through Worlington when their destination is to the
  north-west.

- There will be increased traffic through the villages, ie heavy lorries and other
  vehicles allied to the site, causing damage to property, extra dust and pollution, extra
  noise.

- There would be pressure arising from increased traffic, not necessarily just lorries but
  also cars, vans etc. over next 18-20 years (followed by refilling).
The scheme would cause dereliction of the surrounding environment, particularly in the smaller villages and roads - particularly Freckenham and Worlington 'B' roads in the area which are already over-busy.

The villages of Red Lodge and Kennett will suffer as lorries take the direct route to the A14. This traffic cannot by law be enforced to avoid spoiling the quality of life.

Gravel trucks may well be banned from driving towards Worlington but this is useless if not policed, which it will not be.

It is possible to lay down lorry routes in the overall approval for an application, probably through a section 106 Agreement. Enforcement of lorry plans laid down within a S106 Agreement is extremely difficult and not undertaken by either the planning authority or the police without severe pressure from the public. The village of Freckenham is at present suffering from a high number of lorries passing through the village, which is the subject of a complaint to Suffolk County Council. The presence of the pit at Bay Farm will increase this, regardless of any written agreement there may be to attempt to prevent this. A vast increase in vehicle movements will seriously effect the livelihood and amenity of all residents of the parish.

There is no guarantee that the resulting traffic from the development would not go through the village which already has more than its share of heavy trucks causing pollution, and damage to foundations of some housing and very few observing the speed limit through the village.

There would be an increase in local traffic pollution.

Pollution would be caused to the community by noise, dust and smell from machinery.

The "dust bowl" effect for 18-20 years will be intolerable.

Whatever landscaping works and bunding that is undertaken there will be dust. This will cause aggravation to people using Elms Road, to nearby Rectory Farm and, with the wind from the south east, to the village.

The normally prevailing wind will blow dust in the direction of Worlington for a good part of the year.

There would be an unacceptable increase in noise Worlington. The proposed tree planting will not be effective in eliminating the noise impact on the village.

Increased pollution to the air and water could present a danger to children in the new play area, also would attract vermin and would discourage developers and prospective home buyers.

Loss of existing amenity at Rectory Farm - the nearest property is Rectory Farm on Elms Road. Rectory Farm is approximately 150 metres from the nearest point of the proposed site and will be affected by noise, dust and the general aspect of a nearby working. The occupier is concerned about the inevitable loss of value.
- Security has been a problem at other workings in the area and no doubt lighting would need to be used to illuminate plant which would cause an intrusion into the countryside.

- There would be the increased likelihood of spillage of materials thereby creating an additional hazard to other roads users from punctures, broken windscreens etc.

- There is concern over the likely increase of lorries through Tuddenham St. Mary.

- There is concern over the potential impact on residents of Kennett End.

iv. Highways considerations

- Lorries thundering down a very narrow 30mph road through the village, would not do a detour to use the main roads.

- The amount of traffic will increase. There is already far too much heavy movement from Fordham Road in the early morning making it dangerous to cross the High Street.

- Access / egress to the site have not been defined.

- Elms Road - the U6004 - is narrow for the majority of its length. The only exception is the recently constructed length from the A11 north bound slip to the roundabout on the A11 interchange. The A11 slip forms a "T" junction with Elms Road on a corner. Vehicles, especially HGVs, leaving the slip road cause a hazard to other users of Elms Road because of the limited visibility. The suggested access route, close to the slip road junction and at the foot of an up gradient will compound the problem. All access to the site should be via the existing roundabout.

- The lack of eastern and northern links at the junction between the A11 and A14 trunk roads is a fundamental inadequacy.

- A number of the County Council's development options for the review of the Structure Plan (Alterations No 4) are proposing major growth for Bury St Edmunds (up to 5000 additional dwellings between 2006 - 2011). It is likely that there will be a substantial demand for sand and gravel from an easterly direction.

- Lorries access directly onto the A11(T), which is the only route indicated as permissible, will direct all traffic out of Suffolk either to Newmarket on the Cambridgeshire border or Barton Mills, heading to Norfolk (unless it goes through Mildenhall town). It is obvious from the geography that the traffic will have to take rural routes to gain access to Suffolk sites including those prohibited. There is no substantial access to the A14(T) if minor north-south roads are avoided.

- Vehicle Movements - the Plan refers to "Lorry Routing." An aggregate pit not only attracts lorries but is also accessed by service vehicles, workers transport and private users, has this been taken into account?
There is the threat of increased traffic through Freckenham, as no guarantee can be given that the lorries will keep to the A11.

It is stated that traffic will be barred from entering Worlington, but this would be a condition that would be very difficult to enforce as the authorities cannot now enforce existing speed limits.

Request that mineral lorries must be restricted from using the villages of Freckenham, Worlington, Tuddenham, Red Lodge and Kennett as main through routes.

Quarry traffic would represent a safety school children at the primary School in Tuddenham.

National planning guidance questions the feasibility of enforcing lorry route bans by either planning conditions or legal agreements. The main problem cited is that it is unlikely that all of the lorries calling at a mineral extraction site will be in the control of the operator. The particular characteristics and limitations of the highway network in this locality mean that the general problems of enforcing lorry route agreements will be further tested and exposed in this case.

A lorry routing obligation will not be enforced as it is normally ultra vires for planning controls to be imposed on public highways. The only legitimate effective control over highway use is likely to be in the form of weight restrictions on particular sections on the highway imposed under the Roads Traffic Acts.

Lorry routing is a fundamental concern. The proposed restriction will be impossible to police and enforce. This will be made even more difficult by allowing movements as suggested by PDA 41, which only serves to illustrate the practical difficulties of imposing an effective lorry ban.

The existence of convenient but unsuitable links on 'C' class roads are all likely to provide an overwhelming temptation for minerals lorries travelling to and from the east to go through Red Lodge and Kentford, irrespective of any legal agreement.

There would be a need an enforceable ban on quarry traffic other than onto the A11(T). Alternatively, a suitable new link road to the A14(T) should be provided at the expense of the developer.

There is a motorway close to the proposed site. All quarry traffic should be made to use this.

The additional traffic would create disruption and danger on an already difficult "C" road which by definition is not suitable for the frequent use of heavily laden and very large vehicles.

The generation of traffic on the local minor road will be horrendous and will last for many years. It is understood vehicular access will be onto the Worlington to Red Lodge road, a road that is narrow, has many corners and is in places not wide enough for two lorries.
Large lorries will use mainly the C160 14 road from Worlington to Red Lodge with resulting noise and pollution of the surrounding area including Golf Links Road and our world famous "Sacred Nine" Golf Links. This increased usage will drive many motorists onto Golf Links Road which will be quite disastrous to all residents of Worlington and surrounding area.

New east and west bound Junctions (A11/A14) and (A14/A11) should be constructed and financed by the landowner from the profits prior to any extraction commencing.

There is a fear of heavy lorries using village routes either to get to main roads or their nearest destination. Even if they come off at the A11, the extra traffic on the Five Ways roundabout will prove a further hazard on a dangerous spot.

Traffic will have to take rural routes to gain access to Suffolk sites.

Access to the site will lead to increase in traffic along Elms Road and through Freckenham. There should be a complete ban on site traffic using Elms Road.

The roads between the site and Freckenham are already heavily used and in bad repair. There are also very sharp "S" bends that HGVs would have to negotiate.

The traffic through Kentford is already unacceptably high.

Villages already suffer from commercial vehicles due to the lack of an A11-A14 link road.

The access to the site is too close to the exit from the A11 and the roundabout causing a danger to road users.

There is no suitable access to the A14(T) if minor north-south roads are avoided.

There would be danger to pedestrians in Freckenham which does not have sufficient footpaths.

Narrow lanes are not for heavy and large lorries which could lead to accidents.

Warren Road is not wide enough to allow two lorries to pass each other.

Any increased traffic flow through the village endangers the lives of residents.

The state of rural roads is not good with potholes and crumbling verges. With the increase in traffic, conditions will be made worse, endangering lives, vehicles and certainly reducing cycling.

The edges of Golf Links Road tarmac surfaces have broken up extensively because it is only a bridle road and too narrow to allow the safe passing of lorries and fast cars.

14 I have taken this to be a reference to the C610
Lorries will leave mud on the road which will be a danger for other road users, including motorcyclists.

v. The effect upon leisure and recreation

- This proposal is only just outside Worrington and adjacent to the green lane which is used extensively by walkers, horse riders, the local branch of the Riding for the Disabled. This lane / right of way is a great asset to the village whose use would be impaired by the workings.

- There will be serious loss of amenity in particular Badlingham Lane (U6006). This lane passes one field to the north of the proposed site. The parish of Freckenham has a shortage of footpaths and bridleways and this lane is used by a number of parishioners. The workings nearby will cause dust, noise and loss of visual amenity.

vi. Impact upon the water environment

- There is a risk of the ground water level being distorted.

- There would be a danger of pollution of water sources and watercourses.

- The lowering of the groundwater levels would cause "dustbowl" effects.

- The Plan acknowledges that there is an important chalk aquifer beneath the site and that a hydrological study will be required. Any disruption or disturbance to this aquifer could have serious consequences to the water supply to the area. Boreholes are used for the supply of water for domestic and business use within 200 metres of the site and businesses could be seriously jeopardised by any alteration to the water table level. The known presence of this aquifer is, in itself, a reason for not including the site as being suitable for development.

- The water table in this area will be adversely affected particularly in view of the lack of rain over recent years.

vii. Effect upon ecological interests

- The local wildlife habitat is likely to be destroyed.

- There would be a loss of wildlife amenities.

- The existing ground levels and hedgerows would be totally ruined including the trees that at present line the green lane and would undoubtedly be affected by changes in water tables and soil.

- The trees within the site would be affected by the workings.

- There will be destruction of wildlife and visual pleasure.
The proposed site lies within an Area of Special Landscape Value and is also part of the ESA.

A designated County Wildlife Site lies close to the north-west of the site. The proposed development could have a serious impact on the wildlife in this area if suitable safeguards are not implemented.

There is concern over the effect on the local nature reserve.

Protection of the County Wildlife Site and "green lanes" adjacent to the site are important.

The great crested newt is abundant in this area.

viii. Agricultural impact

The proposal could be responsible for contaminating vast areas of the country nationally as the farmland concerned has been infected by Rhizomania. Given the extraordinary precautions taken by the Ministry of Agriculture to prevent this dreadful disease and the fear that farmers have concerning it spreading it seems unbelievable that carting thousands of tons of contaminated gravel should be considered acceptable. The proximity of the A14(T) road means that the disease will quickly spread through East Anglia - the U.K centre for sugar beet production.

This area has been successfully farmed for generations - a proper appraisal, not just preliminary tests, should be carried out before any decisions is made.

The loss of Grade 3 or better agricultural land is unacceptable.

The site includes land which, under modern farming practices, can produce higher than average crop yields and has produced double potato crops in a single season. This indicates a higher grading than that which is quoted, as it is based on an outdated survey. Under Policy SMLP4 2.33 it is stated that proposals will be restored to original grade. This land cannot be restored.

ix. Restoration / reclamation

What will happen to the excavations once complete? Will the next problem for the area be the depositing of household waste.

The possibility of the site being used as an infill site in the future is of concern.

Any "infill" later will cause traffic, litter, pollution and be environmentally unfriendly.

The current proposals by Anti-Waste at Kennett is a reminder of the potential pressure to use sites for landfill following extraction rather than restoring the land for agricultural or nature conservation use.
The Plan suggests "grassland or heathland to the ESA prescriptions." This proposal is generally acceptable but any condition laid down now can, and quite probably will, be altered at the end of the working life of the pit - 20 or so years hence. Regardless of the intentions laid out in the draft, a further 20 years of high inconvenience could follow whilst the pit is filled with domestic and commercial waste.

Should these quarry workings go ahead it will be only after many years of misery before the developers restore the site to a more acceptable environment for all concerned.

The vastness of the site together with any possible extension granted in future years when a principle had been established, will have a long lasting effect on the area not a short term of sufferance.

x. Other matters

- The scheme does not conform to the principles of sustainable development.
- There is concern over the possibility of the subsequent extension of any proposed site.
- There is concern that in 2006 an extension to the permission would allow the workings to extend even nearer to Freckenham and Worlington.
- Red Lodge has been down-trodden for many years and local residents have been looking forward to the building of 1500 properties that have been on hold as a result of the recession. Anything that is likely to affect the sale of those properties when built has to be bad.
- If the site goes ahead, residents have been informed that the developers of the 1,500 new homes and industrial estate will pull out - this will mean no new jobs for the village and no work for the building trade.
- Red Lodge’s already poor image would be worsened and this would conflict with its planned expansion.
- There is great concern that the important upgrading of Red Lodge village hall will not be an attractive proposition and never take place if the Plan goes ahead.
- The development of the site will inevitably encourage the appearance of a large bird population of gulls, ducks etc. because of the large area of surface water that will be exposed. Such birds are dangerous to low flying aircraft as found in the area and there is legislation to prevent any such development within four miles of an airport. RAF Mildenhall is within the designated area. The site’s development will imperil air traffic and local people.
- There will be no benefit to the employment (unemployment) figures by this proposed development.
- Red Lodge already has seven active or potential extraction, transfer or landfill sites surrounding the village. Any more schemes would jeopardise plans to build 1500 new homes and a village hall in Red Lodge.

- Has any other site in the area been investigated which has a main traffic corridor outlet?

- The area has been surrounded by pits and extraction for 40 years. This is enough for one village without 15 to 20 years more.

- Two gas mains currently cross the site and these will be affected.

- At least one site (a bronze age barrow) is close to the site and further, as yet undiscovered archaeological features could be destroyed.

- Large parts of the area are protected by conservation orders and include a site of archaeological interest.

- The value of properties are likely to be adversely affected and will seriously deplete the capital assets for which people have worked for all of their lives.

Inspector's considerations

2.102 The MPA propose to change the Plan (PDA52(part) - CD.B5) by including under the 'Main Issues' section which precedes Inset Map 7 on page 66, revised references to the need to safeguard the visual amenities of Worlington and Red Lodge, and the protection and improvement of the existing roadside hedge along the C610. Also, PDA41 (CD.B5) proposes to add a caveat to the suggested lorry routing agreement to allow local deliveries within the restricted area. Both of the proposed changes have been on public deposit and PDA41 has attracted counter objections. I will take them into account in my consideration of these objections.

2.103 The MPA have put forward a further proposed change (PDA109 - CD.B33) which proposes to delete the reference to the protection of Grade 3 agricultural land under the 'Main Issues' section on page 67. The proposed change has not been open to public consultation, but it has been available for consultation as part of one of the core documents of the inquiry. No adverse comments on the proposed change have been forwarded to me, but the general matter of agricultural land was raised at the inquiry. In which case, I will take account of the proposed change when I consider the relevant objections.

i. Demand for the mineral

2.104 In Part 1 of this report I examine the supply and demand situation in Suffolk, with particular regard to the obligations placed upon the MPA by national planning policy as expressed in MPG6 and as interpreted through the working of the EAAWP. Whereas there may be factors which have influenced the level of production in the past, keeping demand for minerals below the projected levels, it may be equally as likely that other factors in subsequent years may increase demand. The production capacity figures agreed through the EAAWP take into account minerals imported into the County from other sources, for
example marine dredged aggregates, crushed rock from coastal super quarries, and recycling. The figures given in MPG6 and the EAAWP are for new land-won material.

2.105 The guidance given in MPG6 also takes into account trends in house and road building, as anticipated at the time the guidance was prepared. It may be that the predicted demands from these developments need to be revised, however this is something which should be done on a regional basis, guided by a national overview. This process is due to commence in 1998. Without any firm information it would be both premature and impossible to make a rational adjustment in this local plan for Suffolk in isolation - it would be inappropriate to base this plan on nothing more than guesswork. Therefore, based on the best or most reliable information to date, I have concluded that the SMLP should make provision overall for some 10.68mt - as detailed in paragraph 3.7.4 of the Plan as proposed to be changed by PDA110(part) (CD.B34).

2.106 There is no mechanism or justification in land use planning terms to tie the production of a minerals site to one particular geographical area. There may be substantial development planned for Red Lodge, and there may also be a convenient relationship between the development area and the proposed quarry, but the supply of material to the development area would be a matter for negotiation under commercial contracts. Planning legislation cannot direct or restrict the freedom of a commercial company to supply particular areas or customers. This would be a form of hypothecation, which is beyond the scope of the planning system operating in England and Wales. The influence of market forces, within the general constraints of land use planning controls, is the appropriate control mechanism on supply and demand. In a free market economy profit is usually the motivating force, and it is not the concern of land use planning whether the interested companies need the money or not.

2.107 The SMLP has taken into account what sites are currently operating or have planning permission for minerals development. Minerals can only be worked where they occur naturally, in which case it is not unusual for several sites to be found in a particular locality. Neither is the size of the site per se a matter for concern. The main planning concern would be whether a new site would give rise to unacceptable harm or disturbance, not that there may already be others in the same locality. The points of concern are addressed in detail below. As discussed briefly in Part 1 of this report, marine dredging for aggregates has its own implications for the environment and for the fishing industry, as well as for distribution from landing points. Even if there were opportunities to increase the supply from this source, this cannot be seen as an uncontroversial alternative to land-won materials.

ii. Effect on the landscape

2.108 The site is within an area of local landscape value, identified in the Forest Heath Local Plan. This category of landscape protection is not founded on the landscape protection strategy established in the SCSP, nor does it derive from any national category of landscape protection policy. As discussed at the beginning of this section, there is a hierarchy of landscape protection policies applicable across the County. As advised in PPG7, it is national planning policy that the countryside should be protected for its own sake and locally devised protection categories should be given little weight (PPG7 paragraph 4.16) as they may unduly restrict acceptable development. PPG7 also advises that minerals development is an appropriate activity in a rural area, providing it does not cause undue disruption to the
environment or character of the area. These points are examined in detail below, against the specific points of objection.

2.109 Whilst I accept that the site is appreciated as an attractive area by those who live locally, it is part of a wider area of agricultural and breckland landscape. Whilst the sites lies within the area of the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks Study, it is described as a "peripheral landscape" type, and does not exhibit characteristics of the ‘natural’ breckland landscape in that it has been developed for fairly intensive agricultural production, with enclosing hedges and tree belts. The site does not exhibit unique characteristics and development of this land for a quarry would not result in the loss, either permanent or temporary, of special landscape features.

2.110 There are belts of trees and woodland across the site, dividing it up both physically and visually. The MPA recognise the value these trees have both as a structural element in the landscape and as a means of reducing the visual impact of the working areas should the quarry be developed. Under the ‘Main Issues’ section which precedes Inset Map 7 the MPA have listed the retention of these trees as a necessary requirement in any development. Restoration of the land adjacent to the site which was previously worked as a borrow pit demonstrates that the area can be successfully restored. There are also tree belts and hedges in the wider area between the site boundaries and the main public vantage points on the surrounding roads, particularly on the west and south-west sides and opposite the site entrance alongside the approach to the A11 junction.

2.111 It is proposed to restore the site to grassland or heathland in accordance with the specifications set out under the Breckland Environmentally Sensitive Area study. I accept that this would be feasible and, in which case, the local landscape would not be permanently destroyed. I comment further on the restoration of the site below.

2.112 The site is likely to be worked and restored progressively in phases, meaning that only a relatively small proportion of it will be left open at any one time. For the most part, topsoil would be stripped from one phase and replaced on an earlier phase undergoing restoration. In which case, there need not be huge banks of topsoil on the site to appear as eyesores. Some soils will have to be stored for longer periods, but these can be used to construct bunds in appropriate locations around the site to screen the working areas and installed plant. With the present trees and hedges on and around the site being largely retained and, where appropriate, augmented with additional planting, the need for screening by bunds will be limited to particular locations; largely around the site entrance, certain locations off the C610 and possibly to screen some views from the U6004. In my view, these measures would minimise the visual impact of the scheme and should result in a generally unobjectionable appearance when viewed from the wider area.

2.113 It is argued that bunds are artificial features and they would be unattractive themselves. The Plan includes advice on the formation of screen bunds at Appendix 4 (page 195), which seeks to create bunds of a more sympathetic appearance, by using shallow slopes on the outer faces, variation in the height and grass seeding. In my view the bunds need not be so insensitively designed as to be incongruous in this area, particularly if augmented by tree and shrub planting. Taking these measures together, screen planting, bunds, and retained vegetation, I consider the degree of visual intrusion will not be significant, and not so great as to seriously detract from the character and appearance of the area generally.
2.114 The A11(T) is a national trunk road which runs through Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk. It runs through extensive areas of undeveloped countryside and it is not true to say that this site is one of the few undeveloped pieces of land adjoining this road. Even if the site is developed as a quarry, the A11 will still be perceived as a route which runs through large tracts of open countryside.

iii. Impact upon village and residential amenities

2.115 Numerous points have been raised over the degree of disturbance, disruption and damage which the proposed scheme could cause to the character and general enjoyment of local settlements and individual residents. The great majority of these relate to the effect of increased traffic through local settlements, either by reason of noise, dirt, mud, safety or physical damage.

2.116 The proposed scheme could generate some 132 HGV movements per day; that is, 66 vehicles out and 66 returning to the site over 10 or 11 hours of an average working day. This averages out at about 1 every five minutes. However, not all of this will travel through the nearby settlements; the lorries will diverge at the site entrance, according to the location of the customers. The proposed access is onto the U6004, which gives good access onto the A11(T), both north and south bound, which would disperse much of the main concentration of HGV movements onto an appropriate road.

2.117 The MPA propose to seek a lorry routing agreement to restrict HGV movements associated with the quarry to the main roads in the area - that is the A11, the A14 and the A1101. Only local deliveries would be seen to be appropriate within this restricted area, that is through Red Lodge, Kennett, Kennet End and Tuddenham amongst other settlements. I have concluded at the beginning of this part of the report that routing agreements cannot be achieved through planning legislation. However, evidence was given at the inquiry that such arrangements have been largely successful elsewhere across the County in confining the majority of quarry-related traffic to preferred routes. It is often in the best interests of the site operator to ensure that such arrangements do work, and these can be supervised through local liaison committees where representatives of the local community meet with the quarry operator and the MPA to discuss matters of particular concern and to devise acceptable solutions. I have no reason to believe that such arrangements, albeit voluntary, could not be effective here.

2.118 There was debate at the inquiry as to how much traffic would need to use the local roads, notably through Red Lodge and Kennett, taking a shorter route onto the A14 eastbound towards Bury St Edmunds. Were I to accept that the routing agreement could not be made to work, it was suggested that about 30% of the traffic would run through Red Lodge. This would represent about 40 trips per day, or about one every 15 minutes or so, which would probably be divided between Warren Road and Turnpike Road (the old A11). This would represent some disturbance to the local area and I accept that the local residents would prefer there to be none. Some traffic may travel north through Worlington and Freckenham, but with better and faster access route to the north and west I consider the number of vehicles likely to use these routes would be small. The likelihood of quarry traffic using Golf Links Road seems extremely small to me as the route would offer no apparent advantages for traffic travelling to or from the quarry in either time or distance over using other roads in the area.
2.119 No detailed evidence of damage to property caused to date by HGVs has been put forward. There may be a risk of this in some places, and any increase in traffic would inevitably increase the risk but, in my view the risk is not significant and is not so great as to be considered unacceptable. Neither was there evidence of the amount of use of roads in the wider rural area compared to the notional design capacity of the roads. At my site visit I saw that the A11, A14 and A1101 were well used, but away from these main roads the roads were quite lightly trafficked; I did not form the view that they were "over-busy". The amount of additional quarry related traffic would not be so destructive or disruptive as to cause such a deterioration in the quality of life and living conditions, or levels of air pollution, as to make them intolerable to most people in the affected villages.

2.120 The MPA can require a wheel-wash to be installed at the site exit to ensure that mud and other debris is not carried on to the surrounding roads to leave dust, stones etc, as a nuisance to local residents and a danger to other road users. This could be extended to a more general wash-down facility if needed. Indeed, measures along these lines will probably be required for agricultural purposes so as to control the spread of Rhizomania off the site and into the wider area. Furthermore, loads could be required to be sheeted if there was a problem of material being blown or spilled out of loaded lorries.

2.121 Therefore, taking these traffic-related points together, although I acknowledge that, in the event of the routing agreement not being effective, there may be some disturbance, in my view the degree of disturbance would not be so great as to be wholly unacceptable, particularly as it would probably only take place during the normal working day, and not be happening in the evenings and weekends. This could be controlled by a planning condition limiting the operating hours of the quarry if it was thought necessary. Furthermore, it would be possible for the County Council to impose weight restrictions on certain roads if this were considered appropriate, although this would apply to all lorry traffic and not just quarry vehicles. In which case, this might conflict with the proposed development for the expansion of Red Lodge which would include a proportion of employment uses dependant upon lorry access.

2.122 I turn now to consider other amenity concerns, related more directly to the activities on the site. Although the site lies between Worlington and Red Lodge, it is separated from both by distance and, in the case of Red Lodge by the physical and perhaps psychological barrier of the A11(T). Dealing first with the matter of dust, I have concluded at the beginning of this section of my report that a separation of 175m should be sufficient to protect those living in the locality of a quarry from the great majority of the effects of dust. The distance could be reduced if dust control measures were put in place and used at a quarry. The nearest property in Worlington is some 700m from the edge of the site, and there may be even greater separation allowing for stand-off margins etc. The main body of the village is at least 1km from the northern extremity of the site. In which case, I consider there would be no appreciable impact from dust arising on the site on the residents of Worlington.

2.123 The closest property in Red Lodge, ‘Dromgarth’, is some 200m from the edge of the site. It is also to the south-east which generally places the property up-wind of the site. All other property in Red Lodge is further away and further to the south and south-east hence, even without specific dust control measures, I consider there would be no significant impact by dust on the residents of Red Lodge. Nor, by extension, would there be any appreciable deterioration in the health of people with respiratory problems who live in the village. Dust control measures may be necessary to ensure that wind-blown material is not a nuisance to
users of Elms Road. Rectory Farm is over 1km to the west of the site and, again, should be largely unaffected by dust arising from the site.

2.124 There is considerable advice on the measurement and control of noise at surface mineral workings. This is discussed in some detail at the beginning of this section of my report. Taking account of the circumstances of this site and considering this against the advice in MPG11, I consider there would be no undue noise problems for local residents arising on this site. It was acknowledged at the inquiry that this was not a matter which concerns the Environmental Health Officer for Forest Heath District Council. This is not an essentially quiet location as it experiences noise from the A11 and aircraft from the two nearby air bases. Worlington village would probably be too far away to hear any noise associated with the quarry. Red Lodge is also at some distance, with the noisy A11 trunk road between the village and the site. In my opinion, it is highly unlikely that residents of Red Lodge would be disturbed by noises generated on the site. The quietest public areas close to the quarry would be along Badlington Lane. This is some 300-500m from the western edges of the site and the extraction plant may be heard from the lane as an addition to the general background noise levels. However, this may be no more disruptive than the farm equipment which I saw and heard in operation close to the lane on my site visit.

2.125 Lighting may be necessary on the site for security purposes, probably only in the vicinity of the processing plant. Policy SMLP2(o) provides the policy context for the MPA to exercise control over on-site lighting, such that it does not spill out beyond the site boundaries and disturb those living in the vicinity. The plant area is likely to be towards the southern end of the site, which is closest to the All and Red Lodge village. In these circumstances, I do not consider that lighting on the site would represent a serious intrusion into the countryside.

2.126 This is a rural area, but it does not have the specific role of providing an entirely undisturbed environment. The countryside is also a working area - either for food production or for other activities appropriate to a rural area. PPG7 advises that minerals can only be worked where they occur naturally and hence mineral extraction is an appropriate activity for a rural area, providing the degree of disruption to the character and environment is kept to a minimum. There may be some additional erosion of verges by lorries running through the villages, but this could be addressed by installing kerbs in appropriate locations if it became an unacceptable problem. The condition of local highways is subject to a regime of monitoring and maintenance where appropriate. I have no reason to believe that highway maintenance would fall below a standard where safety and free flow of traffic would be seriously jeopardised.

2.127 Taking these amenity considerations together, it is my view that there would be some disturbance from additional traffic, but not to an unacceptable degree. Other concerns over noise, dust and general disturbance either are unlikely to occur or can be adequately controlled. It is my view that the environment of Red Lodge would not be seriously damaged, nor would the residents of Worlington find their village "ruined".

iv. Highways considerations

2.128 The MPA's evidence is that proposed quarry would generate some 132 vehicle movements per working day. This is the figure for HGVs, and no evidence was given for the number of ancillary vehicle movements. However, I would estimate this to be no more
than 25-30 per day. The ancillary traffic is also likely to be cars and light vans, which would not give rise to significant highway capacity, safety or environmental problems. The MPA put forward their figures as a ‘worst case’ estimate, on the basis of a very short working life for the quarry and full exploitation of all the reserve.

2.129 The proposed access is shown as being onto an improved length of the U6004 Elms Road, some 250m west of its junction with the A11. This would be a safe point of access, with some 200m visibility available in both directions. No evidence was given on the speed of traffic passing the proposed entrance, but from my own observations, I estimated it to be no more than 50-55 mph. The speed of passing traffic can, of course be confirmed by measurement but at the speeds I observed, it would be possible to create a safe access which complied with the visibility standards given in PPG13.

2.130 The quarry entrance would give ready access onto the Eastern Region Primary Road network and the associated major road network. The U6004/A11 junction is a modern, purpose designed junction with a trunk road and I have no reason to believe that it would not be capable of safely handling the amount of traffic generated by this quarry. In general terms, therefore, the site should not cause undue difficulties in terms of capacity or safety for the major roads.

2.131 I assume the reference to the "motorway" near to the site is the A11 trunk road. It is my view that the majority of traffic will use the A11 (see below), but it would be impractical to insist that all traffic is restricted to using the trunk road as there would inevitably be the need to serve local customers which would necessitate the use of local roads - whether the traffic originated at Bay Farm or from any other quarry. There is a perceived problem in that there is no easy access nor return from the A11 onto the A14 eastbound. With a share of the market area likely to be towards Bury St Edmunds, as a consequence of the SCSP housing growth allocations for the town, this might give rise to difficulties on local roads as drivers seek out alternative routes to get access onto the A14. These local roads are narrower, run through villages and their use by significant numbers of lorries could give rise to environmental, safety and maintenance problems.

2.132 In my view, it is unlikely that a north-east junction would be constructed with the A11/A14 on the strength of the amount of traffic generated by this quarry. The MPA rely on the County Council’s lorry management plan identifying suitable routes for lorries and then expecting compliance with those preferred routes through, amongst other measures, a lorry routing agreement with the quarry operator. The preferred route onto the A14 eastbound is via Barton Mills and the A1101. I have expressed my reservations over the enforceability of a lorry routing agreement at the beginning of this part of my report, particularly if it relies upon planning legislation. However, as discussed above under my consideration of the objections on amenity matters, I also accept that such agreements have been successful elsewhere across the County, albeit on a voluntary basis. As discussed above, local liaison committees have been set up to monitor the route taken by lorries and to seek solutions to significant breeches. The County’s lorry management plan also has provision for signposting appropriate routes and limiting access over other routes where justified.

2.133 With these controls available to County Council both as MPA and highway authority, I accept that it would be possible, to a large degree, to restrict the use of inappropriate roads by quarry related traffic. Even without the routing agreement, the majority of the traffic would use the A11 as the route to more distant market areas, and a small proportion, perhaps
30% or so, (40 or so HGVs per day) would find the need to use local roads. Not all of this would use the same route so the proportion travelling through Freckenham, along Fordham Road, and through Worlington, Tuddenham and the other villages where concern has been expressed would be quite small and not great enough to overwhelm the capacity or safety limits of the roads through these villages, whether there are footpaths or not. I do not consider that there would be a significant proportion of traffic travelling north on the C610 into Worlington, causing the displacement of appreciable amounts of traffic onto Golf Links Road.

2.134 The place at greatest risk of additional traffic if the routing agreement is abused would be Red Lodge. Again, the ramifications have been largely discussed under my consideration of the amenity objections above. However, on specific points of highway capacity, the Turnpike Road through Red Lodge used to be the A11 and, in terms of width and capacity, is capable of carrying the additional traffic. Warren Road is already used by some lorries and, with a significant proportion of the proposed Red Lodge development area to the east of the road, it is likely that the new development will generate additional traffic onto this road, meaning that the proportion of quarry traffic would be insignificant in this context.

2.135 I have already commented upon the points which concern highway maintenance and the deposition of mud on the highway under amenity issues above.

2.136 Summing up my consideration of the highways issues, it is my view that the proposed site can offer a safe access onto an appropriate road network which can safely handle the amount of additional traffic likely to be generated. I accept that a lorry routing agreement may not be strictly enforceable, but such agreements have been largely effective elsewhere in Suffolk, and it is reasonable to assume that one may be effective here. Even if it is not effective, the amount of traffic which might use local roads would not be so great as to represent significant safety or capacity difficulties along the roads or in the villages through which these roads pass.

v. The effect upon leisure and recreation

2.137 Badlingham Lane (the U6006) is, in places, separated by one field from the edges of the site. There is a good hedge and tree cover along most of the length of the lane and views into the site are either not possible or very restricted unless one actually leaves the lane and passes through one of the few gaps in the hedge. In my view, the amenity value of this lane for walkers or riders would not be seriously compromised by the proposed scheme. Noise, dust and other disturbance associated with the quarry would not be at significant levels in the vicinity of the lane, and then only during the working day. At weekends, when presumably the majority of the leisure activities along the lane takes place, there would probably be no working and hence no disturbance.

vi. Impact upon the water environment

2.138 The identified deposit partially lies below the water table at the northern end of the site. There would be two ways of working the area which lies below the water table; either it could be divided up into relatively small cells and pumped dry to permit excavation with a conventional face shovel and loader, or it could be left as a flooded area and excavated by using a dragline or similar equipment to pull the material from the wet area. The latter
method would have no effect upon the water table. If the site were to be worked dry, this would have a 'pull-down' effect on the level of the water table but, depending on the depth of water to be pumped, only in a fairly localised area. This may not result in a "dust bowl" effect as despite dewatering, the material would still be damp when it is extracted, and the MPA could also require the site operator to employ suitable measures to suppress dust when necessary. On the cessation of pumping the water table would return to its natural level, leaving exposed water areas where the workings had not been back-filled.

2.139 The MPA is aware of the underlying aquifer, and this is acknowledged in the 'Main Issues' section preceding Inset Map 7. A full hydrogeological evaluation will be required prior to development commencing, which will be appraised by the MPA in consultation with the Environment Agency. This study may indicate certain precautionary working practices should be incorporated into the working scheme but, on the evidence before me, I do not consider that the proposed quarry would significantly threaten the integrity of the aquifer or the boreholes which draw upon the aquifer for water supply.

2.140 Sand and gravel extraction is essentially a 'clean' activity in that it does not result in the introduction of contaminating material which could percolate through the ground to pollute the underlying ground water or surface water courses. There may be some fuel for the operating plant stored on the site in tanks, but these are generally required to be surrounded by impermeable bunds, capable of containing at least the contents of the tanks in the event of a leak. Any spilt fuel can then be collected and disposed of without polluting the site. These safeguards can be required through planning conditions if necessary. Restoration of the site by infilling may introduce the risk of pollution through the dumping of inappropriate substances. However, infilling is seemingly not proposed as part of the restoration for this site. Were the site to be used as a tip this would be subject to separate consideration which would take into account inter alia containment and the risk of pollution.

vii. Effect upon ecological interests

2.141 There are no formally defined sites of wildlife interest on the site and hence no habitats of particular ecological value would be lost. I accept that local wildlife does use the site either for foraging or habitat, but the characteristics of the site are very similar to the surrounding area and the wildlife on the site could be temporarily displaced to the adjacent land until it is restored. The safety of the local wildlife would therefore not be seriously affected and the amenity interest would temporarily transfer to other areas of land, either on or off the proposed site, whilst each part of the quarry site was being worked. Specifically protected species which may be found on the site would require special consideration and the working plan of the quarry adapted or revised as appropriate. However, this is a detailed matter which should be addressed at application stage.

2.142 The MPA have assessed the likely impact on the County Wildlife sites in the wider area surrounding the quarry site and have concluded that they would be unaffected by either changes to the water table or by dust. No evidence has been brought forward to demonstrate that the MPA's view is misguided.

2.143 If the site is not worked below the water table there would be no alteration to the water table and hence the retained trees and hedges on and around the site would be unaffected. Even if there were to be dewatering, adequate stand-off margins could be imposed to ensure the retained vegetation would be adequately protected.
2.144 The site is not within an Area of Special Landscape Value, but it is within the Brecks ESA. The quarry proposal is not necessarily incompatible with the ESA categorisation as it offers the opportunity to return the land to a more appropriate breckland type habitat on restoration. I discuss this in greater detail below, but I consider there is the opportunity for a positive enhancement in the ecological interest on this site following excavation.

viii. Agricultural impact

2.145 I accept that the site has been productive in recent years helped by the availability of water for irrigation of the crops. However, it has been categorised as being within grades 3b and 4 under MAFF’s scheme of Agricultural Land Classification. This is not seen as the best and most versatile agricultural land and hence working it as a quarry would not represent a significant loss in national terms.

2.146 MAFF have been consulted over the presence of Rhizomania and the risk the quarry would represent of spreading this crop disease. MAFF are content that adequate precautionary measures can be put in place to resist the spread of this disease, and it need not be seen as an insurmountable objection to the release of this land for minerals development (see MAFF letter of 27 July 1995).

2.147 It is not proposed to restore the land to agriculture, but to either wet or dry grassland, which would be compatible with the ESA proposals for breckland sites.

ix. Restoration/reclamation

2.148 Many of the concerns raised under this broad topic heading relate to the possibility of the site being used for waste disposal after excavation. This is not mentioned under the list of relevant points given on page 65 of the Plan which implies to me that it is not necessary to import waste materials to achieve a satisfactory restoration. However, the scheme put forward in the Plan involves working the deeper deposits in the northern part of the site which lie below the water table. It probably would be possible to restore this site to grassland or even dry heathland, but this could not be achieved if the site is to be worked below the water table without importing some form of fill material.

2.149 Doubts were raised at the inquiry over the feasibility of either acquiring sufficient suitable fill material (some 0.5m³) in order to achieve the restoration. If the site cannot be filled, this would leave some 15-20ha at the northern end which would fill with water, particularly in winter. The MPA’s response was that some water features could be left on the site - designed to appear as pingos or small shallow ponds. However, it was also accepted that water areas were not landscape features being promoted through the Breckland ESA scheme. Water areas in this vicinity also have implications for aircraft safety; these are discussed further under my examination of the objections grouped under ‘other matters’. There would therefore seem to be an issue here as to whether water areas would be an appropriate element in the landscape on restoration.

2.150 In my view, restoration to dry grassland would be more in keeping with the Breckland character and, without further investigation and consultation, should be taken as the assumption for this Plan. This has implications for the quantity of material which could be gained from the site. Figures agreed at the inquiry indicated that for a dry heathland
restoration without needing imported fill there would be between 1.26mt and 1.32mt of workable deposit, depending on the stand-off margins around the trees. The stand off-margins could be variable according to the size, age and condition of the trees and hence the most likely figure is somewhere between the two. I do not have an exact calculation of an intermediate position, but for the purposes of this local plan a broad figure is all that is necessary. For these purposes, I propose the figure should be 1.3 million tonnes.

2.151 Having said that, I do not suggest that a higher production figure could not be achieved, but this requires further consideration of two alternative strategies. Either an acceptable regime of working and back-filling is devised, which would enable a dry restoration to be achieved with deeper workings. Alternatively, further examination is undertaken on the design of a wetland restoration, both in terms of whether it could be reconciled with the Breckland character and whether the water areas would be compatible with aircraft safety. On this last point I note that MoD have seemingly accepted some water areas as part of the restoration of Cavenham Heath Quarry, (site C2), which also lies within the area perceived to be at risk of bird strike. This indicates to me that a wet restoration is not absolutely incompatible with aircraft safety considerations.

2.152 If the possibility of deeper working and consequent infilling were to be pursued, this should be subject to separate and detailed consideration taking into account containment of the waste, contamination and pollution risks, other health risks associated with the nature of the waste to be imported, traffic generation and the implications for the living conditions and quality of life in the surrounding villages.

2.153 Whereas the site might be worked over a period as long as 20 years, it is likely to be worked progressively as a series of phases, whereby one area is stripped in advance of the following one being worked, with the previously worked phase being simultaneously restored. In this way only a small proportion of the site would be open at any one time, and the area undergoing some form of disturbance would also be minimised. After-care would follow immediately after restoration and hence large parts of the site will be progressively returned to an acceptable condition before all of the excavation phases are completed.

x. Other matters

2.154 There are undoubtedly numerous definitions of sustainable development. As discussed under Part 1 of this report, I consider the Plan conforms with the principles of sustainable development as defined in PPG1 and MPG 1.

2.155 There is no evidence that the sand and gravel deposit extends beyond the site boundaries, and hence the likelihood of the operator seeking an extension to the site is not clear. However, whether the site is to be extended at some future date would be a matter for separate consideration, taking into account the County's needs at that time, the availability of sand and gravel from other sources, and the likely impact of the working scheme on the character and amenities of the area. Allocating this particular site in the SMLP does not convey an automatic assumption that applications for extensions to the site would be granted.

2.156 The potential impact on the proposed scheme for expansion and redevelopment at Red Lodge were discussed at the inquiry. In my view there are two main considerations here. Firstly, the quarry site stands on the opposite side of the A11. This is a major physical
barrier which separates the site from Red Lodge. It also represents some form of psychological separation, in that the site does not easily relate to the character and appearance of Red Lodge, to the point of it forming part of the natural hinterland of the developed area. This separation is reinforced by the line of established trees alongside the A11 slip road in front of the site boundary. Therefore, what happens on the quarry site would not have a significant impact on the character and appearance of the village or its setting, and hence should not unduly influence investment and development decisions affecting Red Lodge.

2.157 Secondly, I have considered all the detailed points of objection which address on-site activities and how they might affect Red Lodge. In my assessment, there would be no undue disturbance from noise associated with the quarry, there would be no appreciable quantities of dust blown across the village and, even if the proposed routing agreement were ineffective, the amount of additional lorry traffic through the village would not be unacceptable. Therefore, taking these considerations with the broader assessment of the relationship between the site and the village, I consider the proposed quarry need not frustrate the new development and the associated benefits of improved community facilities which may be expected as part of it.

2.158 I have considered the landscape impact of the site being restored as either a series of small lakes or as wet grassland. I accept the point made by MoD that the water areas may attract large numbers of birds, which would represent a threat to aircraft safety through the risk of 'bird strike' affecting aircraft as they approach or take off from Mildenhall and Lakenheath. In which case, I consider that the site should not be worked below the water table without detailed examination of how it could be restored, in an acceptable manner, without it creating a risk to aircraft safety.

2.159 There will be some employment created through the development of the quarry. Whether the jobs would go to local people is not a land use planning matter, and cannot be taken as a determinant as to whether the scheme should be included in the Plan or not.

2.160 The reference to the lorry routing agreement given in PDA41 refers to this being achieved by means of a planning obligation. I have concluded at the beginning of this section of my report that, in my view, it would be misleading to indicate that such agreements could be achieved through planning obligations made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Whilst such agreements may be possible, on a voluntary basis, I consider the references to a planning obligation should be deleted.

2.161 It may be that other potential sand and gravel sites could be identified in the County which have equal or better access onto main roads. However, the purpose of my report is not to investigate alternatives or to weigh up the benefits of one site against another and to select the best. My role is to look at the objections raised to the sites which have been identified by the MPA and to consider whether the objections are sustainable to the point where they present a cogent argument to warrant excluding the site. In this case I accept that the development of the proposed site would have some effects on the surrounding area, but I consider these would be within acceptable limits and hence there is no overriding argument to justify me recommending its deletion from the Plan.

2.162 The presence of the gas mains is acknowledged by the MPA, and apparently an allowance has been made for the necessary stand-offs from the pipelines in the calculation
of the potential yield of the site. The fact that the site is identified in the Plan for
development does not override the protection given to service pipelines.

2.163 There are no conservation areas on the site, nor are there any other kind of ecological
or environmental protections applicable on all or part of the land. The archaeological interest
in the site is uncertain but the fact that remains have been found in the wider area indicates
that there may be some archaeological interest on this site. This has been acknowledged by
the MPA, who have identified this as a 'Main Issue' on page 66 of the Plan. Policy
SMLP1(d) (as proposed to be changed) offers an adequate safeguard for the observation,
recording and, if appropriate, preservation or any remains that are found.

2.164 Paragraph 64 of PPG1 (CD.A1) advises it is Government's view that the planning
system does not exist to protect the private interests of an individual. The basic question is
not whether an individual would suffer financial loss, but whether their amenities would be
unacceptably affected. However, it is often the case that amenity considerations can affect
the value of property. It is my view that, given the powers available to the MPA under
general planning legislation and the controls available through the SCSP and the SMLP,
development of this site would not give rise to unacceptable harm to the amenities of those
who live in the vicinity of this site. This does not cut across an individual's rights to seek
compensation under other legislation if this is relevant and justified.

Conclusions

2.165 Drawing all of these considerations together, I conclude that it is necessary to include
this site in the SMLP to ensure that the County is able to meet its share of the regional
apportionment of sand and gravel production. The site will have some effect on the
appearance of the local landscape, but this can be minimised by retaining the existing
established trees and hedges and creating new areas of planting, augmented by screen bunds
where appropriate. The workings would not seriously affect the amenities of those who live
in Red Lodge and Worlington, nor in the villages along the routes which quarry related
traffic may need to take. A safe access can be created, feeding almost directly onto the
primary road network. Measures can be put in place to restrict the use of inappropriate
roads but, even if these are not entirely successful, the implication for highway safety and
the free flow of traffic would not be so serious as to make the site unacceptable. I have
considered all other matters and, other than considering that the potential yield of the site be
reduced subject to further detailed investigations on infilling and restoration, none of the
other matters raised is sufficient to justify deleting the site from the Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.166 i. The SMLP be modified by reducing the estimated resource of the site given on
page 65 and Table 10 from 2.1 million tonnes saleable to 1.3 million tonnes saleable.

ii. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA52(part) in so
far as it affects Inset Map 7, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments,
CD.B5.
iii. The SMLP be modified by deletion of the references to a lorry routing agreement under the 'Main Issues' section which precedes Inset Map 7 on page 66, and the inclusion of the following:

Lorry routing; a voluntary agreement will be sought to control the routes quarry traffic will take. The County Council considers that quarry traffic should only gain access to the pit from the A11(T) via the U6004 Elms Road, with no traffic being allowed access via Freckenham or Worlington. In addition, quarry traffic should be excluded from the area bounded by the A11(T), A14(T) and A1101 in order to safeguard the amenities of the residents of Red Lodge and the other villages in this area. Only where deliveries are being made to the villages of Worlington and Freckenham or to a destination within the area bounded by the A11(T). A14(T) and A1101 should the above restrictions not apply.

iv. Under the 'Main Issues' section on page 67 preceding Inset Map 7, the SMLP be modified by the deletion of references to the protection of agricultural land.

2.167 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Demand for the mineral

The forecast for demand from new workings of sand and gravel (Para 3.7.6) is 13.7mt. However, Table 7 shows that demand has not been up the predicted level, indeed, only some two thirds. Even if it is accepted that the requirements is 13.7 million tonnes, the totals of the proposed sites, marine dredged, recycled and imported material comes to 31.5mt. This seems to be excessively above the forecast demand and should justify the exclusion of all proposals in Special Landscape Areas.

The environmental considerations outweigh the development need. This proposal is questioned as it was not included in the Consultation Draft.

ii. The effect on living conditions and village amenity

The scheme would result in the loss of important an residential amenity.
• Lorries running to and from the site would be disturbing to the local communities and represent a safety risk.

iii. Effect on the landscape

• SCSP Policy MP10 includes criteria which need to be satisfied to justify planning permission in Special Landscape Areas. The policy requires there to be a proven need for the mineral and that the site and/or surroundings will not be permanently and adversely affected. Neither has been demonstrated in this case.

• Further development of the site could result in the loss of the typifying landscape characteristics.

• The site would be visually intrusive in the landscape, particularly from the east and south, from where stockpiles and machinery are visible.

iv. Effect upon ecological interests

• The disturbance of this peaceful and unusual location, which is very important for recreation and nature conservation, would be completely unacceptable.

• A small area of the proposed allocation is actually within the Cavenham and Icklingham SSSI and National Nature Reserve. Any mineral workings close to the edge of the site are likely to disturb the nesting of internationally rare and protected birds on the adjoining SSSI. The proposal is contrary to Policy SMLP1(c).

• With respect to the wildlife which abounds in the area, special regard should be made to the stone curlew population in the spring and summer months. This area is one of the most important in this country with regard to this bird.

• As well as the SAC designation (reflecting the habitat quality), Cavenham-Icklingham Heaths are also a potential Special Protection Area because it supports breeding populations of rare and endangered birds.

• Extraction close to the SSSI border would damage the special interest by causing disturbance to birds and through other indirect effects such as groundwater change and dust.

• Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve is owned and managed by English Nature. English Nature have no intention of permitting mineral extraction on this land and object to the granting of planning permissions.

• A full environmental impact appraisal should be drawn up and agreed with English Nature before agreeing planning permission. This should cover buffer areas, working methods and after-use.

• There is insufficient protection of important nature conservation interest in the locality.
Extraction in the southern part of the site may be acceptable, provided that there is a large and effective buffer zone, sensitive working methods and appropriate restoration.

v. Restoration and reclamation

- If the proposal is put forward with a revised boundary, which is not likely to have an impact upon the SSSI, then a nature conservation after-use would be supported.

- There is a general objection to the restoration of sites in the Lark Valley to water in nearly every case. Consideration should be given to some alternatives.

vi. Other matters

- If this extension were to be allowed, it would greatly increase the likelihood that the permission for the northern area of C2 would actually be implemented.

- Restoration of the northern area of existing site C2 was planned in isolation; the proposal for P46 alters the context of C2 so those restoration plans may become inappropriate to the new context.

Inspector's considerations

2.168 The MPA propose two changes in respect of this site. PDA51 (CD.B5) deletes Inset Map 10 and replaces it with a new Inset Map 10, showing revised boundaries for both P46 and C2. PDA85 (CD.B24) amends the quoted area of the site to reflect the revised boundaries. Both of the proposed changes have been open to full public consultation, and have not attracted counter-objections. I will take the proposed changes into account in my consideration of these objections.

2.169 The revision to the site boundary amends the divide between C2(north) and P46, and makes minor adjustments to the western and north-eastern boundary of the site. This deletes the area of the Cavenham and Icklingham SSSI and National Nature Reserve which was previously shown to be within P46. No objections have been made to the proposed changes and I consider the Plan should be modified accordingly. In which case, the conditionally withdrawn objections made by English Nature, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and RSPB would apparently be satisfied. However, and notwithstanding the fact that the objections have been conditionally withdrawn, proposed change PDA51 does not deal with all the matters raised by these objectors.

2.170 I deal now with the remaining points in turn.

i. Demand for the mineral

2.171 I have considered the objections made to the Plan's assumptions on the demand and supply of sand and gravel in Part 1 of this report. Although there will be other sources of supply, these are already taken into account in the estimation of the likely needs of the County over the plan period. That is, the figures for the projected need are solely for land-
won minerals. Whereas the actual sales of sand and gravel have fallen below the projected needs in recent years, there is no compelling evidence to show that in future years sales may not be above the average demand figure used for the projections. It is a duty placed upon the MPA to make sure that Suffolk is able to meet its share of the regional apportionment of the national projected demand given in MPG6. I do not consider there are any special circumstances which would justify accepting a level of provision in this County which fell below the apportionment agreed through the EAAWP.

2.172 In the event that sales throughout the plan period do turn out to be consistently below the projected figure this should mean that identified reserves will last longer into the future, either because some of the sites may delay the commencement of development, or they will be worked at a rate slower than that assumed in this Plan. However, this is not a supportable basis for deliberately under-providing now. The MPA propose to review this Plan as part of the proposed Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which is programmed to follow the publication of the review of the national production figures which will commence in 1998 (see paragraph 7.2 of EAAWP Fourth Annual Monitoring Report 1996 - CD.D9). It will be open to that Plan to reassess the production capacity of the permitted and proposed sites and to relate them to any revised projections of demand, both with regard to projected annual sales and the overall plan period, as rolled-forward.

2.173 I see no significance in the fact that the site was not shown on Inset Map 8 of the Consultation Draft of the Plan. The purpose of the consultation exercise was to attract representations from all interests. This would inevitably have resulted in some deletions, but equally, some additions. The deposit draft stage allows formal representations if a site included after the consultation stage is seen to be objectionable by some. This is precisely the case here.

2.174 In Part 1 of this report I have examined the predicted demand for sand and gravel in the County against the availability of supply from all sources. I have concluded that it is necessary for the MPA to identify new sites for sand and gravel production. The balance between environmental considerations and need for the development are considered further below.

ii. The effect on living conditions and village amenity

2.175 Although loss of residential amenity was raised by Suffolk Preservation Society in their original objections, no further evidence was brought forward at the inquiry. The site is fairly well separated from other development. The nearest residential property would seem to be Mill Farm House, some 350m to the east of the site. In view of my consideration at the beginning of this Part of my report of the potential of dust and noise to disturb local residents, I consider this property is far enough away for the occupants not to be unduly disturbed.

2.176 There has been quarrying at Cavenham since 1965, with lorries using the C627. I can appreciate that local residents would prefer not to have quarry traffic running through the local villages, but no evidence has been brought of undue disturbance though excessive traffic levels, or of accidents attributable to quarry vehicles.
2.177 No other evidence of the possible effect on residential amenity has been brought forward. Accordingly, I consider that there would be no undue disturbance to the living conditions of those living in the vicinity of the site.

iii. Effect on the landscape

2.178 SCSP Policy MP10 has two criteria which have to be satisfied before development would be considered acceptable: the first is the need for the mineral and the second is the likelihood of a permanent loss of special qualities of the site or its surroundings. The need argument has been addressed in Part 1 of this report and in my consideration of the first group of objections to this site. In the context of having to satisfy the projected demand for sand and gravel over the plan period I consider there is a need to make the material available for extraction. On the second point, very extensive areas of Forest Heath District are designated in the Forest Heath Local Plan (FHLP)(CD.C2) as being Special Landscape Area, which generally corresponds with the SLA shown on the Key Diagram in the SCSP. The FHLP does not define the characteristics of the SLA in detail, so I go to SCSP Policy ENV8 for guidance.

2.179 This site is within the Brecks SLA. Policy ENV8 lists a variety of landscape types in this category. Given that the SLA is a very broad area, it is not a very refined designation and inevitably there will be areas within it which do not exhibit all the typifying characteristics. Whereas this site includes some of the landscape types listed in ENV8, it does not solely comprise these, as there are areas of secondary woodland and fallow agricultural land. The site does not, in my view, contain any particularly special or unique qualities which must, at all costs, be preserved. The site is also largely surrounded by established trees either in belts or in areas of woodland. In which case, it does not relate well to the surrounding area, nor does it 'read' as part of a well defined and readily perceived landscape. Whereas the site would be permanently affected by development and, arguably not all of the change would be beneficial depending on the details of the restoration proposals, in my opinion this would not result in the loss of any special landscape qualities, particularly when considered in the context of its wider setting. I consider that it would be possible to develop the site without contravening SCSP Policy MP10.

2.180 As mentioned above, the site is largely surrounded by areas of established trees. Even from the adjacent National Nature Reserve there are only partial or glimpsed views into the area. With peripheral screening, including sensitively designed bunds and perhaps some supplementary planting if necessary, I consider the site would not be unduly conspicuous from public vantage points, nor would it be possible to readily see into the working areas. The stockpiles and some of the plant can be seen in fairly distant views, particularly from higher ground to the east. These are not on Site P46, but on the current C2(south) site. I accept that they would be used to process and store the material off P46, and hence they would be retained for a longer period than if they related only to C2. However, these are seen as fairly small elements in the landscape from these distances and they are not, in my opinion, unacceptably intrusive or damaging to an appreciation of the landscape quality of the area. The working areas on P46 itself would not be discernable from these distances, and no scar on the landscape would be seen.
iv. Effect upon ecological interests

2.181 Several points listed under this sub-heading have been addressed by proposed change PDA51 in that the boundaries have been revised to delete any parts which previously were shown to lie within the SSSI. As far as I can discern from the maps included in the Plan, no part of the site, either as originally defined or as proposed to be changed now, lie within the National Nature Reserve (NNR) and hence there is no direct conflict of interest here. The evidence from the MPA, supported by responses from several of the nature conservation bodies, is that there would be no materially adverse effect on the nature conservation interests in the SSSI (and SPA) or NNR, nor on the SAC.

2.182 P46 itself does not contain any special habitats of interest for either flora or fauna and therefore there would be no actual loss of habitat. I recognise that working close to the boundaries of the site could prove disturbing or disruptive to the neighbouring wildlife sites, either by reason of noise, dust or general trafficking through the site. This is also recognised by the MPA who, in their evidence, say that adequate stand-off margins will be required to safeguard the interest on the neighbouring land. On a more general level, the proposed site would represent a continuation, rather than an intensification, of the present activity in this area. This would be supported by Policy SMLP2(c), SMLP2(f) SMLP2(g), and SMLP3(a).

2.183 The measures envisaged by the MPA also acknowledge the particular need to safeguard the rare and endangered bird species in the area. I accept that none of the activities on site P46 would directly threaten these species. Indeed, an irony seems to be that the site had been an airfield, and stone curlews only settled in the area once quarrying had begun.

2.184 With adequate attention to the boundary screening and control of noise and dust, I consider the public’s appreciation of the site’s surroundings as a recreation and nature conservation area would not be significantly affected.

v. Restoration and reclamation

2.185 The first listed point is one made by RSPB, and which has apparently been satisfied by PDA51, in that the objection was conditionally withdrawn in response to the proposed change. Site P46 (as proposed to be revised) falls entirely outside the SSSI and the proposed after use is for nature conservation. Consequently there would appear to be no conflict of interests with the objector here.

2.186 Turning to the second point, the Plan does not propose to restore this site as a lake; page 71 indicates this would be a "valley feature" with a watercourse, wetland and heathland margins. A planning application has been submitted which integrates the working and subsequent restoration of C2(north) and P46. As revised, (see letter dated 10 September 1997 from Mr Fenton and the accompanying document prepared by Environomics Ltd dated August 1997) this shows all but a relatively small area to the north of the site being restored to land, with the northern portion shown as reed beds. Having accepted that sand and gravel may be extracted from a site, there is thereafter an environmental debate over the manner of the site’s restoration.

2.187 A water or wetland feature may not be entirely appropriate in landscape terms, but filling the void with (say) imported waste could introduce a whole range of environmental
problems, including the risk of pollution of ground and surface water. Alternatively, where this could be overcome through containment methods, there would be the likelihood of delays in completing the restoration whilst sufficient suitable waste material was accumulated. I consider that the MPA’s envisaged restoration of this site, which presumably is reflected in the revised drawings supporting the recent planning application, represents a reasonable balance between these environmental arguments, with only a relatively small area of shallow water being created on P46. I do not consider the objector’s point has a significant bearing upon this site.

vi. Other matters

2.188 A reasoned basis has not been given for the objection to C2(north) being developed. C2(north) has had the benefit of planning permission since 1963, and it has been included in the calculation of the County’s permitted reserves as part of this Plan (see Table 8 and paragraph 3.7.2 as proposed to be changed). It would therefore seem to be a reasonable assumption that the site would, and even indeed should, be worked. Indeed, even if it were both feasible and desirable to delete this site from the Plan, because I support the MPA’s commitment to meet the County’s share of the regional apportionment, it would only mean another site has to be found to replace it in the stock of permitted reserves.

2.189 A planning application has been submitted for the development of this site. The submitted scheme proposes to work C2(north) and P46 concurrently, so that the different deposits under each site may be blended to make a more saleable product with less waste. In which case, the evidence certainly is that, if planning permission is granted, working this site would bring about the implementation of C2(north). However, if this is seen to bring about longer-term benefits with regard to the quality of the restoration of the Cavenham sites, bringing C2(north) into production is not something which should be deplored.

2.190 The second point of objection listed under this sub-heading was made by English Nature. Their objection was conditionally withdrawn in response to proposed change PDA51, although the proposed change does not directly bear upon this point. The integrated scheme referred to above re-examines the restoration of C2 and considers this as part of the wider restoration of the Cavenham site. These particular proposals may, or may not, be acceptable to the MPA, but it demonstrates a willingness by the operator to consider the restoration of the whole site, and not just C2 in isolation. In any event, the review of conditions attached to old planning permissions which should take place under the Environment Act 1995 would give the opportunity to reassess the relevance and acceptability of the restoration of C2(north) in the light of current circumstances.

Conclusions

2.191 Drawing these points together, I conclude that development of the site would not have any adverse impact on residential amenities, it would not result in the loss of an area of particular landscape quality and it would be possible to safeguard the sensitive ecological interests on the surrounding land. It should also be possible to restore the site to a form which is at least in sympathy with its surroundings, if not entirely replicating it.
2.192 Whereas PDA85 revises the area of the site from 21.9ha to 18.6ha the same revision has not been identified in respect of Table 10 on page 55 of the Plan. In the interests of consistency, Tale 10 should also be revised.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.193 i. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA51, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

ii. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA85, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B24.

iii. The schedule of proposed extensions to existing sand and gravel workings on page 55 of the Plan (Table 10) be modified by the deletion of the 21.9 hectares under the column for the area of the site, and its replacement by 18.6ha.

INSET MAP 13

Objection Nos. 0005 Mr P E Cowley; 1141 Suffolk Preservation Society

Summary of objections

2.194 i. The associated HGV traffic is noisy and a hazard to safety in a rural area. This traffic does not use the A134 by-pass as the route to the A14 [0005].

ii. No mention is made of efforts to preserve the residential amenity surrounding the site [1141].

Inspector's considerations and conclusions

2.195 Site P148 is effectively an extension to what was shown as site C31 in the deposit draft of the SMLP. Since then, the site has received planning permission. The MPA propose to change the Plan by the deletion of P148 as a proposed site, and including it as part of the commentary of an enlarged site C31. The proposed change allows for the deletion of the descriptions of P148 and C31, the revision of the Inset Map and the deletion of the 'Proposed Site' symbol from Inset Map 13 on the Proposals Map (PDA 87(part) - CD.B24). The proposed changes has been open to formal public consultation and there have been no counter objections. I will take it into account in my consideration of these objections.

2.196 Because the site now has planning permission it is rational to show it as a committed ('C'), rather than a proposed ('P') site and I support the proposed change. Consequently,
and following the information given in paragraph 5.1.5 of the SMLP, the inclusion of this as a ‘C’ site would be for information only.

2.197 I note the concern expressed by both of these objectors but if the operation of the quarry is in contravention of the planning permission and its attaching conditions, then this is a matter of enforcement for the MPA. It is beyond my remit to consider any possible revocation of a planning permission already granted. It is possible that, in time, the conditions applicable to the planning permissions for this site may be reviewed as ‘Phase II’ sites under the Environment Protection Act 1995. That would be an appropriate time to assess the effectiveness of the controls currently applicable at this site.

RECOMMENDATION

2.198 No modifications be made to the SMLP in response to these objections.

INSET MAP 16

Objection No. 0408 Finch & Ollett Aggregates Ltd

Summary of objection

2.199 The details given relating to this site for mineral type, end use and site area are not correct. Furthermore, it is beyond the remit of the MPA and the SMLP to make assumptions about the end use of extracted materials.

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.200 The MPA propose to change the details given (PDA48 - CD.B5). The proposed changes have been open to full public consultation and have not attracted counter objections. I will take them into account in my consideration of this objection.

2.201 The proposed change is only to the area of the site, which seems to generally accord with the objector’s estimate. I consider this change should be carried through as a modification to the Plan.

2.202 As to the description of the material and its end use, I have no compelling evidence to persuade me which of the descriptions is the most accurate - the objector’s or the MPA’s. The MPA say that the description is only for information and is not prescriptive. I accept this. However, if it is misleading information and it adversely affects the trading position of the site operator then this would be a matter for concern, but not necessarily under planning legislation. In the absence of detailed evidence either way I consider that no change to the Plan has been justified. However, the MPA may wish to verify the information for themselves and make any appropriate modification before committing the final version of the Plan to print.
RECOMMENDATIONS

2.203  i. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA48, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

ii. The MPA verify the description of the composition and quality of the deposit and include any appropriate corrections as a modification to the Plan.

Inset Map 20

Objection Nos.  0497 Ramblers' Association; 1095 Atlas Aggregates Ltd; 1143 Suffolk Preservation Society; Suffolk Coast & Heaths Project; 1189 RSPB; 1259 Lark Valley Association

Support No.  1093 Atlas Aggregates Ltd

2.204 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Need for the mineral

- The SMLP over-provides by about 100%, taking into account re-cycled aggregates, imported and sea-dredged materials. There is no need for further sites.

ii. Effect on the landscape

- The site is within an AONB, and as such the proposal is contrary to Policy SMLP1(c). Sites in the AONB should only be worked where this is in the national interest; this is not the case here.

- The site must be comprehensively screened.

iii. Effect on ecological interests

- The scheme would have an adverse impact upon water courses around the site and consequently disrupt the hydrology of the Wangford Marshes County Wildlife Site, Minsmere, and Walberswick Marshes and Heaths SSSI. This is a RAMSAR site and SPA.

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15 The MPA refer to the site as Hill Farm, Wangford in their representations, but I have used the name given in the SMLP document on page 85.
iv. Groundwater effects

- It should be clarified that the protection of ground waters relates only the potential effect working this site might have on the former landfill site, rather than the effect of the nearby landfill on the wider environment. The developer can only be responsible for effects under his own control.

- The implications on the nearby landfill site should be carefully assessed.

v. Restoration of the site

- It is premature to decide at this stage whether the Wangford site should be backfilled or restored to a lower level. Landfilling should not be ruled out at present.

- The after-use of this site should be for nature conservation in view of its proximity to other wildlife sites. A possibility would be to provide reed beds and open water.

vi. Other matters

- Wind will blow dust towards Wangford village.

- Particulate pollution from lorries using the access route would harm the flora and increase siltation of waterways.

- The scheme would give rise to noise and particulate pollution in the village.

- The site contains features of archaeological interest and these would need to be studied before the full impact of the proposal can be assessed.

Inspector’s considerations

i. Need for the mineral

2.205 Although consumption of sand and gravel has fallen below the predicted level of demand in recent years, the MPA is obliged to ensure that the County’s share of regional production, as established through the workings of the EAAWP, is capable of being met throughout the plan period. The regional apportionment figure, derived from Government guidance given in MPG6, takes account of alternative sources of aggregates and is a figure for new land-won minerals. I therefore consider that it is necessary for the SMLP to identify sufficient sites to meet the balance of the predicted demand not already committed in sites with planning permission.

ii. Effect on the landscape

2.206 The site is within the AONB. As advised in PPG7 (CD.A2) AONBs are areas which enjoy a high level of protection from development which would harm the natural beauty of the area. Major development should not take place in these areas, save in exceptional
circumstances. The same advice is carried through into MPG6 (CD.A15). Furthermore, SCSP policy MP9 advises that new workings or extensions to existing sites will not normally be permitted in AONBs.

2.207 The SCSP policy and MPG6 both include criteria which have to be satisfied before working in the AONB would be permitted. Paragraph 71 of MPG6 lists four points, the first of which is need, both nationally and on the local economy. The County's share of the regional apportionment is a basic indication of need, and I have concluded that additional sites do need to be identified to ensure the predicted requirements can be met during the plan period, and thereafter through the identification of a long-term landbank. Neither the MPA nor the objectors have brought forward evidence on the effect on the local economy. Need, of itself, is not sufficient justification as the second criterion in the MPG looks for the availability of alternative supplies. Sand and gravel is clearly not scarce in Suffolk, the MPA and other objectors to the Plan have identified at least some of the potential alternative reserves across the County. In my view, it is not essential to work this site by reason of there being no alternative supplies.

2.208 The third criterion in MPG6 examines the effect of the proposals on the landscape and the environment. The MPA argue that the site lies in an area which has a history of mineral working; indeed, the northern and western sides of the site are adjoining or very close to previous or operating minerals sites. However this is not a compelling argument to permit yet more working in the AONB, the site has to be assessed on its own merits. The site is largely unspoilt and the proposed working would considerably alter its profile and appearance. It is presently clearly open to view from the lane along its northern boundary. The southern edges are steeply sloping and heavily wooded, running down to the Wangford Marshes County Wildlife Site. Depending on how much of this wooded area was taken for development, mineral working here could have a considerable impact on the appearance of the area, albeit with limited opportunities for public views from the south and west.

2.209 I acknowledge that the environmental impact may not be significant. The nearest village, Wangford, is about 1km to the north, and no other houses are within the 175m stand-off distance which I have accepted as offering adequate protection from wind-blown dust. There are no known habitats of particular ecological interest on the site, although there are such areas nearby. If working below the water table is restricted I consider these nearby sites would be largely unaffected, either directly or indirectly through derogation of groundwater. I also accept that the development might offer potential for restoration to a condition which could encourage interesting new habitats.

2.210 The final criterion in MPG6 paragraph 71 examines whether an extension to an existing working would achieve an enhancement to the landscape. The site is not, in my view, unsightly. At my site visit I saw that the adjacent operative site (C4) is generally well hidden, and only noticeable from very close to looking from Hill Road and the lane leading to the A12. I accept that restoration of the proposed site could be integrated with the present site to create an acceptable landscape, but I do not consider that the present site is so unsightly that it requires an integrated restoration with the proposed site.

2.211 In their responses, the MPA say that the acceptability of the new development in the AONB can be assessed at application stage by applying SCSP Policy MP9 and SMLP1(a). To me, this implies the principle of allowing sand and gravel extraction on this site is far from certain. This is a potentially misleading position, as once the site is included as a proposal in the SMLP the principle of development here would have been established. In
according with Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, a planning application would have to be determined in accordance with the Plan and hence the principle could not be lightly put aside at that stage. The MPA have, in fact, relied upon this site becoming available as it is listed in Policy SMLP7 and Table 10 and, by extension, is carried through into paragraph 3.8.1 (as proposed to be changed by PDA110).

2.212 The emphasis in both Government and SCSP policy relating to the AONB is that development which is likely to have an impact on the appearance of the landscape should be resisted. In my view, development of the proposed site would not be entirely inconspicuous in the AONB. Both the SCSP and PPG would allow development in the AONB in exceptional circumstances and I do not overlook the possibility that a strong enough case could be made for permitting development here. However, to comply with both Government and SCSP policy it could only be justified on grounds of exceptional circumstances. By definition, schemes which can only be justified under exceptional circumstances cannot be a development plan policy or proposal.

iii. Effect on ecological interests

2.213 The basis of the concerns is that the marshes and wetland areas below the site could be adversely affected. This might only happen if the mineral were to be worked below the water table and the workings pumped to keep them dry. Experience on the adjacent site has been that extraction rarely extends to below the water table and, if it does, the area is not pumped, but is immediately back-filled with quarry waste. This could be controlled by limitations on the planning permission or planning conditions. From the MPAs submissions I note that there has been sand and gravel working in this area since the 1950s, with apparently no serious or permanent adverse effect on the nearby nature reserves. I consider that further working could take place here without any additional impact on these sensitive areas.

2.214 The ‘Main Issues’ for this site listed on page 85 of the SMLP acknowledges that this is a matter which has to be examined in some detail in the context of policy SMLP1(c). In the event of an application being made to develop the site SCSP Policy MP9 would require an environmental statement to be submitted which would explore such potential effects and how they could be satisfactorily addressed.

iv. Groundwater effects

2.215 I agree that the developer of a site can only be held accountable for matters under his direct control or influence. If another site in the vicinity represents a threat to the environment through contamination of the groundwater then the owner or developer of this site cannot be held accountable for whatever remedial measures are necessary. Having said that, the proximity of the landfill site should not be overlooked and the possibility of a hydrological connection and subsequent escape of contaminants should not be ignored. The wording of the ‘Main Issues’ section which preceded Inset Map 20 seems to reverse the onus. It would be more appropriately phrased if the implications of the former landfill site upon the proposed extraction were assessed.

2.216 I consider that, should an application be made to develop the site, this is a matter upon which the Environment Agency would be able to comment.
v. Restoration of the site

2.217 The after-use of the site is not something over which the MPA has a direct control, it only has to be satisfied that the site is capable of being restored to a condition which would sustain an acceptable after use. In this case, low-level restoration is seen to be acceptable by the MPA and therefore importation of waste is not essential. Having said that, I do not consider that the possibility of waste disposal here would be ruled out because of the notation under the site name in the list of points which precedes Inset Map 20.

2.218 Similarly if, in the light of further consideration, discussion and negotiation, restoration for nature conservation as wetland and marshes was seen to be preferred, I do not consider that the references on page 85 would preclude this.

vi. Other matters

2.219 As mentioned above, I there are no houses which are likely to be affected by windborne dust arising from this site. None is closer than 175m, which is the stand-off distance I consider necessary to protect nearby residents from the adverse effects of dust. The present site (C4) is closer to Hill Farm, and I have not been made aware of any unacceptable effects on the occupants of that property. Wangford village is about 1km distant and hence well beyond the limits where perceptible deposits of dust attributable to this site could be expected.

2.220 It is not clear what is meant by ‘particulate pollution’, but I take it to mean dust, mud or sand and gravel falling from lorries, rather than exhaust particles from diesel engines, or any other form of particles. The route to and from the present quarry is likely to be continued if planning permission is granted for the proposed site. The route away from the quarry passes along a lane to the west, directly onto the A12. In which case dust, mud or dropped material would not affect the residents of Wangford village. At my site visit I examined the lane leading to the A12, the verges and the stream running under Aldous Bridge. There was some sandy material along the road, but I do not consider much, if any, of this can be attributed to the lorry traffic from the quarry. This is an area of sandy soils and sand, stones and dust are found along the lanes in such areas naturally, having been washed off fields and verges by rain etc.. I did not notice that the stream under the bridge was silted up, nor that the local flora was noticeably affected by undue deposits of dust and sand. I do not consider conditions would be made materially worse if the proposed site were to be developed. If a problem did arise, and which could be attributed to the vehicles leaving the quarry, it would be open to the MPA to require wheel washing and vehicle washdown facilities to be installed and used at the site before vehicles entered the highway.

2.221 Policy SMLP1(d) offers a policy context to safeguard any archaeological interest the site may have. I do not consider the possibility of archaeological remains to be a bar to development here.

Conclusions

2.222 Drawing these points together, whilst I consider that the environmental and amenity concerns might be satisfactorily addressed by a development proposal, the primary concern is that the scheme would represent a significant development in the AONB. Whilst this may
be permissible under exceptional circumstances, I do not consider that the SMLP should promote development which is \textit{prima facie} contrary to Government and structure plan policy and can only be justified as an exception. In which case, I conclude that the site should be deleted from the Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

2.223 The SMLP be modified by deleting P170 as a proposed mineral working site both from Inset Map 20 and Table 10.

Objection Nos. See list annexed to this section of the report (Annex 3).

Support No. 0077 County Land Agent & Valuer

2.224 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Demand for the mineral

- There has not been a proven need for the sand and gravel.

- The Government's policy on reducing the road building programmes, coupled with a marked slow down on building construction has meant that demand for all building materials has reduced.

ii. Quality and/or quantity of the deposit

- There is an absence of sufficient evidence of economic deposits of minerals.

- The site has been recommended for inclusion on the basis of very limited test borings and prior to the demonstration of firm evidence of viable quantities of sand and gravel.

iii. Effect on the landscape

- If the proposal goes ahead Sudbury, Waldingfield and Acton will sprawl across the whole area and develop into an urban town as large as Colchester or Bury.

- Gravel extraction would cause an eyesore. The area should be maintained as Green Belt.
The Inspector's report on the Babergh Local Plan said that the area should remain undisturbed.

The site can be seen from a long distance, the environmental impact during the extraction and land fill will be detrimental and not in accordance with an area of natural beauty.

The workings would be visible from Cornard Tye.

The method of screening will be out of keeping with the lie of the land.

The site would be visually intrusive as the site is very open and exposed - it would not be a very fitting entrance to the County of Suffolk (as it is located right on the border).

A quarry here would be inappropriate as the site is very close to the Stour Valley Conservation Area.

iv. Effect upon village and residential amenities

Many residential properties have no foundations, therefore any change to the water table or increase in vibration (due to extraction and increased vehicular activity) will be detrimental to these houses.

Severe vibration from the site and the road will damage property including Chilton Hall, a moated house of great distinction.

There is concern over the effect lowering the water table would have on the moat and ponds at Chilton Hall - a Grade II* listed building.

In Great Waldingfield there are approximately 12 listed buildings which will be affected by the proposals.

The workings would be within 200m of residential properties.

Will the company that is going to work the gravel pit, be forced to install double glazing in residential properties?

Objection is raised on health and environmental grounds due to the close proximity of residential dwellings of the Bantocks Road Estate, especially with regard to asthma, bronchitis, sinusitis and stress.

There is also to be a concrete plant on the site which will cause cement dust to be blown into adjoining properties, this will have a severe adverse effect on health.

All of the lorries and excavating equipment to be used on site will be diesel engined. Recent research has proved a direct link between diesel fumes and cancer.

There will be an increase in traffic on the roads in the vicinity, including HGVs. The area is already suffering from an excess of traffic.
The traffic through Newton is already considerably in excess of what is acceptable.

Gravel and tipper lorries will cause a great deal of noise and congestion and general nuisance.

The effect from spillage from loaded lorries on to a busy classified road including mud deposits on wet roads.

The increase in traffic will have a detrimental effect on the view from properties.

Traffic routing is difficult to enforce.

Lorries will take a short cut through the village. Regulations not to take short cuts would be unenforceable.

There would be light pollution from the working's illumination system.

Noise and dust from the site would be a nuisance as there is no tree coverage.

The prevailing winds (south west) will deposit dust and debris over the villages. It would also carry the sound of the equipment.

Earth bunds screening the site will restrict light to properties.

A bank screen will block residential views and a scrub screen would take too long to establish.

Lorry noise, especially from empty lorries will cause a problem.

The proposed access would be within 100m of Nursery Lodge, hence traffic entering and leaving the site would be disturbing for the occupants of this dwelling.

v. Highway considerations

Proper lorry routing arrangements should be made to confine all site vehicles to the A134 and to ban them from using Valley Road and the main roads through Great Waldingfield and Acton.

The roads are currently in need of repair, therefore the likelihood of this situation improving when more and more traffic is using the network is unlikely - the funds are not available.

The associated traffic will lead to the deterioration of local roads, especially in the villages of Great Waldingfield, Little Waldingfield and Acton.

The proposed road changes, eg the traffic roundabout, would add to the present congestion on the A134 between Newton and Sudbury.

The proposal will cause serious congestion, delays and greatly increase the risk of accidents.
The A134 is highly unsuitable for the type of transport that will be used for gravel extraction - there would need to be a great deal of widening along the A134 to make it suitable for sand and gravel lorries and to make the junction safer.

Delays caused by the new roundabout will encourage people to use short cuts - using unsatisfactory roads.

Valley Road is straight and overtaking is a regular occurrence, but it puts people at risk. This will increase with extra traffic on the roads.

Children cycling to school would be at risk from overtaking vehicles.

There is a school nearby and a heavily used post office facility which generates traffic problems at the cross roads.

There would be an increased risk of accident on the corner by the White Horse pub where visibility is poor.

The roads through Acton, Valley Road and Bull Lane are unclassified. Additional heavy traffic generated by the proposed quarry would be a hazard to life and property.

Turning right from Carbonels towards Sudbury is dangerous as traffic from both ways appears very quickly. More traffic will add to this dangerous situation.

The access should be relocated to the junction of Roman Road 16 and the A134.

The development would result in more lorry traffic travelling on the A134 into Essex (Colchester District).

Development which results in more traffic on the A134 should be resisted until the western by-pass has been built around Sudbury.

vi. Impact upon leisure and recreation

The re-siting of the public footpath will detract from the convenience and pleasure of the community.

vii. Impact upon the water environment

Excavation will result in the removal of natural drainage. The site slopes towards the B1115 which already has a lot of standing water during heavy rain.

There is a layer of blue clay running from Great Waldingfield under Chilton and eventually to Cornard Road. If the proposed extraction was to penetrate the clay, the effect on the aquifer could be catastrophic.

16 The reference to Roman Road is taken to mean Valley Road, the C714.
The proposal could cause a lowering of the water table.

Upsetting the water table will cause subsidence to occur in the locality, this could have an effect on the insurance premiums paid and could result in properties becoming uninsurable.

If extraction is likely to be below the water table then an assessment of the impact on water features, water quality and water resources should be made prior to an application being made.

viii. Effect on local ecology

- This is an important area for corn bunting, which is now an extremely rare species in Suffolk. It is a red list species.

- There is a need to conserve green spaces, not destroy them.

- The area affected by the proposed gravel pit is home to a colony of great crested newts. It would be illegal to disturb their habitat.

- There would be a risk to wildlife, especially larks, newts, red legged partridges and deer.

ix. Effect upon agricultural and horticultural interests

- This proposal would involve the loss of agricultural land which will take away opportunities for tenant farmers in the area.

- Degradation of soil after restoration to arable.

- The site is part of Suffolk County Council Small Farms estate, which enables people without inherited wealth to work and manage their own land. These are a community asset and should remain so.

- Wind-borne dust would cover the glasshouses at the nursery and garden centre, affecting growth of plants and viability of the business.

- Lowering the water table would adversely affect crops on surrounding land.

x. Restoration / reclamation

- No mention is made of the infill of the site and what this would consist of.

- If the restoration proposal involves landfill, this will increase the risk of the illegal dumping of toxic waste material causing an health risk to the village.
There are no guarantees that the pit will not be used for the dumping of household waste. This could cause considerable litter and smell pollution and also attract vermin.

xi. Other matters

- The site may be extended in the future. This would mean it being moved even closer to residential properties.

- If the gravel pit were to go ahead there must be restricted hours of working.

- Despite the extent of the site (it would cover an area greater that the entire developed area for Great Waldingfield) it offers no economic advantage to the district. The number of jobs which would be created are so few as to be out of all proportion to the size of the development.

- The site has gas apparatus laid within it. The mains have the protection of easement agreements which will restrict extraction within these areas. Any proposal for extraction must be notified to British Gas Transco.

- There will be a decrease in property values.

- Will Council Tax levels be adjusted to reflect the decrease in residential amenity?

- The quarry development would prejudice the next district local plan review.

Inspector’s considerations

2.225 The MPA propose to change the narrative passages relating to this site which precede Inset Map 22. PDA107(part) (CD.B28) revises the quantity of the estimated resource given on page 88 from 1.8 to 1.0 million tonnes. This is to reflect the latest geological information which has become available to the MPA. The proposed change has not been open to full public consultation, but it has been available as part of a core document of the inquiry and, other than the points raised at the inquiry, has not attracted adverse comment. I will therefore take it into account in my consideration of these objections.

2.226 Several additional passages have also been introduced to the ‘Main Issues’ section on page 89. PDA43 (CD.B5) introduces a reference to the need to take the presence of great crested newts into consideration at application stage. PDA52(part) makes minor typographical corrections. Both of these proposed changes have been open to full public consultation and have not attracted counter objections. English Nature have responded that PDA43 would satisfy their concerns if it were incorporated in the Plan and have conditionally withdrawn their objection. PDA98 (CD.B33) includes details of the proposed restrictions on the routes to be used by lorries, and PDA99 (CD.B33) alters the proposed junction arrangements at the point of access from a roundabout to a priority junction. Neither of these later changes have been open to public consultation but, other than the points made at the inquiry, no adverse comments have been received. Accordingly I will take these proposed changes into account in my consideration of these objections.
2.227 I turn now to deal with the points raised in the objections.

i. Demand for the mineral

2.228 In Part 1 of this report I examine the supply and demand situation in Suffolk, with particular regard to the obligations placed upon the MPA by national planning policy as expressed in MPG6 and as interpreted through the working of the EAAWP. Whereas there may be factors which have influenced the level of production in the past, keeping demand for minerals below the projected levels, it may be equally as likely that other factors in subsequent years may increase demand. The production capacity figures agreed through the EAAWP take into account minerals imported into the County from other sources, for example marine dredged aggregates, crushed rock from coastal super quarries, and recycling.

2.229 The guidance given in MPG6 also takes into account trends in house and road building, as anticipated at the time the guidance was prepared. It may be that the predicted demands from these developments need to be revised, however this is something which should be done on a regional basis, guided by a national over-view. This process is due to commence in 1998. Without any firm information it would be both premature and impossible to make a rational adjustment in this local plan for Suffolk in isolation - it would be inappropriate to base this Plan on nothing more than guesswork. Therefore, based on the best or most reliable information to date, I have concluded that the SMLP should make provision overall for some 10.68mt - as detailed in paragraph 3.7.4 of the Plan as proposed to be changed by PDA110(part) (CD.B34).

ii. Quality and / or quantity of the deposit

2.230 The geology of the site is not straightforward, with a main deposit of glacial sand and gravel overlying basal sands. The deposits vary in thickness from 0.8m up to 3.9m for the main deposit, and up to 2.8m or more thickness of the basal sands. There is a layer of boulder clay as inter-burden between the two deposits over much of the site. The characteristics of the deposit were examined at length at the inquiry. With two deposits to take into consideration, of varying thickness, plus underlying basal sands, it is possible to represent this available quantity in several ways. The objectors preferred an average thickness for the main deposit only at 1.75mt; the MPA gives an average thickness for the sand and gravel deposit of 1.95m, plus the basal sands, giving an overall average of some 2.3-2.5m. I accept that, if the site is worked at all, it is likely that the basal sands will also be worked and hence it is reasonable to assume the average thickness of the workable deposits is above the minimum 2.0m specified in page 141 of the SMLP.

2.231 The stone content also varies across the site and with depth. The MPA’s evidence was that this can be as high as 50% in places and overall the proportion is greater than the 25% minimum laid down in the SMLP. The deposits are considered to be ‘dirty’; that is, they are clay bound and loamy in the upper horizons. The fines content, on average is given as being within the range 12%-21%, but overall it falls within the MPA’s 20% criterion.

2.232 In my view, the quality of the deposit is within the criteria laid down in the SMLP, although there is some concern over the amount of clay and other material which will have to be washed out of the extracted material. There is no obvious on-site water resource to draw upon for washing purposes, the evidence being that mains water (which could be made
available) would have to be piped into the site. Mains water is seen to be considerably more expensive than water which might have been found on the site. Also, I note that the thickness of the deposit under the northern end of the site is less than 1.5m, which may be unattractive in commercial terms. A high proportion of the stone content is ‘over size’, and will require crushing before it can be used as a concreting aggregate. However, in the absence of alternative, detailed geological or commercial evidence from the objectors I accept the evidence given on behalf of the MPA that the site contains a workable, commercially viable deposit of just under 1.0 million tonnes.

iii. Effect on the landscape

2.233 The site is not within area covered by landscape protection policies. The site is not within or near to the ‘Stour Valley Conservation Area’ or any other area of recognised category of landscape quality. It is therefore not formally classified as an area of notable natural beauty, although I accept that it is valued by the local community as an area of attractive countryside. Also, the area is not Green Belt land, there being no Green Belt land in Suffolk. The Babergh Local Plan was not concerned with the location of sand and gravel sites and hence the Inspector’s comments cannot have taken this into consideration. Mineral working is an appropriate activity in a rural area and a sand and gravel working here cannot be construed as disturbance from an urban-type development. I do not consider the proposal is in conflict with the views of the District Local Plan Inspector.

2.234 The site occupies an elevated plateau, falling away gently to the north and south, with a more pronounced fall towards the southern end of the site. The site is open to view from the B1115 and from footpath Chilton No.8 which crosses the site east-west. The western edges of the site, for the most part, do not correspond with field boundaries and are not defined on the ground. There are hedges along much of the eastern boundary of the site, and along the south-west corner. Beyond the site boundary, other hedges help screen the site from some public vantage points, notably from Valley Road and from the south-western edges of Great Waldingfield village.

2.235 It should be possible to screen the workings from the south. Here the deposits are at their deepest and the depth of the workings, together with screen bunds along the southern edge of the site should screen the working area and most, if not all, of the installed plant. I accept that it might just be possible to see parts of the working area from Cornard Tye, probably towards the centre of the site, but this would be looking over a bund and peripheral planting, and at a distance of more than 1km. I consider this would not be so intrusive or insensitive as to be unacceptable.

2.236 The northern portion would be more visible, with views into the site being possible from the B1115, particularly in the vicinity of the grain store buildings. This could be at least partially screened by soil bunds and some advance planting, although I accept that it could take several years for any planting to achieve a height where it could perform a worthwhile screening function. I also acknowledge that, whilst screening the working areas, the bunds themselves could be seen as unnatural and unattractive features in the more open views. However, with careful attention to the profile of the outer slopes, grassing of the faces and tree and shrub planting in front of the bunds the impact could be significantly reduced. In view of the fact that this is not a specially protected landscape area, and allowing for screen planting and bunds, I consider the visual impact of the quarry would not be so great as to be totally unacceptable.
2.237 A quarry here would not presage a major programme of built development in the area, and would not result in the creation of a large urban development.

iv. Effect upon village and residential amenities

2.238 There are a few houses in Great Waldingfield which are within 200m of the north-east corner of the site, and the cottages at Winthrop Hall may also be within 200m of the western edges of the site. However, it is not proximity *per se* which need be cause for concern, it is the likely effect of the workings on the amenities of the occupants of those properties which must be taken into consideration.

2.239 The main concerns are over noise and dust and any potential health risk. In the introduction to this section of the report I examine the issues of noise and dust in some detail. There is well-researched guidance on the control of noise at surface mineral workings, contained in MPG11 (CD.A20). With the installation of appropriate silencers and other noise attenuation measures, in my view there are no obvious reasons why noise on the site cannot be controlled to limits which are at, or below, the advised maximum noise levels given in the MPG. Reversing beepers on mobile plant are a recognised irritation for those who live nearby, but there are alternative safety devices which can be used on minerals sites, some of which emit no noise at all. These can be required by the MPA as part of the approval of a planning application. Local residents should not require double-glazing to achieve adequate protection from the noise of operations on the site.

2.240 There have also been detailed studies of the effect of dust from minerals sites. I have accepted that, in the absence of any dust suppression measures, a minimum stand-off distance of 175m should be provided between a working area and residential properties. The only properties within this distance of the site are those on the south-west edge of Great Waldingfield. Although part of the site boundary is within this minimum stand-off distance, it is possible that the working area may not approach as close. In which case, there may be little cause for concern. However, if working does approach within the recommended minimum stand-off distance, it would be necessary for the MPA to ensure that adequate dust control measures were put in place before working commenced in this part of the site. This could be covered by conditions on a planning permission. Dust from any concrete batching plant installed on the site would be subject to separate controls. With adequate controls over dust generation and suppression there should be no undue impact on the health of local residents, including those with respiratory problems.

2.241 In my experience, mineral sites do not generate a significant amount of litter or debris which could be carried off the site and into the wider area, including residential property. The screen bunds would not be close enough to residential property to block light. Similarly, although views from properties would be partially blocked (which is the very purpose of the bunds), no property is close enough for this to be unreasonably dominant or overbearing in the outlook from the houses, nor would they block daylight. Lighting on the site would be controlled by Policy SMLP2(o). Extraction is not likely to take place during the hours of darkness. What illumination there is could be confined to within the site boundaries, and the only areas likely to require security lighting would be the plant site, which is also likely to be well screened.

2.242 Several objectors raise concern over the threat to structural stability of property. From the evidence given at the inquiry, the workable minerals generally lie above the water
table. In which case, there will be no need to de-water the working areas, and with no consequent effect on the water table in the wider area. Therefore, the moat and ponds at Chilton Hall should be unaffected, nor should any other properties be affected by changes to the water table attributable to the quarry. In any event, evidence given at the inquiry indicates that the moats and ponds at Chilton Hall lie above the level of the site and the drainage gradient is away from the Hall and towards the site. Furthermore, the moat and ponds are thought likely to lie above a perched water table, which would be unaffected by works on the site. Vibration on mineral sites is a result of blasting operations. This only takes place on hard rock quarries; blasting is not required to work sand and gravel. Consequently, there should be no vibration effects from the quarry on Chilton Hall or other properties in the vicinity with inadequate foundations.

2.243 Other concerns have been expressed over the impact of associated traffic on the living conditions and structural stability of property. As discussed below, the site is only likely to generate a maximum of 60 HGV movements per day - 30 in and 30 out. Over a 10 hour working day this averages out at one every 10 minutes or so. In the context of the existing traffic levels in the area, notably on the A134, this would be an insignificant increase (about 0.5% on 12,900 vehicles per day). I do not think this justifies a general concern about excessive increases in traffic and congestion on the roads in the area.

2.244 Quarry lorries would be subject to the same regulations applicable to all other road vehicles and hence should be no noisier or polluting, nor generate more damaging vibrations, than other lorries. In my opinion, the effect on the health of those living in the vicinity from the exhaust from lorries and on-site plant would be unnoticeable over the wider area. Apart from any local deliveries, the MPA propose to confine all lorries to the appropriate lorry routes in this area; the A134 and the B1115. Of the 60 daily trips, only a proportion would need to travel to destinations served off the B1115 and hence the effect in Great Waldingfield and its listed buildings would be slight. Chilton Hall is more than 200m from the B1115 and likely to be entirely unaffected by any increase in lorry traffic.

2.245 Nursery Lodge (Nursery Bungalow on the Ordnance Survey plan) is some 100m from the proposed entrance to the quarry. Whilst the occupiers may experience some increase in the noise of lorries either slowing down as they approach the entrance, or accelerating away, in view of the relatively small numbers of additional vehicles, the likelihood that operating hours will be restricted and the fact that up to 13,000 vehicles per day already pass this property, I consider the increase in disturbance would be very slight, and not enough to justify rejecting this proposed site.

2.246 I accept that lorry routing agreements may be difficult to enforce under planning legislation. However, experience in other parts of the County have shown that they can be effective in that it is in the operator’s best interests to cooperate with the MPA. Also, it is common practice to set up local liaison committees where representatives of the local community, the MPA and the operating company sit to discuss matters of concern. These matters can include the problem of quarry lorries using unsuitable local roads. I comment further on a routing agreement below.

2.247 Finally, quarry lorries would be required to ensure their loads are secure before entering the highway. The MPA can insist upon the installation and use of a wheel-wash at the quarry exit to ensure no mud or other debris is carried onto the highway and, if necessary further measures can be taken such as sheeting the loads and the use of a vehicle wash-down facility if necessary.
v. Highway considerations

2.248 Despite local opinion about the suitability of the road, Suffolk County Council, as local highway authority, have categorised the A134 as a strategic lorry route. This is not unreasonable in view of the fact that the road is a Class 1 road (ie an ‘A’ road), and it is clearly used by an appreciable volume (some 900 trips) of HGVs at the moment. As a strategic lorry route, it should be capable of carrying all types of HGV traffic. Quarry-related lorries are no longer, wider or heavier than other vehicles classified as HGVs. The evidence given at the inquiry was that the quarry was likely to give rise to some 50-60 trips per day (ie about 30 journeys out and 30 return). In terms of the amount of traffic already using the A134 (12,900 vehicles per day) this is a very small increase (less that 0.5%) and insignificant in relation to the present level of traffic on the road. It represents an increase of about 6.5% in HGV movements which I consider to be only a small increase, and not so great as to overwhelm the capacity of the road and cause congestion in either direction. Accordingly, I do not accept that the road is unsuitable for quarry related traffic, nor that development should be delayed until a western-bypass has been built for Sudbury.

2.249 I accept that other roads may be less suitable, either because of their width and alignment, or because they run through residential areas which should not be unduly disturbed by quarry traffic. The MPA have undertaken to negotiate a lorry routing agreement with the operator of the site. Such agreements are difficult, if not impossible, to enforce under planning legislation and hence I consider a degree of scepticism over the effectiveness of such agreements is justified. However, evidence given at the inquiry was that, for the most part, such agreements have been effective and that in sensitive areas the drivers of the majority of quarry related vehicles have been persuaded to adhere to preferred routes. Indeed, it is probably in the best interests of the site operator to make sure this is so. Such agreements are generally supervised as part of the work of a local liaison committee, on which representatives of the local community sit with the operating company and the MPA to examine issues which have given rise to concern locally and how these may be successfully addressed. The Suffolk Lorry Management Plan classifies the B1115 as a Local Access route for HGVs and hence it would be inconsistent for a routing agreement to seek to prevent lorries from using this road.

2.250 I have been given no information as to how many vehicles may need to use the B1115 through Great Waldingfield but it is reasonable to assume that only a proportion of the deliveries would be to destinations to the north-east of the quarry. If this was as much as a third, this would represent about 20 trips per day (10 each way) through the village, or 1 per hour on average during the working day. I do not consider this to be so great as to represent an unreasonable increase in HGV traffic on this Class 2 road, and hence I do not consider the risk to the safety or convenience of other road users, pedestrians or cyclist would be significantly or unreasonably increased by the development of the quarry. No information was produced on the history of accidents at the junction by the White Horse public house or in the vicinity of the school and post office in Great Waldingfield. This was not raised at the inquiry with the MPA’s highway witness. I accept these locations may be perceived locally to be dangerous but, on the information available to me, I do not consider these are unusually dangerous locations, nor that the anticipated relatively small increase in traffic on the B1115 would give rise to an unacceptable deterioration in the conditions of highway safety through the village.

2.251 Highway maintenance is not a land use planning matter; it is something covered under other controls. With a routing agreement in place, lorries should generally be confined
to the designated lorry routes, that is, the A134 and B1115. The particular point about highway maintenance was not discussed at the inquiry in respect of this site, but in connection with another site it was said that the County Council, as local highway authority, monitors the condition of local roads and, where this falls within the criteria which indicate maintenance is required, the necessary works are undertaken. I have no reason to believe that this would not happen along the routes leading to and from this quarry. However, in view of the fact that the increase in HGV traffic on the local roads is unlikely to be more than 60 trips per day, I do not consider this would significantly add to the rate at which their condition deteriorates. Off these routes, lorries should only be using the roads for local deliveries; that is, deliveries which would have been made along the minor roads irrespective of where the quarry is located.

2.252 The proposed access arrangements were raised both at the inquiry and in the written representations. PDA99 amends the proposed junction arrangement from a roundabout to a priority junction with a right hand turning lane - that is, a ‘ghost island’ junction with refuges for traffic turning into the site from the east. This would obviate the concerns expressed in the written representations over the potential problems a roundabout junction may cause in terms of delays and the possibility of drivers taking short cuts. The details of the design of the junction now envisaged were discussed at the inquiry. At my site visit I saw the width of the A134 is restricted in this vicinity and visibility is poor to the east. However, at the inquiry the highways witness for the MPA gave evidence that the junction could be designed to meet the current planning and engineering guidance, and that adequate visibility could be achieved without the need to take land from a third party. No expert highway evidence was put forward by the objectors to demonstrate that a junction at the access which complied with the relevant guidance could not be achieved. In which case, there would be no need to consider alternative access arrangements, such as use of the Valley Road/A134 junction.

2.253 The Suffolk / Essex border with Colchester District is some 7 miles to the south-east along the A134 from the proposed site entrance. Only a proportion of the envisaged 60 daily trips would travel that far, allowing for the likelihood of deliveries to customers in other directions. In view of the amount of traffic already crossing the County boundary along the A134, I consider the impact on Colchester District would be negligible. In any event, customers in Colchester District area would be served by lorries from another quarry if not the one proposed at Chilton, and hence the net effect may be absolutely minimal.

vi. Impact upon leisure and recreation

2.254 At my site visit I saw that the footpath crossing the site is well used, and presumably appreciated locally as part of a recreational route. The footpath would have to be diverted during the course of the working, if only temporarily. At the inquiry the MPA said that an alternative off-road route could be found for the footpath, but no details were given of where this might be. Without this information it is not possible for me to assess whether an alternative route is feasible or if it would be an adequate substitute. However, there are separate procedures to cover the closure and diversion of footpaths where the suitability of an alternative could be challenged. The loss of the present route may be regrettable but, in the overall balance of considerations, I do not consider this would be so significant as to warrant dismissing this site from the Plan’s proposals.
vii. Impact upon the water environment

2.255 Most of the concern on this subject is related to the possibility that the working would result in the lowering of the water table locally. As stated above (paragraph 2.242) the workable deposit lies, for the most part, above the water table and hence there should be no de-watering of the site with no consequent reduction in the level of the water table. In which case, there would be no effect upon property in the wider area. However, an assessment of the impact on ground and surface water is likely to be required before development would be permitted, and this would examine the likely consequences on site drainage and flooding on the B1115. The study would cover not only the likely effect, but may also show how to avoid or deal with any problems which may be envisaged. I do not see this as an overriding concern.

viii. Effect on local ecology

2.256 There are no formally protected wildlife habitats on or adjacent to the site. Therefore there would be no direct effect on significant habitats. I acknowledge that corn bunting have been spotted on and around this site, but only one sighting was actually on the proposed quarry site. From the evidence given by the MPA, the survival of the species is dependent more upon agricultural practices relating to pest control and crop types. At my site visit the site was growing broad beans and rape, neither of which would seem to be the natural habitat of corn bunting. The use of the site as a quarry is therefore unlikely to make a significant difference to the survival of this species in this area.

2.257 The MPA have acknowledged the need to conserve the great crested newts in PDA43, which has satisfied the concerns of English Nature on this point.

2.258 Of the other species mentioned in the objections, none are unique to this site and neither may a quarry be incompatible with their survival. On the evidence before me, in the context of the whole County, I do not consider that taking this relatively small area would seriously jeopardise the survival of any of these species in Suffolk.

ix. Agricultural impact

2.259 No detailed information has been given to me of the quality of the agricultural land on the site, other than a general comment that it is thought to be in Grades 2 and 3 of the Agricultural Land Classification. If this is so, then the site includes some of the best and most versatile agricultural land. However, this does not constitute an overriding objection to the development of the site as a quarry; mineral working is not incompatible with the retention of good quality agricultural land. Government advice in MPG1 (CD.A11) and MPG7 (CD.A16) is that land can be successfully restored to agriculture after mineral working with no loss in soil quality. This requires careful handling and storage of soils, and a proper regime of aftercare once the stored soils have been respread. These matters are covered by Policy SMLP4(a). SMLP4(c), SMLP4(d) SMLP4(f) and SMLP4(k) (this last would become SMLP4(j) if my recommendations in Part 1 of this report are accepted). I see no reason why these safeguards should not be relevant or successful on this site. Following restoration and aftercare the site would then be in a condition capable of supporting food production again.
2.260 As it would not be necessary to de-water the site as part of the operations there would be no effect upon crops on surrounding land.

2.261 Evidence given at the inquiry was that the prevailing wind was from the south and south-west; that is, the wind blows from the garden centre towards the site. In which case, there would be a reduced risk of dust affecting the garden centre’s interests. Also, the glasshouses are more than 200m from the site boundary. I have concluded that beyond 175m the impact of dust would not be significant, although I accept there could be some deposition beyond this distance. Because the main deposit on the site is clay bound, the likelihood of dust arising is considerably reduced. Furthermore, to screen the working in the longer views from the south, it is probable that a bund would be constructed along the southern boundary of the site, which would also serve to contain wind-borne dust. In the event that experience showed that appreciable amounts of dust were blowing over the garden centre, appropriate dust control measures could be employed at the quarry during periods of greatest risk. Taking these points together, I consider the garden centre would not be seriously affected by dust generated on this site.

2.262 The issue of opportunities for tenant farmers is an ownership and tenure issue rather than of land use planning. This is a social or political matter, consequently I do not consider it is for me to comment upon this in this report, other than to say that it does not constitute a major planning objection and hence has little bearing upon the matters before me. It may be that detailed considerations of tenure would need to be examined as part of the application process.

x. Restoration / reclamation

2.263 The SMLP gives the envisaged after-use of the site as agriculture / forestry at a lower level. That is, the restoration of the site does not rely upon the importation of fill materials. If the site were seen to be an appropriate location for infilling this would be subject to separate consideration where issues such as litter, smell, contamination, pollution and health risks would be examined. As infilling does not form part of the proposals of this Plan it is not a matter for me to comment upon.

xi. Other matters

2.264 Future extensions of the quarry would be examined in detail and on their own merits as and when they are brought forward. The effect of such extensions on the amenities of those living in the vicinity would be examined in detail at that time. However, no extension, nor the possibility of any such extensions are raised as part of this Plan and hence it is not a matter for me to comment upon any further.

2.265 Policy SMLP2(a) gives the MPA the policy context to restrict the hours of working at a quarry in appropriate circumstances. Should an application be made for working this site, this is a matter which the MPA should take into consideration, taking into account the proximity of the site to residential areas and whether there would be the likelihood of unacceptable disturbance arising outside usual working hours, either from operations on the site or from associated traffic over the wider area.
2.266 The need to develop the quarry is a consequence of considering the economic needs of the whole County and not just the local area. It may be the locally held view that the quarry would have a disproportionate environmental impact, but it is likely that residents of the local villages benefit from different types of development elsewhere in the County where local residents consider they have been imposed upon. Whilst I may sympathise with local anxieties, it is my view that the matters of concern may not arise or can be adequately addressed through planning controls to the point where no undue harm would be caused to local interests.

2.267 Any allocation in this Plan or subsequent permission for working allocated sites cannot disregard statutorily protected services. I have no reason to believe that the interests of British Gas Transco would be jeopardised by the proposal to develop a quarry on this site. The site design and planning application process would ensure consultation takes place with the pipeline company and that proper safeguards are incorporated into the eventual working scheme.

2.268 Paragraph 64 of PPG1 (CD.A1) advises it is Government’s view that the planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of an individual. The basic question is not whether an individual would suffer financial loss, but whether their amenities would be unacceptably affected. However, it is often the case that amenity considerations can affect the value of property. It is my view that, given the powers available to the MPA under general planning legislation and the controls available through the SCSP and the SMLP, development of this site would not give rise to unacceptable harm to the amenities of those who live in the vicinity of this site. This does not cut across an individual’s rights to seek compensation under other legislation, nor to seek a reduction in Council Tax, where either course of action is justified.

2.269 Minerals planning is not a concern of Babergh District Council; this is a matter for the County Council as MPA. Although applicable within the Babergh area, the policies and proposals of the SMLP do not have a direct bearing or influence upon the review of the District Local Plan. Consequently, the SMLP will not prejudice the review of the District Local Plan.

Conclusions

2.270 Drawing these points together, I conclude that there is a need to identify new sand and gravel sites in the SMLP and that the deposit identified here is of sufficient quality to meet the criteria for new sites set out in the SMLP. Whereas the site would be visible in the landscape, this is not an area of especially protected landscape quality and much of the working area and installed plant could be screened during the course of the operations. The amenities of the local residents would be largely unaffected or could be adequately protected. Whereas the A134 is seen as a busy road it is appropriate for HGV traffic, the amount of additional traffic generated would be quite low, and would not add significantly to the risks of accidents or congestion. The evidence given was that a safe access could be constructed onto the main road. Because the workable deposit stands above the level of ground water, there would be no pumping and no associated lowering of the water table to threaten agriculture or buildings. It is my view that other concerns raised are either not likely to materialise or can be adequately controlled through the policies of the SMLP or conditions on a planning permission. Consequently, I do not consider the site should be deleted from the Plan.
2.271 Whilst I support the inclusion of the spirit of PDAs 98 and 99 I consider minor rewording is necessary to make them more easily understood, and indicate that a planning obligation may not be necessary (in that other arrangements may be more appropriate) to cover the cost of constructing the access.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.272 i. The figure of 1.8 million tonnes given for the site yield in Table 10 on page 54 and for Estimated Resource given under the listed details for Site Reference Number P14 on page 88 be deleted and replaced by 1.0 million tonnes

ii. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA52(part) as it affects the Main issues listed for site P14 on page 89, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

iii. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA43, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

iv. The SMLP be modified by including the following in the section on "Issues Arising" for site P14 given on page 89:

[Lorry routing: before planning permission is granted, a voluntary agreement will be sought to control the route quarry traffic will take. The County Council considers that quarry traffic access should be onto the A134, with no quarry traffic allowed to use the C714 Valley Road, and the C732 which runs between Cornard Tye and Great Cornard. The only exceptions which will be permitted being for deliveries to Cornard Tye, Sackers Green, Great Greys or Newton Leys.]

iv. The section on "Issues Arising" for site P14 given on page 89 be modified by the inclusion of the following:

[Improvement to the highway: access to the site will be off the A134 via an access road and priority junction with right hand turning lane, constructed by the developer.]
If necessary, this will be the subject of a planning obligation under which the cost of constructing the access would be met by the developer.

INSET MAP 24

Objection Nos. See list annexed to this section of the report (Annex 4).

Support Nos. 0578 Brett Gravel Limited; 1030 P I Dunn

2.273 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Demand for the mineral

- The site would provide only a very small proportion of the County’s and region’s demand.

ii. Quality and quantity arguments

- It is doubtful that the quality of the material would meet the minimum geological criteria set in the SMLP. It is extremely important that the minimum criteria are strictly adhered to.

- Restricting mineral extraction to the area north of the Layham-Shelley parish boundary might reduce the amount of material to be extracted to a maximum of about 450,000 tonnes i.e., 50% of the estimated tonnage of the larger area.

iii. Effect on living conditions and village amenity

- In this rural area any form of mechanical working will act as a noise pollution.

- There is enough noise coming from the pit already. Complaints over the present operations have not been satisfactorily resolved.

- The site would generate noise nuisance from machinery and vehicular traffic.

- The site is located adjacent to Stour Valley Conservation Area, above the village of Layham and adjacent to Polstead Heath. Access to suitable main roads i.e., A12, A14 is not easy, and hence many villages en route would be disturbed.

- The site extends right to the boundary of Ivy Tree Farm, and the proposal appears to be an unwarranted intrusion into the amenity associated with this property.
- The community looks forward to the end of the existing planning permission, they do not want another one.

- Assurances should be secured through the use of conditions or planning obligations to maintain satisfactory access and routing and that progressive restoration is carried out.

- It would not be possible to maintain a 200m stand-off zone if the parish boundary was taken as the limit of working.

- Bunds formed south of the parish boundary would obstruct views out from Ivy Tree Farm.

- The storage of overburden and the formation of bunds must be north of the tree line in the environmental zone between the trees and gravel extraction, the cross-hatched area (23% of the site) should be excluded completely from site P29.

- Preclusion of mineral extraction from any part of P29 to the south of the Layham / Shelley parish boundary is premature in advance of the preparation of a detailed scheme of working. It is considered that minerals could be worked from parts of this area without damaging the mature tree belt and without affecting the residential amenity of Ivy Tree Farm. Detailed consideration should be given to the method of working, storage of burden and bunding arrangements before a limitation is put in place.

iv. Highways impact

- Whilst Site C7 is constrained to using the existing access to the A1071; such a restriction has not been specified for Site P29. All vehicular access should be via the A1071 and the purpose built access road currently used. Other than the existing access road to the A1071, the other local roads in the area are totally inadequate for intensive use by HGVs.

- There would be too many lorries using unsuitable roads. Local roads have already been damaged by lorries.

- There could be an unreasonable increase in lorry traffic on the A143 if production was significantly above present levels.

- There would be untaxed and uninsured vehicles crossing Popes Green Lane.

v. Effects on the water environment

- The Environment Agency should be consulted prior to the inclusion of the site in the Plan to establish whether or not there will be a detrimental effect on groundwater resources.

- The boreholes serving Ivy Tree Farm and Ivy Tree Cottage would be adversely affected.
vi. Effect on the landscape

- This is an area of great natural beauty. It would not be worth spoiling it for these low quality deposits.

- The line of mature trees across the site only partially marks the parish boundary between Layham and Shelley. At least the eastern half of this boundary through P29 comprises only one tree of any quality.

- The site abuts a Special Landscape Area and development would therefore seem to be in conflict with Structure Plan Policy MP11.

vii. Agricultural impact

- The site is all Grade 2 agricultural land. An essential characteristic of land of this grade is the free draining nature of the soil, due to the mixture of sand, clay and gravel. When the sand and gravel is removed, the soil is no longer free draining and therefore it would be an irreversible loss of some of the best and most versatile agricultural land. This is contrary to Policy SMLP4(a) and (b).

viii. Restoration

- The Section 52 agreement currently in force requires the present site to be restored by 30 June 1998 - such restoration would eliminate any access from Site P29 to the processing plant area and to the link road with the A1071.

- The Section 52 Agreement should be upheld in full and in the spirit in which both parties agreed to it, or make a variance allowing partial restoration to agricultural use as legally bound, and the variance being the transport of mineral rising from Site P29 across the land covered by Section 52 Agreement.

- In order to ensure that Layham gravel pit does not continue indefinitely, if this site is approved it must be worked and returned to agricultural within two years from the approval of planning permission or by 2001, whichever is the sooner.

- The land is classified as Grade 2, therefore subsequent restoration of the site to the present grade could prove impossible - this is in contravention of the requirements of permission under the Suffolk Structure Plan Policy MP12.

- The considerations do not preclude disposal of refuse from commercial premises such as hotels. This would attract scavenging birds to the detriment of local breeds and promote the infestation of flies and vermin.

- No one can guarantee that the cell lining of the site will not puncture or break down over time.

- Category 2 waste material will degrade producing leachate and a risk of pollution to the aquifer.
ix. Other matters

- The value of properties in Layham would be affected.
- The site would only be 10.83ha as a consequence of having to meet the geological criteria.

Inspector’s considerations

2.274 The MPA propose to change the Plan as it affects this site. PDA38 (CD.B5) proposes to change the area of the site from 11.7ha to 11.4ha. PDA52(part) (CD.B5) proposes to change ‘powerline’ to two words. The proposed changes have been open to public consultation and have not attracted counter objections. The proposed changes are minor corrections and I consider the Plan should be modified accordingly.

2.275 Further changes have been proposed. PDA96 (CD.B33) proposes to amend the yield of the site from 0.7mt to 0.45mt, and PDA97 (also CD.B33) introduces a reference to the need to continue use of the present access to the site from the A1071. Neither of these proposed changes have been open to full public consultation, but they have been available as core documents of the inquiry and I have not been made aware of any adverse comments. I will take these proposed changes into account in my consideration of these objections. PDA38 and PDA96 were consolidated under PDA107(part) (CD.B28), without changing any further details.

2.276 I turn now to consider the points of objection.

i. Demand for the mineral

2.277 The SMLP is only able to identify sufficient supplies of sand and gravel to meet the County’s share of the regional apportionment through identifying several sites. With some 16 sites identified in the Plan (and also subject to any further recommendations of mine), every site contributes only a relatively small proportion. This is not an argument to justify omitting an otherwise viable and acceptable site.

ii. Quality and quantity arguments

2.278 The evidence submitted by Mr S R Wakerly, but not examined at the inquiry, was accepted as being a reasonable analysis of the both the quality and quantity of the deposit in this site. From the details provided, I accept that the site exceeds the minimum criteria set in the SMLP. Mr Wakerly’s evidence was also accepted that to the north of the Layham / Shelley parish boundary some 506,000 tonnes could be extracted (say 0.5mt), and to the south of the boundary (ie the "hatched area") would yield some 87,000 tonnes, allowing for adequate margins. These figures are different from those introduced by PDA96 and, subject to the considerations below, I consider the details should be revised to show a potential yield of 0.5mt.
iii. Effect on living conditions and village amenity.

2.279 Mineral working does generate noise, dust and can give rise to disturbance over a wider area beyond the immediate surroundings of the site. However, there is advice in the MPGs and other published research and advice, on what can be generally be regarded as acceptable levels of disturbance and how operations can be controlled to ensure the acceptable limits are not exceeded. These controls are carried through into the general policies (SMLP1 - SMLP5) of the Plan.

2.280 There are residential properties in the area around the site, but these are, for the most part, scattered and at some distance. The closest are those around Ivy Tree Farm and Wynncoll’s Farm. I am satisfied that the amenities of the occupants of these properties can be adequately protected if the scheme of working for this site follows the guidance on noise and dust control, and these are carried through into enforceable measures either in the approved application or in conditions attached to a planning permission. I also consider that the amenities of those living in the wider area can be adequately protected; that is, the noise and dust levels can be kept within the limits given in the relevant guidance. Having said that, the guidance given in MPG11 on controlling noise at surface mineral workings, acknowledges that soil stripping and bund-formation can be noisier than the extraction operations, but this is generally only a short-lived stage and generally acceptable limits are also given for this.

2.281 Whether 200m is needed to achieve this protection is more a matter for assessment at application stage, taking into account the individual circumstances of each site and its surroundings. In my general review of amenity protection at the start of this section, I accept that 175m could be a generally accepted stand-off margin, which may be either extended or reduced depending on the sensitivity of nearby premises and the efficacy of the control and amelioration measures which could be put in place. However, the 175m separation would exclude a significant proportion of the area south of the parish boundary.

2.282 At my site visit I saw that some windows and the garden area of Ivy Tree Farm looked out over the site. However, under planning legislation there is no right to view over neighbouring land. Providing development does not seriously harm the amenities of those living in houses nearby - for example through noise, overshadowing or through being unreasonably overbearing, there can be no justification on residential amenity grounds to the formation of screen bunds in the area between the parish boundary and Ivy Tree Farm. In any event, such bunds would be only temporary, unlike (say) a farm building or planted woodland which might quite legitimately be located on the land to the north of this property.

2.283 The extracted material would be processed through the existing plant and vehicles would use the present site access and therefore no greater level of disturbance would be caused in the wider area.

2.284 Whilst I accept that those who live in the area would prefer there to be no further working, if the site can be worked within limits of noise, dust and other disturbance which, through objective analysis are recognised as being within tolerable limits for the majority of people, individual preferences cannot be regarded as an overriding objection.
iv. Highways impact

2.285 As mentioned above, the extracted material would be processed through the present plant and vehicles would use the present access. This being the case, both the volume of traffic generated and the roads used by associated vehicles would be much as at present. I do not consider there is likely to be an undue increase of traffic running through to the A134, nor would other local roads be used by quarry traffic. At the inquiry evidence was given by the MPA that the amount of damage to roads in the vicinity of the quarry was within acceptable maintenance limits. It was said in evidence that the condition of the roads is regularly monitored by the County Council, and repairs are made where and when necessary. I have no reason to believe this is not so, and I accept that roads are repaired once they fall within the criteria used by the highway authority to indicate when they are necessary.

2.286 Whether any vehicles using a public highway would be untaxed and uninsured is not a land use planning matter.

v. Effects on the water environment

2.287 I have no reason to believe that the Environment Agency would not be consulted on any planning application made on this site as a matter of course, nor that the views of that Agency would be ignored or overlooked if there was a perceived threat to the water environment. In a letter dated 14 February 1997 (appended to Mr Codd’s proof of evidence), the Environment Agency state that the borehole for Ivy Tree Farm is geologically isolated from the sand and gravel under this site and that extraction is very unlikely to have any impact on the water levels in the borehole. No evidence has been put forward to refute this.

vi. Effect on the landscape

2.288 I accept that this site is seen by local residents as an area of peaceful and attractive countryside, but it is not included within an area covered by specific landscape protection policies, although it is immediately adjacent to an area of special landscape value. However, even if the site were within the SLA, this would not necessarily rule out mineral extraction. SCSP Policy MP10 would allow working in an SLA where there is proven need for the mineral and where the special qualities of the site and its surroundings were not permanently and adversely affected. Site P29 would be developed as an extension of the present quarry, and MP11 accepts extensions can be less damaging environmentally than an entirely new working. I have concluded in Part 1 of this report that there is a need for sites to be identified for the MPA to be satisfied the County’s share of the regional apportionment of sand and gravel production can be met.

2.289 The boundaries of the site are generally well screened by established trees and hedges and I accept that these can be adequately augmented by advance planting where necessary. Advance planting may be carried out in front of future screen bunds, to soften the visual impact. The site would therefore be largely screened from view from public vantage points. The site could be restored to agriculture, albeit at a lower level, but to a landform which could be sympathetic to the surroundings. The hedges and trees across the site could be retained and therefore there would be no permanent loss of landscape quality, albeit some of it remodelled.
2.290 Having said that, the remnants of the planting along the parish boundary are notable features in the landscape and although, in my opinion, not outstanding features these could be usefully retained to help screen any new extraction areas and subsequently help assimilate the remodelled landforms into the wider area. This, together with the fact that there is only some 87,000 tonnes of material (about 6 months production) south of the parish boundary, would justify the view that the parish boundary should be the limit of the working area. However, I do not agree that screen bunds and stored materials would necessarily be unacceptable south of this line, subject to detailed consideration of heights, profiles, location and surface treatment.

vii. Agricultural impact

2.291 The soils on the site are apparently mostly Grade 2 under MAFF’s scheme of classification of agricultural land. The soils on the present quarry site are of a similar quality. In their letter of 6 June 1997 sent to Brett Gravel (and submitted in evidence by Mrs Owen), the ADAS service of MAFF confirm that the restoration of the present site is proceeding satisfactorily and that the land should be returned to a quality similar to that before extraction commenced. In my experience, this is not unusual. I consider it would be feasible to return site P29 to agriculture, and to a quality which was similar to that which presently exists. In which case, subject to proper and careful stripping, storage and reseeding of the soils, and a proper regime of after care, there would be no permanent and irreversible loss of some of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

viii. Restoration

2.292 As discussed above, the site is capable of being restored to agriculture at a similar quality to that which exists at present. Therefore there would be no conflict with SCSP Policy MP12.

2.293 Whereas there is a Section 52 agreement concerning the restoration of the present site, such legal agreements are not immutable. It was accepted at the inquiry that this could be varied to allow access from the present site into P29 without significantly disrupting the restoration of the original site.

2.294 The deposit under the site is, of course, finite hence the development here will not go on indefinitely. I am not sure why 2001 (or a 2 year extraction programme) would be more acceptable than any other arbitrarily selected date. The material can only be worked at a rate which the plant can handle and which sales can support. Evidence at the inquiry was that this deposit represented about four years production. An accelerated programme could prove more disruptive if the material has to be extracted at twice the present rate, with more machinery and longer hours necessary, and unsold material stockpiled for some two years.

2.295 The SMLP is not concerned with waste disposal. The Plan envisages the site being restored to agriculture at a lower level, which would not require the importation of any fill material. Consequently, the concerns over the integrity of cell linings, pollution of ground water and birds and vermin are not justified.
ix. Other matters

2.296 The area of the site, as defined in the Inset Map, would remain the same, irrespective of how much of it was worked as an extraction area.

2.297 The MPA have correctly referred to the Government’s view on the role of the planning system, as expressed in PPG1 (CD.A1). The potential effect of new development on the value of a property is not a legitimate land use planning concern. What is of concern is the effect upon an individual’s amenities. However, property values can be influenced by a perceived impact upon the amenity of a property. It is my view that adequate measures can be put in place to protect the amenities of those living in the vicinity from an unacceptable level of harm.

Conclusions

2.298 Taking all of the above points together, I consider that there is an established need for further sand and gravel sites, and that this site would make a useful contribution to the County’s overall need. I consider that a scheme to work the site could be devised which gave adequate protection to the living conditions of those living in the vicinity, and that it could be worked and restored with no undue or permanent effect on the landscape or agriculture. Consequently, I conclude that the site should remain as a proposal in the Plan, but that minor modifications should be made to the supporting details.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.299 i. The details given for Site P29 preceding Inset Map 24 be modified to show:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated resource</th>
<th>0.5mt saleable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area of site</td>
<td>11.4 hectares</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ii. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA52(part), in so far as it affects site P29, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

iii. In the list of main issues affecting Site P29, immediately preceding Inset Map 24, the following addition is made:

[Under "Issue Arising"]

[Under "Policy Response"]

Continued use of access directly to A1071 SMLP3(b)

will be expected
Objection No. 1137 Suffolk Preservation Society

Summary of objection

2.300 Development of this site would result in the loss of a public right of way, dramatically increase traffic on the Needham Road, affect the wildlife and surrounding woodland, reduce the quality of life for those living to the north and east of the site.

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.301 At the time the draft SMLP was placed on public deposit the site had been granted planning permission. Consequently, and following the information given in paragraph 5.1.5 of the SMLP, the inclusion of this site is for information only. It is beyond my remit to consider any possible revocation of a planning permission already granted.

RECOMMENDATION

2.302 No modifications be made to the SMLP in response to this objection.

Objection No. 0682 Redland Aggregates Ltd

Summary of objection

2.303 The SMLP gives an incorrect name for the site.

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.304 The MPA propose to change the Plan by correcting the name of the site to Darmsden Hall (PDA47 - CD.B5). The proposed change has not attracted counter objections. I consider the proposed change entirely meets the concern of the objector and the Plan should be modified accordingly.
RECOMMENDATION

2.305 The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA47, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

INSET MAP 29

Objection No. 0446 English Nature

Summary of objection

2.306 The planning permission does not state that the site shall be restored to agriculture. The pit has geological exposures of national importance and it is appropriate for part of the site to be restored with a geological conservation end-use.

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.307 Whether the planning permission specifies the end use of the use is not entirely clear from the information before me. The details given on page 99 of the Plan clearly state that the after-use will be agriculture.

2.308 The end date given for this site is 2042, although I have not been told the date of the planning permission, and hence it is not clear if this is classified as a ‘Phase I’ or a ‘Phase II’ site under the Environment Act 1995. However, on the assumption that the site has an operational life longer than 31 October 1998, the planning conditions attaching to the permission will be reviewed by the MPA, presumably drawing upon the policies of the SMLP. In which case, the form of restoration can be reconsidered at that time, to see if it is appropriate or desirable to restore all or part of the site for geological conservation purposes.

2.309 In my view, this is a matter which can be dealt with through discussions between the MPA, the landowner, the site operator and the objector. I do not consider this to be a matter which is dependant upon the SMLP and its policies.

RECOMMENDATION

2.310 No modifications be made to the SMLP in response to this objection.
Objection Nos. 0023 Mrs M P Nicholls; 0154 Mr J Pratt; 0155 Mrs A E Pratt; 0156 Mr J R Gibbs; 0157 Mrs B I Gibbs; 0384 Cullen Family; 0419 Mr A E Eaton; 0453 Mrs A Fitzmaurice; 0468 W A P Everitt; 0505 Mr F E & Mrs N J Cooper; 1000 Miss A Cullen; 1001 Nettlestead Parish Meeting; 1139 Suffolk Preservation Society; 1315 Mr K C Southall

Support No. 1013 Mid Suffolk District Council

2.311 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Need for the mineral

- Countryside will be destroyed in the name of commercial interests and profit.

ii. Effect on residential and village amenities

- Dust will be blown on to cars and houses.
- The development would adversely affect the residents of Nettlestead by reason of noise, dust and oil pollution.

iii. Effect on the character of the area

- There will be more noise and traffic on our quiet country lanes.
- Large vehicles employed on the site will detract from the area.
- The proposed extension will destroy the peace and tranquillity of this beautiful spot.
- The Nettlestead-Baylham road will eventually be destroyed.
- The development would be a further encroachment into unspoilt countryside.
- The Plan should ensure the extensions to the existing site cause minimal further impact on the surrounding area.
- Public footpath Nettlestead No.4 would be lost.
iv. Landscape impact

- It is an area of outstanding beauty and will be destroyed for ever.
- It would impinge upon a proposed Special Landscape Area.
- It would be scar on the landscape.
- There will be a loss of long established hedgerows and trees.
- The visual screen for site C13 and OP2 would be removed.
- There would be a permanent change in the landscape if restoration is to a lower level.

v. Impact on ecological interests

- It is a home for many rare species of birds, badgers, foxes etc.

vi. Effect on agricultural interests

- It would result in the loss of good quality agricultural land.

vii. Other matters

- Access to agricultural land would be severed.
- The loss of 23ha of an agricultural holding would disproportionately affect profitability.
- It would adversely affect the value of nearby properties.
- It is not certain if the illustrated boundaries would be the ultimate limit of extraction.
- The controls over hours of operation and screen planting for the current site are overridden and ineffective. There is no faith that effective control could be exerted over an extended site.
- The site is likely to be used for waste disposal, which will bring its own problems of litter, dust and smells.

Inspector's considerations

2.312 The MPA propose a minor change to the text which precedes Inset Map 32 in that the word 'powerlines' is amended to two words (PDA52(part) - CD.B5). The proposed change has been open to public deposit and has not attracted counter objections. I will take the proposed change into account in my consideration of these objections.
2.313 I turn now to consider the points of objection.

i. Need for the mineral

2.314 It is Government policy, as expressed in MPG10 (CD.A19) that adequate reserves should be identified to ensure continued production for the cement industry. Cement is a basic construction material, which is required in virtually every new development. It is manufactured from naturally occurring minerals which can only be extracted from where they exist in nature. With a continuing need for development it is inevitable that some areas of countryside will be affected in order to supply the cement industry. The effect on the countryside per se cannot be taken as justification to resist further clay extraction.

ii. Effect on residential and village amenities

2.315 At the inquiry it was accepted that dust could be adequately controlled through planning conditions and the use of on-site dust control measures. Whereas each site would have to be assessed according to the local circumstances, as a general rule, I have come to the view that 175m would be an adequate stand-off distance for protection from dust. Nettlesstead is about 1km to the south-west of the site, and Westleygreen Farm about 450m; well in excess of any likely fall-out of dust arising from the extraction of the clay from this site, even with the wind blowing from the north-east. Other houses are closer to the site, but the closest, Stone Cottages, Stone Farm and the group at Bayham Stone, are at least 100m from the boundary. Appropriate measures would have to be put in place to protect the amenities of those who live in these properties, either by drawing back the boundary of the extraction area, or through requiring the installation of suitable dust control measures whilst extraction took place in the vicinity of these properties.

2.316 Noise can also be adequately controlled by planning conditions, following the advice given in MPG11 (CD.A20). I do not consider the circumstances on this site would make noise control measures unworkable or ineffective. The reference to oil pollution appears to be a specific incident, rather than an unavoidable consequence of mineral extraction. In consultation with the Environment Agency, the MPA would be able to impose conditions requiring adequate containment for oil storage tanks to prevent the migration of any spillage into the groundwater.

iii. Effect on the character of the area

2.317 Working the site will introduce change and a degree of disturbance into the countryside, but the essential consideration is whether this would be to such a degree that it would be unreasonable or unacceptable. The development would be considered in the context of the general development control policies of the Plan (SMLP1 - SMLP5), which have been prepared to ensure that development would take place with the minimum impact on the surrounding area.

2.318 The working will be a continuation of the present operations on site C13, supplying the cement works at Great Blakenham. Therefore there need be no increase in the amount of traffic, or any associated noise, on the lanes in the area.
2.319 The site is reasonably well screened at the moment by roadside hedges, although views into the site might be possible from the south-west in the vicinity of Westleygreen Farm. However, if the development does go ahead, it is unlikely that extraction will need to commence until 2010. This gives the opportunity for advance planting to put in place and have time to grow to become effective in screening views into the site. Furthermore, if it is necessary, earth bunds could be constructed to offer more substantial screening. Because of the undulating nature of the countryside here, careful design and siting of the bunds could mean they are not seen as unduly intrusive features in themselves, particularly if there is some tree and shrub planting in front of them to break up the profile.

2.320 With adequate peripheral screening much, if not all, of the plant employed on the site would not be seen from public vantage points, except perhaps during the soil stripping and bund forming stages. However, these would be relatively short-term events. For the most part, plant would be screened either by the peripheral hedges and the bunds, and by the depth of the workings themselves as the extraction progresses.

2.321 Screen bunds and, to a lesser degree, hedges would act as noise attenuation. Together with controls over noise emissions from the site, calibrated to take account of the degree of exposure in noise sensitive locations, plus limits on working hours, the degree of disturbance would be minimised and should leave the weekends and evenings, ie the periods when people are most likely to be out in the countryside recreationally, undisturbed.

2.322 The proposals do not extend as far as the Nettlestead-Bayham road and there are no proposals in this local plan to go further to the west. Should there be proposals to further extend the workings beyond site OP2, the implications will have to be assessed in the light of the needs and operative planning policies at that time.

2.323 The public footpath would have to be diverted, but need not be lost altogether. I acknowledge that the present footpath is appreciated by local residents and visitors as a pleasant recreational walk. However, an alternative walk could be provided with a similar recreational value. It was accepted at the inquiry that the diverted route could be constructed to avoid or obviate unattractive conditions such as damp and muddy areas.

iv. Landscape impact

2.324 I acknowledge that the vicinity of the site is appreciated by residents and visitors as an area of pleasant countryside. However, it is not covered by any landscape protection policies, nor is it currently proposed to be. The boundary of the extension to the SLA proposed by Mid Suffolk District Council excludes this site and, indeed, the District Council have expressed their support for this site to be included in the SMLP.

2.325 Some 1.3km of trees and hedges across the site would be lost during the extraction phase. However, with the peripheries of the site being screened by hedges and, if necessary further planting and screen bunds, the loss would not be noticeable from public vantage points. Similarly, I do not consider there would be any views possible into C13/OP12 if, as would be necessary, the public footpath across the site is diverted. With progressive working and restoration there would be the opportunity to plant new hedges and trees across the site, with the first phases of the restoration being fairly well established by the time restoration commences on the last working area.
2.326 Because of the potential for good peripheral screening (see above), the extraction area need not be seen in the wider landscape. Restoration, including removal of the screen bunds, would be to agriculture, albeit at a lower level, with the opportunity to plant new trees belts and hedges, as appropriate. With careful attention to the design of the new landform, the site need not appear incongruous in the longer term after extraction has finished.

v. Impact on ecological interests

2.327 There are no identified sites of particular wildlife or botanical interest on the site. The extraction would disturb the area and, with the removal of some trees and hedgerows, some birdlife and other animals would be displaced, although they are unlikely to leave the area altogether. The development could also see the planting of new trees and hedges, either initially as part of the screening of the site, or later as part of the restoration. This would provide the conditions for new areas of wildlife interest to evolve. In my experience, quarry development is not necessarily incompatible with nature conservation. Indeed, evidence was given at the inquiry that there is a badger sett on the present quarry, site C13, and the quarry is part of the foraging area. Careful design of the restoration could create a wider variety of habitat for both flora and fauna, thereby ultimately enriching the ecological interest in the area.

vi. The effect on agricultural land

2.328 Neither the objector nor the MPA have provided evidence on the quality of the agricultural land. However, drawing on evidence given for other sites at the inquiry, and taking note of how sites have been restored in recent years, I accept that with proper care being taken over the stripping, storage and subsequent re-spreading of soils, the land can be returned to agriculture at a similar quality to that at present. Policy SMLP4(a), SMLP4(c), SMLP4(d), SMLP4(k) and SMLP4(l) would be relevant and, in my view, effective controls to ensure that there is no permanent loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

vii. Other matters

2.329 The direct effect of development on the management of land, either in terms of interruptions to access or the loss of part of a farm holding, is a detailed matter, and not of concern for an local plan. If the development goes ahead, a planning application would have to be made and, so far as such matters are of direct concern under planning legislation, they can be addressed at that time. Private interests between the affected farmers and the landowners may also be covered by tenancy agreements or other arrangements.

2.330 The ultimate extent of the working is a decision which can only be taken within the context of the prevailing circumstances. The MPA takes the view that the site would provide sufficient reserves to support production until about 2028. There is currently no reliable guidance as to what may be the needs of society at that time, nor is it possible guess what the planning policies would be to address those needs. This is a matter which would be addressed when the permitted reserves run out. If proposals to extend the quarry at that time were in conflict with the then current policies for protecting the countryside and local amenities, it is likely that no further working would be permitted. I consider it is beyond
the scope of this Plan to make a commitment on the ultimate extent of the workings so far into the future.

2.331 The MPA correctly refer to the Government’s policy on planning and property value, given in paragraph 64 of PPG1 (CD.A1). That is, the matter for concern is not whether owners of property would experience financial loss, but whether their amenities would be unacceptably affected. Having said that there is probably a close relationship between property value and amenity. In my view, there need be no undue impact upon the amenities of those living in the vicinity of the site.

2.332 Compliance with the present planning conditions was discussed at the inquiry and it was accepted by the objectors appearing that breaches of conditions on the present site had not been apparent to the general public in recent years. This indicates to me that the workings are capable of being adequately controlled to within acceptable limits. Given adequate resources to monitor the site, perhaps supported by a local liaison committee operating in partnership with the quarrelling company, the MPA and local residents, should there be breaches of conditions, these would be quickly noticed and remedied.

2.333 The SMLP is not concerned with waste disposal, and it is not indicated in the Plan that restoration of the site would depend upon the deposit of wastes. In which case, the objection does not address an issue raised by the Plan.

Conclusions

2.334 Drawing the above considerations together I conclude that there is a need to identify further reserves of clay for the cement industry locally. The proposed extension would have some impact on the character and appearance of the area, but the workings could, for the most part be successfully screened from view, and that the amenities of those living in the vicinity of the site could be adequately safeguarded. There would be no serious or permanent harm to agricultural and ecological interests. None of the other matters raised in the objections are sufficient to justify deleting this site from the Plan.

2.335 The proposed change (PDA52(part)) is uncontroversial and I consider the Plan should be modified accordingly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.336 i. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA52(part), in so far as it affects the text which precedes Inset Map 32. as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

ii. The SMLP be modified by the deletion of the fourth element under the ‘Issue Arising’ column on page 105 and its replacement by:

Safeguarding of residential amenity: Bayham Stone and Stone Cottages are situated to the north of the site, Hill Top Farm lies to the north of the future chalk working area working area. Extensive advance planting of trees and shrubs in the area between Bayham Stone and the site should be carried out. The extent of the area permitted for extraction on site OP2 should have regard to the
potential impact of dust on the occupants of these properties, either by maintaining an adequate stand-off distance, or by requiring the installation and use of effective dust suppression measures.

Objection Nos.  
0454 Mrs A Fitzmaurice; 0506 Mr F E & Mrs N J Cooper; 1138 Suffolk Preservation Society

Support No. 1016 Mid Suffolk District Council

Summary of objections

2.337 i. The excavation will give rise to noise and pollution, shattering the peace and quiet of our small community [0454].

ii. The excavation would affect the value of property [0454, 0506].

iii. The extension would give rise to noise and dust. The site is only 300m from ‘Highlands’ [0506].

iv. The excavation would result in the loss of public footpath Nettlestead No.4, which offer access to the countryside [0506].

v. The character of the countryside would be severely affected during working and would be changed irreversibly if restoration is to a lower level [0506].

vi. There are no assurances that the indicated boundary will be the ultimate extent of the quarry [0506].

vii. The Plan should clearly differentiate the limits of the existing site and the extension area [1138].

viii. The Plan should ensure that the extensions cause minimal impact to the surrounding area [1138].

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.338 First of all I should address a few points of fact raised by Mr Cooper. Using the plan which supported the MPA’s submissions to the inquiry, the site boundary is not less than 700m from Highlands, and Site OP12 does not affect the route of public footpath Nettlestead No.4.

2.339 The proposal in the SMLP is to identify a reserve of chalk. The chalk underlies clay and interburden, and planning permission already exists for extraction of the overlying chalk. In effect, the land is worked over twice; firstly for the clay and subsequently for the chalk. Therefore, in answer to the point raised by Suffolk Preservation Society there is no
difference between the boundaries of the existing site and the extension area. The MPA's submissions make it clear that the chalk face is advancing to the west, but the area for chalk working is dictated by where the clay had previously been extracted. Other than illustrating the overall site boundary, I do not think it either necessary or feasible to differentiate limits for the chalk extraction.

2.340 On the second point raised by the Suffolk Preservation Society, the objector has not specified where the SMLP has failed to ensure that the extensions would cause minimal impact to the surrounding area. The Inset Map identifies the extent of the site. On the basis that the general development control policies (SMLP1 - SMLP5) have been formulated to protect the interests of the countryside and local amenities, applying these to proposals to work within the site boundaries should be sufficient to minimise the impact on the surrounding area.

2.341 It is not clear what Mrs Fitzmaurice means by 'pollution', but I take it to refer to a concern over the potential for dust in the atmosphere. At the inquiry Mr Cooper accepted that dust from the chalk workings could be adequately controlled and this would not be a cause for concern. The closest residential properties are in front of the advancing quarry face, which means that noise will, to a large degree, be masked by the depth of the workings. In addition, specific noise limits and restrictions on working hours could be applied as planning conditions, calibrated to take account of conditions at the identified noise sensitive premises.

2.342 I agree with Mr Cooper that the working would change the appearance of the countryside irreversibly. However, this is the inevitable consequence of development, whether it is for quarrying or built development. The matter for real concern is whether the change would be unacceptable. The site is largely unseen from public vantage points. Some change to the appearance of the area will come about anyway when the presently permitted clay reserves are extracted. Once this has been removed, working the underlying chalk will probably be completely hidden from view from public vantage points by reason of the depth of the working. In my view, working within the general development control policies of the Plan (SMLP1 - SMLP5), it should be possible to work and restore this site to an acceptable standard, reinstituting agricultural land at a lower level, with appropriate tree and hedge planting, and creating suitable conditions for new wildlife habitats to evolve.

2.343 On the point raised by Mrs Fitzmaurice and Mr Cooper, the MPA correctly refer to the Government's policy on planning and property value, given in paragraph 64 of PPG1 (CD.A1). That is, the matter for concern is not whether owners of property would experience financial loss, but whether their amenities would be unacceptably affected. Having said that there is probably a close relationship between property value and amenity. In my view, there need be no undue impact upon the amenities of those living in the vicinity of the site.

2.344 Mr Cooper also seeks assurances over the ultimate extent of the working. In my view, that is a decision which can only be taken within the context of the prevailing circumstances. The MPA takes the view that the site would provide sufficient reserves to support production for 25 years; that is, until 2019. Taking the current guidance given in MPG10 (CD.A19) that the cement industry should have a landbank of 15 years, this means that the situation need not be reviewed until 2004. In my view, there is currently no reliable guidance as to what may be the needs of society at that time, nor is there any information on what the policies would be to address those needs at that time. This is a matter which
would be addressed when the permitted reserves run out. If proposals to extend the quarry at that time were in conflict with the then current policies for protecting the countryside and local amenities, it is likely that no further working would be permitted. I consider it is beyond the scope of this Plan to make a commitment on the ultimate extent of the workings so far into the future.

RECOMMENDATION

2.345 No modifications be made to the SMLP in response to this objection.

INSET MAP 33

Objection No. 1281 Ipswich Borough Council

Summary of objection

2.346 The SMLP introduces a degree of uncertainty over the scale and type of future development of the Wet Dock area. The notes pertaining to this site on page 107 should clarify that the information given only reflects the current activities and do not constitute proposals throughout the plan period.

Inspector's considerations and conclusions

2.347 Paragraph 5.1.5 of the SMLP states that 'C' sites already have planning permission and are listed for information only. In my opinion, this is a neutral position; whereas a further comment as suggested by the objector may be helpful, I do not consider it essential. It is not within the scope of the SMLP to consider the possibility of other types of land use. If a subsequent development plan document puts forward specific proposals for this site the latest document would, in accordance with Regulation 32 of the Town & Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations 1991, take precedence in the context of Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 in the consideration of a planning application for a new or alternative use.

RECOMMENDATION

2.348 No modifications be made to the SMLP in response to this objection.

Objections Nos. 0359 Wherstead Road Residents' Association; 0971 Mr C J Keeble; 0959 Mr R Smith; 0960 Mr F Hind; 0961 Mr H Kenyon
Summary of objections

2.349 If this site is used for processing minerals all the associated HGV traffic would have to use the main roads through Ipswich, many of which are residential. Of particular concern are Landseer Road, Nacton Road, Clarence Road and Wherstead Road which are already over-used by HGVs. There is congestion and disturbance to local residents from the noise of passing lorries, particularly in the evening and at night. Furthermore, the surface of the roadways is deteriorating. The Cliff Quay scheme could generate another 100+ HGV movements along these roads. The site should not be used for minerals processing until the East Bank Link, (Gainsborough Bypass) has been built.

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.350 The site has been receiving sea-dredged aggregates since the 1980s and hence there is an established minerals traffic from the dock. Indeed, to a limited degree, the SMLP relies upon there being landing facilities for sea-dredged aggregates. At the moment there are no restrictions on the volume of traffic from the docks, the routes it may take or times HGVs may pass through residential areas.

2.351 The Plan includes Cliff Quay as a new processing site, that is, in addition to the established landing site. The processing site has already received planning permission, subject to completion of a Section 106 agreement to control HGV traffic. The processing operation may increase the amount of HGV traffic from the docks, but the disturbance this may cause to residential areas has been recognised and acted upon by the planning authority. The draft agreement submitted to the inquiry shows two specified routes for the associated HGV traffic, neither of which show the use of Wherstead Road, Landseer Road or, apart from the extreme eastern end where it is entirely industrial or commercial in character, Nacton Road.

2.352 The objectors would prefer no further traffic through the residential areas until a bypass has been built to connect the docks directly to the A14. Although possible schemes have been discussed there is presently no firm proposal to build such a road. Whereas I appreciate the concerns of the local residents, and their wish for a bypass to divert all HGV traffic, in my view the HGV traffic generated by the aggregates processing site would not represent a significant or unreasonable increase in the proportion of such traffic on the routes leading to and from the docks. Consequently, this cannot justify deleting the scheme from the SMLP, or placing an embargo upon it until some form of relief road is built.

2.353 The objectors are concerned that HGV drivers would not adhere to the terms of the S106 agreement, and still travel along unsuitable roads through Ipswich. I accept that there is a significant doubt over whether a planning obligation is an appropriate and enforceable means of controlling lorry routes. However, evidence given at the inquiry was that such agreements have been effective elsewhere in the County. Notwithstanding my doubts over the enforceability of such agreements, I have no reason to believe a voluntary agreement for this site would be any less effective than for other sites across the County.

2.354 At my site visit it was noted that part of the site shown on the Proposals Map as C46 was fenced off and under development for another use. This has been acknowledged by the MPA and a post deposit amendment (PDA113 - CD.B36) has been submitted to show the smaller area for the minerals processing site. The proposed change has not been open to full public consultation but it has been available as a core document of the inquiry, albeit only
for a very short period. However, on the basis that it addresses a matter of fact, and for reasons of accuracy, I consider the Proposals Map should be modified to show the amended site boundary.

RECOMMENDATION

2.355 The Proposals Map (Inset Map 33) be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA113, as set out in the Consolidated List of Post Deposit Amendments CD.B36

INSET MAP 34

Objection and counter objections Nos. - see list annexed to this part of the report (Annex 5).

Support No. 1193 Harleyford Aggregates Ltd

2.356 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Demand for the mineral

- There is no need for the minerals from the site for Suffolk County Council to fulfil the Government’s landbank requirements.

- The actual demand for sand and gravel has diminished over the last few years and shows no sign of increasing.

- The Plan describes a long term drop in demand in Suffolk for sand and gravel, therefore it is unnecessary to remove extra. The Plan shows the sand and gravel needs in the County have been consistently over estimated.

ii. Quality and quantity arguments

- Data from the trail pits shows the site has a very low gravel content, less than 25%. This means the site is not economically viable.

- It is understood that there is serious doubt about the quality of the mineral deposit at Pannington Hall. It is potentially of a very low grade, failing below the minimum standard set by Suffolk County Council for the majority of the site.

- The gravel deposits on the site are very thin which would result in strip mining of a large area to obtain a relatively small amount of usable material.
iii. The effect on the landscape

- Mineral workings will be totally visible from the A137 creating an eyesore and blot on the landscape and make it a less desirable area in which to live or visit.

- With no overriding need for the mineral, concern is expressed locally over the resultant effect upon the rural setting, should the Plan go ahead.

- The area proposed is of particular scenic beauty and such a scheme would leave a hideous scar on the landscape.

- Strip mining over such a large area would be impossible to screen effectively and would have a visual impact.

- In landscape terms mineral workings, despite any attempt at concealment, would inevitably seriously detract from the rural character and natural beauty of the area, visually degrading this part of the Shotley Peninsular.

- Measures such as earth banks or tree planting may screen the workings but they would be alien features in the landscape and would themselves be intrusive.

- The scheme would create an environmental hazard to the surrounding attractive countryside which is regularly visited by many people from Ipswich and surrounding area.

- Some 30 trees and 2.8km of hedgerow would be lost.

iv. The effect upon village and residential amenities.

- It is not believed that the specific criteria as set out in the proposals impact matrix can satisfactorily be met. The site is 550 metres from the nearest village property and only 800 metres from the main village across open fields.

- The scheme would result in increased traffic passing the entrance to residential properties and along the already congested A137 to Ipswich.

- Lorries going to and from carrying gravel and later on rubbish to infill the site would be an eyesore and an added hazard to an already busy highway.

- The surface run-off from the quarry would carry mud over the roads, onto farm land and listed buildings

- The overall effect on the environment, of noise, dust and the general unsightly state is unacceptable.

- The south west prevailing wind towards the village would carry noise, smell and sand which will obviously emanate from the proposed workings.

- The prevailing south west wind will blow dust over Grade II listed buildings, namely Hubbards Hall, Bluegates and Pannington Hall and much of Wherstead Parish.
The dust will inevitably cause problems for asthma sufferers.

The proposed works will adversely affect the setting of the three Grade II listed buildings in the area namely, Pannington Hall, Bluegates Farm and Hubbards Hall Farm. Vibration from plant and machinery would be a further concern in respect of the risk of potential structural damage. To locate such works so close to these buildings cannot be justified under any circumstances. It is clear there would be a very substantial loss of residential amenity should the development go ahead.

The high level of noise that would be produced by the excavating machinery, plant and transportation would cause a considerable nuisance to the local residents and visitors to what is currently a quiet and beautifully unspoilt area.

Noise from mining machinery and the separation plant will create a nuisance for local residents and will probably be an increase above the ambient noise of more than 5dB which is clearly unacceptable.

The noise levels should be properly evaluated in relation to MPG11 guidance and bearing in mind the existing sound levels. The effectiveness of earth mounds should be evaluated in a downwind condition. Planning conditions should be used to set noise limits at nearest property.

Heavy goods vehicles on the main A137 are noisy.

Whilst reference is made to the safeguarding of residential amenity of properties at Pannington Hall Cottage and Bluegates Farm, no reference is made to Hubbards Hall Farm which is situated only 450m to the south west of the site and will be adversely affected by the proposals.

Exploitation of the northern part of the site would be visible in long views from a large area of the built-up part of Ipswich, be intrusive in views from the railway on an important approach to Ipswich, and result in the loss of a number of trees within the site. The slope of the site would preclude effective bunding and screening.

v. Highways capacity and safety issues

There would be increased heavy traffic on already inadequate local roads.

The proposed access to the site is poor. It is onto a bend on very fast stretch of the A137 which is likely to lead to a high incidence of accidents.

The access to residential properties is already dangerous, any increase in traffic whatsoever would make the road a death trap.

The traffic safety implications should be evaluated to ensure access / egress works fully comply with the national guidance - it doesn’t appear to at present. If the access / egress cannot be located adequately in relation to the junctions and bend, then the site is not feasible.
The C453 already carries heavy traffic from the village and south-west Ipswich, which has several schools. There is no means of access to the A137 for these areas other than via the C453. Although lorries will be banned from the village, the site is bound to generate a considerable volume of ancillary traffic, much of which is likely to use the village as an access route.

It would appear inevitable that heavy traffic would use Belstead Lane (C453) which is clearly unsuitable for this purpose.

It is recognised that any access to a mineral working will need to be of a high standard, and will often involve improvements to the existing highway. However, it is considered that an alternative access can be constructed onto the A137 near its junction with the A45. Whilst this suggested access may not be preferred, it is considered that the Plan should allow flexibility for an alternative access to be considered. Seeking an amendment referring to the possibility of an alternative access being located.

The village already has severe problems arising from blind bends and the absence of footpaths and street lighting; any increase in vehicular traffic can only worsen those problems.

Although there is to be a requirement for direct access to the A137 it is considered that, even with an under-road conveyor, there is likely to be cross-movement of vehicular traffic between the two parts of the site to be detriment of the users of the C453.

The proposed access for heavy vehicles onto the A137 will inevitably cause further hazards at this point at the end of the bypass. Any similar traffic using Belstead Lane (C453) will create additional dangers for residents in Belstead village.

Belstead Road and Bentley Road are two busy minor roads which are totally ill equipped for the amount of traffic already using them due to the opening of the Orwell Bridge. Belstead Road is narrow with passing places and unsuitable for lorries.

Congestion on the A137 in the vicinity of The Street, Wherstead, so close to its junction with the A14 would be detrimental to the area as a whole, and for the access to the Eastern Electricity offices in particular.

vi. The effect on leisure and recreation

The proposal would result in a loss of amenity to walkers through the need to divert footpaths.

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17 I have taken this to mean the A14.

18 I have taken this as a reference to Belstead Lane (C453).
The proposal would prevent reasonable access (ie, without being run over by a lorry!) to the existing footpaths and bridleways.

A riding school is situated in Bentley. Because of the almost total lack of bridleways in the area, riding occurs extensively in the country around the proposed development, in fact it is the place that we ride to, having spent a lot of time on the road to get there. Rides go out two or three times a week, more often in the holidays. To turn the area, or any part of it, into a semi industrial site would be a piece of crass vandalism beyond all belief.

The proposed works would affect the two public footpaths which cross the site and three bridleways which run along the site boundary. All of these are regularly used by the public in pursuit of quiet recreation. Whilst it is acknowledged these could be redirected and screened where necessary, it is clear this would still result in a significant loss of public amenity as they would, no doubt, be very different in character.

The Belstead Circular Walk runs along the boundary of P44 and must be adequately protected.

The value of the surrounding area as an amenity, especially for people on the southern side of Ipswich and surrounding villages must be respected and protected for this and future generations as one of the outstanding natural beauty and recreation.

Alton Water is a busy area for tourists and visitors with walkers going around the reservoir.

vii. Impact upon the water environment

The site is at the head of Alton reservoir which is the main supply to Ipswich and surrounding areas. It is likely that particulate fines from the gravel washing process and other pollutants, will percolate into Alton Water which is only 0.5Km down the hydraulic gradient.

Extraction might well have the effect of lowering the water table in an area which has suffered reduced rainfall in recent years.

The applicant should assess the impact of the proposal on water resources and water features, including springs, streams, lakes and licensed and unlicensed wells and boreholes.

The gravel washing process will require use of water, probably large amounts of groundwater, which would lower the water table and draw upon the water supply from the surrounding area including Ipswich's supply of Alton Water.

Reliance is placed on the natural level of water in order to keep lakes filled at the trout farm. Fish would suffer if water levels dropped.
The probable effect that the site would have on lowering the water table and the knock-on adverse effect that this would have on nearby springs / streams / wells, and in turn, on the local wildlife and woodlands if their water supply dries up.

PDA44 introduces an inconsistency over the consideration of water resources and water features and the need for an assessment of the impact. The approach adopted for this site is different from site P86 (PDA45). Clarification should be provided as to why, in the case of site P86, an assessment is only required if working is to take place below the water table, whereas in relation to site P44 it is required regardless of whether the working is wet or dry. It would seem reasonable to seek the amendment to PDA44 to be the same as PDA55 \(^9\) which it is believed more accurately reflects the concern of the Environment Agency.

If the soil around the workings is compacted there would be a risk of flooding at Pannington Hall Cottage and at Bluegates.

viii. Ecological impact

- Enjoyment is gained from seeing the wildlife eg fallow and roe deer that use the area and wish the habitat to be left undisturbed.

- Wherstead Wood and Heath are County Wildlife Sites. Wherstead Wood is some 1,600 metres in circumference, of which 900 metres actually abut the boundary of the site. Working the site is bound to have a serious effect on this habitat.

- Is it really acceptable to allow gravel extraction in an area which borders with not one but two country wildlife sites and is zoned by Suffolk Coasts and Heaths for protection?

- If this site were to go ahead it would seriously damage what is a popular area of outstanding natural beauty and abundant with wildlife.

- White Admiral and Purple Emperor Butterflies breed here and the area was noted and catalogued for its ecological importance in 1893 by Rev. F B Zincke.

- The land lies within the remaining area of Green Belt between the town of Ipswich and the villages of Belstead, Copdock, Bentley and Tattingstone. It also falls within the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths Project boundary whose aims and objectives would doubtless be contravened by an commercial development.

- It will upset wildlife in the area, on account of noise and pollution.

ix. Agricultural impact

- The proposal would involve the permanent loss of a very substantial area of Grade 2 agricultural land.

\(^9\) I have taken this to be a reference to PDA45 as PDA55 relates to Policy SMLP1(c).
There is a commercial farming business at Paddington Hall which totally surrounds the proposed site. Part of the business involves growing crops which are dependent on water. Mining away for a very poor gravel deposit on that area will have a very detrimental effect on the rapidly diminishing water table. This will restrict crop yields and these perhaps could become failures.

The extraction of low grade gravel from the site will destroy a large area of arable farmland.

Sporting rights (shooting) are held for the farm and also the right to roam on the proposed site.

Belstead Lane access point, is a main route for agricultural vehicles and staff to carry out their work. With the increase of traffic, namely huge lorries and mixing equipment it would make it almost impossible for the farm to function. Livestock is kept in that area and it is very important that access is never disrupted to maintain a high standard of animal welfare.

x. Restoration / reclamation

After processing, surplus sand will be left in massive heaps on the site to blow over the surrounding area.

There is no guarantee that the site will eventually be restored to its present condition when extraction has been completed. Spoil could be abandoned on the site or alternatively the site could be used for landfill and thereby create further hazards.

The eventual "restoration" of the site at a lower level at some time in the future (there is no time span specified for the duration of the works) would clearly not restore the land to an equivalent level of "natural" beauty. This area would remain permanently scarred, the site always being easily recognisable as a former mineral workings.

There are reservations that this would open the door to other forms of undesirable development or landfill.

Following mineral extraction, it is anticipated that agriculture would resume at a lower level. It is hard to believe that the anticipated production of this site would justify merely returning the area to agriculture at a lower level, but that the site would become a suitable place for landfill, creating even more destruction of the landscape with continued pollution in its many forms.

There is serious concern regarding the speedy return to agriculture and forestry use, avoiding the use of the old workings as a landfill site.

20 I have taken this as a reference to Pannington Hall.
xi. Other matters

- The SMLP devotes several pages to promoting the virtues of sustainable development. "The principles of sustainable development are now incorporated into much of the advice issued to MPs (see 1.3.1)" The Local Minerals Plan, however, chooses to omit the crucial part of a sustainable development strategy, namely the aim; "to minimise the production of waste and to encourage efficient use of materials, including the appropriate use of high quality materials" (see 1.5.3). Not only does this statement render a large section of the SMLP pointless, it also negates the sustainable development principle. The Pannington Hall proposal is clearly not an efficient development, nor is it an appropriate use of materials (or resources), it will however be an effective maximisation of waste.

- The area is of known archaeological importance with crop marks and a neighbouring region of medieval usage. In addition, the proposed area has had several historical finds, most notably a stone age "club spike" found in 1887 and a bronze age burial site (0.5km to the north of the proposed area) with important artifacts, discovered by Prof. J R Moir (1924). The finds are in the Ipswich Museum.

- Inclusion of the site in the Plan has already blighted property and would result in a significant loss in value. A subsequent grant of permission and workings (if any) would exacerbate the situation.

- The detrimental effect on properties in the vicinity of commercial development would be substantial, several of which are Listed. Claims for injuries would without doubt ensue.

- The need for a full archaeological evaluation of the site is emphasised, as the area is of known archaeological importance.

- Prevailing south west wind will blow dust over Wherstead Parish area also of known archaeological importance.

- It is known that operators' interest has been sought for this site unsuccessfully and it is significant that no operator is associated with the proposal.

- The proposed gravel workings border with the Norwich-London railway at the Belstead cutting. Extraction will, therefore, lead to denudation of the cutting slope and a dramatic reduction in slope stability.

- The SMLP states that "minerals should be transported across the road by means of a conveyor". It is considered that this comment does not allow full consideration to alternative methods of transport, and their likely impacts and costs. Whilst it is recognised that these matters should be addressed, it is considered that this should be done at the detailed stage, when the impacts can be fully considered rather than in a Minerals Local Plan. Objection is therefore made to this statement which should be amended to identify the fact that minerals need to cross the road, and that the mode of transport will need to be considered at the application stage.

- The evidence would suggest that the use of site P44 would be an inefficient development causing maximum disruption of the surrounding area for the extraction
of relatively small amount of minerals and therefore it should be omitted from the SMLP.

Inspector's considerations

2.357 The MPA propose to change the 'Main Issues' section relating to site P44 on page 110, which precedes Inset Map 34. PDA44 (CD.B5) introduces a need for an applicant to assess the likely ground and surface water impact of the proposed scheme. The proposed change has been open to full public consultation and has attracted one counter objection. The counter objection has been conditionally withdrawn on the basis that PDA76, relating to site P86, is incorporated into the Plan. I have recommended that the Plan is modified to incorporate PDA76, in which case, the conditionally withdrawn objection made by Harleyford Aggregates Ltd has been satisfied.

2.358 I now turn to consider the points of objection.

i. Demand for the mineral

2.359 In Part 1 of this report I examine the supply and demand situation for sand and gravel in Suffolk, with particular regard to the obligations placed upon the MPA by national planning policy as expressed in MPG6 and as interpreted through the working of the EAAWP. Whereas there may be factors which have influenced the level of production in the past, keeping demand for minerals below the projected levels, it may be equally as likely that other factors in subsequent years may increase demand. The production capacity figures agreed through the EAAWP take into account minerals imported into the County from other sources, for example marine dredged aggregates, crushed rock from coastal super quarries, and recycling.

2.360 The guidance given in MPG6 also takes into account trends in house and road building, as anticipated at the time the guidance was prepared. It may be that the predicted demands from these developments need to be revised, however this is something which should be done on a regional basis, guided by a national over-view. This process is due to commence in 1998. Without any firm information it would be both premature and impossible to make a rational adjustment in this local plan for Suffolk in isolation - it would be inappropriate to base this plan on nothing more than guesswork. Therefore, based on the best or most reliable information to date, I have concluded that the SMLP should make provision overall for some 10.68mt - as detailed in paragraph 3.7.4 of the Plan as proposed to be changed by PDA110(part) (CD.B34).

ii. Quality and quantity arguments

2.361 There was considerable discussion at the inquiry over the quality of the deposit under this site. Evidence presented on behalf of Mr G W Paul questioned the gravel content of the site, particularly in the southern portion. The evidence also questioned the extent of a viable deposit, again, notably in the southern portion of the site. Evidence brought to support the MPA's position acknowledged that the deposit was thought to be thin under the southern and eastern stretches of the southern part of the site. It also showed that the deposit differed in quality across the site, with the northern portion containing a higher proportion of gravel. The gravel content might be as low as 19% under some parts of the site. The information
available is drawn from the report published by the Minerals Assessment Unit of the British Geological Survey, and trial pit and more detailed borehole information carried out by Wimpey Environmental and an assessment by Wilding & Smith. Whereas there is scope for interpretation of the information, in view of the different levels of experience behind the expert witnesses for both sides, I prefer the evidence given for the MPA; that is, there is a resource of some 1.9mt, with an overall average gravel content of more than 25%. This would fall within the minimum quality criteria set out at page 141 of the SMLP.

iii. The effect on the landscape

2.362 Whilst I appreciate that local residents find the area attractive, it is not within an area of formally protected landscape. The Shotley Peninsular is not covered by Special Landscape Area policy, nor any other planning policies which recognise particular landscape qualities in this area.

2.363 The site is open to view from several places. It can be seen from the A137, the C453 and in the longer views from the southern edges of Ipswich. The most noticeable views are of the southern part of the site, with views from the A137 and, more noticeably, from the C453 where there is no hedge. There is a gap in the roadside hedge which gives a view over the northern portion from the C453, and users of footpaths Wherstead 24 and 34 would be able to see across the site. Other views, from bridleways Wherstead 30/41 and Wherstead 27 would be screened by established hedges and shrubs / trees.

2.364 The loss of trees and hedges would be noticed, particularly over the generally flatter southern portion. However, it is proposed to restore the land to agriculture at a lower level and new hedge and tree planting could be a requirement of the restoration scheme. The loss would therefore be temporary, although I acknowledge that it would take several years after restoration before the newly planted areas matured. To some degree, once the operation has begun, the depth of the workings would screen some of the operations from view, as they would take place below ground level and behind the working face. The plant area is likely to be partially screened by the trees on Wherstead Heath, plus the apparent height would be diminished by locating it on the quarry floor. Views over the site from the A137 and C453 could be screened by constructing earth bunds, possibly augmented by tree or shrub planting. I accept that the bunds themselves could be seen as incongruous features, but sympathetic modelling would minimise their impact. The two footpaths would have to be diverted, perhaps temporarily, whilst the working progressed across the site, and hence there would be no public views from these routes until the area had been restored.

2.365 Whereas the northern edges of the site can be seen from development on the southern edges of Ipswich, this would be in fairly long-distant views of more than 1.5km. From this distance I consider the impact would be quite small, and would be seen against the back-drop of Wherstead Wood. Adequate amelioration could be achieved by the use of screen bunds, advance planting and, by working in a northerly direction towards the outer edges of the site, the depth of the workings should screen much, if not all, of the working area and the on-site activity. The railway line passes the site in a cutting such that, allowing for stand-off margins around the edge of the working area, passengers on a train would not be able to see into the site over the rim of the cutting even if the site were worked to the boundaries indicated on the Inset Map.
2.366 Drawing these points together, I accept that there is likely to be some visual impact. There will be a loss of trees and hedgerows and the screen bunds would not appear as natural features in the landscape. However, there are no landscape features here which require particular protection. Views into and across the site can be screened and the visual impact of the screen bunds can be softened with careful attention to design and additional planting. The site is likely to be worked and restored progressively in stages, with the land returning to agriculture. The restoration scheme could include new tree and hedge planting. It is my view that, on the balance of considerations, the effect on the landscape would not be so great as to justify deleting the site from the Plan.

iv. The effect upon village and residential amenities

2.367 As discussed at the beginning of this part of my report, there is considerable advice and guidance on the likely effect of dust and noise arising from surface mineral workings, together with advice on how these nuisances can be controlled to within acceptable limits. Advice on noise and how to control it is contained in MPG11 (CD.A20). I have no reason to believe that the workings on this site would be so noisy as to be beyond the guidance given in the MPG. On the matter of dust, I have come to the conclusion that, in the absence of specific dust control measures, a separation of 175m would be sufficient to adequately protect local residents, both from undue disturbance from dust and from any health hazard associated with dust. This would include both the working areas and the internal haul roads.

2.368 The only properties which would fall within this 175m zone are Pannington Hall and Pannington Hall Cottage. Pannington Hall is unoccupied and hence would not be affected. If it were to be occupied during the course of the operations, either the boundary of the working area would have to be drawn back at least 175m from the property, or dust control measures would have to be used when workings were in the vicinity of the house. This could be controlled by planning conditions if necessary. A small strip if the eastern edge of the northern portion of the site would be within 175m of Pannington Hall Cottage, but similar measures could be applied here as for Pannington Hall to protect the occupants from adverse effects of dust. Mineral working is not a smelly activity and hence there should be no undue small nuisance.

2.369 Many of the objections relate to the effect of the associated traffic through the settlements. I examine the traffic generation in detail below, but suffice it say that the amount of additional traffic would be very small and, in the context of the amount of traffic currently on the A137, it would be insignificant. There would, on average, be one lorry trip every 15-20 minutes, divided into different directions at the quarry entrance, during the working day which would have a very small impact in terms of noise and visual disturbance in the settlements along the A137. The SMLP envisages the site being restored to agriculture at a lower level, without the need for infilling with waste and hence there should be no disturbance from HGVs after the extraction has finished. I comment on the effect on highway safety and traffic congestion in more detail below.

2.370 With regard to the effect upon listed buildings, I note that Babergh District Council, the local planning authority with responsibility for the care and protection of listed buildings, have not raised this as an objection. Being within 175m of the site boundary, Pannington Hall may be subject to greater deposition of dust, but this is not essentially harmful and would only be for a short period whilst working was carried out in this part of the site. Blue gates would be far enough away from the site for dust not to be a problem. Sand and
gravel working does not give rise to appreciable levels of ground vibration and hence there would be no effect from this on the listed buildings. Hubbards Hall is considerably further away from these other buildings. Being some 500m to the south-west, prevailing winds blow away from this building and towards the site. In my assessment there are unlikely to be any adverse effect on the fabric or structure of this building. Bluegates Farm is located about 200m away from the site boundary and at a lower level. There are trees, hedges and open farmland between this property and the site. In my view the setting of this building would not be materially harmed. Pannington Hall would be closer to the working area, but again, there would be adequate separation to respect the setting of this building whilst working passed through this part of the site.

2.371 A quarry is essentially a hole in the ground and hence, in the general sense, surface run-off would be towards the site, rather than out towards surrounding land and property. There could be the potential for mud to be carried off site at the site entrance and where material is carried over the C453 from the northern portion to the processing site. Careful attention can be given to these details at the planning application stage, to cover the gradient of the access roads to ensure that adequate drainage is incorporated, and to assess whether a wheel-wash facility at the site exit would be necessary.

v. Highways capacity and safety issues

2.372 The evidence given at the inquiry was that the quarry is likely to generate some 36 HGV trips per day (ie 18 into the site and 18 out), plus between 10 and 20 trips per day for staff and ancillary vehicles. This makes a total of between 46 and 56 trips per day. The proposed access is onto the A137, categorised in the Suffolk Lorry Management Plan as a Zone Distributor lorry route; that is, it is considered an appropriate road to carry HGV traffic. The road has a theoretical design capacity of about 13,000 vehicles per day, with measured flows of about 7,900 (on average), with the proportion of HGVs measured at 6.4% - considerably below the County’s average of 10% HGVs on Class A roads. None of this was seriously challenged at the inquiry. Therefore, the road is clearly capable of accommodating the anticipated additional traffic without giving rise to an appreciable increase in congestion.

2.373 The junction with The Street, Wherstead is some 2km north of the proposed site entrance. Staff travelling to and from the site at either end of the working day, assuming they all needed to use the A137/A14 junction, would be travelling in the opposite direction to the general commuting flow into and out of Ipswich, and hence would not add to the problem of queuing at the A137/The Street junction. With only some 18 HGV movements out of the site across the working day (about 1 every half hour on average), and not all of these likely to be using the A137/A14 junction, I do not consider this would materially add to the delays or dangers experienced at the A137/The Street junction during the peak periods or at other times during the working day.

2.374 The point of access proposed is onto the A137, between two bends, the northern bend being referred to as Oak Tree bend at the inquiry. Whereas the space available is limited, it was demonstrated at the inquiry that a safe access could be formed, to include a ghost island for right turning traffic, and could be constructed without needing to acquire third party land. There was debate as to whether the access would conform with DTp design guidance for new junctions; however, the guidance referred to (TD 42/95) is primarily for works on trunk roads, rather than ‘A’ class roads in general, and hence there is scope for
some flexibility, depending on local circumstances. The design which was put forward by
the MPA at the inquiry meets the guidance given in PPG13 (CD.AS) for a de-restricted road
in terms of visibility distances and set-backs. The design would be similar to, but better
than, the present junction of Belstead Lane (C453) and the A137 a similar distance to the
north of Oak Tree bend. This junction carries some 540 vehicles over a 10 period (1989
data) into and out of the C453, ten times as many vehicles as are likely to be using the
quarry access. The evidence at the inquiry was that there were no personal injury accidents
at this junction during the period 1993 - 1996 and it cannot be regarded as a dangerous
junction. Taking all of these points together indicates that the proposed access would not be
unsafe.

2.375 PPG13 also allows for some relaxation of the guidance if conditions allow. Here the
measured speed of vehicles exiting one of the bends - Oak Tree Bend - was given as 50 mph,
and the amount of traffic likely to be entering and leaving the site would be quite low. Both
of these circumstances would give the opportunity for some relaxation in the design standards
if, (say) for amenity reasons, it was considered parts of the roadside hedge should be
retained. With it being feasible to construct an acceptable access at the indicated location,
it is unnecessary to take alternative access locations into account.

2.376 I accept that Belstead Lane (C453) is not suitable for regular use by HGVs, and it
would be appropriate to discourage this. A lorry routing agreement could be sought to
control the routes taken by lorries from the quarry. In my view, such agreements are
difficult to enforce using planning legislation, but they may be appropriate on a voluntary
basis. Experience elsewhere across the County has shown that such agreements can be made
to work as overall, it is usually in the operator’s best interests to cooperate with the
preferences of the MPA. Also, it is common practice to set up a local liaison committee
where representatives of the local community discuss with the quarry operators and the MPA
matters of concern and how they may be addressed. It is possible that such a committee
could be an appropriate mechanism to deal with abuses of inappropriate roads.

2.377 Even if it all used Belstead Lane, which is unlikely, the amount of ancillary traffic -
at some 10-20 trips per day, should not prove to be an unreasonable increase over the
present use of the lane (ie 3.7% increase on 540 trips over a ten hour period). In view of
the fact that these vehicles are more likely to be cars and light vans, I do not consider this
would represent an unacceptable deterioration in terms of either capacity or highway safety
for the present users of the C453. With the plant site likely to be located on the southern
portion of the site, careful consideration has to be given to the means of transporting
extracted material from the northern part of the site to the processing area. An under-road
conveyor may be the most appropriate means of avoiding conflict with users of the C453.
However, I consider this is a detail which should be examined at application stage.

2.378 Taking a wider view of the effect of the quarry traffic, with only some 36 HGV trips
and another 20 ancillary vehicles generated per day, I do not consider this would represent
a significant increase in the potential risks for pedestrians or other highway users along the
A137 and through local villages. Clearly, the further away from the quarry entrance the
effects would become less noticeable as the flow would divide either towards Ipswich and
the A14 or towards the Essex border. Also, some journeys would be to local destinations
off the A137, further reducing the potential risks in the settlements along the A137. The
increase in traffic represents about 0.7% additional movements on this road, which is, in my
view, negligible. It represents 1 movement about every 10 minutes during the working day,
half into the site and half out. I do not consider this would make such a significant difference that the road would become a "death trap".

vi. The effect on leisure and recreation

2.379 Whilst I accept that residents of Ipswich and surrounding villages visit this area for recreational purposes, this must be only one of many areas so used. The quarry would introduce changes to the appearance of the area, some only temporarily, but the footpaths and bridleways would be maintained as recreational routes. It would be necessary to divert the two footpaths as work progressed across the relevant parts of the site. It seems that, as a recreational amenity, these footpaths would form relatively short lengths of a longer route. Therefore, the impact upon the recreational value would be proportionate.

2.380 Furthermore, although no details have been canvassed, it is possible that the diversions could be of no less amenity value than the current routes. After work had progressed over the effected paths and the land restored, the footpaths could be returned to their original alignment. As the Belstead Circular Walk only passes along the boundary of the site, it should be unaffected. Similarly, there would be no direct affect upon the bridleways. There are examples elsewhere in the County (eg at Flixton) where bridleways apparently continue to be used in close proximity to quarry workings and hence I do not consider that the recreational value of the routes adjacent to this site would be so seriously harmed as to be totally degraded as worthwhile leisure rides.

2.381 The quarry operator would be required to fence the routes off if they passed over any quarry land. Views into the quarry could be screened by bunds, if necessary. With a very small increase in traffic attributable to the proposed quarry, (see above) I do not consider access to the footpaths would be made unreasonably difficult.

2.382 Alton Water is a mile or more to the south of the proposed site. The only effect the quarry might have on the pattern of visitors is if the amount of traffic was so great as to cause undue congestion on the A137 and hence delay or endanger those wishing to visit the reservoir. As discussed above, the amount of additional traffic during the working day would, in relation to the present traffic levels on the A137, be insignificant. In which case, I do not consider there would be any noticeable effect upon the pattern of visiting at Alton Water.

vii. Impact upon the water environment

2.383 The evidence given at the inquiry was that the mineral deposit was found above the level of the water table. I which case, there would be no need to lower the water table and consequently there would be none of the associated effects on lakes, streams, wells and woodland raised in the objections. However, having said that, it would be usual practice as part of the application procedures for the Environment Agency to be consulted and PDA44 introduces the requirement for an applicant to provide an assessment of the wider impact on the water environment.

2.384 The processing plant would require a supply of water which would be either as a licensed abstraction or from the public supply. Therefore, there need be no harmful effect upon the interests of neighbouring water users. This would be included in the assessment
referred to above. Process water would be stored in a reservoir on site, as part of a recirculatory system where out-wash water would be run into a lagoon before returning to the reservoir for re-use. In this way not only are losses minimised, but silt is retained within the site rather than washed out to infiltrate into ground or surface water courses. Any discharges of water from the site would be controlled by the Environment Agency to safeguard the purity of local water supplies either from boreholes, or from Alton reservoir.

viii. Ecological impact

2.385 Inspector’s note. Although some objectors have referred to AONBs and Green Belt as part of their concerns over ecological matters, these categories of planning policy have no direct relevance to ecological protection.

2.386 The site, and the neighbouring wildlife sites, are not within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, nor are they within the area protected as part of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths project. There is no formally declared Green Belt in Suffolk. Even if it were, it is recognised in PPG2 Green Belts (paragraph 3.11) that mineral extraction is an appropriate activity in a rural area and hence not necessarily inappropriate in Green Belt.

2.387 Whether the ecological significance of the area now is the same as it was in 1893 is not clear from the submissions. Whereas there are wildlife protection sites adjacent to the site, neither of these would be directly affected by the proposed scheme. They are both ‘dry’ sites, and the operation on the site would affect the hydrology of the site. The evidence from the MPA is that quarrying activity, including noise does not affect wildlife interests. Indeed, some operation quarries are themselves categorised as wildlife sites. Accordingly, I do not accept that quarry would be incompatible with the wildlife sites or the long-term protection of the species found on the sites. Indeed, the ecological evidence is that quarrying should bring an end to the spraying of agricultural pesticides etc, in the vicinity of these woods, which would be a benefit for the wildlife. Quarrying of sand and gravel is not generally an activity which gives rise to appreciable levels of pollution, either of the air or water, and hence there is unlikely to be a harmful effect on local wildlife attributable to pollution arising from this site.

2.388 The operations may temporarily displace the species which use the site for breeding or as part of their foraging area, but no evidence has been produced which suggests that these species are unique to this site, nor that displacement would threaten the survival of these species. With the land being restored to agriculture, it is likely that the wildlife interest would return to the site. It is possible that the wildlife interest could even be enhanced with careful attention given to the planting of new hedgerows and wooded areas.

ix. Agricultural impact

2.389 No detailed evidence was given on the quality of the agricultural land here, but several objectors have referred to it being Grades 2 and 3 under the MAFF Agricultural Land Classification. As advised in MPG1 (CD.A11) and MPG7 (CD.A16), mineral working is a temporary activity and it is not necessarily incompatible with agricultural interests in that, providing soils are stripped, stored and respread in an appropriate manner and followed by an aftercare regime, land can be returned to agriculture at a grade equal to that which existed before extraction. Policies SMLP4(a) - SMLP4(f) inclusive offer a policy context to ensure
sites are prepared, worked and restored in a way which would return the land satisfactorily to agriculture. In which case, there need not be a permanent loss of good quality agricultural land.

2.390 Whether the gravel is low grade or not (and I have concluded above that I consider the deposit meets the MPA's standard) is not really relevant as low-grade gravel has an economic purpose in itself, as well as making sure that higher grade gravels are conserved for purposes which justify their use. As the deposit exists above the water table, there is unlikely to be any derogation of ground water under the surrounding farm land and hence there is unlikely to be any effect upon the quality and quantity of the crops grown on land close to the quarry.

2.391 The access would be directly onto the A137 rather than Belstead Lane. As discussed above under my examination of the highways objections, the amount of additional traffic generated by the quarry would not be particularly great; there need be very little additional traffic using Belstead Lane, other than for local deliveries. If necessary, this could be supported by a local voluntary agreement on the routes used by quarry related traffic. However, there will be a need to transport extracted material from the northern portion of the site to the processing plant which is likely to be located on the southern portion. This will involve transporting material from one side of the lane to the other. I have already commented on the effect this may have on the safety and convenience for users of the lane as a highway, as well as noting there may be a potential problem of mud etc being spread across the lane. I agree that interference with agricultural practice is another matter to be taken into consideration when addressing this point. However, without full information on all the options and possible control measures and safeguards I consider I am unable to make a firm recommendation over whether this should be a cross-road transfer or an under-road conveyor. In my view, this is a detail which would be more properly considered at the planning application stage, taking into account all the possible problems and advantages of the various concerns and solutions.

2.392 The private rights of individuals to shoot or roam over land is not a land use planning matter. This would be a point for negotiation between the landowners and the affected parties.

x. Restoration / reclamation

2.393 Planning controls extend to the design and implementation of the site restoration scheme, which could include an aftercare regime which applied for up to five years after working and restoration had ceased. These controls have worked successfully on other sites across the County and are in accordance with Government guidance on the subject, given in MPG7 (CD.A16). I have no reason to believe that the usual practices would not be successful here. In addition, the minerals industry operates its own safeguards in the event of operators being unable to complete a restoration scheme - evidence was given early in the inquiry on the Restoration Guarantee Fund operated by SAGA (now part of the Quarry Products Association). In which case, I do not accept that there is a significant risk of the site being abandoned in an unrestored condition.

2.394 The planning permission for the scheme, should it go ahead, would cover the pattern of working and restoration. This is likely to be progressive over the site; that is, the site would be worked as a series of small phases, where stripping, working, restoration and
aftercare would follow progressively around the site. The restoration and aftercare proposals should make provision not only for a sympathetic landform following working, but should also include details for new tree and hedge planting and other appropriate surface features. This is covered by Policies SMLP4(e), SMLP4(f), SMLP4(g) and SMLP4(h).

2.395 Although several objectors point to landfilling with waste as the after-use, this is not included in the Plan's proposals and is not seen as necessary to secure a satisfactory restoration of the site. If landfilling is seen to be a possible use for the site following extraction, this would be subject of separate and detailed consideration, taking into account, the implications for *inter alia* the environment, local amenities, traffic generation and pollution.

xi. Other matters

2.396 I have looked at how the proposals of this local plan conform with the Government's policies on sustainability in Part 1 of this report. Whereas there may be scope for greater use of recycled materials these will not be sufficient or appropriate to meet all of society's needs. There will still be a need to provide new materials, of all qualities, from appropriate sites which minimise the need to transport materials over long distances to the prospective users.

2.397 I am not sure how the efficiency of a minerals site is to be assessed in land use planning terms, but I am satisfied that this proposal has been brought forward in conformity with Government guidance on the identification of need for new sand and gravel development and that the SMLP does not conflict with Government guidance on the preparation of minerals local plans. I accept that minerals extraction is unlikely to take place without some disturbance or disruption, but the essential consideration is whether this would be unreasonable and hence unacceptable. The SMLP, together with Government guidance in the MPG's, includes policies which are designed to minimise the disruption of the surrounding area and to ensure that change and disturbance are kept within reasonable and acceptable limits.

2.398 The possible archaeological interest on the site is recognised by the MPA in the 'Main Issues' section relating to this site which precedes Inset Map 34 in the Plan. Policy SMLP1(d) (as proposed to be changed) provides a policy context to safeguard the archaeological interest and to provide the opportunity for a watching brief during soil stripping to see if there are any features of interest and to provide the opportunity for recording and or avoiding important archaeological remains and their setting. It is my view that there would not be significant amounts of dust blown off this site and over the wider parish area, and certainly not to the degree that it would interfere with archaeological remains off the site.

2.399 Paragraph 64 of PPG1 (CD.A1) advises it is Government's view that the planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of an individual. The basic question is whether an individual would suffer financial loss, but whether their amenities would be unacceptably affected. However, it is often the case that amenity considerations can affect the value of property. It is my view that, given the powers available to the MPA under general planning legislation and the controls available through the SCSP and the SMLP, development of this site would not give rise to unacceptable harm to the amenities of those who live in the vicinity of this site. This does not cut across an individual's rights to seek
compensation under other legislation, nor to seek damages through civil action, where either course of action is justified.

2.400 Similarly, a planning permission does not override any statutory or other protection given to ensure the stability of railway engineering works. I am satisfied that the stability of the railway cutting would adequately safeguarded during the extraction and restoration works on this site.

2.401 The point of whether an operator is interested or not is not of great significance in land use planning terms. The advice in MPG6 (CD.A15), is that the MPA should be satisfied the site is likely to become available to the minerals industry within the plan period. I am satisfied this is the case here. The potential commercial interest was indicated at the inquiry in the evidence given by D K Symes Associates for the MPA. Also, a mineral operator has submitted a supporting representation.

2.402 I have commented previously under my consideration of highway and agricultural objections on the ways in which material may be transported across Belstead Lane. I consider this is a detailed point which should be assessed at planning application stage, taking into account all relevant considerations. Accordingly, I agree the requirement to install an under-road conveyor is unduly prescriptive in the SMLP and it should be amended.

Conclusions

2.403 Drawing these consideration together, I conclude that there is a need to identify additional sites for sand and gravel extraction, and that the mineral here is of a suitable quality and in adequate quantity. The workings would have an impact on the local landscape, but this is not a specially protected area, and the visual impact can be controlled to be within generally acceptable limits. The site could be satisfactorily restored afterwards without the need for landflling. The amount of traffic generated would be very small, and well within the capacity of the A137. A new access could be created onto the A137 which would offer an acceptable level of safety, taking into account the existing conditions on the main road. Other roads in the vicinity are unlikely to be affected to the point where the safety and convenience of other road users is seriously jeopardised. Recreational, ecological and agricultural interests would not be so affected that the scheme would be unacceptable. In my view, none of the other matters raised in the objections is of sufficient concern to justify deleting the proposal from the Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.404 i. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA44, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

ii. The SMLP be modified by the deletion of the sixth element under the ‘Issue Arising’ column on page 110, and its replacement by:

Movement of mineral from the working face to the mineral processing area: the two parts of the site are separated by a minor road, the C453. Consideration will have to be given to the means of transporting extracted material from the
northern part of the site to the processing plant, having regard to the safety and convenience of road users on the C453.

INSET MAP 35

Objection and counter objections Nos. - see list annexed to this part of the report (Annex 6).

Support No. 340 Tip Top Waste Ltd

2.405 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Demand for the mineral

- There is no need for another pit in this area of Suffolk. Sand and ballast is arriving by boat at the West Bank, Ipswich.

- The need for aggregates is over-estimated due to the decline in the building industry and the present policies being pursued on road building.

- The Plan describes the long term drop in demand in Suffolk for sand and gravel, therefore it is felt to be unnecessary to remove extra.

- It is questioned whether the site is economical.

ii. Effect on the landscape

- Satisfactory screening will be essential to minimise the impact - some of this will be already in place because of the existing working and also retention of existing trees and hedgerows will play a major role.

- More machinery will be involved than is presently utilised and large unsightly mounds of earth will appear on the ground.

iii. Effect on living conditions and village amenity

- It is far too near to residential property.

- To extend the proposed working towards a populated area is environmentally unfriendly.

- Compared with the existing workings adjacent to the site, this represents a large extension and consequently has a greater impact than the workings already in
existence. Safeguarding the residential amenity is important because of the increase in size of the site.

- Residents will be looking out on huge hills of earth quite close to their back gardens, somewhat like slag heaps in mining areas only on a smaller scale.

- Residents will have increased traffic to cope with.

- The access road to the public highway should be smoothly surfaced to help reduce the noise from empty vehicles which has an adverse impact on the residential amenity of those living at Tattingstone Heath.

- It is too near the properties on the Heath which will be blighted by the noise and dust and increased traffic.

- Noise and dust pollution is likely from the surface working.

- To extract 11 million tonnes will take several years, during which time local residents will be subjected to dust, dirt and noise from machinery running for 8 hours a day.

- The prevailing wind is south or south west which would carry the dust and noise right into local residents gardens.

iv. Highways impact

- The proposed extension is likely to bring a significant increase in traffic to the local roads and thus the ability of the proposed routes to carry this increased capacity should be assessed - only then can the suitability of this site, in its present form be properly evaluated.

- The existing access onto the C426 road, which is identified as being retained in connection with the intensification of use of the site, is unacceptable despite the recent modification to the visibility splays. It is considered that this access, on a hill and a bend on a minor road, is already unsafe and the proposed increase in the number of HGVs will only aggravate the situation. Paragraph 3.1.31 of the Consultation Draft clearly states that minor roads are unsuitable for HGVs traffic generated by Mineral Workings and that site access should be to the principle road network.

- The access to the site needs to be improved. The entrance and first part of the access road needs to be widened to allow HGVs to leave the public highway completely whilst waiting for the single width access road to be cleared of oncoming traffic. Vehicles stopping on the highway in mid turn are a safety hazard to other road users.

- The proposed access point to the A137 would be detrimental to road safety.

v. Effect on the water environment

- The licence to tip waste on site C41 was extended to cover all industrial work. Objections were raised at the time due to the fear of contamination of the brook from
waste leaking out from the tip. The objections were withdrawn after the local
planning authority made a substantial filter system a requirement. Site P42, if
granted, will double the size of total site and bring it down to Dodnash Brook. What
protective measures are to be taken to prevent pollution of the brook?

- The possible effects on the water catchment to the nearby Alton reservoir and
  Lattingford Hill borehole.

vi. Ecological concerns

- Not enough is known about the wildlife of the site.

- The site has remained largely untouched for centuries except for agricultural purposes
  and is a natural habitat for wildlife.

- Concern regarding the threat to bird life as well as the impact it will have on the local
  environment.

vii. Restoration and reclamation proposals

- The site description refers to the restoration of Site P42 by ‘infilling with inert waste’
  specifying that one specific category of waste used for restoration may cause
  problems in the future if policies for recycling inert wastes and taxation result in a
  shortage of such material, thereby delaying restoration. Appropriate waste categories
  should be agreed at a later stage through the Waste Local Plan or when a planning
  application is made.

- The proposed mineral site lies only approximately 350 metres from residential
  properties along the A137 at the Heath, Tattingstone. Removal of the limitation on
  restoration of the site to infilling with inert waste opens up the potential for the
  deposition of putrescible material which would be detrimental to residential amenity
  on the grounds of smell. It is considered that PDA40 should be rejected and the
  word ‘inert’ retained.

- Experience of the existing mineral extraction at Folly Farm is such that the extraction
  is followed by subsequent planning applications for the recycling of various materials.
  This has the effect of an open ended operation with no fixed end date. The residents
  of the locality have to put up with permanent additional traffic to and from the site,
  noise and dust pollution and the loss of visual amenity. The site is never restored to
  its original use because the hole will never be filled. If the site operator fills the
  hole, he then has no recycling business. Thus it is not in the operator's commercial
  interest to ever restore the site to its original use and cease all operations.

- In the interests of sustainable development, due consideration must be given to the
  after-use of any void created by mineral extraction as a criteria towards the selection
  of proposed mineral extraction sites. On the grounds of longevity of the current
  workings, the combined effect of existing workings and the current operator's
  behaviour towards planning permissions and conditions are good reason why Site P42
  should not be included in the SMLP.
With regard to PDA40, any infilling should be preferably defined as 'inert waste'.

With regard to PDA40, objection is raised to allowing non-inert waste. Current planning consents have been with restriction of dry non-notifiable commercial and industrial waste.

viii. Other matters

- The houses in the area will be blighted.
- Protection of listed buildings grounds.
- If this scheme goes ahead, there would be justification in asking for a reduction in Council Tax as it will reduce the value of properties.
- Archaeological evaluation and subsequent protection of any significant findings is important as this site has not been subject to investigation previously.
- There is no need for another landfill site in this area.
- With regard to PDA39, it is preferable that the landfill site be 'substantially complete' rather than only two thirds since it is considered that two thirds is not 'substantial'.
- With regard to PDA39, does two thirds mean surface area or depth?
- The current permission on Site C41 was given in 1982 and is valid now until 1997. What is needed is for one site to be finished before another comes "on line". History shows that they never close.

Inspector's considerations

i. Demand for the mineral

2.406 The MPA have put forward several proposed changes in respect of this site, either in response to some of the objections or as a result of discussions at the inquiry. PDA39 (CD.B5) clarifies that development of the site would not commence until the present landfill operation is ¾ complete. This is superseded by PDA74 (CD.B24), which further clarifies this proportion relates to the land area. PDA40 (CD.B5) deletes the reference to inert waste as the infilling medium, but this is superseded by PDA75 (CD.B24) which gives a closer definition of the wastes which would be acceptable here. All of these proposed changes have been open to public consultation and some have attracted counter objections. Subsequently, PDA104 (CD.B33) introduced a requirement to improve the access to the site to allow HGVs to pass each other. PDA110(part) (CD.B34) reduced the expected yield of this site during the plan period from 1.4mt to 0.35mt. The last two proposed changes have not been open to full public consultation, but they have been available as core documents of the inquiry and I have not been made aware of any adverse comments. I will take all of these proposed changes into account in my consideration of these objections.
2.407 Dealing firstly with the objections relating to the need to develop the site, in Part 1 of this report I examine the supply and demand situation in Suffolk, with particular regard to the obligations placed upon the MPA by national planning policy as expressed in MPG6 and as interpreted through the working of the EAAWP. Whereas there may be factors which have influenced the level of production in the past, keeping demand for minerals below the projected levels, it may be equally as likely that other factors in subsequent years may increase demand. The production capacity figures agreed through the EAAWP take into account minerals imported into the County from other sources, for example marine dredged aggregates, crushed rock from coastal super quarries, and recycling. I have therefore concluded that the SMLP should make provision overall for some 10.68mt - as detailed in paragraph 3.7.4 of the Plan as proposed to be changed by PDA110(part) (CD.B34).

2.408 Whether the site would be economical is a commercial judgement and not a land use planning matter. The MPA state that they have included the because the landowner has indicated his willingness to make the land available for development, and this has been supported by the current operator at the inquiry. I have no information to demonstrate that it is unlikely that the site will come into production.

ii. Effect on the landscape

2.409 The site is not within an area of protected landscape. It is generally flat, with a line of mature trees intermixed with a hedge along the eastern boundary. There is also a belt of recently planted trees along the western edge of the site. The site is an expansion of the present extraction / landfilling site. Whereas the edge of the extraction area would be 160-200m closer to the houses along the main road through Tattingstone Heath, there would still be some 300m separation. In my view, the site would not be unduly obtrusive in the landscape, the closest public views being from the bridleway which runs north-south along the eastern boundary.

2.410 Policies SMLP2(b), SMLP2(h) and SMLP2(i) establish a context for the MPA to require adequate screening measures for any new working. The advice on the construction of screen bunds given at Appendix 4 to the Plan shows that such screening need not be unduly obtrusive. On this site I consider it should be possible to create suitably designed bunds to the west of the established hedge and tree belt, thereby having minimal visual impact in wider views over the countryside. I accept that the bunds would obscure views to the east for users of the bridleway, but this would not be for its entire length.

2.411 I do not necessarily agree that the site would utilise more machinery than used at present as the policy issues, as proposed to be changed, effectively rule out concurrent working on the present and proposed sites. However, even if more machinery were used, the screen bunds and depth and direction of working could mean that, for most of the life of the site, machinery is not visible from outside the site boundaries.

iii. Effect on living conditions and village amenity

2.412 The present site is not primarily a minerals operation, but a combined waste disposal and extraction operation, the rate of extraction being largely dictated by the need to create void for waste disposal. The anticipated yield during the plan period is not 11mt but, as discussed and agreed at the inquiry, only 0.35mt. This will be developed as a continuation
of the present operation, rather than in addition. I acknowledge that extending the operational area would be unpopular, but it need not be environmentally unfriendly. Neither need the operational area of the site be larger at any one time than the present site, therefore the environmental impact need not be any greater. In which case, traffic levels, noise and dust will not necessarily increase.

2.413 With regard to the likelihood of dust or noise being an unacceptable nuisance, I have discussed these matters at length in the introduction to this part of my report. The nearest the site would approach to the residential properties in Tattingstone Heath is 350m. Station Farm and Folly Farm are about 200m away from the site boundaries. This is beyond the 175m minimum separation which I consider to be sufficient to safeguard local residents. Even taking account of the prevailing wind direction, I consider the separation would be sufficient to protect local residents from any dust that may be generated on the site. Noise is a matter which can be controlled and the MPA may set maximum noise levels as part of a planning permission, in accordance with Policy SMLP2(g). I recognise that some phases of the operation may be noisier than others, for example during soil stripping, but this would be relatively brief and is regarded as acceptable, within prescribed limits, in MPG11 (CD.A20). Therefore I do not consider it would be impossible to control both noise and dust to within acceptable limits. Having said that, care will have to be exercised in properly identifying the relevant noise sensitive premises and in establishing representative background noise levels. This may be something the established liaison committee could be consulted over.

2.414 I note there is an issue over the noise of vehicles passing along the present concrete road. However, this is not a particularly quiet location, there being a general background noise from the traffic on the main road and the passing of trains on the railway. From the discussion at the inquiry, it seems the local liaison meetings have discussed this and at least a partial solution has been devised to reduce the noise from lorries. In my view, further measures could be taken to further reduce the noise from lorries if it was found to be exceeding reasonable limits established in planning conditions based on Policy SMLP2(g).

2.415 At the inquiry it was accepted that the present arrangements for liaison between the local residents, the local authorities and the site operator were working well, and whenever issues were raised they were usually dealt with reasonably swiftly and effectively. I do not see why these arrangements cannot continue into the future, to take account of any possible complaints which the extended site might stimulate.

iv. Highways impact

2.416 As discussed above, the proposal would be a continuation of the present scale and nature of operations rather than a significant escalation. Therefore the level of traffic using the site access and travelling over local roads would not be significantly greater. Although local residents would prefer there to be no such traffic, no evidence was brought of undue congestion, delays or highway safety attributable to vehicles running to and from the present site. Indeed the evidence brought on behalf of the MPA shows that the A137 is fairly lightly trafficked for a Class 1 road, and that the proportion of HGVs is less than the County average for a road of this class. Similarly, there is no record of accidents in this vicinity, either on the A137 or Station Road, involving a HGV in the past 3 years. (Station Road was also referred to as Station Lane at the inquiry).
2.417 The site would use the present access off Station Road. Therefore the highway safety of a proposed new access point is not a consideration. PDA104 introduces the need to consider improvements to the width and layout of the present access which may need to be implemented prior to the proposed site coming into development. Improvements of the kind outlined in the proposed change should adequately address the problem of vehicles waiting on the highway when vehicles exiting and entering the site meet.

v. Effect on the water environment

2.418 Extraction of the aggregates should not threaten the quality of groundwater as it would remove material, rather than emplace it. The concerns expressed in the objections relate more to the controls and protections which would be needed on restoring the site by back filling with imported wastes. Control over the emplacement of wastes would be covered by a waste management licence granted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. These licences are granted after consultation with the Environment Agency, who may require certain measures to be taken to either restrict what wastes are emplaced, how they are deposited, the degree of containment or isolation necessary, and the quality of the water leaching out through the site. I acknowledge that the measures required under earlier licences had not originally been effective, but it seems this was identified and remedied before any contamination of water courses occurred. Whilst this is not a matter of direct concern for this Plan, I am satisfied that adequate statutory controls exist under other legislation to protect Dodnash Brook, Alton Reservoir and Lattinford Hill borehole from being polluted.

vi. Ecological concerns

2.419 There are no designated sites of particular ecological interest either on or adjacent to the site. No details have been provided by the objectors of the scarcity or vulnerability of habitats on the site, either of flora or fauna. Neither at the inquiry nor in the written representations were any habitats of particular note drawn to my attention. Accordingly I consider that working the proposed site would not result in a significant loss of bird life, plants or other species.

vii. Restoration and reclamation proposals

2.420 Much of the concern over the indicated restoration of the site focuses on the nature of the material likely to be imported. PDA40 deleted the word 'inert'. I can appreciate the concerns this may have stimulated, particularly with regard to the possibility of disturbance to local amenities by smell and the possibility of pollution to groundwater. However, in strictest terms, very little is truly inert, but there is a range of materials which have a low potential for contaminating groundwater, or for giving rise to smells. These matters are not controlled by planning legislation, but by waste management licences granted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. These licences are granted after consultation with the Environment Agency, who have responsibility for safeguarding the quality of groundwater. In my view, the alteration introduced by PDA75 adequately addresses the point, and should allay the concerns raised by the deletion of the word 'inert'. This should also offer sufficient flexibility, within the terms of any waste management licence, to cover a range of waste materials which would be suitable to achieve the restoration of the site.
2.421 Policy SMLP4 establishes a framework of relevant considerations for a satisfactory restoration of the site. A planning application to work the site would have to satisfy this policy. I consider the site is not incapable of being restored satisfactorily and this policy would give adequate safeguards for local residents.

2.422 The recycling operation is not inextricably associated with either the extraction of sand and gravel or the subsequent restoration of the site. In which case, it is not directly affected by the policies or proposals of this minerals local plan. The acceptability of this should be more properly considered as part of the proposed Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which might look at the suitability of the site both in the short term and over a longer period. If the planning conditions currently applicable offer sufficient controls over this operation, then compliance with these conditions is a matter for discussion for the local liaison committee which could lead to enforcement action being taken by the local authorities if there are persistent breaches.

xi. Other matters

2.423 PDA39 and subsequently PDA74 clarify that the site would not be brought into development until the present landfill site was ¾ complete, in terms of land area. This is a useful addition to the Plan and adequately addresses some of the points of concern. I consider the proposed change is a reasonable acceptance that continuity of development here would be less disruptive than an insistence that the present site has to be completely restored before the proposed site may be brought into development. Providing the site is capable of being adequately controlled, which I consider it is, there should be no overriding objection.

2.424 With regard to the need for a landfill site, the Plan is concerned with the supply of minerals and the control of operational sites. It is does not put forward proposed landfill sites. Whereas the operation on the adjacent site is, in my view, primarily driven by the need to create void space for the waste disposal business, it is relevant for this Plan to consider the mineral extraction potential of the site. Although clearly there is a degree of overlap here between minerals and waste disposal, in that restoration of the site is seen to be by means of landfills, the need for further landfilling sites per se should be examined as part of the proposed Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

2.425 There is no known archaeological interest in the site. However, and subject to my considerations given in part 1 of this report, Policy SMLP1(d) would give the opportunity for the identification and recording, and possible protection, of archaeological remains which may be discovered.

2.426 No detailed information was given on the proximity of listed buildings and the likely effect of working the proposed site, hence I am unable to make any useful comment on this point. Similarly, it is unclear as to what the objector means by houses being 'blighted'. If this is a valuation point, then it is covered by other legislation; if it relates to the effect on living conditions then I have considered these above. Similarly, the justification for a reduction in Council Tax is not a planning matter.
Conclusions

2.427 Drawing the above considerations together, there is a need to identify additional sand and gravel sites in the County, and the deposit here would make a contribution to the anticipated need over the plan period. The workings would not be unduly conspicuous and adequate screening can be put in place to protect most views into or over the site. The amenities of the local residents could be adequately safeguarded. The amount of traffic should not be significantly different from that generated by the current site and, subject to minor alterations at the site access, there would be no undue highway safety or amenity effect. I am satisfied that there would be no undue impact on ecological interests and that adequate controls exist to ensure that the site could be restored without ground or surface water being polluted. None of the other matters raised in the objections is sufficient to justify deleting this site from the Plan.

2.428 Whilst not raised in any of the objections, the proposed change to the yield figure for this site introduced by PDA110 should also be given in Table 10, listing the proposed extensions to existing sand and gravel sites on page 55 of the SMLP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.429 i. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA74, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B24.

ii. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA75 as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B24.

iv. The SMLP be modified by the addition of the following on page 113, to precede Inset Map 35:

[Under ‘Response’]

Suitability of roads: the present access is not wide enough for all types of HGV to pass each other without obstructing the public highway. Mineral working should not begin until at least the first 20m of the access, measured from its junction with the C426, has been widened to allow HGVs to pass each other.

iv. The schedule of proposed extensions to existing sand and gravel workings on page 55 of the Plan (Table 10) be modified by the deletion of the figure 1.4m under the column noting the yield of site P42, and its replacement by 0.35mt.
Counter objection Nos. 3006 Tattingstone Parish Council; 3011 Tattingstone Action Group; 3017 Mr P Tomlinson

2.430 Summary of objections

i. The lorry routing is incorrectly given on sites C40 and C41 [3006].

ii. With regard to PDA50, this site is the same area as site C40. Its reference is only for another planning consent but the access to the site is via an internal track / road to Station Road and then on to the A137 and not ‘direct’ as detailed [3011, 3017].

iii. With regard to PDA50, the re-cycling of crushed concrete was only added as an extension to planning permission B94/0006. In no way should it be allocated a site number on its own right [3017].

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.431 This site was not included in the deposit draft of the Plan. PDA50(part) (CD.B5) proposes to include the site in both Index 3, in the list to follow paragraph 3.9.10, and Inset Map 35. It is shown on the map as the same area as site C40, and is included as a specific reference to the recycling facility. Subsequently, PDA77(part) (CD.B24) corrected the description of the access route to the site. Both of these proposed changes have been open to public consultation and have attracted these counter objections.

2.432 PDA77 deals with the points raised by Tattingstone Parish Council, Tattingstone Action Group, and the first point raised by Mr P Tomlinson by correcting the description of the access to route to being via Station Road. I consider this meets the objection and the Plan should be modified accordingly. However, in PDA74 the four sub-sites of Folly Farm are variously described as either Tattingstone, Tattingstone / Bentley or Bentley, with no reasons being given for the differences. I appreciate that the parish boundary divides the site but, in view of the fact that all four sub-sites use the same access road and entry control gate, it is potentially misleading to use three different descriptions of the location. I consider the Tattingstone / Bentley description, as used in the deposit draft of the Plan should be used consistently for all four sub-sites. Also, for the sake of clarity, the site details should be listed in numerical order of the sites (ie consolidating PDA75 with PDA77 and listing all of the Folly Farm sites in numerical order).

2.433 On the second point raised by Mr P Tomlinson, the objector does not give a fully reasoned argument for excluding C59 as a specific reference. In my view, the recycling operation is distinctly different from the waste disposal operation and, in view of the Plan’s interest in recycling, it is entirely reasonable for it to be mentioned separately. I consider the Plan should be modified to include the reference to C59.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.434 i. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA50, in so far as it affects site C59, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.
ii. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA77, in so far as it affects site C59, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B24.

iii. The SMLP be further modified by consistently referring to Folly Farm as being in Tattingstone / Bentley.

iv. The SMLP be further modified by arranging the list of sites preceding Inset Map 35 in numerical order.

**INSET MAP 36**

Objection No. 1032 Trustees of Orwell Park Estate

Summary of objection

2.435 The restoration and after-use of this site are still matters to be discussed and agreed by the MPA. The comments on these matters listed on page 115 should be revised accordingly.

Inspector’s considerations and conclusions

2.436 The MPA propose to change the comments to meet the objector’s point (PDA46 - CD.B5. There have been no counter objections. I consider this entirely meets the objection and the Plan should be modified accordingly. In which case, the conditionally withdrawn objection is satisfied.

RECOMMENDATION

2.437 The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA46, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

**INSET MAP 37**

Objection No. 0018 Felixstowe Town Council

Summary of objection

2.438 The site is no longer used for handling aggregates; the jetty is now out of use and the site is left vacant. Continued use of the site for the landing and processing of minerals
would be inappropriate having regard to the poor access and the disturbance and highway safety risks for local residents.

Inspector's considerations and conclusions

2.439 SMLP includes in its calculations, if only to a limited degree, construction aggregates being supplied from alternative sources, which includes marine dredged aggregates. Consequently, the Plan should note locations where this material could be landed, to give confidence that this source can be relied upon.

2.440 From the evidence at the inquiry, the jetty at Landguard Point was demolished following a shipping accident in 1993. Thereafter there has been sporadic use of the site, but no regular landings of sea-dredged material has taken place. However, planning permission was renewed for the use of the site for handling and processing of aggregates. This permission is valid until June 1999.

2.441 The site is located towards the end of a long, narrow concrete roadway running off Carr Road / Langer Road. These roads are not part of the trunk road network leading into Felixstowe Docks. I accept that whilst the site was operating the lorries running to and from the site represented a notable disturbance to the local residents, although no evidence was brought of road traffic accidents associated with this traffic. I also note that the site is close to Landguard Fort, and Ancient Monument, and the adjacent Local Nature Reserve and SSSI.

2.442 As this is a site with planning permission, recently renewed, it would be perverse not to include it as an extant minerals site in the Plan, albeit one not currently in use and therefore not contributing to County's supply. The matters which are now of concern to the objector are seemingly not significantly different from the time the application was renewed and seemingly no objections were raised at that time. Even if I sympathised with the current concerns, it is beyond both my remit and the scope of this Plan to seek to revoke an extant planning permission.

2.443 Neither is it appropriate for me to recommend whether permission should be renewed or not when the present permission expires. That is a decision which will have to take into account the circumstances prevailing at that time. I recognise that, with the site in the Plan and the Plan being current up to 2006, an application for a further renewal of the planning permission would prima facie comply with the development plan. Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) indicates that an application for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. These material considerations could, amongst other things, include a reevaluation of all the points raised by this objector, set against the broader objectives of the Plan and how this site relates to them. However, as with every other site in the Plan where planning permission would have to be given or renewed, it would be premature and prejudicial to come to a view on these matters at this stage.

2.444 It was raised by the objector at the inquiry; that Carr Road is not part of the A14(T). This was accepted by the MPA. In which case, Inset Map 37 should be modified to remove this notation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.445 i. No modifications be made to the SMLP in response to this objection.
ii. The notation A14(T) be removed from Carr Road, as shown on Inset Map 37.

Inset Map 38

Objection Nos. See list annexed to this part of the report (Annex 7).
Support Nos. 0360 Mr R N Baker; 0678 Redland Aggregates Ltd

2.446 Summary of the points of objection:

i. Demand for the mineral

- The need for the projected volumes of sand and gravel is disputed especially in view of the likely decline in house building and curtailment of road building over the next ten years.
- There is no need for it.

ii. Effect on the landscape

- Tree planting will not screen the site for at least 20-25 years.
- Should the site be approved, conditions should be imposed regarding the height and density of boundary screening.
- The general impact on the surrounding area needs to be considered.
- The development would be a general blot on the landscape and yet another intrusion into the tranquility of Bucklesham village and the surrounding countryside.
- The site would have an alien nature if extraction occurs.
- With reference to the County Structure Plan Alteration II, the importance of Policy IP5 is stressed; "care will be taken to maintain the open character of the land which separates the villages from each other and from Ipswich". Concern is expressed that the proposal for mineral extraction at site P86, will contravene this policy and have a detrimental effect on the area as a whole.

Suffolk Coastal District Council's Local Plan for the Felixstowe Peninsula, Policy FX 57, states; "The landscape quality and character of the countryside will be protected by generally restricting development to that which is essential for the efficient operation of agriculture, forestry and horticulture".
The area of the proposed development is far too large.

By the year 2020, the whole peninsular will be one urbanised mass.

iii. Effect on the amenities of the village and local residents

- The edge of the site is only 900 metres from the centre of Bucklesham village.
- The vicinity of the school is exceptionally windy therefore dust and other particles carried on the air would affect children, especially for asthmatics.
- Dust would affect people who suffer from suffer from allergies.
- The development would give rise to pollution caused by heavy vehicles which would affect asthma sufferers.
- Concern is expressed over whether radon gas would escape, presenting a health risk.
- The noise would carry to the school and interrupt lessons.
- Would the level of noise generated be within the EU guidelines?
- Site vehicles, when reversing, will activate the reversing alarms. No banking, fencing or structure would eliminate these highly audible alarms which are designed to be heard above working machinery and all weather conditions.
- The noise from the plant would affect night workers.
- Empty lorries with axles clattering would make just as much noise as loaded ones.
- Peace, quiet and safety would be at risk.
- Spill-off from trucks carrying sand would cause muddy roads.
- There is bound to be an increase in traffic through the village, and it is likely that there will be abuse of the recommended route to avoid the long detour via the A14 when travelling westward and traffic from the proposed pit will be tempted to take the shorter route through Bucklesham village.
- The traffic would be continuing for a long time after the extraction was completed, and there would be difficulty in restricting the incoming lorries to any particular route.
- Lights used at the site would contribute to light pollution.
- Topsoil is already a problem when it is dispersed by the wind. The extraction of minerals would exacerbate the problem.
- The effect on air quality.
The effect of continual traffic and heavy plant travelling to and from Tenth Road will have in the way of noise, dust and inconvenience to local residents.

Who will police the movements of heavy lorries to prevent them travelling through the villages?

The proposed work result in disturbance for a long time.

iv Highway capacity and safety matters

No estimate of traffic movement is given for the Ready-Mix concrete use of the site.

Large increase in volume of traffic (not only contractors vehicles but those of ad hoc purchasers of materials) would adversely affect the C375 junction with the A14, the Trimley Roundabout above the A14 underpass, the roads through the villages of Bucklesham, Kirton and Brightwell.

Will the gap in the crash barrier of the A14 be re-opened to enable lorries to turn right?

Suffolk County Council have given very simplistic estimates of 66 lorry movements per day. Is this accurate? What will be the maximum?

When the new extension to the Port of Ipswich is in full swing, container traffic using the A14 will increase in volume above the 30,000 vehicles a day using this route.

The present network of local roads is incapable of sustaining a higher volume of traffic.

The number of personnel employed on the site who will be travelling to and from work in their private vehicles would add to the congestion.

The volume of heavy lorries using the B1093 road would be unacceptable 21.

The proposed point of access on the A14 is extremely hazardous - visibility is hampered by the bend in the road.

The idea of making heavy lorries go down to Trimley roundabout is ludicrous and up to the A12 when they return or will all be coming past Trimley School?

The need for vehicles returning to the site from Felixstowe to use the Seven Hills junction will add to the delays and dangers at this junction.

Vehicles travelling north to the site would have to negotiate the central reservation crossing of the A14.

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21 This is taken to be a reference to the C375, which was previously numbered A1093.
There are three junction danger points - Bucklesham School T Junction; the new access to mineral extraction plant onto C375 and the junction of C375 with A14.

To the north of the T junction at the school there is a steep hill, with cottages on the left hand side. It is a very dangerous hill in the winter, this will be known to the local lorry drivers and therefore they will avoid coming through the village.

The "acceleration lane" joining the Foxhall Road to the A14 is insufficiently long to allow heavy mineral lorries to join fast moving traffic on the A14 safely. It is not long enough to get up to speed even in a family car - one frequently has to come to a dead halt and await a long gap in the traffic or rely on traffic moving across into the outside lane of the A14 to allow access to the road.

The existing surface of the A14 is severely rutted by heavy vehicles so additional heavy traffic will cause the surface of this trunk route to break up, especially the section between the C375 junction and the Trimley roundabout.

Congestion caused by vehicles parking at the school to drop off / pick up children will be made worse by quarry related traffic.

The footpath leading to the school is too narrow and this may cause problems if the level of traffic on the road should increase.

The increased traffic would endanger cyclists going to and from school.

Bucklesham School is situated on a T Junction with the C375 about ¼ mile north of the proposed mineral extraction site. Although the C375 is narrow, it is straight and vehicles travel fast along it. Further ancillary traffic passing through Bucklesham, Brightwell and Kirton villages has to use this junction creating additional danger and congestion at an already tight bottleneck especially at peak periods during term time. This is of continuing concern to parents and the police.

The supposed vehicle controls are unlikely to prevent excessive use of the village roads by general builders and casual buyers of ready mixed concrete.

Who is going to stop numerous small builders trucks coming past residential properties on the C375 and using the dangerous Brightwell Hill where we have had numerous accidents in the past?

A clear idea of the impact of traffic is needed.

There is some talk of an underpass being built at the junction of the A14 and the C375 but this will also increase other traffic and encourage more vehicles to come along the C375 to pass Brightwell Hill. An alternative to this would be to build a roadway for pit lorries along side the A14 with a high bank to the north side to help to stop the noise of the ever increased traffic on the A14 from being heard.

Builders’ lorries passing for minerals etc. would represent a danger for the school children.
Hold-ups and continual accidents will annoy dockers, the Port of Ipswich and tourists: Felixstowe is still a seaside resort.

Vehicles coming and going through the village at the same time as children going to and from school would endanger school children and those who take them to and from school.

The traffic using this road before, during and after the Suffolk Show causes much congestion. The additional traffic of heavy lorries would only add to this problem.

v. Effect upon leisure / recreation

The site is bisected by a public footpath.

vi. Impact upon the water environment

The site is on the border of the catchment area for the Newbourne Pumping Station.

There is an irrigation borehole and underground piping system shared with the site - how will the proposed development affect the rights of extraction from the borehole?

Pipework and infrastructure on the proposed site which serve properties located off the site, would need to be properly safeguarded.

The impact of the proposal on water resources and water features, including springs, streams, lakes and licensed and unlicensed wells and boreholes should be assessed. Many of the surrounding properties rely on a local domestic well for their supply. If there is to be any work below the water table the impact of this on surrounding water features should be assessed. The study should include a field survey to locate any such features within the predicted area of impact. All details should be agreed in writing with the Water Resources Department, of the Environment Agency in consultation with the Minerals Planning Department.

The loss of well water may have an effect upon those suffering from skin allergies.

The level of the water table would be affected.

The water table would be contaminated.

The extraction would have an impact upon outside swimming pools.

vii. Impact upon local ecological interests

The development would have a potential impact on the nearby County Wildlife Site (Kirton Reservoir) in terms of wildlife, ecology and water levels.

Loss of wildlife and in particular the natural habitat of hares, pheasant, partridges and skylarks would be ruined.
The area is designated an Environmentally Sensitive Area.

The development would result in the destruction of ancient hedgerows on the proposed site.

viii Agricultural impact

- Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land would be ruined.
- Farm land would be degraded when the total area of food producing land nationwide is being diminished weekly by road building and unnecessary house building.

ix. Restoration / reclamation proposals

- Noise and mess caused by seagulls if the site is used for landfill.
- Flies if the site is used for landfill.
- If the site is used for domestic or similar waste after extraction, there would be a continuing increase of largely light domestic type traffic through Bucklesham.
- There is concern at the proposed use of the mineral extraction site for purposes other than excavation. If this were to be of a holding nature, then traffic volume will further increase on roads inadequate to cope with the volume.
- The projected life expectancy of Foxhall Tip is 15-18 years, which corresponds with the projected period for supply of sand and gravel from P86. Consequently, it is felt that P86 would be filled with domestic and other refuse.
- There is a degree of concern over the nature of the filling material that will be used and the impact of this on the surrounding areas.
- The lower level of the land after restoration would be unattractive.
- The land must be restored to farming at a reduced level and should not be used as a tip.

x. Other matters

- In view of the proximity of the site to the tumuli on Levington Heath, there are likely to be areas of archaeological interest on the land.
- Measures should be taken to re-cycle waste instead of depending on landfill as a means of disposal.
- The scheme would set a precedent to other surrounding farmers once the above site is exhausted.
The area of land provides a boundary against commercial activity to the North and East of Ipswich.

Planting of the trees on the site by Redland Aggregates Ltd is seen as representing the fact that a decision has already been made.

The tree planting by Redland Aggregates Ltd is causing problems with the amount of seed heads being produced.

The application states working hours from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 7am to 1pm on a Saturday, and working would only be permitted exceptionally outside these hours. Who decides what constitutes ‘exceptional’?

Will there be compensation available or a reduction in Council Tax?

Change the location totally away from Bucklesham village.

The development would cause a decrease in value of the properties in the vicinity.

Concern is expressed over the possible implications for coastal erosion.

The site is to be used for the manufacture of concrete - an activity not mentioned in the SMLP.

Inspectors considerations

2.447 The MPA propose to make several changes to the section on ‘Main Issues’ on page 119 relating to site P86. PDA52(part) (CD.B5) makes two minor corrections to the fourth and sixth paragraphs. PDA45 (CD.B5) introduces a paragraph to cover the protection of ground and surface water, and this has been superseded by PDA 76 (CD.B24) which reflects the concerns expressed over security of private water supplies from wells. All four proposed changes have been open to public consultation and have not attracted any counter objections. Accordingly, I will take the proposed changes into account in my consideration of these objections.

2.448 Also, PDA110(part) (CD.B34) revises the yield for this site from 2.7mt to 1.5mt. This reflects the marketing assessment made by the operator currently expressing an interest in the site. The proposed change has not been open to full public consultation, but it has been available as a core document of the inquiry and has not attracted adverse comment. In which case, I shall take it into account in my consideration of these objections.

i. Demand for the mineral

2.449 In Part 1 of this report I examine the supply and demand situation in Suffolk, with particular regard to the obligations placed upon the MPA by national planning policy as expressed in MPG6 and as interpreted through the working of the EAAWP. Whereas there may be factors which have influenced the level of production in the past, keeping demand for minerals below the projected levels, it may be equally as likely that other factors in subsequent years may increase demand. The production capacity figures agreed through the
EAAWP take into account minerals imported into the County from other sources, for example marine dredged aggregates, crushed rock from coastal super quarries, and recycling.

2.450 The guidance given in MPG6 also takes into account trends in house and road building, as anticipated at the time the guidance was prepared. It may be that the predicted demands from these developments need to be revised, however this is something which should be done on a regional basis, guided by a national over-view. This process is due to commence in 1998. Without any firm information it would be both premature and impossible to make a rational adjustment in this local plan for Suffolk in isolation - it would be inappropriate to base this plan on nothing more than guesswork. Therefore, based on the best or most reliable information to date, I have concluded that the SMLP should make provision overall for some 10.68mt - as detailed in paragraph 3.7.4 of the Plan as proposed to be changed by PDA110(part) (CD.B34).

ii. Effect on the landscape

2.451 The site is generally flat, falling gently to the south. There are hedges around parts of the site boundary, notably along the western end of Tenth Road and along part of the southern edges. A good hedge crosses the site north-south, marking the line of bridleway Bucklesham 16. There are established lines of trees along the Levinston Lane boundary, alongside bridleway 16 and across the south eastern boundary, adjacent to bridleway Bucklesham 20. In addition, a belt of newly planted trees runs across the south-eastern edge of the site.

2.452 I note both the SCSP and the Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan policies aimed at protecting the appearance of the countryside. However, mineral extraction is an appropriate activity for a rural area, and it is an essential activity to support the economy of the County. Therefore the proposed quarry cannot be ruled out simply because it would be in the countryside. The site is not in an area covered by landscape protection policies, which indicates there are no special considerations of landscape quality which have to be taken into account. However, it is national planning policy, as expressed in PPG7 (CD.A2), that the countryside should be protected for its own sake. Accordingly, the likely landscape impact of this proposal is a relevant consideration.

2.453 The site is partially screened and partially open to view, the most notable views from public vantage points being from the C375, the two bridleways and glimpsed views from the A14. Whilst it would not be possible to entirely screen the workings from view, I consider that, through a combination of retention of peripheral trees and hedges, augmented where appropriate, by new planting, the formation of screen bunds and careful consideration given to the direction of working and siting of plant and machinery, the landscape impact would not be so significant as to be unacceptable in this area. The site is likely to be worked in phases over about 15 years which, with adequate growth usually being achieved in 8-10 years, would allow time for advance planting to screen the workings on the basis that the more exposed areas are worked towards the end of the life of the quarry. Matters such as the areas for planting, the density of planting and its maintenance can be covered by conditions on a planning permission.

2.454 I appreciate that the scheme is seen by local residents to cover a large area, but I find it difficult to understand a view which says it is "too large". This implies a smaller site would be acceptable, but there is no indication of how big that might be. The size of the site
is presumably a reflection of the extent of the deposit which can be worked economically. Because it is likely to be worked and restored progressively in phases, not all of the site would be open at any one time - probably only 3 or 4 (one being prepared for extraction, one being extracted, one being restored and one undergoing aftercare works) at a time. With 15 years operational life, and each phase likely to be equivalent to a year's production, only 20%-25% of the site need be open at any one time.

2.455 As mentioned above, mineral extraction is an appropriate activity in the rural area, it is not essentially an urban activity. I am unable to comment as to whether the whole of the Felixstowe peninsula would be an urbanised mass by 2020. This would be a matter for subsequent revisions of the Structure Plan, guided by regional planning guidance. There is nothing in the SMLP which indicates the degree of urbanisation suggested by the objector.

iii. Effect on the amenities of the village and local residents

2.456 The fact that the operation may go on for some 15 years would only be of relevance if the scheme gave rise to unacceptable environmental consequences. Also, proximity to the village per se need not be a cause for concern; it is the effect of operations at the quarry which must be considered and whether these are likely to be disturbing or capable of being adequately controlled.

2.457 Many of the objections relate to the possible impact of dust and noise on the village. As discussed in the introduction to this section of the report, there is guidance on the effect of dust from surface mineral working, and on the control of noise at mineral sites. On the subject of dust, I have concluded that in the absence of measures being installed to control dust a stand-off distance of 175m would generally be sufficient to provide an adequate safeguard from the effects of wind-borne dust for those living in the vicinity of a sand and gravel quarry. Only one property, a bungalow on Tenth Road, is within 175m of the site boundary, and particular arrangements will have to be considered here - either an adjustment to the boundary or dust control measures will have to be installed. The majority of the village is some 450m distant (from properties in Levington Road) and the school is 900m distant. No detailed evidence was given that the meteorological conditions locally were particularly extreme or unique. Therefore, it is my view that the local residents, including the school children, would be unaffected by dust generated on the quarry site. Conditions could be attached to a planning permission to give adequate control over operations which are likely to generate dust; these would include soil stripping, storage and re-spreading, transportation of extracted material within the site, and the operation of the processing plant.

2.458 On noise, there is detailed guidance given in MPG11 (CD.A20) and the associated BS4142 on levels of noise which have been found to be generally acceptable at surface mineral workings and the measures which can be employed to control it to within acceptable limits. In my view, there are no particular circumstances at this site which indicate that the guidance cannot be met and that the control measures would not be effective - should they be found to be necessary. It is recognised that reversing bleepers can be irritating and a cause of complaint. However there are alternative quieter, or even silent, safety devices which can be fitted to mobile plant and I have no reason to believe that these could not be used on this site if appropriate. In which case, I do not consider that the school lessons would be unduly disturbed, nor that night workers would be unable to get a proper rest period during the daytime.
2.459 The associated lorries would be a source of noise which could cause disturbance off the site. Engine noise and reverberations of the vehicle, particularly if running empty over rough roads, can be unduly disturbing if there is frequent and heavy lorry traffic through the village. However, it is the intention of the MPA to route quarry traffic away from the village, to the south and onto the A14, with return traffic using the same route. I acknowledge that the legal basis for imposing routing agreements is not particularly strong, but experience at other sites across the County has apparently shown that such agreements have been largely effective. With an estimated traffic generation of 44 HGV movements per day (22 in each direction, including any concrete batching plant which may be subsequently permitted), and allowing for the fact that the main body of the village is some 500m west of the C375, I consider the degree of disturbance experienced in the village would be low. A small number of additional vehicles may pass the school but again I consider the degree of disturbance would be low and short-lived as traffic appears to flow past this point fairly freely except, perhaps at times when children are arriving and going home.

2.460 Lorry routing agreements may not be legally enforceable, but it is in the best interests of the site operator to be on good terms with local residents and this is generally enough to encourage compliance. It is also common practice to establish liaison committees with representatives of the local community sitting with site operators and the MPA to address local concerns. If the community was concerned about a particular point, such as lorries using inappropriate roads, this would provide the mechanism to address the concerns with the minimum of delay. Further, the design of the quarry entrance could be arranged so as to make exiting to, and arriving from, the north very difficult if not impossible.

2.461 Of the other concerns directly related to lorry traffic, quarry vehicles would have to comply with all the current road traffic regulations regarding exhaust emissions and security of loads etc. Therefore, with only a small number of additional vehicles likely to pass through the village the degree of additional air pollution from vehicle exhausts is likely to be negligible. Consequently the health of asthma sufferers would not be made materially worse. It would be open to the MPA to require a wheel wash to be installed at the site exit, to ensure that excess mud is not carried out onto the highway and through the village. If necessary, the MPA could also require the sheeting of loads and the use of a vehicle wash-down facility if sand and gravel falling from lorries became a significant problem.

2.462 Radon gas is not generally recognised as a problem on sand and gravel sites. By the nature of the geology of such sites, the ground is porous and if such gas does exist it probably already escapes into the atmosphere. Where it may exist, and no evidence has been brought to show that it is identified as an issue on this site, it is unlikely that sand and gravel extraction would make it any worse. Policy SMLP2(2) offers a policy context to control the installation of on-site lighting to minimise the degree of light pollution.

2.463 Once extraction had ceased the associated traffic need not continue, depending on the form of restoration adopted. If the restoration was to agriculture at a lower level, as indicated in the SMLP, then the amount of traffic visiting the site after the cessation of quarrying could be very similar to the present levels. Any other form of restoration, either for waste disposal or a recreational after use, would need a specific planning permission, and the implications for traffic generation for that form of development would be assessed separately.
iv. Highway capacity and safety measures

2.464 There are several broad areas of objection under this sub-heading. The basic point is the amount of traffic likely to be generated by the quarry. With the reduced anticipated yield of the site, the MPA estimate the amount of HGV traffic generated would be some 44 trips per day (ie 22 each way), to include any associated concrete batching plant. This seems to be a reasonable estimate: given the equivalent of some 280 working days per year and an annual production of about 100,000 tonnes, this would represent about 20 loaded trips per day of 18 tonnes for the extracted material - some of which would be as ready-mixed concrete. This is, of course only an average figure and there would be variations about this, but it represents something in the order of one vehicle movement (either in or out) every 10-12 minutes over the working day. In my view, this is not an excessive increase over the present traffic levels, and would be an insignificant increase on the A14. I do not consider this would unduly interfere with or frustrate traffic travelling to and from Felixstowe docks or the holiday traffic to the coast.

2.465 With the majority of quarry related traffic encouraged to travel to and from the site via the junction of the C375 with the A14, not much would be left to travel alternative routes to the north. Even with as much as 25% travelling on the C375 through Brightwell (which I consider to be unlikely as the design of the quarry entrance could discourage traffic travelling north from the quarry), this would represent 11 movements per day, or just over 1 per hour during the working day. I consider the C375 and its connections to the north would be capable of coping with this level of additional use. It is quite likely that local builders will visit the site to collect material themselves. However, much of this is likely to be in smaller vehicles rather than HGVs, which would not be out of place on rural lanes. I do not consider that this level of traffic would amount to "excessive use" of local roads.

2.466 In the light of the above, I do not agree that the increase in the volume of traffic using the road junctions off the C375 north and south of the site would be "large". The level of traffic generation would be relatively small in comparison with the daily flow through these junctions. The County Council, as highway authority, has assessed the capacity of the roads leading to and from the site and the capacity of the associated road junctions, including the Trimley roundabout on the A14. Subject to certain improvements, the highway authority is satisfied that the road network is capable of carrying the additional traffic without undue risk to users of the highways or risk of congestion. The limitations of the acceleration lane eastwards on the A14 have been recognised by the highway authority and development of the site should not commence until the necessary improvements have been made.

2.467 At the junction of the C375 and the A14 right turns are prevented either out of or into the junction by a barrier across the central reservation of the dual carriageway. There is seemingly no intention to re-open this barrier. In which case, there is no alternative for vehicles destined for customers to the west of the site but to travel via the Trimley roundabout junction to cross to the opposite carriageway of the A14. Similarly vehicles returning from customers to the east of the site would have to travel via the A12/A14 junction to cross over to the east bound carriageway of the A14 so that they may return to the site by the preferred route. The effect of this routing on journey times is not a land use planning matter. In my view this should be a feasible and safe pattern of working. No other possible alterations to the C375/A14 junction have been raised, either at the inquiry or in the written representations.
2.468 On the matter of congestion, with some 44 HGV trips per working day the effect upon congestion at the junctions or on the open stretches of roads is likely to be insignificant. Even allowing for the associated on-site staff using their own vehicles plus service and delivery traffic, this is likely to amount to only a small level of additional traffic. The evidence at the inquiry was this is unlikely to add more than 20-30 trips per day. I accept that there may be localised congestion at the C375/Bucklesham Road junction at the beginning and end of the school day, but this is presumably only of a short duration. With only a small proportion of quarry traffic travelling past this junction, and staff journeys to work generally taking place well before and after the peak periods for school related journeys, I do not consider the existing conditions would be made significantly worse. No figures have been given for the amount of traffic generated by the Suffolk Show, but I expect this would be significantly greater than the maximum of some 74 trips per day likely to be generated by the proposed quarry. In which case there is no comparison between the congestion arising from the Suffolk Show traffic and the impact of the quarry traffic.

2.469 Turning now to highway safety matters, I have already commented upon the amount of additional traffic likely to be passing the C375/Brightwell Road junction. With such small increases in traffic, not only would congestion be largely unaffected, but so too would the accident risk. I accept that damage-only accidents are not reported to the police, but at the inquiry it was given that there had been only 8 accidents over the 17 years 1980-1996 within 100m of the school. This would have included the period 1980-1984, before the Martlesham by-pass was open and the C375 was used as the A1093 route to Felixstowe. During this period traffic levels were much higher than at present or as predicted with the quarry in operation. I do not consider the pedestrian / vehicle problems at this junction would be made so significantly worse as a result of the quarry being developed that it would justify rejecting this site. Similarly, with such small increases in traffic expected along the C375, and even less on Brightwell Road, there would be only a very small increase in the risk to pedestrians or cyclists going to and from the school.

2.470 Whereas Brightwell Hill may present a degree of risk, particularly in winter weather, the amount of additional traffic travelling up and down this stretch of road is likely to be quite small. The road was until 1984 part of a main route to Felixstowe, carrying considerably heavier volumes of traffic than at present or as anticipated should the proposed quarry begin operation. Evidence given at the inquiry showed that the hill was not a highway safety problem when it was part of the A1093. Experienced HGV drivers, particularly if locally based; should be well aware of the conditions and it is reasonable to assume they would drive accordingly, with the intention of avoiding any accident either with another vehicle, or of leaving the road and ending up in a ditch or garden of a house. I do not consider the slight increase in traffic would give rise to an unacceptable deterioration in the conditions of highway safety at this point.

2.471 Finally on highway matters, the condition of the surface of the A14 may be a matter for concern, and I am sure it is something which the relevant highway authority monitors to ensure it remains within acceptable and safe limits. The A14 carries very heavy volumes of HGV traffic to and from Felixstowe docks. The 44 or so trips per day generated by the proposed quarry would be an insignificant addition to this level of traffic and it would be unreasonable to attribute an appreciable proportion of the blame for any future deterioration in the surface of this road to the fact that the quarry may have commenced operations.
v. Effects upon leisure / recreation

2.472 The site is crossed by bridleway Bucklesham 16 (rather than a footpath), and bridleway Bucklesham 20 passes adjacent to the south-eastern boundary of the site. It is not clear whether the southern end of Levington Lane is a public right of way, but at my site visit I saw people apparently using it for recreational purposes (ie walking dogs). Only Bucklesham 16 would be directly affected by the proposed quarry in that it may have to be closed and diverted whilst extraction progressed over this part of the site. This would be regrettable loss, but only a temporary one as it could be reinstated over the restored ground on the same alignment. I do not consider this would be so serious an interruption as to justify rejecting the site from the Plan.

2.473 The perceived amenity value of the bridleways would be affected in that the views out over the site would be either of the extraction areas, or the views would be obstructed by screen bunds. I accept that this would diminish the recreational value of a walk along these bridleways, but the impact would be apparent for only a small proportion of a total walk, and again, the effect would only be temporary while the workings passed over that part of the site. A greater and more permanent loss might be the hedgerow and line of trees alongside Bucklesham 16. However, the MPA’s witness at the inquiry indicated that it is likely that it may be a requirement to retain these features as part of the development. Even if they cannot be retained, they could be reinstated so that future generations may benefit. Careful attention to the detail of the landscaping of the restoration scheme could produce a landscape of equal or greater interest for walkers and riders. This is something which the MPA can address through its consideration of the detailed restoration and aftercare proposals.

vi. Impact upon the water environment

2.474 PDA76 acknowledges the concern which has been expressed over water-related issues on this site and identifies the need to prepare an impact study prior to permission being granted for development. The impact study should identify which properties are at risk, to what degree, and what measures have to be put in place to ensure there is no adverse effect on those who rely upon boreholes and wells for a water supply. The study should also take into account the potential effect within the catchment area of public water supply extractions.

2.475 The site itself has an agricultural borehole, licensed for 7.5 million gallons/year. This would provide the majority of the water needs for the proposed quarry, and it is only the demand above this level which might give rise to problems. At the inquiry it was stated that, if need be, the shortfall could be made up from the mains supply, in which case there should be no effect upon other boreholes and wells. Alternatively, appropriate replacement supplies could be provided if the water management element of the quarry working scheme adversely affected these other interests.

2.476 The quarry should not result in contamination of groundwater as it would not introduce polluting material onto the site. The only exception to this would be fuel for the on-site plant. It is usual practice to ensure this is stored in closed tanks, themselves enclosed in leak-proof bunds to contain the contents of the tanks in the event of a leak.

2.477 On the basis that outside swimming pools are effectively tanks constructed with impermeable sides and bottoms I cannot see how the proposed quarry would have any direct effect upon them.
2.478 There may still be some uncertainty over the effect on the water environment and only the impact study may reveal all of the implications and necessary safeguards. However, I consider the uncertainties which exist are not over fundamental points, and these do not justify deleting the site from the Plan.

vii. Impact upon local ecological interests

2.479 As discussed above, the quarry scheme need have no adverse impact on the level of the water table under surrounding land. The MPA’s witness at the inquiry was content that wildlife and other ecological interests would not be adversely affected in the event of quarrying going ahead on this site.

2.480 I have already commented upon the future of the hedgerow alongside bridleway Bucklesham 16. The site does not contain any specifically protected wildlife habitats, although I accept parts may be used by birds and animals as breeding or foraging areas. Quarrying operations would probably result in the temporary displacement of some wildlife, but this should return following restoration of the site. The restoration scheme could, indeed, result in an overall enhancement of the wildlife interest on the site with the planting of new hedgerows and areas of woodland, creating new habitats.

2.481 The MPA’s evidence is that the site is not within the Suffolk River Valleys Environmentally Sensitive Area. The objector has not produced evidence to counter this.

viii. Agricultural impact

2.482 The information listed on page 118 of the Plan indicates that the envisaged after-use of the site is agriculture / forestry.

2.483 There is no detailed evidence on the Agricultural Land Classification grading of this site, but it was accepted at the inquiry that the land is broadly Grade 3; that is, land of moderate-good quality. Mineral working is not incompatible with the retention of good quality agricultural land. Government advice in MPG1 (CD.A11) and MPG7 (CD.A16) is that land can be successfully restored to agriculture after mineral working with no loss in soil quality. This requires careful handling and storage of soils, and a proper regime of aftercare once the stored soils have been respread. These matters are covered by Policy SMLP4(a). SMLP4(c), SMLP4(d) SMLP4(f) and SMLP4(k) (this last would become SMLP4(j) if my recommendations in Part 1 of this report are accepted). I see no reason why these safeguards should not be relevant or successful on this site. Following restoration and aftercare the site would then be in a condition capable of supporting food production again.

ix. Restoration / reclamation proposals.

2.484 Many of the points raised are based on the assumption that the site will be restored to original levels. The information given on page 118 of the Plan gives the envisaged restoration of this site as agriculture / forestry on land reclaimed at a lower level. That is, infilling is neither envisaged, nor is it considered necessary to achieve a satisfactory reclamation of the land for a new (or re-instated) after-use. In which case, the concerns raised are misplaced and not relevant to the proposals of this local plan. If it was considered
appropriate to use this site for waste disposal once quarrying has ceased, this would be a matter for separate consideration where all the issues of traffic, noise, smell, health risk, pollution etc would be examined in detail, in consultation with the relevant statutory and public agencies and the parish council.

2.485 Restoration need not be unattractive or inappropriate. This would depend upon the attention given to the detailed landform of the restored site; the gradients, contours and tree and hedge planting. These matters would be covered by Policy SMLP4(e) and SMLP4(g), and should be carried through into the consideration of any planning application to work the site.

x. Other matters

2.486 There is no evidence of archaeological remains having been identified on the site, although there may always be the potential for such remains to be uncovered during operations. The proximity to the tumuli on Levington Heath may be an indication of some potential archaeological interest on the site. Policy SMLP1(d) provides the context for the MPA to impose controls to ensure any archaeological interest is safeguarded.

2.487 As discussed in paragraph 2.484 above, waste disposal is not being proposed as an after-use of this site and hence the associated issue of recycling is not relevant in the context of this report. Similarly, the installation of an on-site ready-mix concrete plant is a matter for separate consideration and is not of direct concern in the local plan.

2.488 Development of P86 would not set a precedent for mineral development on other land in this vicinity, any more than any other mineral site in Suffolk has set a precedent for the consideration of this site. It is a well established principle in land use planning that each site is considered on its own merits and the relevant considerations are rarely identical on two or more sites, even if they are in the same vicinity.

2.489 Mineral extraction is an activity which is appropriate in a rural area and hence it does not affect the role the site may have to play in containing the spread commercial (ie urban) development of Ipswich.

2.490 Tree planting is entirely appropriate in the rural area. The fact that it may have been carried out by a mineral development company does not prejudice my consideration of the objections made to this Plan. However, in the event that the site is developed, the advance planting of trees to screen the more visible parts of the site could be seen as a prudent and responsible measure, giving time for the trees to become established and begin to grow before development may commence on site. The effect of the tree seed heads can only be as a consequence of natural processes and it cannot be held up as a point of blame against whoever planted them. This is not a matter for consideration under land use planning legislation.

2.491 If limitations on the working hours of the quarry are agreed either as part of the planning application, or imposed conditions on a planning permission, then any variation from the limitations will have to be approved by the MPA. The site operator would have to explain why the variation was considered necessary and over how long a period. It would then be up to the MPA to decide whether the variation was justified and whether it should
be permitted - either temporarily or permanently - having taken into account the likely impact upon matters considered to be of acknowledged importance under planning legislation.

2.492 Paragraph 64 of PPG1 (CD.A1) advises it is Government’s view that the planning system does not exist to protect the private interests of an individual. The basic question is not whether an individual would suffer financial loss, but whether their amenities would be unacceptably affected. However, it is often the case that amenity considerations can affect the value of property. It is my view that, given the powers available to the MPA under general planning legislation and the controls available through the SCSP and the SMLP, development of this site would not give rise to unacceptable harm to the amenities of those who live in the vicinity of this site. This does not cut across an individual’s rights to seek compensation under other legislation, nor to seek a reduction in Council Tax, where either course of action is justified.

2.493 The site is some 7km from the coast at Felixstowe and 2km from the tidal section of the River Orwell. I consider there would be no impact, either direct or indirect through the lowering of the water table (if this does become a consequence of the working arrangement eventually approved), on coastal erosion.

2.494 To seek to develop a sand and gravel site at some other, alternative and unspecified, location does not bring forward any compelling arguments to justify rejecting this site from the Plan. Whereas the company which is supporting this allocation in the local plan (Redland Aggregates) may have other sites either in operation at the moment or in prospect in the local plan, the SMLP cannot assume that any particular operator will run any of the identified sites. The site must be assessed irrespective of which company may develop it. Market and other commercial considerations may result in any minerals company developing the site. Further, even if a particular company does have other sites, this does not negate the points which have been put forward by the MPA to justify including the site in the SMLP on its own merits and the contribution it can make to the County’s projected needs.

Conclusions

2.495 Drawing these considerations together, I conclude there is a need to identify sites for sand and gravel extraction during the Plan period to ensure the County is able to meet its share of the regional apportionment agreed through the EAAWP. The site is far enough away from the village, including the school, for there to be no undue disturbance through noise, dust or other on-site activities. The site can be adequately screened by either tree and shrub planting or the construction of bunds, and no landscape feature of particularly high quality would be lost. Traffic for the quarry can be discouraged from travelling through the village and hence there should be minimal risk of disturbance from lorries, nor would there be an unacceptable impact on highway safety in the vicinity of the village. The roads and junctions along the preferred routes are of adequate capacity and congestion is unlikely to occur as a result of developing this site. Although the scheme would probably result in lasting changes to the local landscape, the site should be capable of being worked and restored without unacceptable harm being caused, and could result in long-term improvements to the landscape quality and ecological value of the area. All other matters of concern raised by the objectors can be adequately controlled either through the policies of the SMLP, planning controls, or other legislation. I consider there are no overriding considerations which justify excluding this site from the proposals of the SMLP.
RECOMMENDATIONS

2.496 i. Table 10 (page 54) of the SMLP be modified to show the yield for site P86 Redhouse Farm, Bucklesham as 1.5mt.

ii. The details on page 118 preceding Inset Map 38 be modified to show:

   Estimated resource ........ 1.5 million tonnes saleable

iii. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA52(part) in so far as it affects the information relating to site P86 on page 119, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B5.

iv. The SMLP be modified in accordance with proposed change PDA76, as set out in the schedule of post deposit amendments, CD.B24.
Schedule of objections

**Site: P158, Flixton**

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<th>Objection No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>0044</td>
<td>Alburgh Parish Council</td>
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<td>Mr B Scales</td>
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**Site: P158 and P159, Flixton**

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<td>Bell, Mr J.R.</td>
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<td>Davison, Mr R.H.</td>
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<td>0089</td>
<td>Hunt, Mr T.W.</td>
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<td>0315</td>
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<td>0381</td>
<td>Forbes, Miss P.R.</td>
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<td>Symonds, Mrs S.</td>
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<td>Aitken, Mrs K.J.</td>
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<td>0475</td>
<td>South Elmham Tenants &amp; Residents Association</td>
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**Site: P158, P159 and P176, Flixton**

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ANNEX 5

Site 154 Penlington Hall, Wherstead

Schedule of objections (* conditionally withdrawn)

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Counter objection

3013* Harleyford Aggregates Ltd
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