

MIDGHAM FARM “QUARRY” PLANNING APPLICATION

[HCC/2024/0755](#)

Planning Application Information

To view the planning application please click on the above reference number which will take you to Hampshire Council's planning website. To comment you will need to click on the link at the top of the details page. This is how it will appear after you have agreed to the Copyright Information and Disclaimer:

Planning application: 25/10023

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Planning Committee Meeting

At our Planning Committee Meeting held on Monday 20th January members of the public spoke to voice their concerns and reasons why they would be objecting to the application. You can view the list of objections raised by viewing the minutes using this link:

[192300-Draft Minutes 250120.pdf](#)

Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Partial Update Regulation 18 Consultation

To view our response to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Partial Update Regulation 18 Consultation and our comments specific to the Midgham Farm site, please click on the following link:

[Reg18-022.pdf](#)

Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Partial Update Regulation 19 Consultation

Please find attached below our response to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Partial Update Regulation 19 Consultation which again contains our comments specifically about the Midgham Farm site.

Report of the Hampshire County Council Planning Officer In Response to the Original Planning Application Submitted in 1992

Please find attached below the Planning Officer's report giving reasons why he recommended refusal to the original application for a sand and gravel extraction site at Midgham Farm. This report is referred to in our responses to both of the above mentioned consultations.

RESPONSE FROM ALDERHOLT PARISH COUNCIL

HMWP Partial Update: Proposed Submission Plan - Regulation 19 Consultation

Response from Alderholt Parish Council (APC) – February 2024

To be sent to hmwp.consult@hants.gov.uk

Note an X in the relevant box indicates that is the option selected

HMWP text is in black

APC comments in blue

Appendix A – Site allocations

Midgham Farm

Location: Off Hillbury Road, Alderholt, Fordingbridge

Grid reference: SU 133 122

Map p179

Legally compliant (prepared in accordance with legislation)

☐ Yes ☒ No

Sound (fit for purpose)

☐ Yes ☒ No

Complies with the Duty to Co-operate

☐ Yes ☒ No

ALDERHOLT PARISH COUNCIL STRONGLY OBJECTS to the inclusion of this site. What has changed since 1995 when application 92/NFDC/050721 recommended for refusal was withdrawn prior to its determination? Evidence shows that this site would not be deliverable, through its failure to comply with National and Plan policies. There is no evidence to show that the issues of 1995 existing today can be resolved.

This rural area on the extreme edge of the HCC authority area abuts the village of Alderholt and is very close to important biodiversity sites, all of which would be adversely impacted should this site be developed.

Alderholt Parish Council (APC) strongly recommends that this site should not be considered for mineral extraction and infill until all the current permissions relating to the ongoing Hamer Warren/Bleak Hill workings have been fully complied with including land restoration to the required standards.

Hydrology

We included with our Regulation 18 submission a number of photos taken in December 2022 and January 2023 which clearly demonstrated not only the flooding, surface water and high water table issues in the areas of Harbridge Drove, Hillbury Road and Ringwood Road, but also evidenced how the “restoration to agriculture at Bleak Hill is unachievable”, with the area now being utilised as a solar farm!

The area comprises clay soils and has excessive groundwater issues as shown by the flooding of past winters 2022/23 and 2023/4. Standing water occurs in the fields on both sides of Hillbury Rd and Ringwood Rd, with footpath E34/7 from Hillbury Rd to Midgham Farm flooding every winter. With climate change resulting in greater amounts of rainfall occurring more frequently, with increased intensity the situation of flooding is only going to worsen, as the water has nowhere to go. Evidence must be provided to demonstrate compliance with Policy C2 b) which requires *reducing vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change*...

In the 1995 withdrawn application 057021, the officer's report majors on the ecology in para 10.11.1&2 and the extensive hydrology issues under section 10.13 where the numerable springs are mentioned alongside the potential removal of water storage within the gravel aquifer. This is of a concern considering the increasing pressure on water supplies with global warming and climate change as per summer 2022.

There is also the ongoing flooding issue in the area as shown by the Dorset Council flooding checker accessed by the following link: -

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<https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/location?q=BH31%207PH&v=map&lyr=mv,ts,tw,ta,gr&ext=-1.888694,50.894664,-1.769451,50.938335>

This other link from the Dorset Council Dorset Explorer shows the levels of ground water in Alderholt – these levels don't change at the county boundary and show the extent of the hydrology issues.

<https://explorer.geowessex.com/?layers=24185&basemap=26&x=378008.83&y=99630.73&epsg=27700&zoom=10>

Flooding doesn't stop at the County boundary

A number of springs rise in Midgham Long Copse, which borders the site to the east, and any disruption to the hydrology here has the potential to adversely impact both this ancient woodland and the Avon Valley. There are problems with hydrology in this whole area, covering the proposed site at Midgham as well as the ongoing extraction at Hamer Warren and Bleak Hill. These are brought to the fore in paras 143 -148 of the Officer Report on Planning Application 19/11326 (to extend the permission for extraction, restoration and aftercare of Hamer Warren Quarry - Bleak Hill 111 site to 2025) which identifies the following concerns:

Para 145 states: -

The concerns raised in representations relating to impact on the groundwater are noted. The EA conclude that overall, the effects of the proposed extension on water resources is insignificant, and although there could be significant impacts on water quality, these can be mitigated for. Long term impacts on groundwater levels and stream flows are also ruled as not considered to be significant, but all the same it is proposed that monitoring will be undertaken, and mitigation measures implemented if required. However, given the scale and duration of the proposed extension any dewatering raises concerns that adequate monitoring and mitigation measures may not be in place for the protection of groundwater, surface water and private wells. The Applicant will need to apply for a Water Resources Abstraction Licence for the proposed Transfer for any dewatering is to be carried out from the excavation void(s) and conditions will be imposed to require review of the ground water monitoring data and a Monitoring Strategy based on that review.

Para 165 states: -

Restoration for Bleak Hill I and II is to agriculture land with nature conservation and biodiversity enhancements. The proposed restoration scheme delivers a balance of agricultural land with features for nature conservation together with public access extended across the site, including the existing landholding.

Para 174 (the report conclusions) state,
It is considered that the proposal would:

- *contribute to maintaining an adequate and steady supply of sand and gravel for Hampshire though the development of an extension to an existing mineral extraction site identified in the adopted Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan (2013);*
- *be a time limited mineral extraction in the countryside which is subject to a requirement for restoration and aftercare and not cause an unacceptable visual impact;*
- **protect soils;**
- *not adversely affect local archaeology and cultural heritage;*
- *not have a significant adverse effect on designated or important ecology and biodiversity;*
- *be acceptable in terms of highway capacity and safety and cumulative impacts;*
- **not cause any additional flood risk and protect the quality of groundwater and surface water;**
- and
- *not cause unacceptable adverse amenity or other cumulative impacts.*

The assumption is that it is only hydrology affecting the R Avon needs to be considered. The Development Considerations must consider hydrology throughout the development and restoration period, which take into account not only total rainfall but the frequency and intensity of storm events

and impact of drought on an altered ecosystem. The proposal does not comply with **Policy 8 Water resources**.

Environment

With regard to the environment, the SA/SEA has justified the inclusion of this site by reference only to the R Avon floodplain complex of habitats and Ringwood Forest. It has not identified the ancient woodland or ancient/species rich hedgerows where the risks to these formed the basis for Natural England's objection to development of the site in 1995. Because of the extent and proximity of the ancient woodlands, a survey is essential.

An ecological survey of land adjacent to the nearby Alderholt Recreation ground (PA3/17/0596 – East Dorset District Council) identified nine species of bat across the site: of these two, Greater Horseshoe and Barbastelle, are Annex II species. The Greater Horseshoe bats (GHBs) are reliant on continuous habitat/hedge features to connect their roosts to their foraging areas.

The ancient woodland and hedgerows cannot be recreated. The suggested replacement with new planting is wholly inappropriate and inadequate.

Please be aware that The HRA Appropriate Assessment is not consistent in its reporting of "Development Plan planned development": It unclear if any development identified for Alderholt has been included, or if it only refers to Hampshire and NFDC.

Quality of resource and viability

The viability of this site is problematic/doubtful with 4.2Mt extraction envisaged as opposed to the 5.9Mt anticipated in 1995. The NFDC Officer report, (PA92/NFDC/050721) states the gravel has an average depth of c 4.1m but has a high silt content, and also refers to *the plasticity of the material to be extracted*, presumably due to clay content. Both the silt and clay would need on-site processing to remove them. The volume, suitability and availability of the resource must be established together with details of how the waste water would be disposed of.

Loss of agricultural land

The Development Considerations confirm that the land is: *Best and Most Versatile (Grade 3a and 3b). Soil handling and management is required and restoration to original (or improved) agricultural land classification*

In the current climate emergency and the requirement for food security the loss of such agricultural land is disconcerting. It is therefore necessary for HCC to establish that restoration to this level is feasible. In 1995 MAFF raised concerns about the *potential for water to back-up into the low-lying agricultural land during winter periods, and/or after heavy rainfall*.

Impact on residents and amenity

There is a long list of Development Considerations – 19 in all, which of itself must question the viability of this site.

The Development Considerations include the need for a buffer in the NW corner of the site to *protect the amenity and well-being of local residents*. However, there will undoubtedly be a **high negative impact on Alderholt Dorset residents who are outside the accountable HCC area, with respect to excessive increased noise brought about by the extraction, processing and transportation, together with associated vibration, dust and air pollution**. EDDC clearly objected to the 1992 application on the grounds of the *"likely detriment to amenity that will be caused to the adjacent residential neighbourhood and outlying individual dwellings"* at para 5.6 of the officer's report on PA 050721. HCC have failed to recognise adequately these objections.

The map from the HCC Officer report of 12.6.95 reproduced below shows not only Alderholt, but the other outlying rural properties that will **all** suffer an increase in background noise levels and vibration due to extraction and processing equipment as a result of their proximity to the site, and those that will be affected by HGV movements.



Other impacts on residents' amenity include: -

- Dust and impact on health and amenity even with damping down.
- Environmental impact of increased HGV movements to and from the site including physical damage to edges of Hillbury Road (C102). There is damage to the verges on both sides of Harbridge Drove (C102) south of the Hamer Warren entrance because it is inadequate to cope with the width of two HGVs travelling in opposite directions. See photo below.



These verges are important wildlife corridors.

- Other road users especially pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists will be at increased risk.
- Any traffic assessment **must** include consideration of the risks and ecological damage due to:
 - increase in HGV movements on Dorset roads and the cost to Dorset Council;
 - increase in HGV movements at the notorious Bakers Hanging junction (B3081);
 - increase in HGV movements through Alderholt and onwards through Fordingbridge;
 - the reduced safety at the junction of Hillbury Road and Ringwood Road
 - the reduced safety at the junction of Harbridge Drove and Kent Lane, as turning right out of Kent Lane due to poor visibility is difficult.
 - Harbridge Drove and Hillbury Road must be assessed fully with regard to the need for speed restrictions and other road safety measures.

Suggested changes:

Correct the figures in the HRA Appropriate Assessment "Development Plan planned development" so that there is consistency in the document.

ALDERHOLT PARISH COUNCIL STRONGLY OBJECTS to this site allocation and recommends that it is REMOVED.

In the event that the Inspector is minded to support its inclusion in the Plan, we recommend the following changes are made to the text:

Development considerations:

It would be helpful if these could be rearranged and grouped under the various topics (eg transport, hydrology, flooding, biodiversity)

However, our comments relate to the bullet points as listed on pages 176 & 177 of the Proposed Submission Plan Document.

An additional point at the top of the list: -

- Evidence of satisfactory restoration to agriculture of other mineral sites in the Alderholt area, including hydrology and nutrient enrichment assessment, prior to any new development to give weight to assumptions regarding restoration of this site.*
- Protection of the Avon Valley SPA/Ramsar, River Avon SAC, Dorset Heaths SAC and the Dorset Heathlands SPA/Ramsar*.*
- The impact on the offsite roosting, foraging and breeding areas of the qualifying bird species of nearby SPAs/Ramsars, and on their functional linkage*.*
- A Hydrological assessment is required to consider whether proposed works will affect nearby National Site Network sites, Ramsars and SSSIs, including the issue of nutrient enrichment**
- A Hydrological assessment is required to consider the impact on the parish of Alderholt.*
- Buffering and linkage of the offsite woodlands and ancient/species rich hedgerows are required.*
- Pre-commencement planting and restoration proposals require phasing and development design to ensure connectivity is retained or replaced as a priority, most notably in the southern boundary.*
- Restoration proposals will need to relate to the wider landscape and enhance ecological networks including provision of deciduous woodland along the boundaries of the site*.*
- Protection of water quality and quantity of the River Avon*.*
- A buffer is required in the north-west corner and western edge of the site to protect the amenity and wellbeing of Alderholt Village and any urban expansion. Buffers are also required to protect the adjacent residential properties along the site boundary.*
- Replacement of hedgerows, where removed, and additional native tree planting along Hillbury Road.*
- Dust, noise, vibration and lighting management plan and monitoring is required* to avoid adverse impact on residents and wildlife.*
- Restoration should include no large open water bodies, for the landscape and airport safeguarding reasons. However, small ponds may be acceptable to contribute towards biodiversity.*
- Archaeological issues are likely to be significant at this site. Archaeological surveys are required, and the presence of the historic settlement may (on balance of archaeological merit or on balance of value of deposits compared to cost of mitigation) require preservation and possible exclusion from development, which may reduce capacity.*
- The site is Best and Most Versatile (Grade 3a and 3b). Soil handling and management is required and restoration to original (or improved) agricultural land classification. Evidence will be required that this is achievable without adverse impact elsewhere.*

- A new priority junction will be required onto Hillbury Road and a conveyor belt to cross Lomer Lane for the second phase of extraction.
- A Transport Assessment is required. This should consider cumulative traffic impacts taking into account
 - i) the possible expansion of development in Alderholt village
 - ii) the increase in traffic from Fordingbridge due to current and planned development
 - iii) that the site is a continuation of existing extraction operations at Bleak Hill which would cease prior to commencement at Midgham Farm.
 - iv) that the proposed site access is further north in Hillbury Road, and the C102 is too narrow for the current HGV movements.
 - v) The safety of other road users (walkers, cyclists and horse riders) will also need to be considered on Hillbury Road and Harbridge Drove (due to the lack of footpath)
 - vi) Increased traffic on the B3081 and the high accident rate at its junction with Harbridge Drove at Bakers Hanging.
 - vii) Increase in HGV movements on Dorset Roads and the cost to Dorset Council
- A Routeing Agreement is required. Routeing to the SRN (A31) will be south along Hillbury Road/Harbridge Drove before joining briefly the B3081 at Bakers Hanging and then to its junction with the A31. An assessment of the current and predicted suitability of the entire route including the Bakers Hanging junction (outward and return journeys) for HGV traffic is required. ~~and the B3081 are suitable routes for HGV traffic. The SRN is located some 5.5 miles south from the site.~~
- Protection and enhancement of rights of way (Fordingbridge footpath 090/8a, Fordingbridge footpath 090/2, Fordingbridge footpath 090/3) and connectivity to the wider network.
- Flood Risk Assessment required. Site must be designed and constructed to remain operational and safe for users in times of flood, result in no net loss of floodplain storage, not impede waterflows and not increase flood risk elsewhere.
- Hydrogeological/Hydrological Assessment required to ensure that any impacts on groundwater flows, surface water flood risk and water quality are considered and avoided or mitigated where needed. This is essential to ensure the safety of road users, minimise road damage and protect the amenity of residents including those of Alderholt. Risks to woodlands and ancient/species rich hedgerows and off-site habitats and residential properties must be avoided.
- To comply with Minerals Guidance para 017, detailed assessment required of the cumulative impact of this further development (that is even closer to homes) on the amenity of all local residents given that they have suffered for decades.

Please note: anonymous or confidential representations cannot be accepted.

The full name of your organisation or group (required)	Alderholt Parish Council
The full address of your organisation or group (required)	1 Station Road, Alderholt, Fordingbridge, Hampshire, SP6 3RB
Your full name (required)	Cllr Gina Logan (Mrs)
Your position in the organisation or group (required)	Chairman of Alderholt Parish Council Planning Committee
Contact email address (optional)	CouncillorGLogan@alderholtparishcouncil.gov.uk

AG: SGB, 25/4 → fik
507214

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

ROADS AND DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

ITEM 6

12 JUNE 1995

MINERAL EXTRACTION AND ERECTION OF ASSOCIATED PLANT
(INCLUDING CONCRETE PLANT), HAUL ROADS AND ACCESS,
WITH RESTORATION TO AGRICULTURE AT MIDGHAM FARM,
NEAR FORDINGBRIDGE (APPLICATION NO. 050721M)

REPORT OF THE COUNTY PLANNING OFFICER

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report considers the application to extract 5.9 million tonnes of sand and gravel and restore the site to agriculture (together with erection of associated plant including concrete plant) at Midgham Farm, near Fordingbridge. This site is the subject of an 'Omission Site' objection to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993). I am recommending that the application is refused on grounds that there is no need for the mineral currently or in the foreseeable future.

2. The Site In Context

- 2.1 The application site, illustrated on the attached plan, extends across an area of 112.3 hectares, just east of the village of Alderholt (in the County of Dorset), 0.75 kilometres south-west of Fordingbridge and 1.25 kilometres north of the village of Harbridge.
- 2.2 Generally the site is bounded by Harbridge Drove and Hillbury Road to the west, Hillbury Wood and Wolvercrate Copse to the north, Midgham Long Copse to the east and agricultural land to the south.
- 2.3 The section of Hillbury Road from which the site access is proposed is within the County of Dorset. The County boundary is close to the road and it is demarcated by ancient hedgerows beyond which lie ancient field patterns.
- 2.4 The application site lies to the north of, and relatively close to, a number of approved or potential areas for mineral extraction. All of these do or would access on to Harbridge Drove in order to link with the B3084 Verwood Road at the 'Bakers Hanging' junction in Dorset.
- 2.5 The existing operations/permissions at Hamer Warren and Bleak Hill I and II together with proposed Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit (1993) Preferred Areas No. 6 (Bleak Hill III), No. 7 (Nea Farm) and No. 8 (Plumley Wood and Farm) are shown on attached Plan No 2.

- 2.6 Planning permission to extract four million tonnes of mineral at Nea Farm, Somerley was granted on 25 April 1995 and incorporates an access onto Harbridge Drove together with a requirement to undertake road improvements south of the access along Harbridge Drove and to the Bakers Hanging junction in Dorset.
- 2.7 The application site is less than 0.5 kilometres from the Avon Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is currently awaiting confirmation as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Community Birds Directive. Also, less than 50 metres to the south-west lies Ringwood Forest, an area of forested heathland identified by English Nature as being worthy of consideration as a candidate SPA under the European Community Birds Directive.
- 2.8 A number of dwellings front directly onto Harbridge Drove and Hillbury Road, notably Drove End Farm, Braemoor, The Bungalow, Primrose Cottage (2) and Hill Crest. Other dwellings, Bleak Hill Farm, Christmas Rose Cottage and Daffodil Cottage, lie within a few metres of Harbridge Drove but not fronting it directly. All these dwellings are located along the first 1,200 metres south of the proposed site access.
- 2.9 Midgham Farm is the subject of an objection to the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit (1993) on the grounds that it is not included as a preferred area in the Plan. It is known as an 'Omission Site'.

3. Site Description

- 3.1 The site comprises predominantly Grade 3 agricultural land, sloping gently but steadily to the south-east towards a number of springs which rise in Midgham Long Copse, ancient woodlands which border the site to the east. The gravel terrace on which the site lies is approximately 25 metres above the River Avon with an average level of 50AOD.
- 3.2 Harbridge Drove, the C102, borders the site to the west separated from it, south of the access, by trimmed hedgerows 1.5 metres high which help to give a feeling of openness allowing views across this part of the site and Harbridge Drove.
- 3.3 Lomer Lane is an ancient, leafy, hedgerowed rural lane which divides the site into two halves to the east and west and serves Midgham Farm and nearby cottages further east.
- 3.4 A number of dwellings can be seen from different viewpoints across the site, dispersed around its edges, notably Drove End Farm, Holmwood, Hillbury and Hillbury Farm to the west, Highfield Farm, Shalotte House New Farm and Berrylands to the north, Midgham Farm, The Bungalow and other cottages

to the east and Primrose Cottage (1) and (2) to the south. Primrose Cottage (2) fronting Harbridge Drove is a Grade II Listed Building.

- 3.5 Shalotte House and Berrylands are less than 200 metres from the site boundary whilst the gardens of Drove End Farm, Holmwood and Hillbury Farm, The Bungalow and Midgham Farm Cottages physically back onto the site boundary. The facades of Midgham Farm House and Primrose Cottage (1) are less than 90 metres from the site boundary.
- 3.6 Public Footpaths Nos. 2 and 3 cross the western half of the site to the north and south respectively, whilst Footpath No. 8 crosses the south-easternmost corner of the site linking with Midgham Farm Cottages and eventually Footpath No. 2.
- 3.7 Wolvercote Copse and what remains of Hillbury Wood borders the site to the north-western corner although most of the site to the north is bordered by hedgerow beyond which lies more fields.

4. The Proposal

4.1 Background

- (i) Planning permission is sought to extract approximately 5.9 million tonnes of sand and gravel over a period of 15 years (approximately 300-350,000 tonnes per annum), together with the erection of associated plant and machinery (including a concrete batching plant). The intention is to restore the site at low level to agriculture.
- (ii) It is the intention of the applicant, ARC Limited, to have established a new processing site at Midgham by 1997 replacing its plant at Ibsley Airfield, where extraction is due to terminate within the next two years. The company considers that the loss of Ibsley Pit will create a considerable need in the local, as well as regional, market place and is of the opinion that Midgham Farm if granted planning permission would help meet this need.
- (iii) The application has been submitted as a combined planning application and environmental statement
- (iv) Mineral reserves within the site are expected to comprise approximately 3.9 million tonnes of coarse aggregate and two million tonnes of fine aggregate. The coarse aggregate includes some 16 percent of +20 millimetre material which will necessitate the use of a crushing plant on the site. The predicted sand gradings from samples taken appear to indicate that the majority of the sand conforms to concreting sand specifications.

- (v) The gravel deposit, whilst reaching a maximum depth of 7.3 metres across parts of the site, has an average depth of approximately 4.1 metres. However, due to the high silt content and plasticity of material to be extracted, it is considered the gravel is unlikely to be saleable as dug and would need processing. A processing plant and crushing plant therefore form a major part of the proposal.

4.2 The Plant Site

- (i) The plant area is proposed to be established within a depression on that part of the north-western corner of the site known as Hillbury Wood. The area would be excavated to around 47 metres AOD, which would involve a maximum cut of approximately nine metres on the plant's western boundary and five metres on its eastern boundary.
- (ii) The plant would reach an overall height of 15 metres and would include an aggregate crushing, screening and storage plant, a concrete batching plant, an aggregate washing and desanding plant, barrel washer and sand processing plant. The conveyors used within the plant area will be raised approximately 11 metres above the plant base and will include windboards as a dust-preventative measure.
- (iii) It is proposed to erect five metre high screen bunds around the plant site, providing a maximum screening height of 14 metres in the south-west corner and a maximum screening height of 10 metres along other boundaries.
- (iv) All noise-generating items of machinery would be totally enclosed in acoustic cladding and to help prevent dust problems all the materials are to be handled wet at all times.

4.3 Site Access and Traffic

- (i) Access to the site is proposed off Hillbury Road, halfway between the houses of Holmwood and Drove End Farm within Dorset. The applicant has made a separate planning application to Dorset County Council regarding this.
- (ii) The access proposals include a bunded entrance designed to discourage outward and inward movement of vehicles to and from the north. The junction design attempts to physically prevent traffic leaving the site and turning right into Hillbury Road towards Alderholt. It is proposed that the routing of traffic created by the development (amounting to 200 vehicle movements per full working day) would be strictly regulated. All

lorries over 30 hundredweight would be banned from gaining access to the site from the north and would be routed to the south except those that service Alderholt, Fordingbridge and other reasonably local destinations.

In support of the routeing policy to the south the applicant is looking to implement two Traffic Regulation Orders. The first would implement a 7.5 tonne weight restriction (except for access) on Ringwood Road to the north of the access site. A second application would seek to extend the existing 40 miles per hour speed restriction on Ringwood Road to the junction with Hillbury Road. The applicant also states that the speed limit along this stretch of road would also be reduced from 40 mph to 30 mph if required by the Highway Authority, Dorset County Council and, if the Highway Authority so require, a further weight restriction on Hillbury Road north of the proposed access point. It is proposed that Harbridge Drove is widened to six metres from its access point to the Hamer Warren Pit Access which would involve cutting into the verge by an average of 0.7-1.0 metres on either side.

4.4 Screening - Noise and Views

- (i) Protective margins of 30 metres to all buildings and five metres to lanes and other boundaries would be left unworked.
- (ii) The houses within the site, Midgham Farm Cottages and The Bungalow, would be screened during operations by planted earth bunds, whilst a substantial block of permanent planting already exists around Primrose Cottage (1).
- (iii) To help screen the site during operations from Hillbury Road it is proposed that the presently low hedgerows would be managed to a height of approximately four metres, once they had been allowed to grow to that height from their current screen level of 1-1.5 metres.
- (iv) Screening around the plant site has previously been described in paragraph 4.2 (iii).

4.6 Footpath Diversions

- (i) It is intended to seek temporary diversions of each of the three footpaths across the site at appropriate times during the life of the pit. Each diversion would remain for around 18 months.

4.7 Method of Working

- (i) The main operations would be implemented between 1997 and 2012 with the extraction areas being worked in 14 phases, an alternate north-south and south-north direction commencing on the western edge of the site.
- (ii) It is proposed that, due to the need for a relocation changeover period from Ibsley Airfield to the application site around late 1995, an initial period of development activity at Midgham would be required. This would include the establishment of the permanent site access, haul road and highway improvements together with the preparation and bunding of the plant site which would involve the transport of around 78,000 tonnes of mineral to Ibsley Airfield for processing. The processing plant, haul road from the plant area to Lomer Lane and the first phase of silt pond capacity would also be constructed. The silt pond excavation would involve the extraction of around 52,000 tonnes over 12 months, which would also be taken to Ibsley Airfield for processing.
- (iii) The transportation of mineral other than in the initial phase to establish silt ponds would be by an electrically driven conveyor line with a conveyor culvert being constructed under Lomer Lane at the appropriate time to allow mineral extracted to the east of Lomer Lane to be processed in the plant area.

4.8 Restoration

- (i) The main part of the site is to be restored at low level to agriculture (excluding two silt pond sites west of Midgham Wood and east of Hillbury Wood, which are to be restored with silt and returned to forestry).
- (ii) The restored perimeter slopes to the extraction site will have a 1:4 gradient with minimum slopes of around 1:40 across the restored fields. The fields would slope north-south for most of the site, apart from the south-eastern corner of the site where this gradient is reversed. Three storage ponds are proposed at the lowest points on site boundaries.
- (iii) Extensive planting is to be implemented to the north of the site, effectively linking Hillbury Wood and Wolvercrate Copse with Midgham Wood. Further planting is proposed along the entire southern and north-eastern boundary. New hedgerows would be planted across the site.

- (iv) In order to facilitate the extraction of minerals, five oak trees, one ash tree and a number of hedgerows currently across the site would have to be removed.

4.9 Water Supply

- (i) The principal use of water on the site will be for washing the extracted sands and gravels which would result in a waste percentage (silt) of approximately nine percent. As well as the silt ponds referred to in paragraph 4.7 above, a clear water reservoir/pond would need to be constructed in the plant area.
- (ii) It is anticipated that the make-up water required could be obtained by piping a proportion of the treated water from Fordingbridge sewage works to the plant area. The route of the proposed pipeline is through Midgham Wood. The ready mix concrete plant is proposed to be supplied via a connection of the mains water pipe in Hillbury Road.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 The New Forest Committee, The Countryside Commission, The Forestry Authority England, and the Chief Waste Regulation Officer have no objection to the application, subject to conditions.
- 5.2 The County Surveyor considers that the outline road scheme submitted illustrating widening to six metres between the site access and Hamer Warren access is acceptable in highway terms, but any planning permission granted should be subject to a Section 278 Agreement relating to these works and routeing to ensure that all lorries entering and leaving the site do so in a southerly direction, other than for local deliveries. The County Surveyor has also considered the effect of the proposal on a bridge over Hamer Brook south of Bleak Hill at Lower Turmer. It is located on a bend and has a carriageway of only some 4.5 metres in width. There have been two injury accidents in the last three years at the bridge, one involving an HGV vehicle. It is considered that there is scope to widen the carriageway without affecting the structure or any significant trees. The County Surveyor states that were the applicant to gain planning permission and operate the site at Midgham Farm before operations had ceased at Bleak Hill there would be a significant increase in HGVs along the whole

length of Harbridge Drove, which would warrant a highway objection to the application were the bridge not to be widened and improved. Consequently, the bridge improvements should form part of the Section 278 Agreement and without phasing of operations to ensure no increase in traffic to the south of Bleak Hill a highway objection to the application will be made.

The County Surveyor considers that whilst desirable, he would not insist on the bridge improvements being undertaken so long as Midgham Farm were not to be implemented at the same time as any other mineral and waste site accessing Harbridge Drove north of Turner Bridge.

- 5.3 The County Countryside and Community Officer (Rights of Way) makes the following observations on the application which affects Public Footpaths Nos. 2, 3, 7 and 8:

- (i) no line of any right of way should be obstructed with any new tree planting; and
- (ii) reassurance that the revised reinstated contours after gravel workings will not result in ponds or lakes forming across or near public rights of way.

- 5.4 The National Rivers Authority does not have any objection in principle but states that the mitigation and remedial measures have not yet been detailed. It considers that water interests can be protected provided that appropriately worded conditions are agreed and that a legal agreement should form part of any permission granted, detailing monitoring requirements amongst other things. The National Rivers Authority states it is unable to quantify the ecological impact on the spring-fed woodlands adjacent to the site, or the habitats that are supported by the springs to the south "due to inadequate information".

- 5.5 The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food notes that the site comprises 58.2 hectares of Grade 3(a) land and 50.2 hectares of Grade 3(b) which is "a significant quantity of best and most versatile agricultural land, and is a national resource for the future". It states that the Ministry will not object to the granting of planning permission provided the Ministry's conditions relating to working programme, stripping, restoration, topsoil handling and aftercare are imposed. It also wishes to make the following comments:

"It is noted from the applicants' submission that the precise details regarding the design and full extent of the 'compensation ponds' are subject to monitoring and further discussion. With the contours having been 'slackened' to accommodate the increase in size of the ponds and in the apparent absence of 'outfall points' to the ponds there is a potential for water to back-up into the lower lying agricultural land during winter periods, and/or after heavy rainfall events....".

- 5.5 The Ministry states that the County Council may wish to ensure "that the applicant provides sufficient detail regarding the method of regulating water levels within the respective 'compensation ponds'".

- 5.6 East Dorset District Council objects to the application on the grounds of the "likely detriment to amenity that will be caused to the adjacent residential neighbourhood and outlying individual dwellings".
- 5.7 English Nature has no objections to the application but recommends that "the woodlands are continually monitored and that if they are drying out further mitigation should be put in place".
- 5.8 Hampshire Wildlife Trust, having studied the additional ecological information submitted, concludes that considerable further work is necessary before it can fully address the impact of the proposal, most particularly on Midgham Woods, which the ecological report states are at risk from hydrogeological changes arising from the proposed mineral works. No detailed mitigation measures are put forward. The Trust notes it originally advised the ecological consultants as to the context of the site and the sensitivities of the land to the south and east, which it considers should have been addressed as part of the environmental statement.
- 5.9 New Forest District Council's Environmental Health Officer objects to the application on the grounds that the proposal will be detrimental to the amenity of the area. Main objections arise from the very low background noise level which the Environmental Health Officer states are 2 to 3 dB(A) lower than the levels contained in the consultant's paper. The District Council has recorded levels as low as 31/32 dB(A) at Wolvercrate Spinney and Midgham Farm Bungalow and Cottages and comments as follows:
- (i) "Primrose Cottage aside, the noise from the plant site and haul road will result in an increase above the background noise level well in excess of 10 dB(A), i.e. the level at which complaints are likely. For example, at Midgham Farm Cottages, Shalotte House and Holmwood, increases of 14, 15 and 16 dB(A) respectively are predicted".

He states that:

- "(ii) even if the more stringent standard of 45 dB(A) can be met then five out of the seven residential properties will be subjected to noise levels 10 dB(A) above the background level throughout the life of the site. At this level complaints would be expected which in normal circumstances would warrant action under the noise nuisance provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990; and
- (iii) concern is also expressed at the environmental impact of HGV movements from the site, in that whilst the consultants are proposing a 40 miles per hour restriction on the Ringwood Road/Station Road

route, seeking to make it less attractive than the preferred route via the Bakers Hanging junction and the A338, the District Council are sceptical that this would work in practice and there are a number of houses on the roads concerned which would be affected; and

- (iv) in the case of Drove End Farm, lorries travelling southwards would result in virtually a four-fold increase in HGV movements, and in all other cases an increase by a factor of 2.5, which will be perceived by residents as peaks of noise, possibly up to 40 db(a) above the background noise level."

5.10 Dorset County Council raises no objection to the proposal, subject to full consideration being given to protection of properties in Dorset from noise. Dorset County Council also comments that it has not yet considered the application for the formation of the access to Hillbury Road and its decision not to object to the mineral extraction does not imply any commitment to approve the access application.

5.11 Dorset County Surveyor states "that subject to a legal agreement to provide the following highway improvements prior to commencement of any works on the site that there is unlikely to be an objection from the Highway Authority to this proposed development:

- (i) confirmation of Traffic Regulation Orders for weight and speed restrictions on Ringwood and Hillbury Road;
- (ii) routing of all vehicles generated by the development to the south of the site via Bakers Hanging junction and onto the A31 Trunk Road;
- (iii) a maintenance agreement for "making-good" damage to the public highway caused by the HGVs;
- (iv) widening and improvement to Hillbury Road and Harbridge Drove to provide a six metre wide carriageway and a right turning lane at the site access; and
- (v) improvements at the junction of Harbridge Drove and Verwood Road (B3081) at Bakers Hanging junction."

5.12 Ellingham Harbridge and Ibsley Parish Council, Fordingbridge Parish Council and Alderholt Parish Council object to the application on the following grounds:

- (i) increase in overall traffic on country roads unsuited to heavy lorries is totally unacceptable due to the site's proximity to residential dwellings and the town of Alderholt;

- (ii) noise impact on local residents from traffic and plant together with the noise, air pollution and disturbance of the habitat of wild plants, animals and birds which will be created over a period of up to 20 years;
- (iii) visual impact of plant;
- (iv) monitoring problems where site is the responsibility of two County Highway Authorities;
- (v) premature application in the light of Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Inquiry;
- (vi) almost impossible to enforce against any routeing policy once lorries have left the site; and
- (vii) whilst the road widening proposal is noted, Turner Bridge to the south is likely to remain an obstacle and previous road widening by way of haunching from the entrance to Somerley Park southwards was not completed satisfactorily and the road is not wide enough along this length.

Fordingbridge Parish Council also states .. "that if Hampshire County Council approve the application they must ensure ... the increased number of lorries are kept away from the farms and villages in the area, with particular reference to Fordingbridge via Bowerwood Road.

5.13 St Leonards and St Ives Parish Council in Dorset states that:

"... as the Parish of St Leonards and St Ives is surrounded by five gravel pits at Ibsley and the workings at Bleak Hill this Parish Council is of the opinion that Dorset County Council and Hampshire County Council should be urged to refuse any more working within a ten mile radius of an existing site until these sites are exhausted thus maintaining the present level of road usage in any one area ... it is felt that the whole ecology of this area will be altered greatly if more of the suggested sites at Langham, Hurn Court Farm, Dudsmore Fare, Avon Common and Bakers Hanging are allowed along with any of Hampshire County Council's suggested sites at Midgham, Cobley Wood, Ringwood Forest or Somerley."

5.14 The local Member objects to the application on the grounds that there is no need for the mineral to be extracted, the development would permanently alter the character of a quiet rural area, the road widening would remove valuable 'walkways' and safety margins for horse riders and ramblers and there are already two accident blackspots along Harbridge Drove and there is no justification for any vehicle going through Alderholt.

6. Objections

6.1 There have been 380 letters of objection to the application, the grounds of which are summarised in attached Appendix 1 including concerns raised by the owners of Primrose Cottage (1) - (bordering the site to the south). However, the freehold owners of Midgham Farm, the land affected by the proposal, have also raised the following concerns which I have summarised below:

- (i) Revised plant location is closer to Midgham Farm with noise and other adverse impacts exacerbated by the prevailing south-westerly air stream.
- (ii) Visual impact of plant.
- (iii) Disturbance to adjoining farm land used by owner is much greater "particularly with regard to the size and shape of the field units", and less land would be returned to agriculture on reinstatement after extraction.
- (iv) The proposed bunds ... "A and B, screening the access road do not show the access required through it for the farm to reach the land to the west. As this is likely to be some 20-30 feet in width it will substantially alter the design of the bund from that shown on the submitted plan..... similarly, the bund E requires an access through it at its south-east corner to provide for the farm road between the farm buildings and fields ...".
- (v) The proposals do not adequately provide for the provision of topsoil to the working areas on reinstatement:
 - (a) there is a risk that different areas will have different classifications of soil on completion which is not acceptable;
 - (b) there is no confirmation that the topsoil from the earthbunds will be used to reinstate the working areas, and this also should be specified in phases to ensure that the areas are left out of production for the shortest period of time possible and the acreage concerned is kept to a minimum...;"
 - (c) potentially and in the later stages of work up to sixty acres may be out of agricultural production, which is considered excessive;
 - (d) screening bund D in front of Primrose Cottage is excessive and should be decreased

allowing more topsoil to be available to reinstate the agricultural land more quickly;

- (e) no guarantee that any shortage of topsoil will be made good by importation of additional topsoil;
- (f) provision of pond in Phase 12 would aggravate the drainage of this field and adjoining land. The drainage of the field and spring line to the north needs to be directed away from this site to the east;
- (g) contour levels of ponds in Phase 10 need replanning to prevent potential drainage problems;
- (h) area shown for afforestation, part of the plant site and silt ponds is excessive. No provision for topsoil in these areas has been made. No account is taken of liability to landowner relating to management of these areas;
- (i) footpath No. 8 is not shown on Plan No. M062/2A and is incorrectly sited on Plan No. M062/1A; and
- (j) the objector suggests that another plant area is investigated such as the southern point of Midgham Farm.

6.2 In addition to the objections attached in Appendix 1 the owner of Primrose Cottage (1) has requested that if consent is granted a legal agreement should be undertaken relating to monitoring and after use, as the owner not only owns East Moor Copse but also a grant-aided tree plantation on the southern edge of the site.

6.3 The Fordingbridge Protection Society and Harbridge Protection Society objects to the application on the following grounds:

(i) Need

- (a) no need for the material in the foreseeable future; and
- (b) the working of Midgham Farm would constitute an unnecessary development which would contradict the requirement to sustain resources;

(ii) Traffic Impact

- (a) vehicles of less than 30 hundredweight will not be subject to proposed traffic control;
- (b) vehicles delivering locally and those heading for Salisbury and the north will exit to the north; the application states just over 12 percent of laden vehicle drivers will drive northwards, seven heavy vehicles and six light vehicles on a daily basis. "When the Nea Farm vehicles of eleven heavy and six light are added one is faced with a possible forty-three additional vehicles per day from the two sites trying to use an already inadequate and overloaded system through Fordingbridge;"
- (c) speed restriction on Hillbury Road and Harbridge Drove - the Harbridge Protection Society has submitted letters illustrating that it has been seeking a speed restriction on this length of road for years but it has been refused by both Hampshire and Dorset County Highway Authorities;
- (d) the control of incoming empty lorries, which cause equal congestion and more noise, will not be subject to proposed restrictions;
- (e) previous traffic control measures appear to have been virtually impossible to enforce adequately;
- (f) the local road network is unsuited for further heavy commercial use and implications of Hamer Warren and Bleak Hill being worked at the same time;
- (g) road widening and removal of verges would leave no space for walkers with dogs, prams and children, cyclists, riders and ponycart drivers and would seriously inhibit access to the recreational area of Ringwood Forest;
- (h) additional heavy traffic would create serious safety hazards to the public;
- (i) at the last Public Inquiry the Inspector and County Council declared that Harbridge Drove was totally unsuitable for heavy lorry traffic and this was one of the reasons for refusing this site in the current Minerals Local Plan; and

- (j) width/weight restriction on Ringwood Road is unforceable as it took ten years for the Harbridge Protection Society to obtain such a restriction on Kent Lane, and in spite of it a number of heavy vehicles, though not gravel lorries, use it. Enforcement of the restriction is almost impossible without the appointment of extra Police to monitor both ends of the lane. It would be impossible to ensure that ARC lorries did not use Kent Lane and North End Lane as short cuts to the A338.

(iii) Impact of the Environment

The likely unacceptable impact upon the environment and those living locally of the noise and dust created by the activities proposed.

(iv) Hydrogeological Impact

Hydrogeological impact including combined impact of Bleak Hill and Hamer Warren extraction;

(v) Ecological Impact

Removal of trees and hedgerows is contrary to the County Council's conservation and environmental policies.

(vi) Cumulative Impact

When considered in conjunction with the workings at Hamer Warren, Bleak Hill (1) and (2) and possibly (3), and the addition of the Nea Farm/Somerley site this would constitute excessive concentrated development in this small area. This was recognised by the Inspector at the last Inquiry when he acknowledged that the development would have a serious environmental impact and "the worst fears of the residents concerning encirclement by sand and gravel workings would be realised".

6.3 Ibsley and District Residents' Association highlights the seriousness of noise problems arising from the application and makes the following comments:

- (i) the change in location of the processing plant does nothing to alleviate the excavation noise problems;
- (ii) the processing plant noise has only been reduced to any degree in the case of Wolvercrate Spinney. It remains in excess of 50 dB(A) at Shalotte House and Holmwood and is therefore unacceptable; and

- (iii) five fold increase in HGVs on the Hillbury Road is significantly understated in the applicant's report for the following reasons:

"(a) HGVs are normally defined as all vehicles above three tonnes. The amount of noise produced by the HGVs which currently use this road is certainly going to be much less than that produced by the same number of nine tonne gravel lorries, especially when empty; and

(b) the quotation from the Wilson Report is only valid when comparing one uniformly steady noise with another. It is invalid to such comparison where the noise is irregular and concentrated over short periods."

6.4 Bickton Conservation Society objects to the application on the grounds of:

(i) potential environmental impact over many years in an attractive rural area, often used for walks and recreation;

(ii) continuous working of the extraction process over 15 years, accompanied by a stream of heavy lorries, will affect the quality of life of people who live and work in the area. In spite of proposed road widening, the extra traffic on the narrow roads south of the site, added to the increases in traffic

in recent years from the expansion of Alderholt, will create hazardous conditions for walkers and riders as well as for vehicles; and

(iii) at the last Inquiry the Inspector came down strongly against the development.

7. Support

7.1 Two letters of support have been received to the application on the grounds summarised in Appendix 1.

8. Development Plan and Other Plan Policies

8.1 I have detailed the following policies which I consider to be most relevant to the application in attached Appendix 2, notably:

(i) Hampshire County Structure Plan 1993, Policies MW2, MW7;

(ii) Hampshire Minerals Local Plan 1987, Policies 11 and 12;

- (iii) Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993) Policies 7, 9, 10, 18, 19, 20, 24.

9. District Council's Views

9.1 New Forest District Council objects to the proposal on the following grounds:

- (i) Midgham Farm is not a Preferred Area in the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - there is no need for the minerals;
- (ii) the proposals will have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the countryside in this part of the Avon Valley;
- (iii) the proposals will have an adverse impact on residents of the area from dust, noise and the extra traffic generated by the development; and
- (iv) the local road network is inadequate to cater for the traffic and will be adversely affected by it.

10.0 County Planning Officer's Comments

10.1 The application site does not lie within a Preferred Area in the adopted Hampshire Minerals Local Plan 1987, nor is the site included as a Preferred Area in the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993). The site's omission from the Deposit Plan clearly reflects the County Council's view that the site is not suitable in principle for release for mineral working during the plan period (i.e. to the end of 2007).

10.2 Notwithstanding this, the Minerals Local Plan under Policies 11 and 12 allows mineral applications at other sites to be permitted if the requirement for land-won sand and gravel cannot reasonably be met from the preferred areas and if it can be demonstrated that the proposal is equally acceptable to working within a preferred Area. Moreover Policies 7 and 24 of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Deposit) and Policy MW2 of the County Structure Plan clearly states that permission will only be granted if there is a need for the development which outweighs any adverse impact.

10.3 I consider the determining issues in this case are, therefore, the need for the sand and gravel to be extracted and the impact of the development. These are dealt with in greater detail below.

Need

10.4 Current Government Policy guidance on the supply of aggregates, in MPG6 'Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England' (1994), is that mineral planning authorities should

aim to maintain landbanks of aggregate minerals sufficient for at least seven years extraction. The current 'apportionment' of regional land-won sand and gravel supply for Hampshire, agreed by SERPLAN in December 1994 (RPC 2705), is 2.7 million tonnes a year. On this basis, and in accordance with Policy MW7 of the Structure Plan and Policy 20 of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit (1993) the County Council should aim to maintain landbanks of at least seven years for soft sand and sharp sand and gravel.

- 10.5 The application proposes the extraction of 5.9 million tonnes of sharp sand and gravel at Midgham Farm. The permitted reserves of sharp sand and gravel in Hampshire at the end of 1993 (the most recently completed survey date) were 12.616 million tonnes. Since then planning permission has been granted for a further 7.648 million tonnes, making a total of 20.264 million tonnes of sharp sand and gravel.
- 10.6 Table 2 of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993) (as amended by the proposed changes to the Plan - January 1995) shows the annual average supply requirement for sharp sand and gravel over the period 1992-96 as 2.21 million tonnes a year, out of a total annual average for all sand and gravel of 2.7 million tonnes a year (i.e. the 'apportionment' rate). At an average rate of working of 2.21 million tonnes a year, the permitted reserves of sharp sand and gravel at the end of 1993 plus the reserves permitted since then are equivalent to 9.2 years working. On this basis, the landbank of sharp sand and gravel is currently sufficient for about 7.7 years working and it will remain above the seven years level until early in 1996.
- 10.7 The resource of sharp sand and gravel in the Midgham Farm site is equivalent to 2.7 years supply for the whole County: this would increase the current landbank to the equivalent of about 10.4 years, well above the seven years level. The Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Deposit) identifies sufficient preferred areas to provide for the supply of land-won sand and gravel at the 'apportionment' level for the County over the period to the end of 2001 and for a seven year landbank to be maintained at that date (i.e. effectively for the period to the end of 2008). These preferred areas contain a total estimated yield of sharp sand and gravel of 18.9 million tonnes, of which 10 million tonnes is within sites in South West Hampshire (revised figures to take account of recent decisions on planning applications). In addition, a further 1.2 million tonnes of sharp sand and gravel is contained in a site (Burnt Common, Mortimer West End) permitted subject to legal agreement.
- 10.8 Therefore, I consider that there is no need for the Midgham Farm to be permitted in order to maintain a seven year landbank of sharp sand and gravel and that the proposal is contrary to Policy 20 of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste

Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993). I also consider that it is contrary to Policies 18 and 19 of the Deposit Plan, in that the release of this site is not necessary to maintain production of sand and gravel at the 'apportionment' level for the County and that it would be likely to result in the supply requirement figures in Table 2 of the Plan being exceeded.

10.9 I conclude, therefore, that there is no need for the proposed sand and gravel extraction to be permitted and, accordingly, that need cannot be taken into account as a balancing factor to be weighed against any adverse impact that the development would cause. Having regard to Policy 9 of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993) the various impacts of the proposal are addressed in the following paragraphs.

10.10 I consider the main issues raised by the policy and relevant to the application relate to ecology, archaeology, hydrogeology, noise, highway and traffic impacts, visual impact, and the cumulative impact of multiple extraction on the local environment.

10.11 Ecology

10.11.1 The ecological assessment report which states that the proposal could have a high adverse impact on habitats and species is correct in its assessment. However, the report is not satisfactory in that insufficient data has been submitted to assess the precise magnitude of any impacts on the ecology of the springs to the east, south and south-west of the site and the woodland associated with them. The separate hydrogeological study noted that these springs would be affected by the extraction. The areas of concern are species-rich ancient woodlands plus the habitats associated with the northern tip of the proposed Ringwood Forest. I consider that the impact of the springs in Midgham Wood need to be explored further.

10.11.2 The applicant acknowledges that more detailed ecological survey work is required but considers such survey work could be undertaken 'post determination'. I do not agree. For example, the bird survey data that has been submitted suggests the possibility of breeding Nightjar and Grasshopper Warbler existing in Hillbury Wood. The presence of these two species alone would qualify that wood for consideration as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). This is one example of the inadequacies within the report. Given the proximity of the site to a potential SPA, the Avon Valley SSSI, potential Sites of Interest to Nature Conservation, including species-rich ancient woodlands, it is my opinion that further survey work needs to be undertaken by the applicant before the ecological impact of the proposal can be accurately assessed.

10.12 Archaeology

10.12.1 The surveys implemented by archaeological consultants on behalf of the applicant have identified significant archaeological evidence within the site and that archaeological remains will represent a significant constraint. However, it is considered that this constraint is unlikely to be overriding, provided the applicant makes provision for the further identification and subsequent investigation of these archaeological remains. This matter should be subject to a condition (were planning permission for the development to be granted) to ensure appropriate provision is made to identify and investigate any archaeological remains likely to be damaged or destroyed by this development. This would inevitably involve further survey work.

10.13 Hydrogeology

10.13.1 The hydrogeological survey concludes that some ground water storage within the saturated and unsaturated zone of the gravel aquifer would be removed by the mineral extraction. It also identifies some ground water and surface water features within the vicinity of the site which should be protected, including a number of springs issuing from the gravel aquifer in the vicinity of the site.

10.13.2 The report states that, with the exception of one spring, all the remaining springs would potentially be affected by the development if no mitigating measures were proposed. The report also states that, whilst the springs which issue along the edge of Midgham Wood and Midgham Long Copse (and to the south of East Moor) are unlikely to be affected by the initial phases of the development along the western boundary of the site, they could be affected as the development proceeds and "the ground water catchment will be steadily reduced".

10.13.3 Concern is also raised by the report about the spring issues at Bleak Hill, which form a stream which flows through a number of properties "possibly supporting ponds". The report concludes that "Derogation of stream flow may occur if no mitigation measures were proposed".

10.13.4 The hydrogeological mitigating measures proposed by the applicant comprise the construction of 'recharge ponds' which the consultants state must be appropriately "sized, located and designed to ensure that spring base flows are maintained". However, the proposed location and expected water level of the compensation ponds has still not been detailed. I note also that the National Rivers Authority advises that mitigation and remedial measures have not been detailed. It is unable to quantify the ecological impact on the spring-fed woodlands adjacent to the site, or the

habitats that are supported by them "due to inadequate information". However, I note that whilst this view was originally supported by English Nature, it no longer has any objections in principle to the proposal.

10.13.5 Whilst I acknowledge the National Rivers Authority has no objection in principle to the development, its comments cause me some concern and do little to allay my fears about the potential hydrogeological impact of the proposal. I note also the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has raised concerns about the "potential for water to back-up into the low-lying agricultural land during winter periods, and/or after heavy rainfall ... "and requests that the County Council ensure "that the applicant provides sufficient detail regarding the method of regulating water levels within the respective compensation ponds".

10.13.6 In summary, therefore, I am concerned about the absence of important detail in the hydrogeological assessment and am of the opinion that the hydrogeological evidence submitted fails to reassure me that there will be no adverse impact to the locality.

10.14 Highway and Traffic Impact

I note the County Surveyor has no objection in principle to the proposal, subject to legal agreements, as long as it does not coincide with the working of any other extraction area in the vicinity such as Bleak Hill I or II. I do, however, acknowledge the concerns of local residents about noise and dust caused by the traffic impacting on the character of this rural area, together with concerns of residents relating to enforcement of the traffic regulation orders proposed. I note there are also listed buildings in the vicinity, most particularly Primrose Cottage (2) which fronts onto the Harbridge Drove. I also take note of residents' concerns about the proportion of local deliveries heading north and that weight restrictions will not apply to some empty vehicles. However, I consider the most major issue caused by the traffic created by the proposal is its contribution towards an adverse cumulative impact and accordingly I have expanded on this in section 10.17 below.

10.15 Noise

10.15.1 The comments of the District Environmental Health Officer clearly indicate that a number of local residents would have to endure a high level of noise over a prolonged period of time (in excess of 12 years) on a daily basis, were the application to be approved. I consider that whilst additional bunding could be imposed to try and reduce further the impact of plant and operational noise, this would have an adverse impact visually as well as affecting the amenity of those residents concerned. I also consider that nothing

practical could be done to reduce the impact of HGV traffic on those residents whose houses front onto Harbridge Drove. Based on the information submitted, I consider the proposal would have an adverse impact on the amenity of local residents.

10.16 Visual Impact

10.16.1 I consider that the proposal as submitted would temporarily cause an adverse visual impact on the character of the area.

10.16.2 The impact would be caused during the implementation of the development by the excessively high bunding and associated planting proposed to screen the plant site, as well as by acoustic and amenity bunding and planting close to a number of houses around the site, which would be alien to the open and gently undulating nature of the landscape.

10.17 Cumulative Impact

10.17.1 I have previously outlined other existing and permitted mineral extraction sites, Preferred Areas for mineral extraction in the vicinity of the application site (see paragraphs 2.4-2.6 of this report). I am particularly concerned about the impact on the Harbridge area of working at Midgham Farm at the same time that working is taking place at the adjacent Hamer Warren/Bleak Hill site. I share many of the concerns of local residents in this regard. The Inspector who held the public local inquiry into objections to the Mineral Local Plan in 1984 also recognised this concern about a concentration of mineral working sites in this area. His report, in relation to the Midgham Farm site concludes:

"... if both sites were in operation then the worst fears of local residents concerning encirclement by sand and gravel workings would be realised."

10.17.2 Midgham Farm was included in the Consultation Draft Minerals and Waste Local Plan as a proposed Preferred Area for sand and gravel extraction. However, it was deleted from the Plan when the Deposit Plan was prepared primarily because of the cumulative impact of working on the Harbridge area and on Harbridge Drove.

10.17.3 The impact of traffic on local amenity and the quality of life of local residents has been summarised in paragraph 10.14 above. However, whilst I consider noise disturbance from the site and from lorry traffic on Harbridge Drove to be a significant factor in the consideration of this application, it is the cumulative impact of working Midgham Farm at the same time that working is taking place at Hamer Warren/Bleak Hill, particularly from lorry traffic on Harbridge Drove, and the resulting adverse

impact to the environment of the area and the amenity of local residents and visitors that is the main factor in the determination of the application. I consider the local environment has no available capacity at present to accommodate another mineral site in this area without very serious adverse consequences for the character and environment of the area and the amenity of local residents and those visiting or using the area for recreational purposes.

11. Summary

- 11.1 I consider that as the site is not within a preferred area in either the Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993) or Minerals Local Plan (1987) and as there is no need for the sand and gravel that cannot be met from within the preferred areas in these plans, and no need can be justified for the proposed development to outweigh the adverse environmental impact it would have on the local area, I recommend that permission should be refused.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that planning permission for mineral extraction and erection of associated plant, haul roads and access, with restoration to agriculture at Midgham Farm, near Fordingbridge (Application No. 050721M) be refused for the following reasons:

1. There is no need for further reserves of sharp sand and gravel to be permitted and the proposal is contrary to Policies 18, 19 and 20 of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993).
2. The proposal is contrary to Policy MW2 of the Hampshire County Structure Plan and to Policy 7 of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993) in that no need can be justified for the proposed development to outweigh the adverse environmental impact that it would have on the local area.
3. The site is not within a preferred area within the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993) and there is no need for additional reserves of sand and gravel to be permitted which cannot be met from within the preferred areas in these plans; the proposal is therefore contrary to Policy 11 of the Hampshire Minerals Local Plan (1987) and Policy 24 of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993).
4. The cumulative impact of the proposal on the Harbridge Area being worked at the same time as Bleak Hill I and II is unacceptable.

5. Some local residents would be subjected to noise levels at or in excess of 10 dB(A) above the existing background level throughout the life of the site, severely impacting on the amenity of these people. .
6. The proposal is contrary to Policy 10 of the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993) in that the overall impact of the proposed development cannot be properly assessed due to the inadequacy of the application with regard to information on ecological and hydrogeological impact.

GROUND'S FOR SUPPORT

- There are few residents near the site
- The area is not as picturesque as the New Forest or Avon Valley
- It would only be a temporary loss of agricultural land
- Hillbury Road is a straight road
- Sensible screening is proposed
- The proposal would provide work for local people

GROUND'S FOR OBJECTION

- Impact on houses adjacent to the site and at Alderholt, most specifically noise and dust, and any road widening, which local residents fear will encourage traffic to speed up, together with narrowing verges will create an unacceptable hazard to walkers and riders
- Impact of traffic on the character of Hillbury Road, Harbridge Drove and other roads in the vicinity
- Impact on the landscape and the character of the area and the need for screening
- Public rights of way across the site
- Temporary loss of high grade agricultural land
- Possible impact on Midgham Long Copse ancient semi-natural woodland and other woodland adjoining the site including potential impact on water courses, springs and wells, including the River Avon SSSI
- Potential archaeological interest
- Cumulative impact on this site if worked at the same time as others in the vicinity, which have already been granted planning permission, to minimise impact on the Ringwood Forest/Harbridge/Fordingbridge area
- Whether satisfactory restoration can be achieved at low level
- The site was excluded from the 1987 Plan and that there had been no significant change since then
- There are less environmentally sensitive sites
- Impact on natural habitats/wildlife

- An area of natural beauty would be destroyed
- Impact on the holiday trade
- Other environmental impact, including noise, dust and smell
- Impact on health
- Impact on water table/potential for subsidence
- Avon Valley is becoming too industrialised
- Hedgerows would be destroyed if roads are widened
- Impact on property value/resale/compensation
- Lorry routeing would be difficult to control
- Impact on Avon Valley Environmentally Sensitive Area, New Forest Heritage Area and National Park
- Site is not an existing preferred area
- Many residents will not live to see restoration
- Contradictory approach of the County Council in publicising plans to make towns and villages more attractive and at the same time planning to destroy the countryside
- The needs of future generations
- Alderholt residents (Dorset) should not suffer from Hampshire's problems
- Risk of roads flooding
- Contrary to Policies 8 and 10 in the Plan
- Contrary to 'Protecting the Environment' proposals
- Money has been spent enhancing Fordingbridge
- Proposal is against 'Belief 1' in the Plan
- There would be no employment opportunities for local people
- Lorry routeing agreement would be needed
- Rail transportation from the site should be promoted
- Site lacks natural screening
- The area needs a development brief
- Cobley Wood would be more suitable

Hampshire County Structure Plan (1993)

"Policy MW2 Permission will normally be granted for minerals and waste development, provided the County Council is satisfied that:

- (i) there is a demonstrated need for the development which outweighs any adverse environmental impact or other detrimental effects that the development would have;
- (ii) the proposals include measures to ensure that any environmental impact or other detrimental effect of the development will not be unacceptable; and
- (iii) the proposals, where applicable, include a phased scheme of working and details of landscaping and the restoration and aftercare of the site as quickly as possible to a satisfactory environmental standard and to a landform suitable for a beneficial afteruse."

In the case of sand and gravel extraction, need will be assessed in relation to Policy MW7.

"Policy MW7 In considering applications for extraction of minerals, the County Council will have regard to the need to maintain a stock of planning permissions sufficient for the extraction of sand and gravel (including building sand and hoggin) in accordance with the guidance in Minerals Planning Guidance Note MPG6 unless exceptional circumstances prevail."

Permission will not be granted for sand and gravel extraction in excess of what is necessary to maintain the landbank, unless it is essential to meet a need for aggregates which cannot be met from marine-dredged, rail-borne, sea-borne or secondary material sources. The County Council will seek to maintain separate landbanks of soft sand and of sharp sand and gravel.

Hampshire Minerals Local Plan 1987

"Policy 11 The County Council will not normally permit sand and gravel extraction outside preferred areas unless the requirement for land-won sand and gravel (in accordance with Policy 9) cannot reasonably be met from the preferred areas. Notwithstanding these provisions there will be a strong presumption against sand and gravel extraction within:

- (i) the perambulation of the New Forest (except for extraction required to enable the

Forestry Commission to implement agreed policies to control recreation within the perambulation;

- (ii) Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- (iii) Sites of Special Scientific Interest and nature reserves;
- (iv) areas of high quality agricultural land;
- (v) sites of Scheduled Ancient Monuments."

"Policy 12 The County Council will consider applications to work sites outside preferred areas on their merits and will be prepared to grant planning permission if it can be demonstrated that working of such a site would be equally acceptable to working within a preferred area."

Minerals and Waste Local Plan - Deposit Plan (1993)

"Policy 7 Permission will be granted for minerals and waste development provided the County Council is satisfied that:

- (i) there is a clearly established need for the development (as assessed in relation to the other relevant policies of the Plan) or a wider environmental benefit to be gained from the development which outweighs any adverse environmental or other impact that the development would be likely to cause; and
- (ii) the development would not be likely to give rise to an unacceptable level of adverse environmental, traffic or other impact, pollution risk or danger to public health, particularly in respect of any of the factors specified in Policy 9; and
- (iii) measures would be taken to ensure that any environmental, traffic or other impact arising from the development, particularly in respect of any of the factors specified in Policy 9, would, so far as is practicable, be minimised; and
- (iv) the proposals provide for the satisfactory working or operation and landscaping of the site; and

- (v) the proposals provide for the satisfactory restoration of the site at the cessation of the operations or use or at the end of the life of the facility to a condition suitable for an agreed beneficial after-use which is compatible with adjoining land uses and the planning policies for the area; and
- (vi) the restoration proposals are capable of being implemented and there is a satisfactory means of securing them; and
- (vii) the proposals comply, where appropriate, with the other policies of this Plan.

Notwithstanding any need there may be for waste disposal, permission will not normally be granted for mineral extraction with restoration by infilling with waste materials unless there is a need for the mineral to be extracted."

"Policy 9

When considering proposals for minerals or waste development the County Council will have particular regard to:

- (i) the relationship of the proposal site to other properties and land uses (particularly residential and other environmentally sensitive properties) and the likely effects of the proposed development on the locality by reason of noise, dust, smoke, fumes, illumination or any other factor and the need for buffer zones between the development and residential and other properties;
- (ii) the likely volume and nature of traffic that would be generated by the proposed development and the suitability of the proposed access to the site and of the road network that would be affected, in terms of highway capacity and safety and environmental impact, and whether any highway improvements required could be carried out satisfactorily without causing unacceptable environmental impact;
- (iii) the likely visual impact of the proposed development and the need for additional planting and screening, including planting in advance of the commencement of the development;
- (iv) the need to safeguard the character and amenities of individual settlements and to safeguard open gaps between settlements from

development which would cause long-term harm to the function of the land;

- (v) the likely effects of the proposed development on and the need to protect and safeguard sites of nature conservation, geological, archaeological, historic, architectural and landscape importance and their settings;
- (vi) the extent and quality of agricultural land to be taken by the proposed development and the proposals for its subsequent restoration and the likely effects of the proposals on farm structure and management;
- (vii) the likely effects of the proposed development on the distinctive character of the landscape and the need to protect and safeguard woodland, trees and hedgerows;
- (viii) the likely effects of the proposed development on sites used for recreation and public rights of way and the need to protect or secure the satisfactory diversion of public rights of way;
- (ix) the likely effects of the proposed development on and the need to safeguard the flow and quality of watercourses, water supplies, groundwater, the drainage of the site and adjoining land and the level of the watertable in the locality;
- (x) any potential danger to aircraft from birds being attracted to the site;
- (xi) the possible amenity implications of any landfill gas that might be generated at the site and of any provisions that might need to be made to deal with it; and
- (xii) the likely cumulative impact of the proposed development in combination with any other significant development taking place or permitted to take place in the locality and the need to minimise the impact of mineral extraction and waste disposal operations by securing, where appropriate, the phased release of sites and progression of working and restoration."

- "Policy 10 Applications for planning permission for minerals and waste development will not be approved unless they are supported by adequate drawings and plans describing the proposed development and a full statement setting out the implications of it including, where appropriate, details of the matters listed in Appendix 4 to the Plan."
- "Policy 18 The County Council will aim to grant planning permissions for the extraction of sand and gravel from sufficient land to enable the production of land-won sand and gravel within Hampshire to be maintained at but not exceeding an overall average level based on the most recent national policy guidance and the most recent regional policy guidance to which the County Council has agreed."
- "Policy 19 The County Council will not normally grant planning permission for the extraction of sand and gravel where it would be likely to result in the supply requirement figures for soft sand or sharp sand and gravel set out in Table 2 being exceeded."
- "Policy 20 Unless environmental constraints or other circumstances prevent the release of sufficient land, the County Council will aim to grant sufficient planning permissions for the maintenance of stocks of reserves with permission for extraction (landbanks) of both soft sand and sharp sand and gravel equivalent to five years' extraction based on the most recent national policy guidance, and the most recent regional policy guidance to which the County Council has agreed, having regard to the forecast supply requirement figures set out in Table 2."
- "Policy 24 The extraction of sand and gravel from land outside the preferred areas specified in Policy 22 will not be permitted unless, exceptionally, either it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the County Council that:
- (i) there is a need for additional permitted reserves of sand and gravel (as assessed under Policies 18-21 above) which cannot be met from within the preferred areas; and
 - (ii) the need for sand and gravel cannot be met from any other source which would give rise to less environmental, traffic and other impact;
- or the proposed development involves a limited, small-scale extension to or deepening of an existing active sand and gravel extraction site."