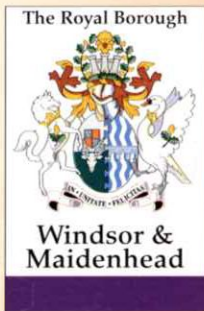


Joint Strategic Planning Unit



Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire

Incorporating the Alterations adopted in
December 1997 and May 2001



CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1 The Background to the Local Plan	3
2 National and regional policies	10
3 Meeting the demand for minerals	14
4 Where should future sand and gravel extraction take place?	24
5 Policies for sand and gravel extraction	29
6 Policies for other minerals	41
7 Restoration and after-use	43
8 Other issues in the submission and determination of planning applications	52
9 Importing aggregates by rail	61
10 Plant and buildings	68
11 Implementation, monitoring and review	72
Appendices	
1 Structure Plan policies	75
2 Extracts from national and regional policy statements and related documents	77
3 Preferred Areas for sand and gravel extraction	81
4 (Deleted)	
5 Examples of issues deriving from Policy 7 relevant to the determination of planning applications	143
6 The Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme	145
7 Safeguarded rail depot sites	147
8 Replacement Minerals Local Plan - Policies	167

INTRODUCTION

We all use minerals, and we all need them in our daily lives. From little things like toothpaste, cat-litter and light bulbs, through the sand we use to condition our lawns or the mortar and cement we use in DIY, right up to the houses we live in and the roads we drive on – all are made of minerals. Huge quantities of minerals are used in all sectors of the economy, and in none more so than the construction industry. In a typical year, the construction industry in South East England uses between three and four tonnes of 'aggregate minerals' – such as sand and gravel – for every man, woman and child living there.

So the local Councils do not invent the demand for minerals. As government ministers have stressed,

"Demand for aggregates is generated by a proper and natural desire for improvements in the standard of living. That means improvements to our transport infrastructure, especially roads and railways, and improvements in hospitals, housing, and water quality."

But it falls to the local Councils to make the decisions on planning applications to extract minerals in the county. These applications pose very difficult problems, because mineral extraction can have major effects on the environment and people's living conditions over a long period. However, because minerals are a basic resource for a prosperous national economy, it is government policy that mineral planning authorities such as the Berkshire Unitary Authorities must ensure that appropriate planning permissions are given to extract them.

The purpose of the Minerals Local Plan is to provide a basis for making these difficult decisions, striking the right balance between the need to produce minerals and the need to protect the environment and people's quality of life. Berkshire County Council's first Minerals Plan was approved in 1984. That plan and its policies have now been completely reviewed, to provide up to date planning policies for dealing with future applications.

Public consultation on the review of the Plan was carried out in two stages, in 1991 and 1992, and the Plan was the subject of a public inquiry in 1993. The County Council strove as far as possible to produce a Plan which takes account of all the views expressed on earlier draft versions – although inevitably it has not been possible to meet all the objections which have been raised during the Plan's preparation. In preparing the final version of the Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire in the mid-1990s, the former County Council took particular account of all the recommendations made by the Inquiry Inspector.

The main issues addressed in this Plan are:

- How much mineral (mainly sand and gravel) should be dug in Berkshire?
- Where should extraction be allowed?
- Where should extraction not be allowed?
- What should be the objectives for the restoration of future mineral workings?
- How can we ensure that mineral working is carried out in the least damaging way?
- How can mineral working be used to secure long-term environmental and other public benefits?
- How much mineral may have to be brought into Berkshire from elsewhere?
- Where might depots be located to allow minerals to be brought in by rail?

The local planning authorities believe that the best way of striking the fairest balance between the need to permit mineral working, the need to minimise its impacts, and the need to ensure the best possible long-term environmental benefits, is to identify in advance areas (called 'Preferred Areas') where mineral working will be permitted. This approach allows the prior selection of the least damaging areas through rigorous study of all the possibilities county-wide, and enables us to lay down in advance the basis on which mineral working will be acceptable in each of the Preferred Areas, including requirements about how sites should be restored. It also allows us to make it clear where mineral working will not be permitted, because of the environmental conflicts which would arise.

Thus the new Plan will provide greater certainty to both local people and the mineral operators about what will be acceptable to the local planning authorities. It will also help the authorities to ensure that mineral working causes the least possible damage to the county's environment and is used wherever possible as a

means of maintaining a high quality environment in the future – two aims to which the local planning authorities are firmly committed.

This Local Plan was adopted by the County Council with effect from 4 November 1995, and its contents became the formal policy of the Council from that date. A first set of Alterations to the Plan was adopted by the County Council in December 1997. When Berkshire County Council was abolished at the end of March 1998, the Plan (including the 1997 Alterations) became the formal policy of the Unitary Authorities that succeeded the County Council. The further Alterations adopted in May 2001 now form a full part of the Minerals Local Plan.

The base-date of the statistical information used in the Plan as originally adopted was 30 September 1994. With the exceptions of Tables 2 and 3, the statistics in the Plan have generally not been rolled forward in the Alterations adopted in May 2001, because the content of the Plan derives from the earlier statistics and it would be misleading to delete them. The latest figures of mineral production and reserves in the county can be found in the annual Monitoring Reports on this Plan.

I THE BACKGROUND TO THE LOCAL PLAN

Berkshire as a mineral producer

- 1.1 Berkshire has been a significant producer of minerals for many years. The county is underlain by three main types of mineral – sand and gravel, chalk and clay – and each of these has been and continues to be extracted to meet society's needs.
- 1.2 Until the 20th century, chalk and clay were the main minerals produced, generally to meet very localised needs. These minerals continue to be extracted, but now on a very small scale compared to sand and gravel. The chalk is used mainly as agricultural lime, and sometimes as 'fill'. The clay was formerly used chiefly in tile-making, but now its main use is to line waste disposal sites to prevent the spread of pollution.
- 1.3 Since the Second World War, the main type of mineral production in the county has been of 'aggregates' for the construction industry. Substantial quantities of aggregate minerals are needed for all construction work – in the building or renovation of houses, schools, hospitals, roads, and so on. As an illustration of the scale of the demand, it is reckoned that every new house built requires around 50 tonnes of aggregates.
- 1.4 The aggregate minerals most widely found in South East England are sand and gravel. These minerals are not evenly spread between counties. Resources of sand and gravel underlie nearly one-third of Berkshire, and the county currently produces just under one-tenth of the sand and gravel won in South East England.
- 1.5 Berkshire's sand and gravel resources are made up of two distinct minerals:
- Sharp sand and gravel** is geologically a very recent deposit, dating from the end of the last Ice Age (around 10,000 years ago). The best sharp sand and gravel is chiefly used for making concrete, and is therefore sometimes referred to as 'concreting aggregate'. Sharp sand and gravel with a higher clay and silt content is not so suitable for concrete-making, and is more likely to be used in road construction or as fill – either load-bearing or 'constructional' fill, or else as 'bulk fill' whose role is chiefly to build up ground levels. This poorer quality sharp sand and gravel is sometimes known as 'hoggin'.
- Soft sand** is a much older deposit, dating from around 60 million years ago. The best soft sand (known as building sand) is used chiefly in the making of asphalt, mortar or plaster. Poorer quality soft sand is more likely to be used as fill.
- 1.6 In recent years, just under three-quarters of the aggregates won in Berkshire have consisted of concreting aggregate. Just under one-quarter has been hoggin or poor quality soft sands, while the best quality soft sands have accounted for between 2% and 5% of total production.
- 1.7 Figure 1 and the Survey Map show where the main commercial minerals are found in the county. The Survey Map also shows the location of past and present mineral workings.

Berkshire as an aggregates importer

- 1.8 Berkshire does not produce all the aggregates it needs. In recent years, the county has used about half as much again as it produces. The majority of the 'imported' aggregates consists of crushed limestone brought in by rail from Somerset. Smaller amounts of rock are imported from other parts of the country. Berkshire also makes use of some aggregates dredged from the sea bed, and also of 'secondary aggregates' – that is, industrial by-products which are suitable for use as aggregates (such as ash from power stations), or recycled concrete.
- 1.9 Berkshire also imports significant amounts of sand and gravel from neighbouring counties, chiefly Hampshire and Surrey. These 'imports' are broadly in balance with 'exports' to nearby counties of sand and gravel dug in Berkshire. Most of the movements of sand and gravel between Berkshire and its neighbours are very local, involving material dug from pits close to the county boundaries.

Why we need a Local Plan

- 1.10 As existing gravel pits in the county come to the end of their production, decisions have to be taken about whether new ones should be permitted to replace them, and if so, where. As Chapter 2 explains, such decisions have to take into account not just Berkshire's needs for sand and gravel, but also wider regional aspects. A Minerals Local Plan is a way of considering these and other related subjects (including topics relating to the import of aggregates) by looking at the county as a whole.
- 1.11 Minerals can only be worked where they occur naturally. Many of the county's reserves underlie areas of attractive countryside, or areas where the soils are excellent for food production; others occur beneath land close to developed areas. Conflicts of interest inevitably occur.
- 1.12 Mineral extraction and its associated activities have a marked effect on the environment, sometimes lasting for many years. A balance has to be struck between the continuing needs of society for more or better roads, houses, schools and hospitals etc, and the need to protect the most valuable areas of the local environment from mineral operations. This Local Plan aims to find such a balance which is fair to all interests.
- 1.13 When this Plan was prepared in the early 1990s, planning control over mineral extraction in Berkshire was the responsibility of Berkshire County Council, and the County Council was also responsible for preparing this Local Plan. Since the abolition of Berkshire County Council at the end of March 1998, the successor Unitary Authorities (the District and Borough Councils) have taken over the responsibility for planning control over mineral extraction. General planning policies relating to minerals continue to be set out in the Berkshire Structure Plan, which was adopted in November 1995 and is currently (mid-2001) under review. In turn, some of the Structure Plan policies derive from the government's national and regional policies concerning aggregates demand and supply. The minerals policies of the adopted Structure Plan, together with some other policies from that Plan, are set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.14 **Structure Plans** set out the local planning authorities' broad strategy for mineral working and related development. To develop this strategy and relate it more precisely to identifiable areas of land, a **Local Plan** is needed. The Councils' first detailed planning policies for minerals were set out in the Berkshire Minerals Local Plan, which was adopted as a statutory local plan by the County Council with effect from September 1984.
- 1.15 The present document completely replaces the 1984 Minerals Local Plan. It will be the principal means by which the local planning authorities and others assess the acceptability of future planning applications for mineral extraction or for related activities. The Plan consists of a set of policies (printed in coloured text) with explanatory text (printed in black).
- 1.16 In preparing this new Plan, the opportunity has been taken to make a comprehensive review of the 1984 Plan's content and presentation. The aim of this has been to produce a document which is more helpful to the local authorities, to the public in general, and to the minerals industry.
- 1.17 The Plan has been prepared having full regard to national and regional policies on minerals. Details of these policies are set out later in this document.

Preparation and status of the Local Plan

- 1.18 When preparing this Replacement Plan, the County Council carried out two rounds of public consultation to seek the views of interested parties – the public, local organisations, relevant statutory bodies, and the minerals industry – on the matters which the Plan considers. The very considerable public response was taken into account by the Council in the preparation of a draft version of the Plan, published in 1993. That document was the subject of a public inquiry later in that year. The Inspector who presided over the inquiry reported to the County Council in May 1994, and the content of the approved Plan was agreed by the Council following careful consideration of each of the Inspector's recommendations. It also takes account of new government advice regarding aggregates provision in England, issued in April 1994. The Plan was finally adopted as a statutory Local Plan by resolution of the County Council with effect from 4 November 1995.

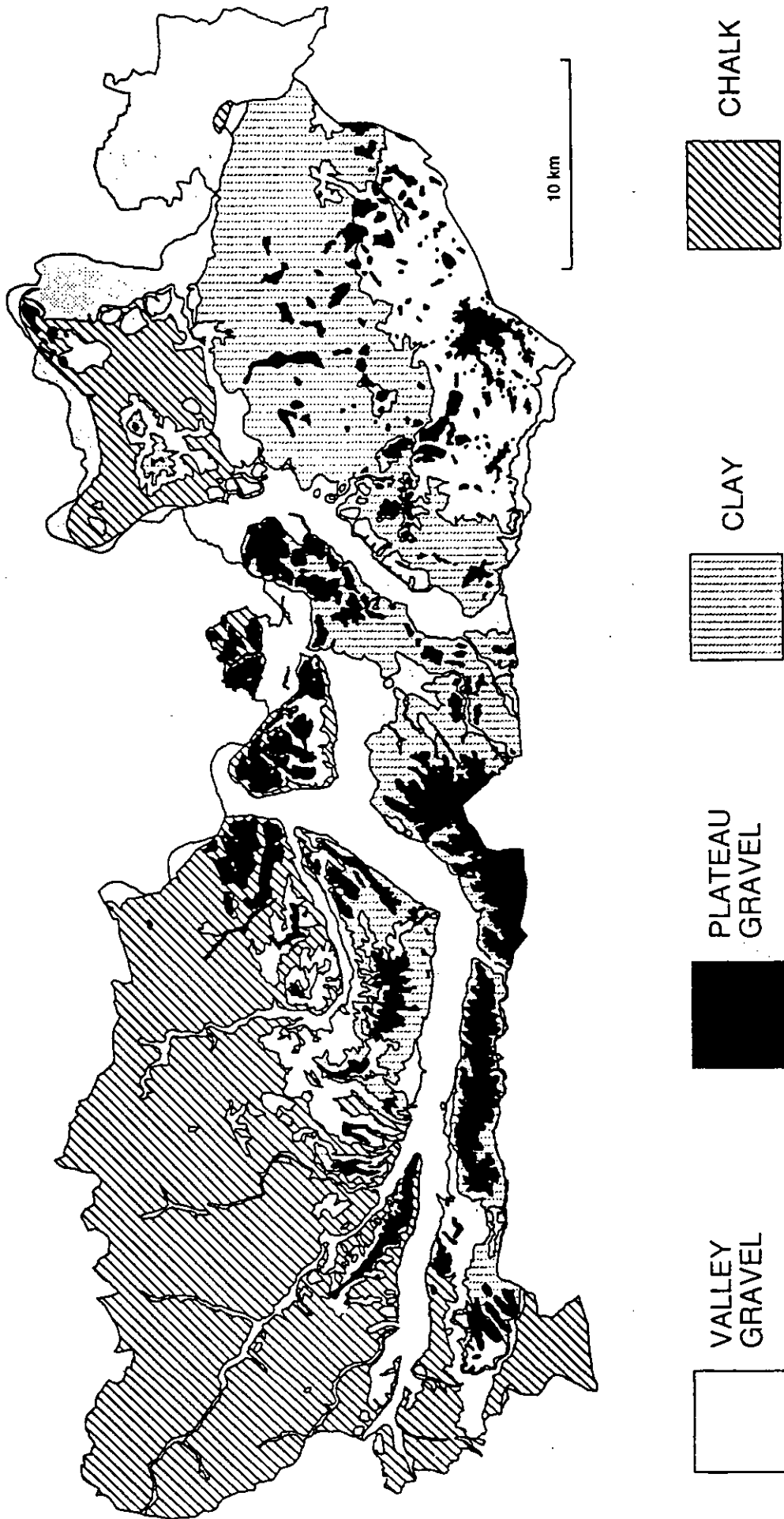


Figure 1 - Map of Berkshire showing principal mineral deposits

Alterations and Changed Responsibilities

- 1.18A In December 1997, the County Council adopted a series of Alterations to the Plan, designed to incorporate the area of Colnbrook and Poyle which had transferred into Berkshire (from Buckinghamshire and Surrey respectively) in April 1995. These Alterations were published separately by the Council in January 1998.
- 1.18B When Berkshire County Council was abolished in 1998, the new Unitary Authorities became responsible for all matters relating to planning for minerals, and took on board the policy approach and other content of the adopted Plan. The Unitary Authorities are now responsible for making the decisions on planning applications for mineral extraction and related matters. However, responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the Minerals Local Plan became a joint responsibility of all six authorities, working through a 'Joint Strategic Planning Committee'.
- 1.18C In 1998, the Joint Strategic Planning Committee initiated work on further Alterations to the Plan, to roll it forward to a new end-date, and to reflect various changes that have taken place since the Plan was first adopted in 1995. Proposed Alterations to the Plan were placed on deposit in 2000, and were the subject of a public inquiry in January 2001. Following their adoption by the Joint Committee in May 2001, the approved Alterations now form an integral part of the Plan.

What the Replacement Plan covers

- 1.19 The Replacement Local Plan [incorporating the 2001 Alterations] sets out policies to be applied to mineral extraction in Berkshire over the period to the end of 2006. The policies aim to ensure that mineral extraction can take place at an appropriate rate throughout that period, and also that at the end of the period there can be sufficient planning permissions to allow extraction for a further seven years (ie to the end of 2013).
- 1.20 Because sand and gravel are by far the main minerals produced in the county, much of the Plan deals with them. In particular the Plan works out how much land should be given planning permission for mineral working over the period to 2006, and the areas which are considered to be the most suitable for its extraction; these are referred to as Preferred Areas. The Plan also sets out the issues that will be taken into account when dealing with planning applications for the extraction of any minerals.
- 1.21 Mineral extraction can mean disturbance to an area for a temporary period – sometimes a lengthy period, but nonetheless temporary. But in the longer term it can also provide the opportunity to improve the appearance and character of the landscape, and to create new facilities of benefit to the public at large. To take advantage of these opportunities, particular emphasis is laid in the Plan on the need to ensure the satisfactory restoration of mineral sites, and on securing suitable uses for the sites and their surrounding areas after extraction has been completed.
- 1.22 The Plan also considers a number of issues related to mineral extraction, including the attitude of the local planning authorities to the erection of plant and buildings at mineral sites, and to the establishment or enlargement of depots for importing aggregates into the county by rail.

Mineral extraction and waste disposal

- 1.23 Many mineral sites in Berkshire are restored after extraction by filling them, in whole or in part, with waste material. This waste may consist of soils, or inert products such as concrete hardcore and brick, or wastes which decompose relatively quickly, such as domestic, commercial or industrial wastes. For geological or other reasons, not all mineral sites are suited to receive waste (of any or all types) to aid in their restoration. In particular, sites in river valleys have not generally been suitable for disposing of household waste, because of the risk of polluting underground or surface water supplies.
- 1.24 The local planning authorities' general planning policies for waste disposal are contained in the Berkshire Structure Plan. The new Structure Plan policies place great emphasis on the need to minimise waste, to give active encouragement to the re-use and recycling of all types of waste, to seek to phase out the landfilling of Berkshire's putrescible waste, and to develop alternative methods of processing and disposing of such waste. These concerns are reflected in the Waste Management Plan for Berkshire

(adopted by the former County Council in July 1995) and in the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (adopted as a statutory local plan in December 1998). The latter seeks to identify specific sites for future waste management and disposal facilities in the county.

- 1.25 The present Plan relates to these issues in two important respects, but it does not deal with them directly. The first concerns the importance of promoting the future use of secondary and recycled aggregates, which (as explained in Chapter 2) are intended to help meet the growing demand for aggregate minerals in a more sustainable way than would result from placing ever-increasing reliance on primary aggregates. The second concerns the fact that waste disposal by landfill is an important means of securing the satisfactory restoration of mineral sites, and this document contains some proposals which refer to waste disposal in that context. However, it is not the role of this Plan to identify sites for waste recycling and disposal activities. That is the function of the Waste Local Plan.
- 1.26 The restoration of mineral sites raises many issues. When extraction takes place in a river valley, a key concern is the choice to be made in each case between leaving the site as a lake, or returning it to dry land by filling it with waste – with all the consequences that this has in terms of lengthening the period of operations at the site, and of the extra traffic which is created. This issue is discussed in more detail in paragraphs 7.10 to 7.14 in Chapter 7.

Environmental considerations

- 1.27 This Replacement Minerals Local Plan deals with an activity which can have major effects on the environment over a long period. In preparing the key policies of the Plan, the County Council rigorously appraised the environmental implications of alternative approaches, having regard to their impacts on both the physical environment and people's living conditions and the quality of life.
- 1.28 The local planning authorities are well aware that in a crowded county such as Berkshire, mineral extraction is unlikely to be a welcome activity, wherever it may be proposed. But equally, the authorities recognise that minerals are an important natural resource, and their exploitation makes an essential contribution to the nation's prosperity and living standards. In preparing this Plan the County Council sought to balance these potentially conflicting interests. In striking that balance, the Council paid particular regard to the growing awareness of the need for future planning policies to be consistent with the concept of sustainable development.
- 1.29 The Council therefore paid very careful attention to ensuring that the policies for future mineral extraction and related activities in Berkshire encourage a sustainable approach. Following the public inquiry late in 1993, the County Council carried out an Environmental Appraisal of the Plan, in accordance with the procedures set out in the Department of the Environment's manual 'Environmental Appraisal of Development Plans – A good practice guide' (1993). The results of this appraisal have been published separately. The issues raised as a result of the appraisal have been taken into account when preparing the 2001 Alterations to the Plan. Those Alterations have in turn been subject to a similar process of environmental appraisal.
- 1.30 However, the method adopted by the County Council when preparing this Plan, and the issues addressed during that process, reflect very many of the concerns referred to in the Department of the Environment manual.
- 1.31 This in preparing the Plan, the Council considered in detail the extent to which Berkshire will be able to maintain past levels of mineral production without unacceptable impacts on the environment, having regard to the finite nature of mineral resources in the county, and also, crucially, to judgements as to the sustainability in environmental terms of working those resources; and having regard also to national and regional guidance on future levels of aggregates provision. Its conclusions on this key issue are set out in Chapter 3 of this Plan.
- 1.32 A further key feature of this Plan is its identification of 'Preferred Areas' for mineral extraction. This approach has been adopted for a variety of reasons relating above all to the need to maintain control over the location and the nature of mineral workings, and thus to ensure so far as possible that their adverse impacts are contained. The reasons for adopting the Preferred Areas approach are explained more fully in Chapter 4. That chapter also explains that the process of selecting the Preferred Areas has

been carried out by carefully assessing the acceptability in environmental terms of working particular sites during the period covered by this Plan.

- 1.33 When these difficult choices about the appropriate level of, and least damaging locations for, mineral extraction have been made, it is then essential to direct mineral working only to acceptable sites; to make sure that mineral working there is carried out with the least harm and disruption to the local environment; to ensure that restoration is of the highest possible standard, to landscapes and land-uses which meet the wider environmental planning objectives of the local planning authorities; and to secure the widest possible public environmental benefits (consistent with the prevailing legal framework and national policy guidance) to counter the adverse impacts of extraction operations. These issues are dealt with in Chapters 5 to 8 of this Plan.
- 1.34 The other key aspect of this Plan in terms of environmental considerations is its provisions concerning the importing of aggregates to the county. An important corollary of the approach of encouraging the sustainable use of local resources, and mineral resources generally, is the need to encourage the use of alternative and recycled materials. Such an approach depends on the local planning authorities being prepared to make provision, if needed, for sites to receive materials from elsewhere. This subject is dealt with in Chapter 9.
- 1.35 All of these subjects, and in particular the key topics of assessing an acceptable figure for the overall level of mineral extraction which can be accommodated in the county in future and of deciding the precise sites to which extraction should be directed, are very closely related. The County Council believed that the rigorous and inter-connected assessments of these key topics which it carried out in preparing this Plan serve to define the 'environmental capacity' of Berkshire to produce minerals over the Plan period. The main policies of the Plan have been drawn up with the aim of ensuring that the county's environmental capacity is not exceeded, whilst at the same time incorporating a firm practical commitment to ensuring effective control of mineral extraction and restoration.
- 1.36 Current government advice, in the general Planning Policy Guidance Notes 1, 7 and 12 and Minerals Planning Guidance Notes 1 and 6, and in other topic-based guidance notes, emphasises the need for sustainable development, including the conservation of non-renewable natural resources, the protection of the countryside for its own sake, and the need to make the environment more attractive, cleaner and safer. The local planning authorities believe that the policies now contained in this Plan will help to minimise the adverse environmental impacts of necessary mineral extraction, as well as securing long-term benefits for local people and the environment generally.

Interpreting the Plan

- 1.37 In this Plan, the terms 'Berkshire' and 'the county area' are used to refer to the whole area formerly administered by Berkshire County Council. These references should be taken as including the area of Colnbrook and Poyle which transferred to the county in April 1995, except where it is clear that the document is drawing on historic data which was not collected on the present geographical basis. References to 'the Unitary Authorities', or to the 'local planning authorities' (or sometimes 'minerals planning authorities') refer to the six authorities that have replaced Berkshire County Council for minerals planning purposes – namely West Berkshire Council, Reading Borough Council, Wokingham District Council, Bracknell Forest Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, and Slough Borough Council.

Statement of Regard

- 1.38 Under new Regulations introduced in January 2000, local planning authorities must include in their local plans a statement of the regard which they have had to certain specified matters. The following bullet-points set out these matters, and indicate the regard paid to them in the preparation of the 2001 Alterations, and more generally in the preparation of the Plan as a whole.
- **current national policies, and any regional or strategic planning guidance given by the Secretary of State to assist them in the preparation of the Plan.** Chapter 2 sets out the principal national and regional policy background to the Plan. The contents of this policy background, and of other relevant national and regional advice, are reflected throughout the Plan.

More specifically, the 2001 Alterations reflect the comments made by the Government Office for the South East during a consultation exercise in the spring of 1999. Further details can be found in the Environmental Appraisal of the original Plan (1995) and of the 2001 Alterations (2000).

- **the resources likely to be available.** The policies and proposals of the Plan, and of the 2001 Alterations, do not *require* the expenditure of resources; the Plan's key provisions are permissive rather than demanding actions on the part of other parties. There are no new provisions in the 2001 Alterations which affect this principle, or which have significant additional resource implications for the local authorities, mineral companies, or other parties.
- **economic, environmental and social considerations.** The level of provision for mineral extraction made in this Plan reflects national advice, which is based on the objective of providing an adequate and steady supply of minerals at the best balance of social, environmental and economic cost while ensuring that extraction and development are consistent with the principles of sustainable development. Other aspects of the Plan, including the 2001 Alterations, reflect the same principle (see e.g. paragraphs 1.27-1.32, and 3.37-3.39).
- **the national waste strategy/relevant local waste disposal plans; the objective of preventing major accidents and limiting their consequences; and the account taken of any enterprise zone scheme in the plan area.** These are not considered to be applicable to this minerals local plan or the 2001 Alterations. There are no enterprise zone schemes in Berkshire.
- **the need to maintain appropriate distances between establishments and areas of particular sensitivity or interest.** The Plan, including the 2001 Alterations, includes provisions designed to ensure appropriate separation between mineral extraction sites and sites of related activities, and sensitive interests and areas – see for example paragraph 5.15 and Policies 10-13.

2 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICIES

General introduction

- 2.1 Minerals Local Plans must take account of prevailing advice at national and regional level. This advice can change over time, for example to reflect the increasing awareness of the importance of environmental matters and the benefits of sustainable development.
- 2.1A Specific national and regional policies for minerals can take two forms.
- 2.2 First, there are policies and guidance which set out 'ground rules' for striking the right balance between meeting society's need for minerals and the need to protect environmental and other interests. These are contained in a series of documents called Minerals Planning Guidance Notes (MPGs), which have been issued by the Department of the Environment over the period since 1988. They cover such matters as the general principles and policy considerations of minerals planning (MPG1, most recently revised in 1996), the making of planning applications and decisions (MPG2, latest version 1998), and the reclamation of mineral workings (MPG7, latest version 1996). This Plan, and its policies and proposals, take full account of these documents.
- 2.3 Secondly, there are those policies which provide guidance on the complex question of how the demand for minerals – and in particular aggregate minerals – should be met (MPG6, latest version 1994). This chapter deals with this issue in more detail, because it is fundamental to minerals planning in Berkshire.
- 2.4 Fuller extracts from some of the documents quoted in this Chapter are given in Appendix 2.

Aggregates demand and supply – national background

- 2.5 Central government sets down guidelines on how the demand for aggregates in the country as a whole, and in individual regions, should be met. The guidelines are produced after discussions with and between the various Regional Aggregates Working Parties (RAWPs). These Working Parties include representatives of the mineral planning authorities, the minerals industry, and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions [DETR - formerly the Department of the Environment], as well as of other government departments and relevant public service industries.
- 2.6 Because the distribution of aggregate minerals across the country does not match the distribution of demand for those minerals, it is not possible for each region to be completely self-sufficient in aggregates. Therefore each RAWP has to consider whether it can or should seek to meet shortfalls in other regions, or where it can obtain minerals to make good shortfalls in its own region. Discussions between the regions on these matters are co-ordinated by a National Co-ordinating Group (NCG), which reports directly to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.
- 2.7 The first national and regional guidelines on aggregates provision were issued in 1982. The current guidelines, covering the period to 2006, were published in April 1994 in the latest version of the document known as MPG6. In their preparation, particular attention was paid to new estimates of future demands for aggregate minerals, and to the introduction of a more sustainable approach to minerals planning generally. (These guidelines are considered more fully in paragraphs 2.12 to 2.20 below.) The MPG6 guidelines are kept under regular review, and are revised when necessary – for example, to reflect changes in demand, technology, or environmental standards. A review of the 1994 version of MPG6 is currently [mid-2001] being carried out by the DETR.

Past aggregates policy for the South East region

- 2.8 In the 1982 guidelines, most regions were expected to meet their future demands for aggregates by using minerals obtained from the same sources as they had done previously, and in much the same proportions as formerly. Circumstances in the South East region – which includes Berkshire – were different. The 1982 guidelines recognised that, because of the risk of using up local resources too quickly, the South

East should not be expected to continue to meet the same proportion of its demands from local land-won materials as it had hitherto. Changes to the pattern of aggregates supply to the region would therefore have to be phased in.

- 2.9 By 1982, the South East was already making considerable use both of aggregate minerals dredged from the seabed, and of aggregates imported from other regions – chiefly the South West and the East Midlands, with an increasing proportion of those imports coming by rail. The 'regional philosophy' set out in the 1982 guidelines expected the industry to increase to the maximum practicable extent the proportion of materials brought into the region by rail or from marine or sea-borne sources, with materials won within the region making up the balance of regional demand. The philosophy envisaged that between 1977 and 1991, the proportion of the region's aggregates consumption which consisted of locally-won sand and gravel would in consequence fall from 63% to 54%.
- 2.10 Regional monitoring after 1982 indicated that this rate of decline was being achieved and even exceeded. However, because total demand in the region increased throughout the 1980s, in absolute terms the amount of sand and gravel won in the region remained fairly constant between the late 1970s and the late 1980s. Figure 2 illustrates this changing pattern.

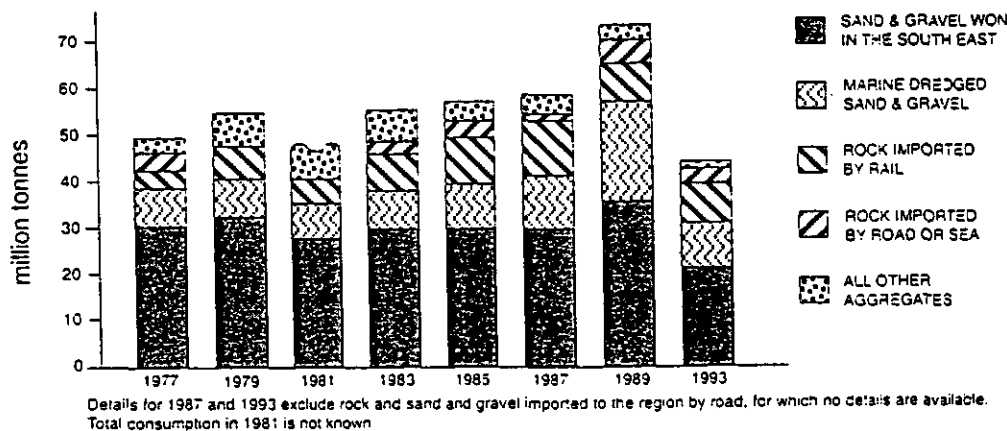


Figure 2 - Consumption of aggregates in the South East 1977-1993

- 2.11 When the 1982 guidelines were first reviewed, in 1989, the South East adopted a 'regional supply policy' which set down a figure for the expected contribution of the region towards meeting its own needs. This was a broad continuation each year of the 1985 production level of 32.5 million tonnes (mt), made up of approximately 31 mt of sand and gravel and 1.5 mt of hard rock. The considerable and increasing additional demands for aggregates in the region were expected to be met by increasing the 'import' of aggregates to the region. The main imports were seen as being of aggregates dredged from the sea-bed, and crushed rock from South West England, the East Midlands, and – increasingly – Scotland.

Current national guidelines: A new approach

- 2.12 The 1989 guidelines have now themselves been reviewed, following the substantial and unforeseen increases in demand in the late 1980s and the subsequent considerable fall-back in demand in the early 1990s. The current version of MPG6 was issued in April 1994. It takes account of new forecasts for the country and the region which indicate that increases in aggregates demand to 2006 and beyond will be even greater than was indicated in the 1989 guidance.
- 2.13 But crucially, MPG6 now also takes account of the widespread and increasing public concern that the previous approach to aggregates supply was unsustainable, having regard to the finite nature of the sources of supply, to the adverse immediate effects of mineral extraction, and to the need to ensure that, as other government advice puts it,

"the sum total of decisions in the planning field should not deny future generations the best of today's environment".

2.14 As a result, MPG6 now lays great stress on the importance of adopting a sustainable approach to minerals planning. It sets out four objectives of this approach, and these have been increased to six in the latest version of MPG1 (1996), as follows:

- "(i) to conserve minerals as far as possible, whilst ensuring an adequate supply to meet needs;
- (ii) to ensure that the environmental impacts caused by mineral operations and the transport of minerals are kept, as far as possible, to an acceptable minimum;
- (iii) to minimise production of waste and to encourage efficient use of materials, including appropriate use of high quality materials, and recycling of wastes;
- (iv) to encourage sensitive working, restoration and aftercare practices so as to preserve or enhance the overall quality of the environment;
- (v) to protect areas of designated landscape or nature conservation value from development, other than in exceptional circumstances and where it has been demonstrated that development is in the public interest; and
- (vi) to prevent the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources."

2.15 With this in mind, MPG6 now adopts a significantly different approach, for the country as a whole, from its predecessors. The key extracts summarising this approach are as follows:

"In order to meet the aims of this Guidance Note in a way which is consistent with the principles of sustainable development, the Government has concluded that a gradual change from the present supply approach is called for, so that over time less reliance will be placed on the traditional land won sources. The Government recognises that over the period of this Guidance Note a substantial proportion of aggregates demand will need to be met from the traditional sources. But alternatives are expected to make an increasing contribution to supply. So that options for future supply from alternative sources are not foreclosed by long term land won provision, the Government has concluded that provision should be made now for the period to 2006 only. In the light of this assessment the Government has concluded that the provision to be made is as set out in Table 4.

"[Table 4 indicates that over the period 1992-2006, 73% of aggregates provision for England should be from land won sources in England; 8% should be imports from outside England, including 4% from Wales; and 12% should consist of secondary and recycled aggregates. The Table is printed in full in Appendix 2 of this Plan.]

"The figures contained in these guidelines are not targets but are indicative figures for the purposes of preparing development plans and the administration of development control. Nevertheless, a broad objective of this Guidance Note is to reduce the proportion of supply from land won sources in England from 83% to 74% by 2001 and 68% by 2006."

2.16 During the preparation of the new [1994] version of MPG6, Berkshire County Council participated in studies to assess the potential environmental implications of the continued working of primary aggregates in the South East region. These studies concluded that

"the area of land affected by extraction of sand and gravel, the need to conserve sensitive resources and the environmental concerns arising from extraction in heavily-populated areas all point to growing difficulties in maintaining, let alone increasing, the level of output set out in the [1989] guidance."

2.17 In consequence, the Council welcomed the new approach adopted in MPG6 as marking an important first step on the road towards a more sustainable approach to minerals planning. Policy M2 of the Berkshire Structure Plan sets out the local planning authorities' own general policy on these matters. However, the authorities consider that pressure needs to be maintained to ensure that the second and subsequent steps are taken along the same road, and without unnecessary delay. The authorities propose to ensure that this pressure is maintained in future.

Current guidelines for the South East region

- 2.18 In accordance with the new national approach, the guidelines for the South East region contained in the 1994 version of MPG6 set out a new requirement for provision for sand and gravel extraction within the region which is lower than that indicated in the 1989 version of MPG6. The requirement is now for provision to be made for the extraction of 420mt of sand and gravel in the region over the period 1992-2006, which is equivalent to 28mt/year – a 10% reduction on the previous figure of 31mt (see paragraph 2.11). This level of provision would account for 35% of the region's estimated total aggregates demand over that period, as compared with the figure of 48% indicated by the previous guidelines. The rest of the region's demand is to be met from marine-dredged material and imports from other regions and from remote sources, together with a much-increased figure of 140mt (11% of total demand) from secondary and recycled materials.
- 2.18A The current version of MPG6 covers the period to the end of 2006 only. This Plan, incorporating the 2001 Alterations, includes provision for the period to the end of 2013. To cover the situation where a Local Plan extends beyond the end-date of the advice in MPG6, that documents states that provision for the period beyond 2006 "may be determined from the MPA guideline figures on a pro-rata basis" – which in effect means that provision should be made at a continuation of the implied annual rate for the pre-2006 period.
- 2.19 MPG6 stresses that future levels of demand are inevitable uncertain, and that the balance between land won provision and other sources of supply cannot be predicted with any certainty. Hence – as stated in the extract quoted in paragraph 2.15 – the figures in the guidelines are not targets, but they are to be regarded as indicative figures for the purposes of forward planning and development control. It is on this basis that they have been applied in the preparation of this Local Plan.
- 2.19A In accepting the advice in MPG6 regarding provision for the period after 2006, the local planning authorities note that a review of the 1994 version of MPG6 is currently (May 2001) in progress. Depending on the outcome of that review, it may be necessary to reconsider the approach adopted in this Plan for the period after 2006, or to amend the levels of provision to be made for that period. The local planning authorities will carry out this reconsideration (if necessary) either prior to the adoption of these Alterations or in a further review of the Plan in due course.
- 2.20 Fuller extracts from MPG6, including the complete regional guidance statement for the South East, are set out in Appendix 2. The national and regional guidance in MPG6 forms an essential background to the aggregates policies for Berkshire for the period of this Replacement Minerals Local Plan. Chapter 3 considers in more detail the issues which they raise for Berkshire.

Demand and supply policies for other minerals

- 2.21 The guidelines in MPG6 apply to aggregate minerals only. There are no equivalent national or regional policy statements applying to the other minerals won in Berkshire.

3 MEETING THE DEMAND FOR MINERALS

Husbanding resources

3.1 Chapters 1 and 2 explained that minerals are a valuable but finite resource, which can only be worked where they occur naturally. As a general principle, therefore, it is important to prevent mineral resources being unnecessarily sterilised. This is particularly necessary in the South East, where many of the remaining resources of aggregate minerals are subject to a range of policies for protecting the environment. For this reason, underlying regional aggregates policy for the South East is the principle that the region's resources should be husbanded to prevent the need for sudden changes of policy, or of operators' practices, resulting from quick exhaustion of accessible resources. National policy too now includes the objective of conserving minerals as far as possible (see paragraph 2.14). In addition, and again in accordance with the government's objectives for sustainable development, the local planning authorities wish (so far as is within their control) to prevent this resource being used wastefully, for example through using good-quality concerning aggregate for purposes for which lower-quality materials would suffice.

Policy 1 The local planning authorities will seek to husband the mineral resources of Berkshire, to prevent their wasteful use or sterilisation.

Policy 2 The local planning authorities will oppose development proposals which would cause the sterilisation of mineral deposits on the proposed development site, or which would prejudice the future working of minerals on adjacent sites, except where it is demonstrated that

- (i) the mineral deposit is of no commercial interest, and is unlikely to be so in the future; or**
- (ii) having regard to all relevant planning considerations, there is an overriding case in favour of allowing the proposed development to proceed without the prior extraction of the mineral; or**
- (iii) extraction of the mineral would be subject to such strong environmental or other objection that it would be highly unlikely that it would ever be permitted in any circumstances.**

3.2 Policies 1 and 2 echo and expand on the first of the three aspects of the environmentally sustainable approach to minerals planning as set out in Policy M2 of the Berkshire Structure Plan (see Appendix 1). Policy 2 will be a material consideration for the relevant local planning authority when deciding planning applications for development on mineral-bearing land. The former County Council identified 'Mineral Consultation Areas' within which consideration of mineral sterilisation issues was required on all applications for development, other than certain minor developments or developments in built-up areas. Following abolition of the County Council, no formal consultation process is now applicable to applications in these areas. However, the local planning authorities will continue to apply the provisions of Policy 2 when considering applications in the former Mineral Consultation Areas (which are now referred to as 'Mineral Safeguarding Areas'), as well as on other sites where development might sterilise mineral deposits. The boundaries of the Mineral Safeguarding Areas have been defined elsewhere; they are based on the boundaries of the sharp sand and gravel deposits as shown on the Survey Map. It should be noted that the local planning authorities consider that the responsibility for demonstrating that mineral resources will not be sterilised by a proposed development rests with the prospective developer.

- 3.3 When considering an application in terms of issue (iii) in Policy 2, the local planning authorities will have regard, not just to whether the extraction of the mineral would be acceptable under the policies of the present Plan, but whether there are any circumstances foreseeable in the longer term whereby extraction might be acceptable. The limited resources of aggregate minerals in the South East may make it appropriate, at some future time, to consider relaxing some of the constraints which today argue very strongly against allowing mineral extraction (see Chapter 5); although the Berkshire authorities would not wish to relax national constraints unilaterally. Thus development proposals on sites subject to such constraints may still be subject to an objection on mineral sterilisation grounds.
- 3.4 The exception under issue (iii) of the Policy is therefore most likely to apply only in the case of small-scale development proposals which would not cause a mineral resource to be newly sterilised (for example, a proposal on a site already effectively sterilised by its location, such as the garden of a private house) – although this will not preclude this exception also applying in other circumstances, depending on the details of the case.

Extraction prior to built development

- 3.4A To avoid sterilising mineral deposits, the local planning authorities support the principle of extracting minerals from a site before more permanent forms of development take place. The following policy addresses this issue.

Policy 2A In appropriate cases, the local planning authorities will encourage the extraction of minerals prior to other more permanent forms of development taking place. Planning permission will be granted on applications for prior extraction of minerals, provided that

- (i) mineral extraction and restoration to an appropriate standard can be completed within a timetable that would not unreasonably prejudice the timetable for the subsequent development; and
- (ii) mineral extraction and restoration operations, or their associated traffic, would not cause unacceptable impacts on the environment or living conditions.

3.4B Prospective developers should consider the potential for prior extraction in all cases where development (other than minor householder development or similar small-scale schemes) is proposed which would newly sterilise mineral-bearing land. In considering whether prior extraction is appropriate in any such case, the local planning authorities will have regard, among other things, to the size and nature of the proposed permanent development; the need for and degree of urgency of the proposed permanent development; the quantity and quality of the mineral that would be recovered, and the practicability of doing so; and the environmental impacts of mineral extraction. In all such cases, the onus will be on the applicant to demonstrate that prior extraction of the mineral will not be appropriate. Although it is not possible in this Plan to establish hard and fast rules about the size or type of development which will, or which will not, give rise to a case for prior extraction, for the avoidance of doubt it is confirmed that prior extraction will not be required in the case of applications for extensions or garages or similar structures within the grounds of an existing dwelling.

3.4C In considering the potential for prior extraction in any particular case, developers should consider whether the extraction of part of the mineral deposit within the site could be accommodated, even if removal of the entire deposit appears impracticable. This might apply, for example, in a case – perhaps in a floodplain area - where the removal of the upper levels of the mineral deposit could be accommodated, whereas removal of the entire deposit would necessitate the importation of fill in order to restore ground levels to a level suitable for the construction of the permanent development; or where removal of the mineral from part of a large development site could be accommodated even though to remove it from the whole site is, for one reason or another, considered impracticable.

SAND AND GRAVEL (INCLUDING SOFT SAND)

Future production levels in Berkshire

- 3.5 Chapter 2 explained that new government guidelines aim to achieve provision for production equivalent to 28mt of sand and gravel in the South East region in each year to 2006.
- 3.6 This figure has been apportioned between counties by SERPLAN (the London and South East Regional Planning Conference). All South East counties have accepted this apportionment as a basis for future planning, to be tested in the preparation of development plans. The details of the apportionment have also been accepted by SERAWP, including its representatives from the minerals industry. Extracts from the SERPLAN document describing the apportionment are included in Appendix 2.
- 3.7 Under this apportionment, Berkshire's share of total regional provision is 2.3mt of sand and gravel each year. This figure is approximately a 10% reduction of production levels in the county in the 1980s (see Figure 3), reflecting the reduction of 10% in the overall regional level of provision contained in the latest version of MPG6 (see paragraph 2.18). As with the overall regional figures, the individual county apportionment figures are not production targets or immutable requirements for the level of provision. The ability of each county to achieve and maintain its figure is a matter for testing through the preparation of Minerals Local Plans.

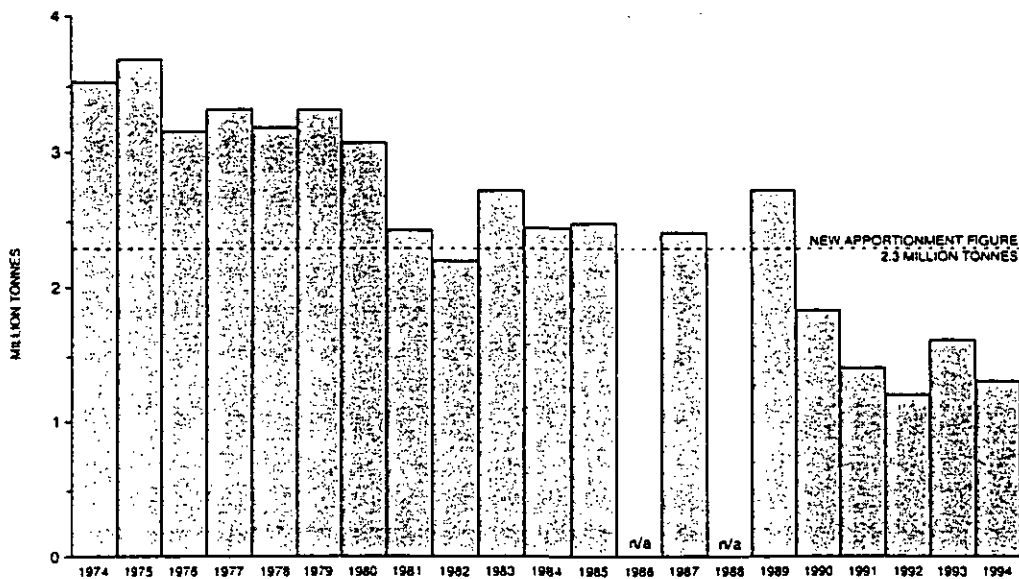


Figure 3 - Aggregates production in Berkshire 1974-1994

- 3.8 When preparing this Plan, the County Council considered the longer-term sustainability of maintaining previous levels of provision in the light of a careful evaluation of the suitability for mineral working of all remaining resources of sharp sand and gravel in the county. The Council's conclusions on this difficult and sensitive issue were the subject of close examination at the public inquiry into the Plan. At the inquiry, the Inspector accepted that "there are real difficulties with respect to almost all of the areas in which extraction has been proposed". However, his assessment of individual sites led him to conclude that a higher rate of provision could be achieved in Berkshire over the period which the Plan was seeking to cover (which at the time was to the end of 2008) than was proposed by the Council in the draft version of this Plan.

3.9 In the light of its consideration of the Inspector's conclusions, the local planning authorities accept that the new figure of 2.3mt has been tested in the preparation of this Plan¹. The authorities accept that, on the basis of current national and local policies for the protection of the environment, this level of provision can be maintained over the Plan period to the end of 2006.

3.10 Although this is not required by government guidance, this Plan also aims to make provision for a landbank of permitted reserves (see paragraph 3.11) to be in place at the end of the Plan period, to provide for extraction over the following seven years – that is, to the end of 2013. For the purposes of this Plan, and in accordance with advice in MPG6, the apportionment figure of 2.3mt/year has been used as the basis for assessing the required level of provision for this period. However, the local planning authorities emphasise that the use of this figure for the period beyond 2006 does not represent any commitment by them to retaining that figure in future reviews of the Plan, if other circumstances suggest that a different figure would be more appropriate. The authorities remain very concerned about the environmental impacts, and the impacts on people's living conditions, of continued extraction of sand and gravel in Berkshire at this level (see also paragraph 2.16). For these reasons, and in order to promote a more sustainable approach to future minerals planning, the local planning authorities intend to press for further moves to be made towards further reducing demands for extraction from land-won sources in future reviews of national and regional guidance. These or other factors may necessitate reconsideration in future reviews of this Plan of whether provision at a constant level of 2.3mt/year is appropriate for Berkshire in the longer term.

Policy 3 Subject to the outcome of any future reviews of national or regional policy guidance, the local planning authorities will aim collectively to make provision for the release of land to allow production of sand and gravel in Berkshire to be maintained at an average level of 2.3 million tonnes a year.

Landbanks

3.11 It is government advice that mineral planning authorities should maintain a stock of permitted reserves (known as a 'landbank') of aggregate minerals. This reflects the need for stability and long-term planning in an industry which requires a considerable 'lead-time' to set up operations, the need to avoid dislocation of supply of a resource of great importance to a prosperous national economy, and the need for the aggregates supply industry to respond promptly to fluctuations in demand. MPG6 says that the aim should be to provide for the release of land to maintain a stock of permissions sufficient for at least seven years' extraction, unless exceptional circumstances prevail. This advice is reflected in Policy M3 of the adopted Berkshire Structure Plan, and Policy 4 below.

Policy 4 The local planning authorities will aim collectively to provide for the maintenance of a stock of planning permissions in the county (a landbank) equivalent to at least seven years' extraction of sand and gravel at a rate in accordance with the provisions of Policy 3.

3.12 It should be noted that the local planning authorities' role as mineral planning authorities is to ensure that, so far as is reasonably possible, there are always sufficient reserves with planning permission to enable the appropriate production level of each material to be achieved. However, the authorities do not require and cannot ensure that this level of production takes place. Nor can the authorities ensure that sufficient acceptable applications are submitted to ensure that the landbank remains topped up: MPG6 recognises that landbanks can only be maintained in practice if the industry comes forward with planning applications

¹ The figure examined at the public inquiry into this Plan in 1993 was 2.5mt, which was Berkshire's apportionment figure derived from the earlier (1989) version of MPG6. The inquiry's examination of this figure is considered to subsume the examination of the lower figure of 2.3mt. Assessment of the Inspector's recommendations following the inquiry was carried out on the basis of the figure of 2.3mt. The County Council was therefore satisfied that this overall process provides adequate testing of the 2.3mt figure for the purposes of this Plan.

in the right place at the right time. These are matters for the mineral operators alone. 'Making provision' for this scale of extraction through the policies of this Plan does not therefore mean that this amount of extraction will necessarily occur.

Landbanks for individual minerals

3.13 Past annual production of sand and gravel in Berkshire is shown in Table I. The Table is based on the period 1981-1987, when production was fairly consistent (see Figure 3). As Figure 3 shows, production in more recent years has fallen considerably below the figure of 2.5mt/year, reflecting national economic conditions.

Building sand		140,000 tonnes
Sharp sand and gravel -		
Concreting aggregate	1,770,000 tonnes	
Hoggin & other fill material	590,000 tonnes	
		2,360,000 tonnes
TOTAL		2,500,000 tonnes

3.14 The local planning authorities do not propose a policy of maintaining landbanks of these different materials equivalent to seven times each of these, or any other, figures. This is because

- (i) there are no national, let alone regional or county, demand forecasts to indicate whether or not the above proportionate subdivision of the figure in Policy 3 will continue to be appropriate;
- (ii) many of the county's deposits of building sand are believed to be in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The local planning authorities do not accept as a matter of principle that the need for continued extraction of the above amount is of such importance that disturbance of the AONB is inevitably justified. (See also paragraphs 5.35 - 5.50.)
- (iii) the distinction between sharp sand and gravels used as concerning aggregate and those used as 'hoggin/fill' is becoming increasingly blurred. It is therefore impossible to be certain that material for which permission is given in order to contribute to the landbank of one or other of those 'uses' will in practice be used for that purpose.
- (iv) sites producing hoggin/fill are generally smaller than those producing concerning aggregate, and take less time to establish. It is therefore arguable that, if a separate landbank is to be required for this material, it should be for a period of less than seven years. There is, however, no guidance available to assess what an appropriate period for the landbank of this material would be.

The significance of Policies 3-4: The issue of need in the determination of planning applications

3.15 The issue of need is a crucial consideration in the determination of any planning application for mineral extraction. Its significance in the decision on individual proposals will vary in accordance with the nature and strength of other constraints on extraction from the particular site (see Chapter 5). The local planning authorities will assess the current position of the landbank, based upon the best information available, when any application is being considered. If the overall aim set out in Policy 4 is met at that time, it will be concluded that prima facie there is no need for a further permission for mineral extraction.

- 3.16 If the overall landbank of aggregates at the time of an application stands at less than seven years, this does not mean that the application will inevitably be permitted. Government guidance confirms that landbank policies do not remove the discretion of mineral planning authorities, or of the Secretary of State, to refuse applications which are judged to have overriding objections.
- 3.17 Conversely, neither should it be assumed that if the overall landbank stands at over seven years, all further applications for extraction will be automatically refused. All applications must be judged on all their merits, of which the issue of need is just one. In assessing the issue of need in respect of particular applications, regard will be paid (among other things) to the objective of husbanding resources, which is consistent with national policies concerning sustainable development (see paragraph 3.1); and to the need to phase the release of acceptable sites, so that they are not released and worked all at one time early in the Plan period. The importance of these issues was acknowledged by the Inspector at the public inquiry into this Plan. Proposals which would cause demonstrable harm to either of these interests will be regarded as unacceptable in terms of the issue of need.
- 3.18 In considering individual planning applications, the local planning authorities will therefore have regard not only to the extent of the need for further site releases as indicated by the current state of the landbank, and to the advice in MPG6 regarding 'real need and real supply', but also to the extent to which the application would conflict with the objectives of husbanding resources, and of phasing the release of sites.
- 3.19 The question of the balance to be struck between issues of need and other considerations in the determination of individual applications is considered further in Chapter 5.

Meeting the balance of demand

- 3.20 Aggregates consumption in Berkshire in the late 1980s was around 33%-50% greater than aggregates production. In the peak year of 1989, consumption was estimated at 3.8 million tonnes. Figure 4 shows the contribution to aggregates consumption in Berkshire made by aggregates other than sand and gravel dug in the county.

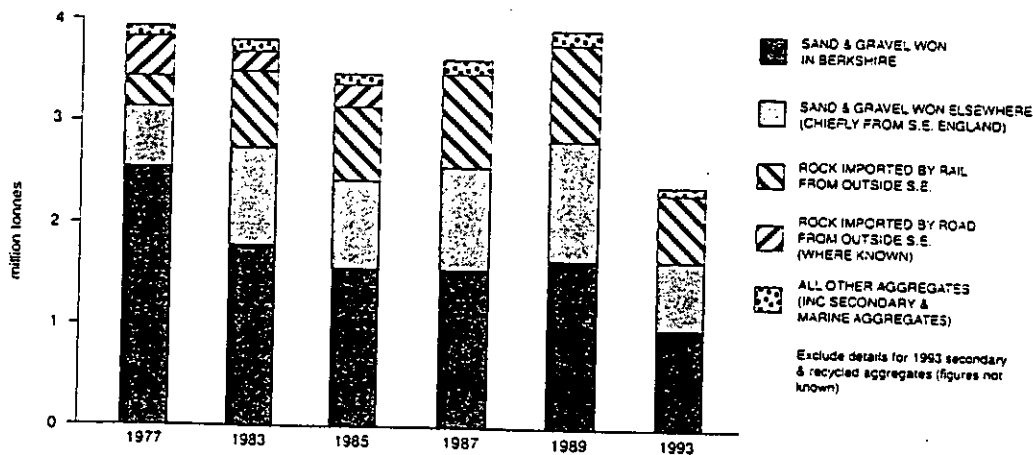


Figure 4 - Past patterns of aggregates consumption in Berkshire

- 3.21 Berkshire's consumption of aggregates has declined from around 8% of the South East's total consumption in 1977 to around 5% in 1989. Various factors suggest that this relative decline may continue: for example the current Structure Plan policy for a declining rate of housebuilding in the county, the current regional strategy which seeks to direct future development to the east of the region rather than the west, and the existence of a number of actual or proposed major construction schemes reflecting this strategy which will

encourage additional growth in other parts of the region (eg the Channel Tunnel, Stansted Airport, and proposals for the 'East Thames Corridor').

- 3.22 Nevertheless, Berkshire's call for aggregates is likely to continue to exceed its own production levels. Only if its share of forecast regional consumption falls below 3% will its total consumption rate fall below the figure given in Policy 3.
- 3.23 The current regional guidelines (Appendix 2), which take as their starting-point demand forecasts prepared in 1992, assume that aggregates demands in the region in excess of 30mt a year will be met by aggregates imported from elsewhere, or by secondary and recycled aggregates. The guidelines also present a feasible breakdown of where this additional material may be expected to come from.
- 3.24 If the mineral planning strategy for Berkshire is to reflect this principle, it is important to have confidence in the continuing availability of alternative sources of supply. The principal components of this 'balance of demand', and the prospects for their continuing or increased availability to Berkshire, are as follows:
- * **Sand and gravel from other South East counties** may be expected to continue to be available to Berkshire, though perhaps at reduced rates in future reflecting each county's newly-reduced apportionment level.
 - * **Marine-dredged sand and gravel** makes only a minimal contribution to Berkshire's needs at present, and because Berkshire is an inland county it is considered unlikely to make a significantly greater contribution in the foreseeable future.
 - * **Rock imports from Scotland** are mainly brought to the region by sea, and again Berkshire's inland position means that little of this material is likely to be brought into Berkshire over the period of this Plan. However, it is expected that total production will increase significantly in the long term. The resultant increased availability of this material to other counties in the region will reduce demands from those counties for rock from elsewhere in Great Britain (and especially from South West England), making more of this latter material potentially available to Berkshire.
 - * **Rock imports from the rest of Great Britain (outside the South East)** are the principal external source supplying Berkshire at present. It is expected that this material will be able to maintain and increase its present proportionate contribution to Berkshire's aggregates needs.
 - * **Rock from other sources.** Small amounts of rock are produced in some other South East counties (chiefly Oxfordshire and Kent). The 1994 regional guidelines provide for slightly increased levels of provision over the period to 2006, but little of this material is thought to be used in Berkshire, and so it cannot be expected to make a significant contribution to the county's needs in the foreseeable future. The new guidance also refers to the possibility of rock being imported in the longer term from sources outside Great Britain. No specific proposals for such importing are known at present, and it is not expected that such materials will make a significant contribution to national or regional supply during the period of the current guidelines. To the extent that such materials may be supplied to South East England in the longer term, their impact on Berkshire is likely to be similar to that resulting from increased rock imports from Scotland (see above).
 - * **Secondary and recycled aggregates.** Secondary aggregates consist of certain waste materials or industrial by-products - such as colliery wastes and some ash from power stations - which are suitable for some aggregates uses. Historically these have made very little contribution to aggregates supply in Berkshire. A greater, and probably increasing, contribution is made by recycled construction and demolition waste, including recycled concrete. Recorded annual production and consumption rates of these materials in Berkshire vary from year to year, though volumes recorded in past surveys of aggregates monitoring are thought to be underestimates. The latest available figures suggest that some 13% of the county's inert waste is recycled - typically around 140,000 tonnes each year. As indicated in Chapter 2, national guidance now aims to secure a significant increase in the use of these materials as aggregates over the period to 2006. The local authorities support and wish to encourage the greater use of such materials wherever appropriate, through the implementation of relevant policies in

the Structure Plan, the Waste Management Plan and the Waste Local Plan², and through other initiatives; and by pressing for a continued reduction in the level of provision of locally-won primary aggregates as an integral component of future aggregates supply policies, and as a complement to measures to manage future aggregates demand. The aim of the adopted Waste Management and Waste Local Plans for Berkshire is to increase rates of recycling of inert materials to 30% by 2000/01, and 40% by 2005/06.

- 3.25 The conclusion is reached that, assuming the moves towards sustainability indicated by the government and supported by the local planning authorities are achieved, sufficient materials other than sand and gravel won in Berkshire will continue to be available to the county to allow the 'balance of demand' referred to in paragraph 3.24 to be met from these sources. Therefore, in accordance with regional objectives and their own policy of husbanding resources, the local planning authorities will expect the balance of aggregates demand in the county to be met by importing primary aggregates and by using secondary aggregates.

Policy 5 In furtherance of Policy 1, and in accordance with regional policy, the local planning authorities consider that aggregates demands in excess of those provided for under the terms of Policy 3 should be met by

- * the use wherever possible of secondary and recycled aggregates either produced in or imported into the county; and
- * importing (preferably by rail) sand and gravel and suitable alternative primary aggregates such as crushed rock and marine-dredged aggregates.

- 3.26 The implications of this Policy for the provision of rail depots in the county are considered in Chapter 9.

CHALK AND CLAY

- 3.27 Although sand and gravel is the main mineral produced in Berkshire, the demand for other minerals (in particular, chalk, clay and hydrocarbons) also needs to be considered.
- 3.28 The continuing demand for chalk as agricultural lime is very low. There is now only one active chalk pit in the county, at Pinkneys Green near Maidenhead. Production totals only a few thousand tonnes each year, and there are sufficient reserves to allow this level to be maintained for several years. Some of the chalk from this pit is also used as bulk fill.
- 3.29 In the past, Berkshire had numerous small workings of clay for making bricks and tiles, but the mass-production of bricks at much larger brickworks elsewhere in the region, and the more general use of concrete tiles, has led to the closure of all the county's brick and tileworks.
- 3.30 The last remaining brick and tileworks was at Knowl Hill, between Reading and Maidenhead. Although the site contains extensive permitted reserves of clay, the manufacture of bricks and tiles ceased during the 1990s. The site is now principally used as a landfill.
- 3.31 Some clay is dug intermittently from deposits near Reading and elsewhere for use as bulk fill or for sealing sites which are to be filled with putrescible waste. These are generally 'one-off' operations, and there appears to be no demand for claypits to be established to serve these markets on a long-term basis.
- 3.32 As indicated in Chapter 2, national and regional policies do not indicate what might be the future 'appropriate production levels' of these two minerals. Nor do they require landbanks of these minerals to

² See in particular Policies WLP6-11, 23 and 24 of the adopted Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (1998). Policies regarding the location of sites suitable for aggregates recycling are included in the Waste Local Plan (Policies WLP1, 23 and 24), and not in this Minerals Local Plan.

be maintained. In the past, permission for their extraction has generally been sought to serve specific local purposes, rather than to provide general market supplies. There is no consistent pattern of year-by-year production of them. In these circumstances, it is not considered appropriate or necessary to seek to maintain landbanks of these minerals. When considering any future applications for their extraction, the issue of need will be judged on its merits as they appear at the time, with particular regard to whether the mineral concerned is needed to meet a particular local requirement (see Policy 16 in Chapter 6).

OIL, GAS AND COAL

- 3.33 Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, seismic surveys were carried out over much of the county by companies hoping to locate possible reserves of oil and gas. Some exploratory boreholes were also drilled in the late 1970s by the then National Coal Board, as part of the national stock-taking of Britain's long-term coal reserves.
- 3.34 So far as is known, all these surveys have drawn a blank. There are therefore believed to be no reserves of oil, gas or coal underlying Berkshire which are of commercial interest.
- 3.35 Government policy is to encourage maximum economic exploitation of the country's own reserves of oil and gas, consistent with the protection of the environment. Should any commercial reserves of these minerals be identified in Berkshire, the local planning authorities will take account of this government policy and advice when assessing the 'need' to allow these reserves to be exploited (see Policy 17 in Chapter 6).

ALL MINERALS

Meeting the needs of individual operators

- 3.36 The local planning authorities consider that their responsibility consists in ensuring that the market generally has adequate supplies of construction materials, and not in maintaining individual operators in production. Accordingly, the authorities will not provide favoured treatment to an individual operator when considering applications which seek to extend the life of his own landbank closer to the period of seven years.
- 3.37 This provision applies equally to suppliers of material for the general market and to operators who use the minerals which they win principally for the on-site manufacture of specific products. There is now only one such operator in the county at present, at Beenham, producing roofing tiles. This operation uses locally-won sand and gravel.
- 3.38 The local planning authority accepts the existence of this factory operation at its present site, and does not seek to curtail its present activities there. The authority also acknowledges that the circumstances of this company are different from those of general market suppliers, in that
- * it has invested substantial sums in permanent buildings and fixed plant at their present site;
 - * it employs (or has the potential to employ) considerable numbers of people;
 - * it does not produce any aggregates for sale as such on the general market;
 - * it produces specialist products which serve market areas which are substantially wider than those of general aggregates suppliers;
 - * the maintenance of adequate reserves to ensure continuity of supply of minerals that fall within a defined quality control specification is important to the company.

3.39 Taken together, these factors necessarily affect assessments on the general issue of need. However, the local planning authority will expect any applications for mineral extraction to supply the Beenham factory to be acceptable in environmental terms (ie impacts, methods of working, restoration and aftercare), in accordance with the policies of this Local Plan and other relevant planning considerations. It will not therefore give permission for the continuation of local mineral extraction to supply this site regardless of the other merits or demerits of the extraction sites which might be proposed.

4 WHERE SHOULD FUTURE SAND AND GRAVEL EXTRACTION TAKE PLACE?

Introduction

- 4.1 The amount of extraction for which provision is made in Chapter 3 derives from a detailed assessment of the suitability of individual sites in Berkshire to supply aggregates, linked to an awareness of the 'desired' rate of provision arising out of national and regional guidance. The processes of assessing acceptable future production rates – and hence the amount of land which this Plan should identify – and of identifying the precise sites where future mineral working would be tolerable are very closely linked. Therefore, although these processes are described separately in this Plan, in practice they all form part of a single, closely integrated exercise.

General approach

- 4.2 One of the main functions of the Replacement Local Plan is to provide guidance concerning the necessary scale and desirable locations of mineral working over the period to 2006 and beyond. When drawing up the Plan, the County Council concluded that, so far as possible, the Plan should adopt the approach of identifying 'Preferred Areas' for mineral extraction, that is to say areas where – subject to various detailed matters, as described in Chapter 5 – there will be a general presumption in favour of extraction being allowed.
- 4.3 This 'Preferred Areas' approach is considered preferable to a more broadly-expressed 'Areas of Search' approach, such as was used in the original Minerals Local Plan. This is because
- * The Preferred Areas approach provides clearer guidance and greater certainty to both the general public and the minerals industry about the chances of land being disturbed, or not being disturbed, during the plan period.
 - * It also gives the local planning authorities the greatest degree of control over the scale, location and impacts of extraction at each site. This is because it allows the authorities to lay down in advance detailed requirements which must be satisfied before planning permission can be granted at each Preferred Area – relating for example to the method of working the site, or the desirable form of restoration or after-use, or the routes which lorries must take when travelling from the site, and so on.
 - * The Preferred Areas approach is also considered to be a firmer and fairer basis for making decisions on subsequent planning applications, because it allows the relative merits of different sites to be assessed all at one time during preparation of the Local Plan, rather than being considered in isolation at the time of each individual planning application.
 - * Policies identifying Preferred Areas with a presumption in favour of extraction allow the more effective implementation of complementary policies identifying clear presumptions against extraction elsewhere.
- 4.4 Government advice (in MPG1) also states that Minerals Local Plans should indicate areas for possible future mineral working. It favours the identification of 'specific sites' and 'preferred areas' for future working (while acknowledging that there may not be much distinction between these categories), ahead of more generalised 'areas of search'. The advice recognises that, among other things, good knowledge of the mineral resources in the plan area is critical to the identification of preferred areas.
- 4.5 In the case of sharp sand and gravel, comprehensive information is available about the location and (in general terms) the likely quality of mineral deposits throughout Berkshire. This mineral is therefore well suited to the Preferred Areas approach.
- 4.6 In the case of soft sand, however, the position is more complicated. The geological deposits in which soft sand is found are much more variable than are the deposits of sharp sand and gravel. As a result, reliable information about the distribution of commercial reserves of soft sand is not available.

Because of this, and bearing in mind also the relatively small amounts of soft sand which Berkshire produces, it is considered that it would not be possible or appropriate for the Replacement Plan to seek to define Preferred Areas for the extraction of soft sand.

How much land should be identified?

- 4.7 Table 2 indicates the scale of extraction which would have to be permitted between the start of 1999 and the end of 2006 if the level of provision indicated in Policy 3 is to be maintained throughout and at the end of the Local Plan period.

TABLE 2 NEW PERMISSIONS REQUIRED BEFORE THE END OF 2006 SO AS TO MAINTAIN A SEVEN-YEAR LANDBANK OF PERMITTED RESERVES

Permissions required to maintain production at 2.3mt/yr 1999-2006	18,400,000 t	
Additional permissions required to leave a landbank sufficient to allow production at 2.3mt/yr to the end of 2013	16,100,000 t	
		34,500,000 t
Less		
Permitted reserves 31 December 1998	est 18,300,000 t	
INTERIM BALANCE TO FIND		16,200,000 t
<u>Plus</u> 15% safety margin	2,430,000 t	
FINAL BALANCE TO FIND		18,630,000 t
Less		
Sites awaiting legal agreements 31 December 1998	nil	
Other sites where renewals of permission were pending on 31.12.98	nil	
Allowance for building sand permissions ¹	718,000 t	
		718,000 t
PERMISSIONS NEEDED BEFORE THE END OF 2006 FOR EXTRACTION OF SHARP SAND AND GRAVEL FROM HITHERTO UNIDENTIFIED SITES		17,912,000 t

¹ Calculated on the assumption of a continuation of production at 150,000 t/yr (see paragraphs 5.43-5.45), minus current permitted reserves at active sites.

- 4.8 Table 2 includes an allowance for a 15% contingency provision or 'safety margin' in the Plan's allocations. This additional allowance is considered to be desirable:
- (i) in case individual Preferred Areas do not yield as much mineral as is currently expected.
 - (ii) in case parts of some Preferred Areas have to be excluded from eventual planning permissions to take account of more detailed information which might become available when an application is submitted, eg as a result of environmental impact assessments (see paragraphs 8.5 to 8.10) or of archaeological evaluations (see paragraphs 8.11 to 8.23);
 - (iii) in case some of the identified Preferred Areas do not become available to the industry during the plan period.
- 4.9 Bearing in mind the relative certainty about the availability of many sites gained during the preparation of this Plan, it is considered that an additional allocation equivalent to around 15% of the initial 'requirement' provides a reasonable balance between the need to guard against the above contingencies, and the need not to undermine the objective of greater certainty which is one of the

main reasons for favouring the Preferred Areas approach. Since there is always the possibility of additional 'windfall sites' coming forward (see paragraphs 5.26-5.28), this level of provision is considered to provide adequate flexibility in providing for future extraction.

- 4.9A As indicated in the Table, this means that to secure provision at the rate of 2.3mt/year to the end of 2013, it would be necessary to identify sites for the extraction of just under 18 million tonnes of sharp sand and gravel. It should be noted that this figure is just a snapshot of the position existing at the end of 1998, and that the level of new permissions 'required' over this period will change as new planning permissions are granted, or as extraction proceeds at permitted sites¹.
- 4.10 It is stressed that any such contingency provision of Preferred Areas does not mean that any more land will necessarily be released for extraction than is required to meet the levels of provision referred to in Chapter 3. It merely provides a 'safety margin' to cover the above contingencies. It also has the advantage of giving a slightly greater choice to the industry as to which sites they consider for working².

The identification of the Preferred Areas

- 4.11 It is a fact of geology that many of the workable deposits of minerals in the country lie beneath high-grade agricultural land, or land of particular amenity, conservation, scientific or historic interest. This applies to the sand and gravel deposits of Berkshire too. It is also a fact that in a crowded county such as Berkshire, there are few if any locations where mineral extraction could take place without affecting some people's living conditions. In identifying the Preferred Areas, it is important to strike a balance between meeting the needs for aggregates and protecting the county's environment and other important interests.
- 4.12 The County Council therefore looked very closely at all the land in Berkshire which is believed to be underlain by deposits of sharp sand and gravel. This land has been assessed to identify the areas where, on a balance of all the issues, the County Council judged that mineral extraction – backed up by schemes of working which take account of people's living conditions and environmental interests, by suitable programmes of local environmental improvements where necessary, and by sensitive restoration of the site after extraction has ceased – could be accommodated with the least harm to environmental and other interests.
- 4.13 In carrying out these assessments, the County Council had full regard to national and local policies designed to safeguard areas which are of particular importance for the reasons set out in paragraph 4.11, or for other reasons. Account was also taken of the matters set out in relevant Structure Plan policies, and also of a more detailed 'checklist' of issues which have a bearing on the acceptability of mineral working from individual sites or areas. The Council also took into account the prospects for securing longer-term improvements to the appearance of an area, or improved provision of facilities for recreation or nature conservation etc, which might be achieved as part of a comprehensive package of proposals for the extraction, restoration and after-use of potential Preferred Areas.
- 4.14 The process of identifying the Preferred Areas may be summarised as follows:
- (i) The application of a 'sieving' technique to identify, and thus to exclude from further consideration
 - * sites which the County Council judged should be excluded on principle from consideration because of the national or county-wide importance of the protective policies which apply to them;
 - * other sites which were judged to be subject to local constraints which impose overriding objections of principle to mineral extraction.

¹ Details of the latest available statistics of Berkshire's permitted reserves, and a revised calculation of Table 2 to the most recent available base-date, will be included in the annual monitoring reports on this Plan.

² However, as stated in paragraph 3.17, it should not be assumed that if the overall landbank stands at over seven years, all further applications for extraction will be automatically refused.

- (ii) The carrying out of public consultation, initially on 20 suggested Preferred Areas; and the inviting of suggestions for additional or alternative sites.
- (iii) In the light of the response to the first round of consultation, the reassessment of certain sites which had been excluded at earlier stages, and the carrying out of a second round of consultation on eight further suggested Preferred Areas.
- (iv) The final assessment of all the issues relating to the 28 suggested sites, and a judgement as to those where it was considered that mineral extraction could be tolerated during the initial period for which provision was to be made by this Plan (ie the period to the end of 2008). The sites so identified were then included as the 'Preferred Areas' in the draft version of the Plan which was the subject of the public inquiry in 1993³.
- (v) Reassessment of these sites, along with others put forward by objectors to the draft Plan, in the light of the conclusions and recommendations (both on the merits of the individual sites, and on the Plan's level of provision) in the Report of the Inquiry Inspector, and of new guidance in and arising from the issue in April 1994 of new national and regional policy advice⁴.

4.15 Despite the reduction in the rate of provision for extraction which results from the reduction of Berkshire's apportionment figure as described in paragraph 3.7, it is still necessary to make provision for very considerable amounts of future extraction. The process just described is a rigorous way of identifying areas where mineral working is unacceptable, and where it can be accommodated with the least harm. The local planning authorities consider that the selection resulting from this process is that least damaging to the county's environment and its people's living conditions, both in terms of minimising the impact of the operations themselves and of securing longer-term benefits to offset that disturbance.

4.16 The areas identified as a result of these assessments are the 'Preferred Areas'. One other site (Kennetholme Farm at Midgham) has also been included as a Preferred Area in accordance with a provision of the 1995 version of this Local Plan, under which sites which at that time had been accepted in principle for mineral working by resolution of the County Council, but where planning permission for extraction was in the end not issued, were added to the list of Preferred Areas.

4.16A The Preferred Areas are listed in Table 3 and shown on the Proposals Map. Appendix 3 describes them more fully, highlights the practical issues which will need to be taken into account when mineral extraction proposals are prepared, and identifies the local planning authorities' restoration requirements for each site.

TABLE 3 PREFERRED AREAS

	Est yield (tonnes)
1 Chamberhouse Farm, Thatcham	1,100,000
2 Bath Road/Brimpton Road, Midgham	875,000
2A Kennetholme Farm, Midgham	1,080,000
3 Woolhampton Quarry	200,000
4 South of Theale	635,000
5 South-East of Theale	481,000
7 Raghill Farm, Aldermaston	500,000
8 Smallmead, Reading	240,000
10 Manor Farm, Slough	1,130,000
11 Riding Court Farm, Datchet	1,750,000
12 North of Horton	3,800,000
13 Railway land, Kingsmead, Horton	135,000
14 Old Slade, Colnbrook	150,000
TOTAL	12,076,000

Preferred Areas 6 and 9 from the 1995 version of the RMLP have been omitted, as planning permission has now been granted for extraction from both sites.

³ The process of identifying the Preferred Areas which were included in the Draft Plan is explained more fully in a separate Background Paper.

⁴ One further Preferred Area, which was in Buckinghamshire until 1995 and had previously been designated as a Preferred Area in the adopted Minerals Local Plan for that county, was added in the Alterations to this Plan adopted in 1997.

4.17 The provision in Table 3 falls some 5.8 million tonnes short of the level of provision indicated in Table 2. For the 2001 Alterations, the local planning authorities have not identified additional Preferred Areas to meet this apparent 'shortfall'. This is largely due to uncertainties about the levels of provision that may be required for the period after 2006, pending the issue of new government advice in a revised version of MPG6. The authorities also note that production in Berkshire in recent years has been consistently well below the 'provision level' of 2.3mt/year, and that on the basis of average production of aggregates in the 1990s (around 1.45mt/year), the existing permitted reserves would last until mid-2011 – only 18 months short of the period covered by this Plan – without having to disturb any of the Preferred Areas in Table 3, let alone having to move into any currently-unidentified sites. In these circumstances, the identification of new Preferred Areas in the 2001 Alterations to the Plan is not considered to be either appropriate or necessary.

4.17A Moreover, government guidance is clear that it is not necessary for mineral planning authorities to identify at the start of the plan period all the resources needed for the seven year 'landbank period' after the official end-date of the Plan. It is however necessary for the authorities to be able to demonstrate that such resources can be brought forward should this be necessary. Accordingly, the local planning authorities confirm that, through the process of regular review of the Plan, additional resources will be brought forward, if necessary and appropriate (having regard to the latest available government guidance, to prevailing strategic policies, and to any other material considerations), to ensure continuing provision of aggregates from Berkshire.

5 POLICIES FOR SAND AND GRAVEL EXTRACTION

Introduction

- 5.1 Chapter 5 sets out the policies which will apply when the local planning authorities are considering applications for the extraction of sand and gravel.
- * The first section of the chapter presents broad principles which will apply in the case of all types of sand and gravel.
 - * The second section sets out the more detailed policy framework for considering applications for the extraction of sharp sand and gravel. It provides policies establishing the 'Preferred Areas' approach, which not only identifies areas where extraction will in principle be allowed, but also establishes clear presumptions against extraction elsewhere.
 - * The final section sets out the special considerations which will apply to proposals for the extraction of soft sand.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Key principles

- 5.2 Policy 6 explains the basic principles which are taken into account when the local planning authorities are considering planning applications for the extraction of sand and gravel.

Policy 6 **Proposals for sand and gravel extraction will be judged in accordance with Policies 7 to 24 of this Plan. In all cases, planning permission will only be granted if the local planning authority is satisfied**

- (i) **that an acceptable balance has been struck between the need for the mineral and all relevant environmental, agricultural, amenity and other relevant planning considerations; and**
- (ii) **that the details of the proposal, including the proposals for the method of working, site restoration, after-care and after-use, satisfy the detailed requirements set out in this Plan.**

- 5.3 The issue of need has already been considered in Chapter 3, but the conclusions of that chapter do not stand alone when planning applications are being decided. The balance between need and environmental concerns is fundamental to the decision on every application, whether inside or outside the Preferred Areas. The way in which this balance is struck in each individual case will have strict regard to Policies 7 to 15. The local planning authorities also consider that applications will only be acceptable if all details contained within them are in accordance with the other policies and provisions of this Plan. Crucially, this applies as much to the details of what happens to the site after extraction (see Chapter 7) as to the details of the surveys or other works to be carried out before extraction or the details of the actual extraction operation itself (see Chapter 8), or to the details of any associated structures or operations which are proposed in connection with mineral extraction (see Chapter 10).

General environmental considerations

- 5.4 Policy 7 will be used to assess the general environmental impacts of sand and gravel extraction proposals, as part of the 'balancing act' required by Policy 6.

Policy 7

Within the framework provided by Policy 6, the merits of all applications for the extraction of sand and gravel will be assessed having regard to all material considerations, including

- (i) the likely effects of the proposal on living conditions, and the likely effects of the traffic which it would generate;**
- (ii) the need to protect the character and amenities of individual settlements, and to protect important open gaps between settlements from development which would cause long-term harm to the land's function;**
- (iii) the need to protect sites or areas of ecological, geological, archaeological, historic, or architectural importance;**
- (iv) the desirability of protecting Grade 1, 2 and 3a farmland, and the likely effects of the proposal on farm structure;**
- (v) the need to protect woodland, areas of attractive landscape, and individual landscape features;**
- (vi) the need to protect existing recreation sites, and to protect and enhance the recreation value of the public rights of way network;**
- (vii) the need to guard against environmental damage resulting from changes to the water table;**
- (viii) the need to protect water bodies and other water features, and to protect the water environment generally, including the protection of the flow, quantity and quality of water supplies, and protection against increased risks of flooding to property and people;**
- (ix) the need to minimise disturbance by securing the phased release of extraction sites; by encouraging (subject to all other planning considerations) the orderly progression of working and restoration in areas where extraction is to take place or is already taking place; and by resisting the unnecessary spread of working to new areas.**

5.5 Examples of detailed issues deriving from the general considerations contained in Policy 7 are set out in Appendix 5. Not all the issues in the Policy will necessarily be relevant to every application for mineral extraction, and similarly these issues do not necessarily cover all the considerations which may be relevant to the decision on any particular application. However, the protection of living conditions in individual houses and in settlements both close to and away from the mineral site (Policy 7i) is always a major consideration in the decision on any application. This applies both to the direct effects of excavation – noise, dust, visual intrusion, and so on – and to the less direct but no less significant effects of lorry movements to and from sites which can on occasion affect a greater number of people. It should be noted that any specific problems affecting individuals which arise from the carrying out of extraction operations in accordance with a permission granted by the local planning authority are private matters between the individual and the mineral operator, with no liability on the local authority.

5.6 Planning constraints affecting the decisions on proposals for mineral working are of various types. They range from constraints of national importance, or relating to areas defined or protected by statute; through constraints established by Structure Plan policies; to constraints of more local significance. Constraints of any of these types may be decisive in decision-making on any particular application. Exactly how this approach is applied to each mineral is considered more fully in the later sections of this chapter.

The Green Belt, and Gaps between settlements

- 5.7 It is government policy that the extraction of minerals need not be incompatible with Green Belt objectives provided that high environmental standards are maintained and that the site is well restored. The fact that a site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt is not therefore of itself a constraint against the principle of mineral extraction.
- 5.8 One of the functions of the Metropolitan Green Belt is to prevent neighbouring settlements merging as a result of the spread of development across the open countryside between them – though this function is not performed to the same degree by every piece of land in the Green Belt. Outside the Green Belt, a similar role is fulfilled by the 'significant open areas' referred to in Policy C6 of the Berkshire Structure Plan. Applications for mineral extraction in areas which fulfil this role (whether or not in the Green Belt) will be judged having regard to their long-term impact on this function of the land, as well as in terms of the considerations set out in paragraph 5.7.

Phasing the release of sand and gravel sites

- 5.9 The local planning authorities consider it of great importance to phase the release of sand and gravel sites in order to prevent the concentration of activities in any particular area at any one time in a way which would cause unacceptable harm to the area's character or environment, or to local people's living conditions.
- 5.10 The policies and other provisions of Chapter 3 of this Plan, along with the site details in Appendix 3, provide a strong phasing mechanism which will ensure that large numbers of new sites are not released for extraction simultaneously. There are considerable reserves in the county which already have planning permission (see Table 2, in Chapter 4), and the local planning authorities expect these to provide the bulk of production in the county over the next few years. To accord with the provisions of Chapter 3, additional acceptable sites will only be released as required to ensure that the county's landbank remains topped up to the required level, and to maintain the ability to achieve the stipulated annual production rate.
- 5.11 In all cases, to further the aim of avoiding over-concentration of extraction activities, the local planning authorities normally intend to control the release of land to ensure that there is no more than one active mineral extraction operation in any individual Preferred Area at any one time. This is addressed in the sections on 'Timing and Phasing' in the statements for relevant Preferred Areas in Appendix 3.

Protecting biodiversity

- 5.11A The Unitary Authorities recognise the importance of conserving and encouraging biodiversity, reflecting the commitment entered into by world leaders at Rio in 1992 to take action to stop the global loss of plants and animals and their habitats. The objectives of biodiversity will be taken into account in considering proposals for mineral extraction or site restoration, and without prejudice to other general considerations referred to in this section of the Plan, or to site-specific guidance elsewhere in the Plan, proposals that would risk significant damage to habitats or species contrary to the aims or specific targets of a Biodiversity Action Plan will not, in principle, be favoured. (On the encouragement of biodiversity through the restoration of mineral sites, see paragraph 7.14A.)

POLICIES FOR THE EXTRACTION OF SHARP SAND AND GRAVEL

Policy for Preferred Areas

- 5.12 Although the designation of the Preferred Areas, as described in Chapter 4, implies a general presumption that those areas are suitable for sand and gravel extraction, this does not mean that every planning application within them will inevitably be approved regardless of all other considerations.

Policy 8 In the Preferred Areas indicated on the Proposals Map and shown in more detail in Appendix 3, there will be a presumption in favour of allowing applications for the extraction of sharp sand and gravel, so long as

- (i) the requirements of Policy 6 are all satisfied; and
- (ii) the proposals have full regard to the statement of detailed requirements for each area as set out in Appendix 3, or such other amended requirements as may be agreed with the local planning authority so long as these fully address the issues and respect the principles contained in that Appendix, and do not diminish the standard of development as provided for in that Appendix.

5.13 It follows from Policy 8 that the presumption in favour of allowing extraction will only apply if all three of the following requirements are satisfied:

- (i) an acceptable balance is struck between the need to release more land for extraction and all other planning considerations applying to the site at the time of the applications, having regard (among other things) to the provisions of Chapter 3 regarding the level of provision for future production, the maintenance of a landbank, and the assessment of need in the determination of individual applications;
- (ii) the application satisfies the general requirements of this Plan relating to the details of working, restoration, after-use, etc; and
- (iii) the application has full regard to the detailed principles and requirements for the Preferred Area in question, as set down in Appendix 3 of this Plan.

5.14 In considering any application, the local planning authority will have regard to the extent to which the details of the proposed operation would minimise the environmental disturbance created by the proposed workings. It will be expected that the details of an application will provide for the highest standards of site operations and the minimisation of resultant environmental disturbance. If any individual proposal indicates something less than these standards, this fact will be taken into account in considering whether or not an 'acceptable balance' has been struck in terms of Policy 6i.

5.15 It is not expected or intended that extraction will necessarily take place right up to the boundaries of the Preferred Areas shown in Appendix 3. In practice, as the Appendix indicates, some land within those boundaries will have to be excluded from any permissions for extraction in order to provide buffers to individual houses, or to protect other interests of importance on or close to the site. The precise boundaries of acceptable working at individual Preferred Areas will be established through the submission and consideration of planning applications.

5.16 The remaining provisos of Policy 8 are designed to ensure that mineral working causes the least possible disturbance, and to achieve in the longer term the best possible environmental benefits to offset against this shorter-term disturbance. It is therefore of prime importance that applications should only be approved if they satisfy both these provisos.

5.17 Table 3 and the Proposals Map show that six of the Preferred Areas, which between them are expected to produce over a third of the total yield of all the Preferred Areas, lie in the Kennet Valley between Thatcham and Theale. The extensive reserves of sand and gravel in this stretch of the Kennet Valley are already being worked in a number of places. The local planning authorities consider that working of acceptable sites within this stretch in a relatively concentrated fashion affords the best opportunity for securing the longer-term landscape improvements and other public benefits of the type referred to in paragraph 4.13, as compared with more gradual and piecemeal extraction over a much longer period. However, these advantages can only be secured if operations in the valley take place in a planned and co-ordinated fashion, with the local planning authority taking the lead in directing and controlling the way in which this stretch of the valley is excavated and restored. To this end, a landscape and restoration strategy has been drawn up for this section of the valley (see paragraphs 7.32-7.33 and Appendix 3). Applications for extraction from individual Preferred Areas in

the valley will have to have full regard to this strategy, as well as to all the other more site-specific provisions set out for each Preferred Area in Appendix 3.

5.18 The statements for each Preferred Area, and for groups of Preferred Areas, in Appendix 3 are intended to set out clear positive requirements and a minimum level of benefits in respect of the working of each site. They are based on current knowledge and the current situation. The local planning authorities may be prepared to consider some departure from them, provided that the resultant scheme deals with all the issues and principles contained in the Appendix, and that it would at least maintain the quality of development which the Appendix seeks to secure. Wherever possible, the local planning authorities will look to applications to make provision for appropriate public or environmental benefits (consistent with the prevailing legal framework and national policy guidance), to offset the disturbance resulting from extraction, and to help meet the government's objective of preserving or enhancing the overall quality of the environment once extraction has ceased (see paragraph 2.14 and Chapter 7).

- *Paragraph 5.19 and Policy 9 referred specifically to the approach to be adopted in respect of nine sites where, at the time of preparing the earlier version of the Plan, the principle of granting planning permission had been agreed, but the issue of the permissions was awaiting the completion of associated legal agreements. Subsequently, planning permissions have been issued at eight of the sites, and refused at the ninth. The content of paragraph 5.19 and Policy 9 is now completely superseded, and they have therefore been deleted from the Plan under the 2001 Alterations.*

Policies outside Preferred Areas

5.20 The Preferred Areas are believed to be capable of supplying enough sharp sand and gravel to meet the levels of provision set out in Chapter 3 for the period of this Plan (subject to the content of paragraphs 4.17 and 4.17A). There should therefore be no need to look outside these areas for additional extraction sites for sharp sand and gravel. Furthermore, because of the rigorous way in which the Preferred Areas have been selected, they are by definition considered to be the least damaging potential sites for sand and gravel extraction in terms of the effect on people's living conditions and the environment. It therefore follows as a general principle that outside the Preferred Areas there will be a presumption against planning permission being granted.

5.21 Policies 10 to 13 establish how applications outside the Preferred Areas will be considered. Policies 11-13 are intended to be read in the general context provided by Policy 10.

Policy 10 Outside the Preferred Areas, applications for extraction of sharp sand and gravel will normally be refused. In considering whether or not to make an exception to this general presumption, the local planning authorities will take account of

- (i) whether there is a need to disturb land outside the Preferred Areas in order to maintain provision for the levels of production set out in Policy 3, or the landbank figure indicated by Policy 4;
- (ii) whether that need could be more acceptably met elsewhere than on the application site, having particular regard (among other things) to the presumptions against extraction in specific areas indicted in Policies 11 to 13;
- (iii) whether the proposals overcome or accommodate all constraints deriving from the considerations set out in Policy 7.

Policy 11 There will be the strongest presumption against allowing the extraction of sharp sand and gravel from

- (i) the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;

- (ii) **designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including classified and proposed Special Protection Areas, designated and candidate Special Areas of Conservation, and Ramsar sites and Nature Conservation Review and Geological Conservation Review sites);**
- (iii) **statutory nature reserves;**
- (iv) **scheduled ancient monuments, and other monuments of national importance;**
- (v) **land owned by or covenanted to the National Trust;**
- (vi) **common land, and town or village green;**
- (vii) **registered parks and gardens of special historic interest, and registered battlefields;**
- (viii) **the sites and settings of Grade I and Grade 2* listed buildings;**
- (ix) **statutory Green Belt land¹;**
- (x) **land within built-up areas.**

Policy 12 **There will be a strong presumption against allowing the extraction of sharp sand and gravel from**

- (i) **Areas of Special Landscape Importance, Wildlife Heritage Sites (including Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites), parks and gardens of county importance, non-scheduled archaeological sites meriting preservation in situ, Conservation Areas and the sites and settings of Grade 2 listed buildings, and the immediate settings of rivers and canals; and**
- (ii) **allotments and land in established recreational use.**

Policy 13 **There will be a strong presumption against allowing the extraction of sharp sand and gravel**

- (i) **from land outside any of the areas of land specified in Policies 11 and 12 but which would adversely affect any of those areas; or**
- (ii) **which would adversely affect the function of land important to the character or amenities of individual settlements, including land important to the separation of settlements.**

5.22 Although it is not intended to permit sand and gravel extraction outside the Preferred Areas, it is not practicable to apply a blanket ban on extraction outside them because of the general planning principle that every application must be judged on all its merits. The fact that a site lies outside a Preferred Area cannot be assumed to outweigh every other consideration in favour of an application in every case. Policies 10 to 13 therefore provide the framework against which the merits of applications outside the Preferred Areas will be judged, in the context of the general principles established by Policies 6 and 7.

5.23 Policy 10 echoes the general provision that the decision on all applications involve balancing issues of need and environmental disturbance. However, proposals for extraction of sharp sand and gravel

¹ This refers only to a very small area of land at Ankerwycke (near Wraybury) which is protected under the special provisions of the Green Belt (London & Home Counties) Act 1938. The position in the remainder of the Green Belt will be as set out in paragraphs 5.7 to 5.8.

outside the Preferred Areas will normally only have a chance of favourable consideration if it is demonstrated that permitted areas and the remaining unconsented Preferred Areas collectively are not capable of maintaining the levels of provision set out in Chapter 3, and that this is likely to lead to a continuing serious shortfall in the county's ability to meet the requirements set out in that chapter.

5.24 Outside the Preferred Areas it will also be necessary to show that such need as may exist cannot be more acceptably met elsewhere. In interpreting the words "more acceptably" in Policy 10(ii), the local planning authorities will have close regard to the provisions of Policies 11 to 13, which (echoing government guidance, and as indicated in the Berkshire Structure Plan) set up a broad hierarchy of 'presumptions' based on the nature and severity of the constraints applying to particular areas of land (see paragraph 5.6 and Figure 5). The land defined by Policy 11 is subject to nationally- or internationally-important or statutorily-defined constraints (items i to ix in the policy), or else extraction from it would create such disturbance and disruption that it is considered that it should be subject to the strongest presumption against extraction (item x). Policy 12(i) refers to those areas of 'county importance' the more general protection of which is provided for in Berkshire Structure Plan policies C7, EN8-9, EN7, EN6 and EN10 respectively², while Policy 12(ii) highlights the importance attached to safeguarding and enhancing recreation sites which is implicit in Structure Plan policies R2-3. Policy 13 reflects the provisions of Structure Plan policies C5-6, and of paragraph 5.8 of this Plan. It should be noted that in addition to the constraints of international, national and county importance referred to in Policies 11-13, more local constraints (including those defined in the Unitary Authorities' Local Plans, and relevant considerations from Appendix 5) will also be taken into account in deciding on the acceptability of working individual sites outside the Preferred Areas. This is reflected in Figure 5.

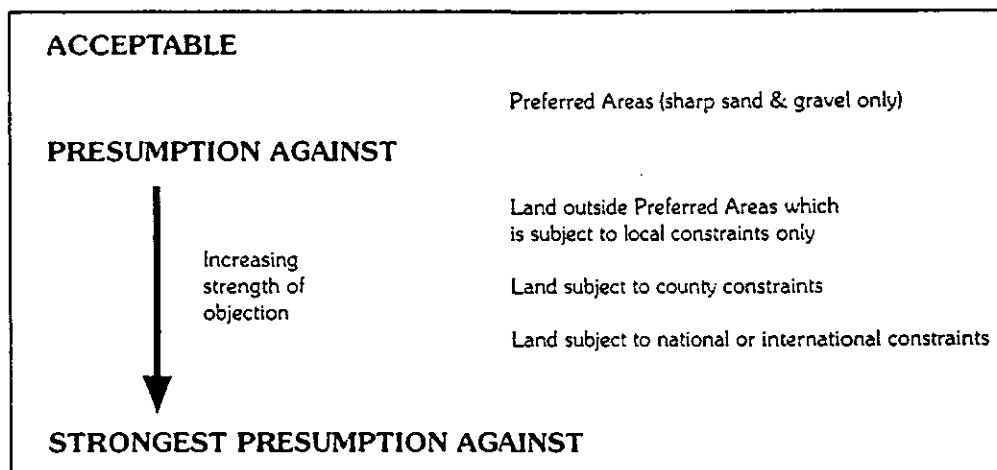


Figure 5 The relative 'in principle' acceptability of extraction from areas subject to different designations or constraints

5.25 It follows from the above policies and provisions that in general the intention is that, if sites for extraction have to be found from outside the Preferred Areas, they should be sought first in areas which are subject only to local constraints, other local issues, or concerns over the practical considerations of the proposed operation; then – if no suitable sites can be identified in such areas – in areas subject to county constraints; and only as a last resort (and then only in very special circumstances, as indicated in government guidance) in areas which are subject to national or international constraints. Applications for planning permission for extraction outside the Preferred Areas will be assessed accordingly.

² Some of these Structure Plan policies also refer to land which is subject to national constraints and which will therefore be subject to the strongest presumption against extraction. Policy 12 will apply to all other land to which those Structure Plan policies relate.

Changes to constraints

- 5.25A The areas and constraints listed in Policies 11 to 13 reflect national and strategic policy advice as at the time of the [date] Alterations. When considering future planning applications both inside and outside Preferred Areas, account will be taken of any changes in national or strategic (regional or Berkshire-wide) policy advice that may have appeared in the meantime, and the practical scope of the policies will be adjusted accordingly. Details of any additional constraints that should be regarded as falling within the terms of these policies, or any adjusted emphasis to be placed on existing constraints, will be given in the annual Monitoring Reports on this Plan. It is stressed that this flexibility in respect of these policies relates only to the assignment of constraints to, or as between, Policies 11 to 13, and not to the basic principle of the hierarchy of presumptions which the policies enshrine.

Mineral extraction in association with other development

- 5.26 Development is sometimes proposed which involves considerable amounts of mineral extraction even though this is not the main purpose of the proposal. Examples might be the construction of a reservoir, or the formation of a void for waste disposal. The local planning authorities will judge the mineral extraction component of any such proposals strictly in accordance with the principles laid down in this Plan.
- 5.27 In exceptional circumstances, it may be that the justification for the development is particularly strong, and all concerns relating to mineral extraction (other than the 'policy presumptions' set out in Policies 10-13) have been satisfactorily met. In such a case, the normal presumption set out in Policy 10 may be set aside, even if the site is not in a designated Preferred Area.
- 5.28 In 1995, the Secretary of State for the Environment granted planning permission on a major planning application submitted by the (then) National Rivers Authority for the construction of a Thames flood relief channel in the Maidenhead-Windsor-Eton area (see Appendix 6). The scheme involves the extraction of over 2 million tonnes of sand and gravel from land in Berkshire, although it is not being developed for that purpose. The line of the channel is not identified as a Preferred Area, but the application was considered by the planning authorities and the Secretary of State on its planning merits, taking into account the principles discussed above. In addition the Environment Agency is to prepare a Flood Plain Management Plan for the section of the Thames Valley between Datchet and Walton Bridge in the period 1999-2001. The Plan will seek to maximise flood storage capacity and protect flood flow, and a key element of this will be the management and restoration of gravel extraction sites in the area.

Borrow pits

- 5.29 In addition to the general demands for aggregates, some major construction projects, such as road-building schemes, require a substantial amount of aggregate to be supplied over a relatively short period of time. In particular cases it may be possible to import aggregates through a temporary rail depot – see paragraph 9.35. More often it may be necessary to open up a new pit close to the project site in order to ensure the availability of the necessary supplies and to avoid putting heavy and concentrated flows of traffic on to public roads. Such a pit is known as a 'borrow pit'. Policy 14 sets out the requirements which must be satisfied before permission for a borrow pit will normally be granted.

Policy 14 Outside the Preferred Areas, proposals for borrow pits to serve major construction projects will be acceptable so long as

- (i) material from the pit is only used in connection with the specific project with which it is associated;**
- (ii) extraction from the site will cause less environmental disturbance than would result from using material won from established sources of supply, and so long as the local planning authority is satisfied that none of the Preferred Areas identified in this Plan is able to meet the particular needs of the project;**

- (iii) the pit is sited and operated so as to minimise environmental disturbance;
- (iv) provision is made for the rapid restoration of the pit following extraction, preferably using only materials from elsewhere on the construction site; and
- (v) the location and operation of the pit have full regard to the issues set out in Policy 7.

- 5.30 In considering borrow pit proposals in terms of item (ii) of the policy, the local planning authorities will have regard to whether, in the light of the purpose for which the material from the proposed borrow pit is required, the use of materials from existing sources or Preferred Areas would constitute wasteful use of aggregates, in the sense referred to in paragraph 3.1.
- 5.31 Of particular importance is item (iv) of the policy. Borrow pits can often be restored by using surplus material from elsewhere on the construction site (eg in constructing a new road, there are usually elements of both 'cut' and 'fill' involved; if the amount of 'cut' exceeds the amount of 'fill', the surplus material can be used to restore any borrow pit which was the source of some of the 'fill'.) In all cases, the local planning authorities will require to be satisfied, before granting permission, that appropriate arrangements for restoration of the borrow pit have been made and will be implemented promptly. In this connection, the provisions of Chapter 7 of this Plan dealing with restoration and after use will apply as much to borrow pits as to all other new mineral extraction operations in the county.
- 5.32 The local planning authorities consider that the issues of the requirement for additional aggregates and of spoil disposal should be treated in detail in Environmental Statements submitted with planning applications for major construction schemes. The authorities will also press to ensure that appropriate provision for these matters is secured before contracts for the development are let.

Sharp sand and gravel: Summary

- 5.33 The local planning authorities consider that in principle planning permission for sand and gravel extraction is only likely to be granted in the Preferred Areas. Elsewhere permission is unlikely to be granted except in very special circumstances. It is expected that such exceptions will be very few. No proposal allowed in such circumstances will be regarded as establishing a precedent for setting aside the policies outside the Preferred Areas in any other case. In deciding whether such exceptions should be made, there are different strengths of factors which would have to be taken into account in considering any proposal (on its merits) to see if an exception to the general principle can be justified.
- 5.34 Any permissions granted for extraction outside Preferred Areas, whether as 'windfalls' in association with other development or in other circumstances covered by Policies 10 and 14, will represent additions to the county's overall landbank of permitted mineral reserves. They will therefore reduce the call on the designated Preferred Areas to maintain that landbank.

SOFT SAND

- 5.35 This section of the Plan sets out the local planning authorities' policies for the extraction of all types of soft sand. Particular attention is paid to policies for building sand – that is, soft sand which is of a suitable quality for use in making mortar or plaster, or in asphaltting. No other mineral can readily substitute for building sand in these uses. The local planning authorities therefore consider it appropriate to apply different policies towards building sand from those applying to other types of sand and gravel.
- 5.36 The Survey Map shows the distribution of the two geological deposits in which deposits of soft sand may be found. The sands from the Reading Beds tend to be of a better quality than those from the Bagshot Beds, and some have in the past proved suitable for use as building sand. The Bagshot sands are of a quality which makes them in general only suited to use as fill.

- 5.37 Even within the Reading Beds deposits, occurrences of building sand are extremely variable. In the past, the attention of mineral operators has concentrated on the Cold Ash/Hermitage area, with some lesser interest in the area of Knowl Hill/Waltham St Lawrence. Deposits of this mineral are frequently associated with landscapes of scenic value: the Cold Ash/Hermitage area lies partly inside the North Wessex Downs AONB, while Knowl Hill is part of an area defined in the Structure Plan as being of Special Landscape Importance.
- 5.38 Both of Berkshire's current workings of building sand are in the AONB near Hermitage. There are currently no other sites where soft sand is extracted, although there is permission for extraction at Knowl Hill in association with the extraction of clay for tile-making. Small amounts of soft sand are also dug from sites elsewhere in the county where the principal mineral extracted is sharp sand and gravel.
- 5.39 Berkshire's past production of building sand has been around 100-150,000 tonnes a year. This is only about 2% of the South East region's total production. Some neighbouring counties have much more extensive deposits of this mineral, and their contribution to regional production is accordingly much higher. For example, in 1989 Surrey and Hampshire produced 26.5% and 8.5% respectively of total regional output.

I - BUILDING SAND

Preferred Areas?

- 5.40 As was explained in paragraph 4.6, the lack of comprehensive information on the location of commercial deposits of building sand means that the local planning authorities consider there is no sound base on which to identify Preferred Areas for its extraction. In these circumstances, the approach to be adopted for this mineral is different from that applied to other types of soft sand, or to sharp sand and gravel.
- 5.41 The fact that much of the interest in extraction of this mineral relates to sites in the AONB poses particular difficulties, and it is therefore considered that the issues relating to extraction inside and outside the AONB need to be considered separately.

Inside the AONB

- 5.42 As indicated, recent extraction of building sand in Berkshire has concentrated on the AONB north of Newbury. In order to protect the landscape and other interests of the AONB, the rates of release of sites and of production at individual sites have been controlled to restrict maximum annual production to a figure of around 140,000 tonnes.
- 5.43 The local planning authorities consider that it would be unreasonable for Berkshire to seek to avoid making any contribution to local and regional demands for this mineral. Minerals can only be dug where they occur naturally, and so the authorities consider that – so long as suitable sites are found – a continuation of past rates of extraction in the AONB could be accepted. However, subject to a modest upward rounding of the past maximum production level, the authorities do not wish to see any increase in the amount of disturbance to the AONB which would inevitably result from allowing higher production levels.
- 5.44 New applications in the AONB will only be acceptable if the local planning authority is satisfied that the details of the application are acceptable in terms of Policies 6 and 7, of the three issues set out in Policy 10, and of the presumptions contained in Policies 11 to 13. In this respect, the authority will pay particular attention to the impacts of any proposal on the immediate landscape character of the site and the area, the impacts of traffic on the AONB, and the cumulative impacts of any local concentration of operations in a relatively small area. It remains very firmly the authorities' view that there should be the strongest presumption against any applications which would adversely affect the special character and appearance of the AONB.
- 5.45 An upper limit of 150,000 tonnes a year will be applied as the maximum acceptable from sites in the AONB. It is stressed that this is in no way a 'target' figure to be striven for either by the local planning authorities (when considering the issue of need) or by mineral operators. Neither is there any

question of there being an implied 'landbank requirement' from the AONB alone, whether based on this or any other level of production. The appropriateness of this limit will be kept under review, particularly in the light of the authorities' wish to secure a reduction in the total provision of primary aggregates in the county (see paragraph 3.10).

Outside the AONB

- 5.46 Outside the AONB, the local planning authorities will consider any applications for the extraction of building sand on their merits in the light of Policies 6 and 7, of the issues in Policy 10, and of the presumptions contained in Policies 11 to 13. There would be no initial presumption either for or against allowing such applications.
- 5.47 The local planning authorities will set no fixed upper limit on production levels outside the AONB. However, all production of building sand (whether from within the AONB or outside it) will contribute towards the production levels of sand and gravel set out in Policy 3. The authorities will expect levels of building sand production to remain very low in relation to production levels of sharp sand and gravel, to avoid unreasonably restraining future production levels of the latter material.

Policy 15 Applications for the extraction of building sand will be judged on their merits having strict regard to the provisions of Policies 6 and 7, to the issues in Policy 10, and to the presumptions in Policies 11 to 13. Notwithstanding Policy 11(i), the local planning authorities will be prepared to grant permissions for the extraction of up to 150,000 tonnes a year from sites within the North Wessex Downs AONB, so long as all other requirements of these policies are met and the authorities are satisfied that the AONB will not be adversely affected by the operations proposed.

2 - SOFT SAND OTHER THAN BUILDING SAND

- 5.48 Soft sands suitable only for use for 'non-specialist' purposes, such as fill, are in effect meeting the same demand as poorer-quality sharp sands and gravels for which detailed provision is made in the section of this chapter dealing with sharp sand and gravel. Applications for extraction of this material will therefore be judged in precisely the same terms as applications for the extraction of sharp sand and gravel outside Preferred Areas (Policies 10-14). In general, because site-specific provision for production of materials suitable for use as fill has been made in the Preferred Areas, there will be an initial presumption against allowing the extraction of soft sand from other sites for this purpose. The strength of this initial presumption will vary according to the planning constraints applying to the site concerned, as indicated in Policies 10-13.
- 5.49 In determining any application which proposes the extraction of both building sand and other soft sand from the same site, the local planning authorities will have regard, among all other considerations, to the relative proportions of the two materials which it is proposed to extract, and to whether the total amount of disturbance caused is justified by the amount of building sand to be extracted.
- 5.50 In furtherance of Policy 1, before determining any application proposing the extraction of soft sand (and particularly if it is claimed that the material to be extracted is building sand), the local planning authorities reserve the right to seek detailed information on the precise geological nature of the material concerned, and the prospective end-uses to which it is proposed that it will be put.

INTERPRETING THE PROPOSALS MAP

- 5.51 The Proposals Map presents generalised information at a scale of 1:50,000 regarding the areas affected by the constraints detailed in Policies 11-13, but only in respect of areas underlain by sharp sand and gravel. Within those limitations, the details on the map are believed to be correct as at the date of preparing the map. However, they are only a snapshot of the position at one point in time,

and the areas affected by particular constraints can change. When considering individual applications for the extraction of any minerals, the local planning authorities will assess the site against the latest available information on the extent of the constraints in Policies 11-13. This assessment will determine which of those policies should apply to the site in question, regardless of what may be the notation of the site on the Proposals Map as printed.

6 POLICIES FOR OTHER MINERALS

Chalk, clay, and other minerals apart from oil and gas

- 6.1 The geological outcrops of chalk and clay in Berkshire are fairly extensive, but as indicated in Chapter 3 the demand for new workings is extremely limited. There is also no requirement to maintain 'landbanks' of these minerals. Accordingly no proposals are made in this Plan as to where future extraction might take place. New applications for their extraction, or for that of other minerals not at present worked in the county (apart from oil and gas), will be considered on their merits in terms of the general principle set out in Policy 6 and of relevant provisions of Policies 7 to 14. The issue of 'need' for chalk or clay will be assessed as indicated in paragraph 3.32.

Policy 16 Applications for the extraction of chalk or clay, or of minerals not at present worked in the county (apart from oil and gas) will normally only be permitted if

- (i) the minerals are shown to be required to meet a specific local need which cannot be met from existing permitted sites or by secondary and recycled aggregates; and**
- (ii) the need for the mineral outweighs all environmental, agricultural, amenity and other relevant planning considerations; and**
- (iii) the proposal is acceptable in terms of national or county constraints, as set out in Policies 11 to 13; and**
- (iv) the details of the proposal, including the proposals for the method of working, site restoration, after-care and after-use, satisfy the detailed requirements set out in this Plan; and**
- (v) proposals for related plant and buildings are acceptable in terms of Policy 28.**

Oil and gas

- 6.2 Although no commercial reserves of these minerals are known to exist in Berkshire, reserves of oil and gas have been located and are being worked in some neighbouring counties. Policy 17 is therefore included in this Plan to safeguard the local planning authorities' position should they receive any applications for preliminary exploration works, or should any possibly exploitable reserves be located.

Policy 17 Proposals relating to oil and gas will be judged in accordance with the following principles:

- (i) Proposals to carry out exploratory drilling will normally be permitted unless they would cause harm to sites or areas which are particularly sensitive in environmental terms, and provided that they are accompanied by satisfactory schemes of working and restoration;**
- (ii) Proposals for further drilling at the appraisal stage will be considered on their merits in terms of the issues listed in Policy 7 of this Plan, having particular regard to the long-term suitability of the site for commercial production and distribution;**
- (iii) Proposals for the commercial production of these minerals, or for the establishment of related plant, will be judged strictly on their merits in**

terms of the key principles set out in Policy 6 and the issues listed in Policy 7. Applications will normally only be permitted if

- (a) the need for the development outweighs all environmental, agricultural, amenity and other relevant planning considerations; and**
- (b) the proposal is acceptable in terms of national and county constraints, as set out in Policies 11 to 13; and**
- (c) the details of the proposal, including the proposals for the method of working, site restoration, after-care and after-use, satisfy the detailed requirements set out in this Plan; and**
- (d) proposals for plant and building are acceptable in terms of Policy 28.**

- 6.3 Proposals for the exploitation of any reserves of oil and gas may only be carried out under a licence granted by the Department of Trade and Industry. A single 'Petroleum Exploration and Development Licence' now covers the exploration, appraisal, and production stages. The actual operations proposed at each of these stages require specific consent from the DTI, and also under town and country planning legislation. Policy 17 sets out the local planning authorities' policy towards any proposals received at any of these stages.
- 6.4 Exploratory drilling is of itself unlikely to have a substantial impact on the environment, so long as adequate measures of restoration are carried out when drilling is completed. However, if a potentially productive reserve is located, it will be necessary to ensure that proposals for exploration do not harm the appearance and character of the affected area. Proposals for exploratory drilling will normally be acceptable so long as there are stringent environmental safeguards. The precise site for the drilling must be selected so as to minimise the environmental impacts of the operation. Proposals for exploratory drilling will be resisted if they would cause harm to particularly sensitive areas, such as the open downland within the North Wessex Downs AONB. The grant of planning permission for exploratory drilling will not imply any commitment to allowing appraisal drilling or commercial exploitation of any reserves found. Proposals for appraisal drilling, commercial exploitation, and plant for gathering and distributing any reserves which are to be exploited, will be judged in terms of the same range of issues as apply to any other proposals for mineral extraction in the county.
- 6.5 Policy 17 has been drafted to accord with the guidance given in DoE Circular 2/85 'Planning Control over Oil and Gas Operations'. The local planning authorities will have regard to this Circular when considering aspects of oil or gas operations which are not expressly covered by this policy.
- 6.6 Before exploratory drilling takes place, holders of DTI licences generally undertake seismic surveys to help locate the most promising drilling sites. These surveys do not normally require express planning permission, but the licensees are required to liaise with local authorities to ensure that appropriate precautions are taken to protect buildings, structures, and environmentally sensitive areas from any adverse effects of the surveys. The government's licences do not absolve the licensee from ensuring that no damage is done to property close to seismic survey routes. The former County Council drew up a schedule of standard conditions which must be complied with by those carrying out seismic surveys. These conditions cover the responsibilities of the local planning authorities both as planning and as highway authority.

7 RESTORATION AND AFTER-USE

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The commitment to a high standard of restoration

- 7.1 Mineral extraction is a necessary activity, but rarely a welcome one. One way of minimising its impact is to ensure that the land taken for mineral operations is restored at the earliest opportunity, and that it is capable of an acceptable use after working has come to an end. This is expressly stated in government advice as being one of the primary aims of planning control over mineral working. This chapter sets out the local planning authorities' general approach in meeting that aim. By so doing, it should be read as amplifying and explaining the provisions of Policy 6(ii).
- 7.2 Changing public attitudes and recent government statements demand higher standards of restoration, and the local planning authorities are firmly committed to achieving these. The minerals industry too generally recognises the need for responsible management of minerals sites both during and after extraction. This has been reflected in generally improved standards of restoration in recent years – though there remains room for further improvement. A key issue in dealing with mineral extraction is therefore how to achieve this improvement.
- 7.3 The local planning authorities consider that this can best be done by setting and demanding the highest standards of site restoration, and are therefore committed to securing this, whatever the proposed landform or after-use. Whether a restoration scheme is 'acceptable' in terms of Policy 18 (see below) will be judged taking this requirement into account.

Mineral extraction as an opportunity for public benefits

- 7.4 The local planning authorities see the role of site restoration as being much more than just to return land to a 'satisfactory' condition after extraction. The authorities consider that restoration should be regarded and used as a means to achieving, wherever possible and appropriate, a high level of wider public and environmental benefits such as
- improvements to the long-term appearance of the landscape;
 - the creation of a greater diversity of habitats for wildlife;
 - the provision of new opportunities for public access and recreation; and
 - the alleviation of flooding.
- 7.5 In this way, mineral extraction can be seen not simply as a short-term disfigurement of the landscape, but also in the longer terms as a means to the desirable ends of landscape enhancement and of improving the provision of facilities for general public benefit. In this context it is considered that so far as possible (consistent with the prevailing legal framework and national policy guidance) the achievement of public environmental benefits should relate not just to the specific extraction sites, but to their wider surrounding area as well.
- 7.6 The policies and other provisions of this chapter are designed to secure these objectives.

Agricultural restoration?

- 7.7 It is government policy that where mineral extraction is proposed on agricultural land, one of the issues in deciding the application is the feasibility of a high standard of restoration to an appropriate after-use. This requirement applies equally to all agricultural land. Government advice in MPG7 states that moves to diversify the rural economy should not lead to the significant loss of high quality agricultural land, and thus even if non-agricultural after-uses are proposed on the best and most versatile agricultural land (defined in PPG7 as land in Grades 1, 2 and 3A of the MAFF Agricultural Land Classification system), the methods used in restoration

and after-care should be designed to enable the land to retain its long-term capability to be farmed to its full potential. Although MPG7 recognises that a wider range of non-agricultural after-uses may be appropriate on land of lower agricultural quality, it is emphasised that reclamation to such uses (whether on high or lower-grade farmland) does not mean that there can be any lessened commitment to high standards in the reclamation and recycling of land taken for mineral working.

7.8 Government advice goes on to say that restoration to non-agricultural uses

"should not be chosen because they are perceived as 'easier options'. They require equal commitment by mineral operators, mineral planning authorities and any other parties involved to achieve high standards of implementation."

7.9 The local planning authorities fully support these views, and will apply them strictly when considering individual planning applications for mineral extraction.

Wet or dry restoration?

7.10 Many of the mineral reserves of Berkshire (including several of the Preferred Areas) lie in the county's river valleys. Digging out the gravel from these sites would lower the ground surface below the level of the water table, resulting in the formation of lakes. The sites could only be restored to dry land by importing filling materials of one kind or another on to the site. Customarily in river valleys filling has been with dry, inert waste: filling with household refuse, or other fast-decomposing wastes, can create unacceptable pollution problems.

7.11 One other means of restoring sites to dry land would be not to fill them, but to arrange for them to be kept dry by means of permanently-operating pumps. However, the underlying geology of Berkshire is not well suited to this form of treatment. Equally importantly, for technical reasons restoration of this type is not acceptable in river floodplains. It is therefore rejected as a restoration option for Berkshire.

7.12 There are many potentially-conflicting interests involved in the decision as to whether a valley site should be restored wet or dry. These included concerns over the effect of wet restoration on the local landscape character, the acceptability (or otherwise) of proposals to restore wet pits by importing filling material, the opportunities which wet restoration offers to meet demands for more water-based recreation, the wish to avoid the permanent loss of farmland, and so on. The result can be in some cases that no form of restoration can be achieved which satisfies the technical and environmental wishes of all interested parties.

7.13 The local planning authorities consider that it is inappropriate to express a view that dry restoration is always to be preferred to wet, or vice versa. Much depends on the particular local circumstances. To seek to strike a balance between all interests and concerns inevitable means that some future sites will have to be restored wet and others dry. The guidance given elsewhere in this Plan over the restoration of individual Preferred Areas seeks to strike such a balance, but it is based on a concern that as far as possible the restoration of mineral sites should aim to reflect the original landscape character of the area.

7.14 It is important to note that 'wet' restoration does not inevitably mean the creation of large expanses of unbroken water. Thoughtful pre-planning of mineral extraction operations can ensure the retention of lines of trees or other landscape features which can break up the appearance of the flooded areas left after extraction. Land can also be restored to various types of smaller-scale 'wetland' habitats, perhaps involving a degree of filling, which result in a landscape (e.g. a reed-bed or carr) whose appearance can belie its 'wet' nature. Mineral operators will be encouraged to pursue such methods of restoration in suitable cases.

Encouraging biodiversity

- 7.14A To complement the provisions of paragraph 5.11A regarding extraction, the objectives of biodiversity will be taken into account in considering proposals for restoration of a minerals site, and without prejudice to other general restoration objectives referred to in this section of the Plan, or to site-specific guidance elsewhere in the Plan, proposals that would help in achieving the aims of or specific targets for particular habitats or species in Biodiversity Action Plans will, in principle, be favoured.

The need for early planning of restoration and after-uses

- 7.15 It is essential that mineral operators should plan for the restoration and after-use of sites at the same time as they are planning the extraction operations, and in the same level of detail. This includes planning to ensure the availability of materials for restoration, as well as planning the details of the eventual landform of the site. Restoration details must not be treated as an afterthought: the whole mineral extraction operation should be designed with the final character, appearance and after-use of the site clearly in mind. Such details as which parts of the site should be worked and which should not, which trees and hedges on the site should be retained, the phasing of operations, the treatment of soils and the location of soil storage mounds, and so on, should all be determined with a view to facilitating the quickest and most effective form of site restoration. (On after-uses, see also paragraphs 7.19-7.20.)

DETAILED POLICIES

I ENSURING APPROPRIATE AND TIMELY RESTORATION

- 7.16 The local planning authorities will require all applications for mineral extraction, and other applications relating to/involving the restoration of mineral sites, to conform strictly to the provisions of Policy 18. This policy seeks to ensure that restoration is undertaken without undue delay, and that the restored landscape is designed to harmonise with its surroundings and to maintain the character of the area, and is designed for and compatible with its intended after-use. It therefore reflects the advice in MPG7 that an important element of the national framework for sustainable development is to ensure that land taken for minerals is reclaimed at the earliest opportunity, and to a standard suitable for the intended use.

- Policy 18 (i) Before they will be prepared to grant planning permission for mineral extraction, the local planning authorities will require to be satisfied that the land will be progressively restored within a reasonable timescale to an appropriate standard and an acceptable landform, landscape character and ecological character which are appropriate to its location and its intended after-use.**
- (ii) When considering other applications relating to the restoration of present or former mineral workings, the local planning authorities will be guided by the aim of ensuring the completion without undue delay of site restoration to an appropriate standard and an acceptable landform, landscape character and ecological character which are appropriate to its location and its intended after-use.**

The local planning authorities will impose conditions to secure these ends on any planning permissions granted, and may request the completion of legal agreements to secure matters which cannot be secured by planning conditions.

- 7.16A Policy 18(i) will apply in the case of applications for new mineral extraction. Policy 18(ii) will apply, for example, in cases where applications are made to extend the period for site restoration beyond that originally approved, or to vary the form of restoration on all or part of a site.

- 7.17 Policy 18(i) requires the local planning authorities to be satisfied on a number of matters relating to restoration and after-use before they will be prepared to grant planning permission for mineral extraction. It should be noted that this requirement applies both to the technical acceptability of the proposals and to their prospects for successful implementation. The latter is discussed further below (paragraphs 7.22-7.23A). The use of planning obligations to secure restoration requirements is discussed in paragraphs 8.29 to 8.30; see also paragraphs 7.36 and 7.41.
- 7.18 In support of the former, the local planning authorities will require the matters referred to in that policy to be treated in appropriate detail in the documents submitted as part of the application. Applications which do not treat these issues adequately will clearly be unable to satisfy Policy 18. They will also be regarded as unsatisfactory in terms of Policy 21(3) (see Chapter 8), relating to effective restoration and implementation of an acceptable after-use.
- 7.19 Site restoration cannot be properly planned without knowing the after-use to which it is intended that the site should be put. The local planning authorities will therefore expect all applications for extraction to be accompanied, not just by detailed restoration plans, but also by a statement of the intended after-use of the site, of the way in which the proposed restoration will allow that after-use to be implemented, and of how it will be managed in the long term. Statements of intended after-use should be as detailed as possible: for example, generalised references to 'nature conservation' or 'recreation' should be avoided, in favour of more detailed indications of the types of habitat to be created, or the types of recreation for which the land is to be prepared.
- 7.20 The local planning authorities acknowledge that it is not always possible for a mineral operator to ensure, at the time when his application for extraction is in preparation, that a particular detailed after-use will take place at the point in the future when restoration has ceased. Policies towards particular land-uses (e.g. agriculture) can change over time, and new types of recreation can come unexpectedly to the fore (e.g. the recent upsurge of interest in jet-skiing). For this reason, the guidance given in this Plan on the question of suitable after-uses for individual areas is couched in relatively general terms. The level of certainty of and commitment to particular after-uses in individual planning applications should reflect the likely time-scale between the submission of the application and the expected initiation of the after-use; but within this constraint they will be expected to be as detailed as possible.
- 7.21 During the 1990s, the County Council prepared strategy documents for nature conservation, landscape, and rights of way. These statements all include provisions relating to the restoration of mineral workings. In addition other bodies such as the District/Borough Councils (through their Local Plans and separate Biodiversity Action Plans), English Nature, the Countryside Agency (formerly the Countryside Commission and the Rural Development Agency), the Environment Agency, and the Berkshire Nature Conservation Forum all have policy documents relevant to or bearing on mineral working and restoration. Operators should have regard to these documents when preparing their restoration proposals for individual sites.
- 7.21A In recent years, an apparent shortage of inert filling materials has led to delays in the restoration of some sites, which in turn has led to the submission of applications to extend the time-period allowed for restoration. In considering any future applications of this type, or other applications which incorporate a lengthening of the approved period for restoration, the local planning authorities will have regard to the provisions of Policy 18(ii), and will consider case-by-case whether some variation to the form of restoration would be a preferable means of securing the prompt and acceptable restoration of the site. If the site concerned is subject to Contingency Restoration conditions (see below), a further option would be for the authority to invoke the requirements of those conditions pending the assured availability of suitable materials to allow the completion of the original restoration scheme.

The prospects of successful implementation

- 7.22 When assessing proposals against Policy 18, the local planning authorities will take into account the likelihood of the proposed restoration being successfully achieved within a reasonable

timescale, and the prospects for the successful implementation and long-term management of the intended after-use. Among the issues relevant to this consideration will be

- the availability of any fill materials which would be required to achieve the restoration of the site (compare paragraph 7.21A);
- the level of commitment shown by the applicant towards achieving the proposed restoration and securing the proposed after-use;
- the operator's past record of achieving successful restoration and complying with planning conditions, bearing in mind any known improvements in restoration techniques; and
- whether the period proposed for the restoration of the site appears both reasonable and realistic.

More is said about long-term management issues in paragraph 7.41 below.

7.23 It is expressly stated in government advice that

"where there is serious doubt about whether satisfactory reclamation can be achieved at a particular site, then there must also be a doubt whether permission for mineral working should be given."

In the view of the local planning authorities, this same provision holds good in respect of the achievement of the intended after-use and its long-term management. Whether any such doubt stems from technical or more personal considerations, the authorities will give considerable weight to it in the determination of planning applications for mineral extraction.

7.23A Government advice (MPG7) expressly states that responsibility for the restoration and aftercare of mineral sites lies with the operator and, in the case of default, the landowner. Applicants should therefore demonstrate with their application the likely financial and material budgets for restoration, aftercare and after-use, and how they propose to make provision for such work during the operational life of the site. As MPG7 states, this is important to avoid future dereliction and the possibility that the costs of reclamation of mineral sites might have to be borne by other public or private sources.

Contingency Restoration

7.24 The local planning authorities will seek to avoid the situation arising whereby a shortage of available filling materials, or some other similar difficulty beyond the operator's control, prevents the achievement of a restoration scheme which relies on the import of such materials to the site. To make sure that the site is not left looking 'unfinished' in these circumstances (i.e. when the intended and agreed restoration and after-use scheme has not been completed), the local planning authorities will normally impose a condition requiring that, if in the authority's opinion these circumstances have arisen or appear likely to arise, the operator must submit and implement a Contingency Restoration Plan.

7.25 The Contingency Restoration Plan should set out the principles and standards to be applied to any land left unfilled if the above situation should arise. The decisions as to when or whether a Contingency restoration Plan should be submitted and implemented will be for the local planning authority alone. The requirements of the condition may not be invoked by a mineral operator as a means of evading his primary responsibility to restore the site in the manner required by the full site restoration scheme.

7.26 Restoration carried out under a Contingency Restoration Plan will be considered to be of an interim nature only, and it will still be expected that in due course the full approved restoration scheme will be implemented. The existence of an approved Contingency Restoration Plan, or its implementation, will not be considered by the local planning authority to remove the operator's obligation to complete the full restoration in accordance with the original consent to the authority's satisfaction. In the event that negotiation does not resolve any problems in this respect, the local planning authorities will not consider the existence of such a Plan to prejudice

any enforcement action which they may consider appropriate to ensure the full restoration to their satisfaction of the site concerned.

Minimising the amount of disturbed land

- 7.27 To minimise the environmental disturbance caused by mineral extraction, the local planning authorities wish to keep to a minimum the amount of land at each mineral site which has been worked but is not yet restored. Restoration plans must therefore provide for the restoration of each part of the site to begin as soon as extraction from that part has ceased or as soon as practicable thereafter, and that once started it keeps pace with the rate of extraction. To further the aim of securing restoration without undue delay, the local planning authorities will expect the restoration of worked-out parts of a site to continue even if extraction from the remainder of the site lapses or ceases for any reason.
- 7.28 To secure these aims, in appropriate cases the local planning authorities will impose conditions on new permissions limiting the amount of land at a site which may be disturbed but unrestored at any one time, and/or requiring restoration of disturbed parts of a site to continue even if production from the site is halted either temporarily or permanently.

2 RESTORATION AIMS AND STRATEGIES

- 7.29 The remaining policies of this Chapter set out the aims to which restoration and after-use proposals should be directed. Above all, they seek to ensure that mineral extraction becomes in the longer term a means to the desirable ends of landscape enhancement and of improving the provision of facilities for general public benefit, both on extraction sites and (so far as possible) in the wider surrounding area to which the extraction relates. Policies 19 and 20 set out these objectives, and the latter also gives force to the more specific guidance given in Appendix 3 on the longer-term aims to which restoration and after-use schemes in the individual Preferred Areas should be directed.

Policy 19 When considering applications for mineral extraction, the local planning authorities will seek to secure environmental and other public benefits (including, where appropriate, recreational benefits) through

- (i) the restoration, after-care and after-use of extraction sites; and
- (ii) the environmental conservation and enhancement of the wider surrounding area to which the proposed extraction relates, and the promotion of recreational opportunities within this area.

Policy 20 Proposals for restoration, after-care and after-use of the Preferred Areas must conform to and not prejudice the broad aims and strategies indicated in Appendix 3.

The benefits of restoration strategies

- 7.30 The advantages of setting out broad restoration aims and strategies for individual areas and groups of areas well in advance of the release of sites for mineral extraction have already been seen in one area of the county – the Blackwater Valley. Here a detailed study was prepared in the 1970s by Berkshire, Hampshire and Surrey County Councils, to provide guidance as to which parts of the valley were suitable for extraction and which were not, and on the desirable phasing of extraction operations. It set out a clear intention for the future of the valley after mineral extraction, and indicated the forms of restoration and after-use which were to be aimed for in order to achieve this intention. The strategy document has provided the basis of

subsequent control of mineral operations in the valley, and has been successful in putting the County Councils in the driving seat over the planning of the longer-term, post-extraction character and role of the valley.

- 7.31 The local planning authorities consider that the experience of such a strategy for the Blackwater Valley provides a valuable lesson which ought to be adopted in other areas likely to be subject to extensive mineral extraction over a prolonged period – in particular to set out a vision for the future character of such areas after mineral extraction, and to indicate the forms of restoration or after-use necessary to secure this.
- 7.32 While the present Plan does not seek to provide quite the same level of detailed guidance for future mineral extraction areas in the county as did the Blackwater Valley Study, its aims are the same. For this reason, a restoration strategy has been drawn up for the Kennet Valley (the location of the greatest concentration of existing workings and of Preferred Areas), to enable the local planning authorities to take the lead in directing and controlling the way in which they are excavated and restored (see paragraph 5.17 and Appendix 3). This strategy sets out clear principles about the future landscape character, and-use and landform of this area, which the authorities consider will be best achieved if mineral operations there take place in a planned and co-ordinated fashion.
- 7.33 The local planning authorities considers this is a particularly significant issue in the Kennet Valley. They will therefore consider convening a Working Party to guide and monitor implementation of the strategy for this area. Such a Working Party could include representatives of the District and Parish Councils, the mineral companies, and other interested groups.
- 7.34 In addition, for all Preferred Areas, whether subject to the overall strategies above or not, more detailed restoration guidance is given in Appendix 3. The detailed restoration and after-use suggestions given for each Preferred Area will not necessarily be regarded as the only acceptable forms of restoration and after-use for each site, particularly bearing in mind possible doubts over long-term land uses (see paragraphs 5.18 and 7.20). However, compliance with these suggestions will be regarded as satisfying in broad terms the aims of achieving a high level of wider public and environmental benefits. Any alternative forms of restoration or alternative after-uses which may be suggested in planning applications will have to be demonstrated to conform to, and not to prejudice, the broad strategies for particular areas in Appendix 3.

Public benefits in the wider surrounding area

- 7.35 In presenting indications of desirable patterns of restoration and after-use, the local planning authorities consider it important not to limit to the site of the mineral deposit itself the area within which opportunities are sought and provided for landscape enhancement and the provision of other public benefits. Mineral extraction operations frequently cause major disturbance in a wider area than just the immediate extraction site, and the local planning authorities consider it reasonable that wherever possible this should be recognised through the preparation of restoration schemes which do not just limit themselves to the mineral site alone, but also make provision for the wider surrounding area to which the extraction relates. This approach also affords the opportunity to ensure that the environmental, recreational and other public benefits achieved through the restoration of extraction sites are linked up in a systematic way, and not restricted by the perhaps arbitrary or artificial boundaries of the mineral site or deposit.
- 7.36 The provision of such benefits away from the mineral site can be negotiable through or in association with the planning process. In accordance with Policy 19(ii), the local planning authorities will therefore look to the mineral operators to make provision for such off-site improvements wherever possible – for example, on other nearby and related land owned or controlled by the same mineral operator or landowner. These may take a variety of forms – for example, specific landscape enhancement measures, or the provision of specific public facilities, or wider countryside management initiatives – and might be provided by the operator either directly or indirectly (e.g. by contributing to their funding).

OTHER RESTORATION ISSUES

Restoration Bonds

- 7.37 It is sometimes suggested that mineral operators should be required to deposit a sum of money as a restoration bond at the time when planning permission for extraction is given. This would then be used as a guarantee of the implementation of the approved restoration scheme.
- 7.38 Although the idea of seeking restoration bonds may appear to have some attractions, legal advice indicates that such bonds cannot be insisted upon. Following a study into the effectiveness of restoration conditions and the need for bonds, in 1996 the government decided that it would not introduce new provisions to enable financial guarantees or bonds to be required under the planning system, for either financial or technical default on restoration.
- 7.39 It is therefore government advice that financial guarantees to ensure the reclamation of mineral sites should not normally be required. However, MPG7 accepts that there may be exceptional cases where it will be reasonable for a mineral planning authority to seek a financial guarantee to cover restoration and aftercare costs through a voluntary agreement at the time of granting planning permission, and gives examples of such situations. It points out that, even in such situations, guarantees should not be necessary where a developer is contributing to an established mutual funding scheme. The local planning authorities will take account of the totality of government advice on this subject, as set out in paras 86-96 of MPG7, when considering individual applications.

After-care

- 7.40 To secure a high standard of site management after the completion of initial site restoration, the local planning authorities will normally impose after-care conditions on permissions for mineral extraction if the after-use of the land is to be for agriculture, forestry, or nature conservation or other amenity purposes. After-care conditions are designed that the land is brought up to and maintained at a standard suitable for the intended after-use. They will apply for a period of five years after restoration has been completed.
- 7.41 Maintenance and management after the five-year after-care period cannot be secured by means of planning conditions. Nonetheless, for amenity purposes in particular, a clear commitment to and provision for effective long-term management is vital if the intended high standard of restoration is to be achieved and maintained. In appropriate cases, the local planning authorities will therefore seek to enter into legal agreements with mineral operators and/or other relevant parties, if it appears desirable and feasible to seek to secure control over a longer period.

Restoration techniques

- 7.42 This Plan does not present detailed advice on best restoration practice. Much valuable advice on this subject is contained in the DETR's Mineral Planning Guidance Note on 'The reclamation of mineral workings', and from bodies such as the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, and English Nature. The local planning authorities will take such advice into account when considering planning applications.

The restoration of old workings

- 7.43 The local planning authorities recognise that some old mineral workings have not been well restored in the past. This has generally been because the need for thorough and sensitive restoration was not so well recognised in the past, and because in general the conditions imposed on old planning permissions were much less rigorous than those imposed today. For the same reasons, some current pits which are being operated under longstanding permissions have not until recently been subject to restoration conditions of the standard which would be required today.

- 7.44 Legislation now requires the local planning authorities to instigate reviews of the conditions applying at mineral working sites, in order to bring them up to modern standards. This includes ensuring that the permissions incorporate provisions governing future extraction, restoration and after-care of sites, even where the original permissions may not have covered all these topics. Reviews of permissions granted before 1948 under 'Interim Development Orders' (IDOs), and reviews of sites where the main planning permission was granted between 1948 and 1982, have already been started (and by mid-1999 had mostly been completed). The revised permissions at IDO and pre-1982 sites, and other permissions granted since 1982, are now subject to a requirement for 'periodic review' every 15 years, to ensure that their conditions are kept constantly up to contemporary standards.
- 7.45 The act of reviewing an old permission does not give the planning authority the right to withdraw the permission altogether, and the authority is liable to pay compensation if any of the new conditions which they impose would materially affect the site's asset value. Nevertheless, these arrangements for the regular review of old permissions should help to secure better standards of operation at active mineral sites, and should also ensure that current and future operations at mineral sites do not leave a legacy of poor restoration.
- 7.45A The legal requirement to review old permissions only applies to sites where extraction or restoration had not been completed at the date when the review was due (whether or not the site was operational at that date). It therefore does not apply to sites that have been restored in accordance with the conditions originally imposed, but where that restoration has proved to be unsatisfactory by modern standards; nor to older sites where extraction or restoration took place before the introduction of planning controls on mineral working in the early 1940s. In such cases, it may not be possible for the planning authorities to take effective action to secure satisfactory restoration.
- 7.45B However, if a landowner (or his representative) wishes to prepare a scheme designed to secure modern standards of restoration and aftercare for such a site, this will in principle be welcomed. In preparing such a scheme, regard should be paid to the policies of the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (WLPB). In particular, attention is drawn to WLPB Policies WLP20 and WLP25, which limit the disposal of non-inert waste to certain Preferred Areas identified in this Plan, and limit the disposal of inert waste to certain other Preferred Areas and to other mineral extraction sites where waste disposal is necessary to achieve satisfactory restoration. The intention – particularly having regard to the general shortage of inert materials for infilling mineral workings – is that this should refer to current or future mineral extraction sites, whose restoration is regarded as (in principle) a higher priority than the treatment of sites that have existed in their current condition for some years. In principle, therefore, proposals to deposit waste as a means of restoring a former mineral site, or to change the restored levels of such a site, will conflict with the policies of the Waste Local Plan, and will not be supported.

CONCLUSION: OPERATORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- 7.46 It is clear from the earlier sections of this Chapter that the local planning authorities consider that mineral operators have very considerable responsibilities to the community at large over the issue of site restoration. In return for the necessary but unwelcome disturbance which mineral extraction unavoidably causes, operators should take into account the need to repay the community by planning and providing for longer-term public benefits through the restoration and after-use of their sites and enhancement of the surrounding areas. The local planning authorities are aware that the industry generally, and individual companies in particular, are proud of their efforts elsewhere to produce high standard restoration, and to do more than the minimum works which might be necessary in order to restore sites in an attractive and beneficial way. The authorities hope and expect that they will do the same in Berkshire. The policies in this Plan, and the guidance in Appendix 3, set out the authorities' views on how this can be best achieved, and the local planning authorities will expect applications to conform to that guidance.

8 OTHER ISSUES IN THE SUBMISSION AND DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

8.1 Earlier chapters have set out the local planning authorities' attitudes and policies concerning the basic issues involved in applications for mineral extraction. This chapter sets out the authorities' attitudes and policies on a number of other relevant matters. These are:

- * the content of planning applications;
- * the need for environmental impact assessment;
- * the treatment of archaeology in the process of determining applications;
- * the need for conditions or legal agreements in association with the grant of planning permission; and
- * the need for early consultations between mineral operators and the local planning authorities over various matters relating to the pre-planning of mineral operations.

CONTENT OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Details required

8.2 In order that the local planning authorities can assess whether or not a planning application satisfies all the other requirements of this Plan, appropriate documentation must be submitted with the application. Policy 21 sets out the minimum requirements in this respect.

Policy 21 Every application for mineral extraction must be accompanied by

- (1) a comprehensive description of existing site conditions; and**
- (2) a working plan indicating all aspects of the extraction operation; and**
- (3) a restoration plan showing how the site is to be restored and managed after extraction so as to facilitate the introduction and continuing implementation of suitable after-care measures and an acceptable after-use; and**
- (4) a written statement providing comprehensive supporting details, including details of the relationship of the proposals to the wider surrounding area.**

8.3 Between them, the documents required by Policy 21 should provide written or illustrative details, or both (as appropriate), of:

- (i) current features on the site: current levels, ecological and landscape survey (including details of the position and condition of trees and hedges), the routes of overhead and underground services and of public rights of way, the position of any current site access, the locations of significant structures, etc;
- (ii) the results of site exploration work: borehole data, soil depths, hydrological and hydrogeological data (including details of the results of investigations into the flooding, land drainage, and water resource implications of the proposal), the results of archaeological research (see paragraphs 8.11-8.23), etc;

- (iii) details of the proposed working: location and depth of working; details of areas which will not be worked; the measures being taken to protect margins and to screen the site to minimise the perceived effects of mineral working; the order, direction, phasing and timing of extraction and restoration; the locations of proposed plant, stockpiles, internal roads, and the site access; details of trees etc which are to be retained; details of measures proposed to safeguard or divert rights of way; etc;
- (iv) an explanation of the steps which are to be taken to overcome or accommodate relevant issues and constraints arising out of the other policies of this Plan, including (if the site is outside a Preferred Area) a statement of the need for further planning permissions to be granted, and why that need cannot or should not be met from within the Preferred Areas;
- (v) details of the final levels and the landform of the restored site (including underwater contours on sites to be restored wet) and how these are to be achieved (including details of any necessary filling operations, and volume calculations of both extraction and infill); details of the drainage of the restored land; proposals for new planting after extraction; etc;
- (vi) details of the proposed after-use of the site, and the way in which the proposed restoration will facilitate the implementation of this (whilst fully acknowledging the constraints on a mineral operator which are set out in paragraph 7.20); details of proposed site management during and after the after-care period and beyond; etc;
- (vii) the relationship of the proposals to the surrounding area, including details of the locations of houses, schools etc close to the site and the measures being taken to mitigate any adverse effects on them (eg from noise, dust, mud, and air pollution); details of proposed lorry routes to and from the site; details of how the restored site levels and other aspects of the restored site will relate to or affect the surrounding area; details of any proposals for enhancing the area beyond the extraction site (where appropriate); etc.

8.4 MPG I I provides detailed advice on one topic that is frequently of particular concern when proposals for mineral working are being considered – the control of noise. The MPG gives advice on how this topic should be addressed in the preparation of planning applications (including carrying out pre-application noise surveys), as well as on the measures that can be taken to keep noise from mineral working to acceptable levels. Mineral operators are encouraged to have regard to the content of MPG I I, and to relevant advice about acceptable noise levels in PPG24 'Planning and Noise', in the preparation of planning applications. For their part, the local planning authorities will be guided by the advice in the MPG and PPG – as regards both the content of applications, and the nature and adequacy of the detailed measures proposed to minimise noise - when assessing planning applications for mineral extraction.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Introduction

8.5 Applications which involve the working of a large area or a sensitive smaller one, or which involve considerable filling after extraction, may have to be subject to a process known as Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA; formerly known simply as 'Environmental Assessment'). EIA is intended to ensure that the environmental effects of major developments are taken into account at the earliest possible stage in the planning and decision-making process. An important benefit of EIA is that it requires the developer to identify the environmental effects of his proposal and to indicate the steps being taken to mitigate them.

8.6 For the developer, EIA involves the preparation and submission of an 'Environmental Statement'. This Statement should be submitted to the planning authority, at the same time as the planning application, for assessment by the planning authority. The detailed procedures governing EIA and the preparation of Environmental Statements are set out in DETR Circular 2/99 'Environmental Impact Assessment'.

When Environmental Impact Assessment will be required

8.7 Under the new EIA Regulations introduced in 1999, EIA is always required in association with applications for quarrying where the surface area of the site exceeds 25 hectares.

8.7A For smaller sites, EIA is required for quarrying or related development if

- (i) the site is in a sensitive area (in Berkshire, this means the AONB, or an SSSI, or a scheduled ancient monument), or
- (ii) the development proposed consists of anything other than the construction of buildings or other ancillary structures where the new floorspace does not exceed 1000 sq metres;

provided in either case that the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. In amplification of this term, Circular 2/99 states that

"the likelihood of significant effects will tend to depend on the scale and duration of the works, and the likely consequent impact of noise, dust, discharges to water and visual intrusion. For clay, sand and gravel workings [and] quarries ... EIA is more likely to be required if they would cover more than 15 hectares or involve the extraction of more than 30,000 tonnes of mineral per year."

8.7B EIA is also always needed in connection with waste disposal operations with a capacity exceeding 100 tonnes per day, and may be needed if the site is in a sensitive area or if the area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectare, depending on the significance of the associated environmental effects. These considerations may be relevant when preparing applications that involve infilling as part of site restoration.

8.7C The Courts have confirmed that applications for the review of conditions at mineral sites (see paragraph 7.44) are also subject to the EIA process. Hence in all such cases, the mineral planning authority must consider the need for EIA, and they will require an Environmental Statement if the site exceeds the threshold figure of 25ha, or on a smaller site if the project is judged likely to have significant environmental effects.

8.8 The local planning authorities will be guided by this advice when deciding whether in their opinion EIA is required in any particular case. Applicants have a right of appeal to the Secretary of State against any decision by the authorities that EIA is required. Any decision by the local planning authority, or by the Secretary of State on a proposal referred to him, that EIA is not required will not be interpreted as accepting that the proposal does not have 'significant environmental effects', and that therefore environmental considerations will play no part (or no significant part) in the eventual decision on the proposal. That would be to prejudge the decision-making process, and to limit unreasonably the local planning authorities' ability to decide the application on all its merits.

Policy 22 **The local planning authorities will require an Environmental Statement to be submitted with a planning application where, having regard to the provisions of the Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 and DETR Circular 2/99, it appears to them that proposals for mineral extraction or related development will constitute 'EIA development'. Any decision not to require such a statement in a particular case will not preclude the authority, when taking the decision on the overall merits of the application concerned, from judging that the environmental effects of the proposal are sufficient to justify refusing planning permission.**

- *Figure 6, which presented a flow-chart setting out the EIA procedures as they applied to applications for mineral extraction under the former (1988) Regulations, has been deleted in the 2001 Alterations. The 1999 Regulations do not lend themselves so readily to the preparation of a simple flow-chart, and it is considered more appropriate for developers and others to refer to the full descriptions of the process in the Regulations and in Circular 2/99 rather than to over-simplify that process for inclusion in this Plan.*

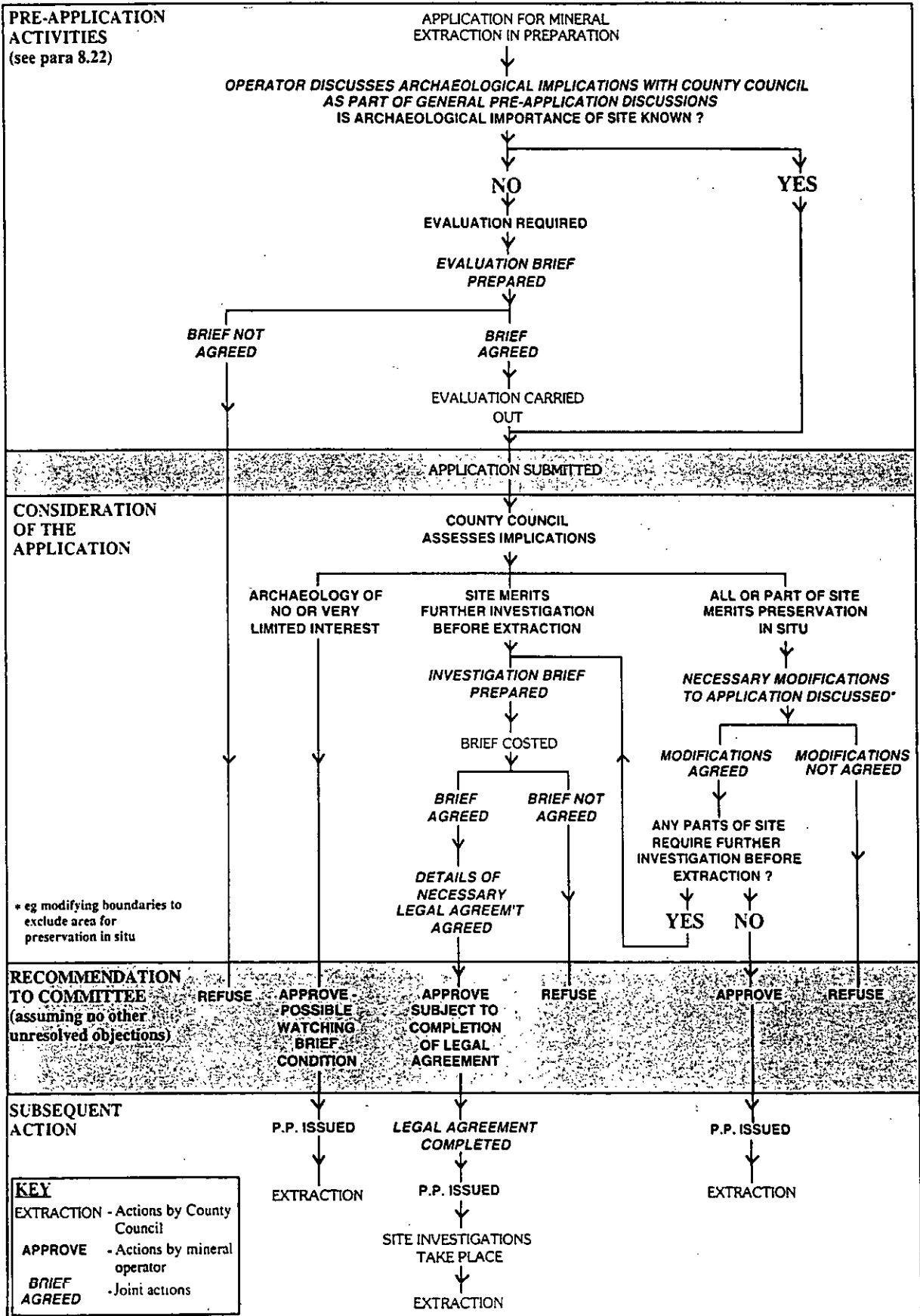
Environmental Impact Assessment and the Preferred Areas

- 8.9 The process of identifying the Preferred Areas described earlier in this Plan took account of many of the issues required by EIA. But it does not obviate the need for EIA for these sites in appropriate cases, in order to allow all the issues required by an EIA to be considered in more detail, and to consider how the details of the particular application meet the requirements set out in paragraph 8.5. On the basis of current information and government guidance, the local planning authorities consider that Environmental Statements will be required with applications for extraction from Preferred Areas 1, 2A, 10, 11 and 12, and that they may be required in future applications at Preferred Areas 2 and 7. Current information suggests that the effects of extraction from the other Preferred Areas would not be so significant as to require an Environmental Statement, having regard to the prevailing advice in the 1999 Regulations and Circular 2/99. However, if information which becomes available in future suggests that significant effects would be likely to arise, the local planning authorities reserve the right to require an Environmental Statement at any of the other Preferred Areas.
- 8.10 Some of the Preferred Areas are very large, and mineral operators may not wish (or be in a position) to put in a single application covering the whole of a particular area. However, an application for part of a Preferred Area may have significant implications for, and impact on, the whole of that area. In such circumstances, the local planning authorities reserve the right to seek an Environmental Statement covering the whole of a Preferred Area even if the application is for only a part of it – even if smaller than the threshold sizes indicated in paragraphs 8.7-8.7B.

ARCHAEOLOGY

- 8.11 Archaeological remains are a finite and non-renewable resource. Government advice is that appropriate management is essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that they are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed.
- 8.12 Protecting the county's archaeological heritage is an important objective of the Berkshire Structure Plan. It is widely recognised that the preservation, management and promotion of a representative sample of sites and their settings is essential, because of their intrinsic archaeological and historic value, coupled with their value as an educational resource and landscape and leisure amenity for future generations. It is also considered important that provision is made for the appropriate investigation and recording of archaeological sites which are not judged to be worthy of permanent preservation before their destruction.
- 8.13 This section on archaeology has been drawn up having regard to two current national guidance documents – the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance Note on Archaeology (PPG16), and the Confederation of British Industry's revised Code of Practice for Mineral Operators on Archaeological Investigations, both published in 1991. Both documents confirm the appropriateness of earlier practice in Berkshire on archaeological matters.
- 8.14 By its nature, mineral extraction is liable to cause irretrievable damage to many aspects of our environmental heritage. However, in contrast to most other aspects of that heritage where the surviving evidence is visible above the ground surface, the nature of the archaeological resource dictates that our understanding of it is based on only partial evidence. The local planning authorities have therefore set up a procedure to ensure that decisions affecting the archaeological heritage are based on adequate information.
- 8.15 Details of all known archaeological sites and finds are recorded on the countywide Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), which is constantly updated as new information becomes available. The local planning authorities will expect the Written Statement accompanying the application to indicate the likely impact of the proposal on known archaeological interests, and the steps which will be taken to safeguard those interests.
- 8.16 The procedure followed by the local planning authorities when considering the archaeological implications of an application for mineral extraction is shown in Figure 7. Two stages of this procedure merit further explanation – evaluation, and other site investigations.

Figure 7 - The archaeological response to planning applications for mineral extraction



Evaluation

- 8.17 Although local surveys and other broader exercises designed to improve our knowledge of the archaeology of the county have been carried out in recent years, few areas have been studied in detail. The archaeological importance of potential mineral extraction sites is therefore not always fully known. When faced with a planning application for extraction, therefore, the information immediately available may not be sufficient for the local planning authority to make an informed judgement about the site's archaeological importance. Without this, the authority is unable to assess whether the site is one which should be preserved intact, or whether it is one where investigation and recording are required, or whether a simple 'watching brief' is required during extraction to monitor any archaeological finds which may be made – or indeed whether the site is of any archaeological interest at all.
- 8.18 In these circumstances, the local planning authority will normally require the mineral operator to carry out a limited archaeological evaluation of the site before the application can be determined. The purpose of such an evaluation is to provide sufficient information about the archaeological interest and likely importance of the site, so that the nature of the archaeological constraints can be identified and an informed judgement can be taken on the appropriate archaeological response to the proposal. Such a procedure is, therefore, merely seeking comparable information to that provided on other aspects of mineral applications, eg transportation, landscape or hydrological implications, to enable informed consideration of the proposal. The local planning authority will not require a full archaeological excavation of the site prior to the determination of a planning application.
- 8.19 Details of the necessary evaluation works will vary from site to site, but typically a desk-based assessment of the site followed by a 2% site sampling might be appropriate. The brief for the evaluation will be set by or must be agreed with the local planning authority before it is carried out. In this way the authority can advise on the areas of the site to which it appears that particular attention should be paid, and on the most suitable methods of survey. The authorities can also advise on suitable bodies to carry out the evaluation, and will monitor fieldwork to ensure appropriate professional standards are maintained.
- 8.20 In deciding whether or not such an evaluation is required in any particular case, the local planning authority will have regard (amongst other things) to any information about the site already contained in the Sites and Monuments Record, to experience of archaeological finds at similar sites, and to its judgement as to the likelihood of archaeological sites hitherto unknown or of undefined importance being encountered during the proposed working. It should not be assumed that a request for an evaluation necessarily means that there are no other objections to the application being approved.

Policy 23 In order to allow an informed judgement to be made on the archaeological implications of an application for mineral extraction, the local planning authorities will, in appropriate cases, require the results of an archaeological evaluation of the site to be submitted before the application is determined. The brief for such an evaluation must be agreed with the local planning authority before the evaluation takes place.

- 8.21 It is stressed that a requirement for an archaeological evaluation will not be an automatic response to each and every application for mineral extraction. If the local planning authority considers that it already has sufficient information on which to make a proper judgement on the archaeological importance of the site, evaluation will not be required.
- 8.22 Figure 7 indicates that ideally any necessary evaluation should be carried out before submission of an application for mineral extraction. In this way, the results of the evaluation can be taken into account in drawing up other details of the proposed working. It will not in itself be unacceptable to the authority if an applicant chooses to defer evaluation until after submission of the application. But it should be understood that opting for a late evaluation will inevitably delay the processing of the application by the authority, and could require substantial revisions to the application to be carried out in order to accommodate the results of the evaluation. The local planning authorities therefore strongly urge mineral operators and other applicants to carry out necessary evaluations before submitting a planning application.

8.23 The identification of the Preferred Areas has been carried out taking into account our current knowledge or expectations of the archaeological importance of mineral-bearing land in the county. But there remain gaps in our knowledge of the archaeology even of the Preferred Areas. Appendix 3 therefore indicates that evaluation will be required in connection with applications for a number of the Preferred Areas. If these evaluations indicate that parts of the Preferred Areas are of such archaeological importance that they should be preserved intact, then that consideration will prevail over the presumption indicated in Policy 8. In any such cases the local planning authorities will seek to minimise the area sterilised to protect the archaeological resource, and in general will not expect to exclude in this way more than 5-10% of any of the Preferred Areas from extraction – though higher or lower figures may be appropriate in particular cases. Precise details of any areas to be excluded in this way will be discussed with the applicant before planning permission is granted. Exclusion of such an area will not rule out the requirement to carry out other site investigations (see below) on the balance of the site if this is judged to be appropriate.

Other site investigations

8.24 Once sufficient information is available to allow an informed judgement to be taken on the appropriate archaeological response to an application, the next stages in the processing of the application will be as shown in Figure 7. The destruction of sites not meriting permanent preservation may be acceptable, but only if accompanied by adequate investigation and recording. The appropriate scale of this exercise will vary from case to case, and will be determined by the local planning authorities' archaeological advisers. It may involve a lengthy excavation and post-excavation operation, but in other cases a brief photographic or measured survey may suffice. In the absence of central and local government resources, mineral operators should in formulating proposals make provision for the work necessary to facilitate the replacement of in situ deposits by a documentary record.

8.25 As Figure 7 makes clear, investigations of this type will not be required to take place before the decision is taken on the relevant application. Neither will they be required if existing records or evaluation show the site to be of no archaeological importance. However, in these circumstances the local planning authority may impose a condition on any permission requiring a 'watching brief' to be maintained during the early stages of operations in each phase of the site, in order to record any archaeological evidence which is discovered before it is finally destroyed.

Policy 24 **The local planning authorities will seek to ensure that archaeological sites and monuments meriting permanent preservation are left undisturbed and appropriately managed, and that elsewhere provision is made where necessary for an appropriate level of archaeological investigation prior to damage or destruction. Where appropriate the requirement for this provision will be safeguarded by planning conditions. Conditions may be imposed, or planning obligations may be sought, to ensure that no development takes place within the area of archaeological interest until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority.**

8.26 Wherever possible, the local planning authorities will seek to cover archaeological concerns at sites where extraction is judged acceptable by means of planning conditions. The authorities will seek planning obligations (see paragraph 8.29) to cover any concerns which cannot be secured by conditions.

Discoveries during site investigations or mineral extraction

8.27 Important but unexpected archaeological discoveries may on occasion be made during site investigations or subsequent mineral extraction – though proper evaluation prior to the grant of planning permission should minimise the chances of this happening. If these discoveries are such as to merit their preservation intact, the local planning authority will seek agreement with the mineral operator to secure this. But it is recognised that by this stage the operator will have a valid planning

permission, and revocation (in whole or in part) of that permission could prove prohibitively expensive. In these circumstances, the authority will look to the operators to adopt a responsible attitude in co-operating over the preservation (if possible) of the site, or over the suspension of extraction operations for a sufficient period to allow the detailed recording of the site prior to its destruction. Provisions to cover such 'windfall' discoveries may be included in the planning obligation referred to in Policy 24.

CONDITIONS AND PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

8.28 In order to ensure that necessary mineral extraction has the minimum adverse environmental effects, and to help achieve the longer-term benefits which can follow extraction, the local planning authorities will impose suitable conditions on all permissions for extraction. Among other things, these conditions will be designed to ensure that the operator complies with all the details of the approved plans during extraction; that day-to-day operations at the site are carried out with respect for the local environment and for the interests of nearby residents; and (as explained in Chapter 7) that restoration in accordance with those plans follows closely after extraction. As also explained in Chapter 7, the authorities will also impose after-care conditions to secure the appropriate management of the site for five years after restoration has been completed.

8.29 Not all the concerns raised by planning applications can always be covered by planning conditions. Planning obligations in the form of legally-binding agreements can be used to supplement the controls imposed by planning conditions – for example

- * to control related activities away from the site (such as, in appropriate cases, linking the phasing of two extraction operations by the same operator at different pits);
- * to secure financial contributions from mineral operators towards necessary off-site works (such as the improvement of road junctions which will be used by gravel traffic, or carrying out works away from the site to overcome objections in relation to flooding or land drainage issues);
- * to secure direct implementation by mineral operators of schemes for off-site environmental conservation and enhancement (including recreational opportunities), or to secure contributions towards the implementation of such schemes;
- * to secure extended monitoring, maintenance or management of the site at the end of the five-year after-care period.

8.30 Such agreements cannot be insisted upon by the local planning authorities: they must be entered into voluntarily by the mineral operator, or offered unilaterally by him. However, in cases where extraction would only be acceptable in planning terms if the matters covered by these legal agreements are secured, the authorities will normally refuse the application if the operator is unwilling to enter into the agreement. For this reason, it will be necessary for relevant legal agreements to have been signed before planning permission for the extraction is formally granted.

THE NEED FOR EARLY CONSULTATION

8.31 Operators are strongly urged to discuss their proposals with officers or advisers of the local planning authority well in advance of submission of their planning application. In this way it will be possible to cover many of the concerns expressed in this and earlier chapters, and in Appendix 3 of this Plan, by

- * establishing more precisely the issues which should be treated in the application documents, as well as highlighting the matters which are likely to be of greatest concern to the authority in deciding the application and those to which the applicants should pay the closest attention in preparing their formal application;
- * establishing the scope, timing and details of any desirable landscaping or planting of the site prior to its extraction, to help reduce the impact of the proposed operations;

- * establishing whether there is a need for submission of a formal Environmental Statement with the application, and what its scope should be;
- * establishing the extent of current knowledge of the archaeological importance of the site;
- * establishing whether there is a need for an archaeological evaluation of the site to be carried out before the application can be determined, and the details of any such evaluation;
- * establishing what would be an acceptable after-use for the site, so that plans for extraction, restoration and long-term maintenance can be drawn up accordingly;
- * establishing the need for off-site environmental conservation and enhancement (including recreational opportunities), and how such schemes could be best achieved;
- * establishing whether there is a need for studies, in advance of submission of a planning application, to establish the existing surface water and groundwater profile. (In some cases, this may require monitoring for up to two years before an application is submitted.); and
- * establishing whether there is a need for consultation with other agencies (such as English Nature or English Heritage, and service and transport agencies) over particular aspects of the proposed development. (Early direct consultation with relevant specialist bodies is also encouraged in the preparation of all planning applications for minerals development.)

8.32 The drilling of boreholes or the making of other excavations in order to test the quality of a mineral deposit – which are normally 'permitted development' under the General Permitted Development Order – may require planning permission if they

- * are within 50 metres of an occupied house, hospital or school;
- * are within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- * are within a Site of Special Scientific Interest; or
- * are within a site of archaeological importance.

Operators are again strongly urged to consult the local planning authority at a very early stage in the consideration of a possible extraction site. This will enable a potential operator to identify if any of these constraints affects the area in which he is interested, and to tailor his site exploration programme accordingly. Consultation may also be needed with the Environment Agency prior to the drilling of boreholes, to meet that Agency's statutory requirements.

9 IMPORTING AGGREGATES BY RAIL

Introduction

- 9.1 Government guidance indicates that a substantial and increasing proportion of aggregates demands in South East England is expected to be met by the 'importing' of aggregates to the region from marine, rail-borne and sea-borne sources.
- 9.2 As discussed below, at present such imports consist almost exclusively of primary material such as limestone. However, looking to the future, there is potential for increased use of a range of secondary and recycled materials in substitution for primary aggregates. Such materials include colliery spoil, china clay waste, power-station ashes, and blastfurnace and steel slags produced in other parts of the country, as well as demolition and construction industry wastes and asphalt road planings which are produced locally as well as elsewhere.
- 9.3 Chapter 3 has explained that Berkshire's recent aggregates consumption has been up to 50% higher than the county's sand and gravel production. Because of its inland position, Berkshire cannot receive direct imports of marine-dredged or sea-borne aggregates.
- 9.4 Rail therefore provides the principal means of importing 'non-local' aggregates to Berkshire. These imports may come directly from the quarry, colliery, china clay working, power station or steelworks; or indirectly from ports where marine-dredged and (more likely) sea-borne aggregates can be offloaded on to trains. Once they reach this county, these aggregates have to be taken from the trains and reloaded into lorries to be taken to the place where they are needed. This activity takes place at rail aggregates depots.
- 9.5 Policy 5 of this Plan provides for the import of aggregates to Berkshire by rail to continue. This chapter considers the implications of that policy.

Rail aggregates imports to Berkshire – the current position

- 9.6 There are currently two major rail aggregates depots operating in Berkshire, located on adjacent sites at Theale (see Survey Map). The aggregates brought into these depots consist chiefly of crushed limestone won from quarries in the Mendips (Somerset). Early in 1992, planning permission was granted on appeal for the establishment of a small rail-served stone-coating depot on land at Padworth, partly overlapping the site of a larger depot permitted in the 1970s but never constructed¹. Planning permission also exists for the construction of a major aggregates-importing depot, with associated concrete-batching and stone-coating plants, on a site at Colnbrook north of the A4 and east of the Staines branch railway line.
- 9.7 At present, the limestone brought into Berkshire is used principally as roadstone or as fill. Very little of the crushed rock imported to the region by rail is used for concrete-making, chiefly because it is cheaper to use locally-won sand and gravel for this purpose. But it can be suitable for use in concreting (the same material is used for making concrete in other regions), so it is possible that its use for this purpose in the South East in general, and in Berkshire in particular, will increase in time.
- 9.8 The depot at Theale operated by Foster Yeoman Ltd has in the past handled over 1 million tonnes of crushed rock a year (though recent figures have been below this level), and that operated by Hanson Aggregates (formerly ARC) has received planning permission for improvements which would increase its maximum throughput to about 650,000 tonnes a year. Between them, therefore, these depots could handle each year an amount of aggregate equivalent to over two-thirds of the level of provision made in this Plan for sand and gravel extraction from Berkshire, or an amount which exceeds recent levels of actual production from the county's sand and gravel pits.

¹ On the planning history of the latter site, see also the section 'Planning history' on page 149. The development permitted on appeal in 1992 had not been undertaken at the time of the 2001 Alterations to this Plan, and it is likely that the permission has now expired.

- 9.9 However, by no means all of the aggregates imported to these depots are used in Berkshire. Rail depots of this scale are essentially suppliers to the regional market rather than just the local one. In recent years, about half of the aggregates imported by rail to the depots at Theale were 're-exported' to counties outside Berkshire, including London.
- 9.10 Complementing these 're-exports', Berkshire also uses aggregates brought into the county by road via rail depots in other nearby counties and in West London. A balance sheet of Berkshire's consumption of hard rock in the later 1980s is shown in Table 4. Figures for more recent years are not available, but they would inevitably reflect the general decline in levels of aggregates use since 1989.

Direct imports by rail to depots in Berkshire	1,300,000	
Less Material brought to rail depots in Berkshire but used outside the county	630,000	
		670,000
Hence, total imported to and used in Berkshire		670,000
Plus Material brought into Berkshire by road from rail depots in other SE counties	160,000	
		830,000
Hence, total consumption of rail-borne rock in Berkshire		830,000
Plus Rock produced in Berkshire	Nil	
Plus Rock imported by road direct from quarries outside Berkshire	200,000	
		1,030,000
TOTAL CONSUMPTION OF ROCK IN BERKSHIRE		1,030,000

All figures are in tonnes. These figures are rounded averages of the actual figures for 1985, 1987 and 1989, save for the figure for road imports, which is the approximate 1985 figure (1987 and 1989 figures are not available).

- Paragraph 9.11 has been deleted under the 2001 Alterations. Its content is either duplicated elsewhere in Chapter 9, or else was rendered out-of-date by the addition of Colnbrook and Poyle to Berkshire in 1995.

The importance of rail depots

- 9.12 Bringing aggregates to Berkshire by rail has already relieved some of the pressure for mineral extraction in the county. As an illustration, in the peak production years of the late 1980s, when aggregates production nationally was at high levels comparable to those recorded in an earlier 'boom' between 1964 and 1973, aggregates production in Berkshire was substantially lower than the county's production in that earlier period (Berkshire's average annual production 1964-1973 was about 3.8mt/year, with a peak of 5.3mt in 1971; whereas in the late 1980s production averaged only about 2.5mt/year). Without the Theale depots, it is likely that pressure for much higher levels of local production would have been experienced in the late 1980s. The importance of rail depots in helping to meet the county's needs for aggregates is likely to be maintained and probably to increase further in the future, as national and regional policies for reducing levels of local mineral extraction, and moves to increase the use of secondary and recycled aggregates, begin to take effect.
- 9.13 On a wider front, the rail depots of Berkshire and of other counties in the South East make a significant contribution to the aggregates needs of other counties, reducing in turn the pressures for mineral extraction in the region. Indeed, the greatest value of rail aggregates depots is their regional role in supplying areas – such as London – which have only very limited remaining resources of sand

and gravel, and in helping towards the aim of husbanding the region's aggregates resources generally. This role too may be expected to increase in importance as the impacts of reducing levels of local extraction of primary aggregates, and moves to increase the use of secondary and recycled aggregates, are felt throughout the region.

Future depot requirements in Berkshire

9.14 Berkshire is in principle well located to receive further supplies of aggregates by rail from (especially) South West England, both to meet its own needs and to meet some of the needs of other parts of the region. However, attempting to assess the scale of depot requirements in the county for the period covered by this Plan is fraught with difficulties. These result above all from the many uncertainties which affect such an assessment – for example, uncertainties relating to

- * precise levels of aggregates demand in individual counties or other parts of the region;
- * the proportion of this demand which might be met from 'non-imported' sources, ie locally-produced primary and secondary aggregates;
- * the levels of aggregates which might be imported to the county by road direct from quarries or wharves in other counties;
- * the extent of spare capacity in existing depots in Berkshire, and the likelihood (having regard to both operational and environmental considerations) of that spare capacity being utilised;
- * the amount of material which might be available to the county and region through depots outside Berkshire, and whether (having regard to the expected increase in imports of sea-borne aggregates to the region – see paragraph 3.24) more of the material currently re-exported from Berkshire's depots will become available to Berkshire in future;
- * the continuing availability to the region of rock supplies from the South West, where there is strong local opposition to continued quarrying to supply the South East.

9.15 Because of these many uncertainties, the local planning authorities do not consider it to be practicable or realistic to specify a figure for the additional depot capacity which might be required in Berkshire during the period covered by this Local Plan.

9.16 However, in planning for the importing of aggregates it is necessary to take a longer-term view. It is the firm intention of the local planning authorities that the level of local production of sand and gravel should continue to decline over time, but it cannot be guaranteed that the level of aggregates demand in the county or region will fall, or fall at the same rate. It is therefore prudent to assume that there will be an increased requirement for importing capacity in the county as time goes on – for the importing both of primary and of secondary and recycled aggregates, as noted in paragraph 9.2.

Problems of increasing depot capacity

9.17 The local planning authorities recognise the importance of importing aggregates as a means of reducing pressure for local mineral extraction, and recognise too the implications of the regional aggregates supply policy. The authorities therefore support the principle of the increased use of rail for importing aggregates (while acknowledging that decisions about the acceptability of additional quarrying in the source areas are the responsibility of the mineral planning authorities in those areas, having regard to government guidance and all other relevant considerations). But this support must be qualified because of the environmental impacts which rail aggregates depots can have. A depot handling 500,000 tonnes each year can generate over 200 lorry movements a day, and this volume of traffic often cannot be readily accommodated on local roads. The handling of aggregates at the depot can also create problems of noise, dust and vibration, while the necessary structures and stockpiles can be unsightly.

9.18 These problems can be compounded by the wish of operators to locate additional plant at the depot site – perhaps plant for making concrete or concrete blocks, or for coating the imported rock with

bitumen for use as tarmac in road construction. Chapter 10 considers in more detail the acceptability of these activities at rail depot sites.

- 9.19 As a way of reducing environmental effects on rural roads and areas, there may in principle be some merit in establishing smaller depots nearer to the main points of consumption, to complement the existence of larger depots elsewhere. Ideally, smaller depots would be sites in existing industrial areas. Their establishment would help to reduce the lengths of lorry journeys to and from the depots, and thus in principle to reduce road damage, accident risk, and environmental impacts. But depots in these locations can create problems of their own, for example by generating more lorry movements through built-up areas than would be the case with larger depots which are better located in relation to the primary road network.
- 9.20 In short, rail depots can create permanent and more concentrated environmental disturbance than temporary (though sometimes long-term) mineral working. Thus allowing the establishment of new rail depots is not necessarily a problem-free alternative to allowing the continued or increased extraction of sand and gravel.
- 9.21 An alternative to the construction of new depots would be to allow the capacity of the existing depots to increase. Both existing depots at Theale operate under limitations on their hours of working which, if eased, would potentially allow their capacities to increase. Proposals to relax these conditions in the past have run into environmental problems, chiefly relating to the effects of extended hours of operation on nearby residents. However, bearing in mind the likely future need to increase depot capacity in the county and the difficulty of finding well-located sites (especially sites well located in relation to the road network), it may be appropriate in future to assess these environmental issues in the context of the wider benefits which an increase in capacity at Theale would bring to the county and region as a whole².

Future policies

- 9.22 There will be an increasing need for aggregates to be imported to serve the markets in the parts of the region closest to the capital. Policies for future development at existing depots and for the establishment of new ones must therefore take account of regional concerns as well as of more local requirements and issues. Nevertheless, the recognition of these factors must take due account of environmental considerations.
- 9.23 Proposals for the establishment of new depots or the expansion of existing ones will therefore be decided on the balance of the issues of need and environmental impact. Permission will only be granted if the local planning authority is satisfied that an acceptable balance has been struck between the need for the depot or new facilities and any environmental objections to the proposal. The authorities consider that the establishment of such facilities may cause harm to important environmental interests in many – perhaps most – instances, and that in such cases the issue of need will be a material consideration in the determination of the proposal.
- 9.24 In considering the issue of need, the local planning authorities accept that the provision of additional importing capacity is in principle beneficial to the county and region. However, case by case the authorities will require to be satisfied that the development proposed would lead to an increase in the total amount of aggregates imported to the region. depots which seek merely to provide an alternative unloading point for aggregates which are already brought into depots in the region will not normally be acceptable, unless they involve clear environmental improvements. The local planning authorities will also have regard to whether the increase proposed could be acceptably accommodated at existing or permitted depots.
- 9.25 Assessment of the environmental considerations of proposals for new rail depots will have regard to the issues listed in Policy 7.

² These words were first written into this Plan before the grant of permission on appeal in 1993 for some increase in the scale and hours of operation at Foster Yeoman's depot at Theale. Any future proposals at the Theale site will continue to be assessed having regard to the principle set out in the last sentence of paragraph 9.21, as well as of all other relevant planning considerations. However, the local planning authority will not interpret this sentence as encouraging the continuing and gradual relaxation of the limitations applying at the Theale depots, regardless of all other local environmental concerns.

- 9.26 Because an increase in the level of aggregates imports may be needed at least in part to help satisfy London's aggregates requirements, some pressure for new rail depots is likely to be felt in the areas closest to the capital. In Berkshire, these areas (outside the main settlements) are in the approved Green Belt. In such areas the normal presumption against development in the Green Belt will apply to proposals for rail depots unless the applicant is able to demonstrate that very special circumstances exist sufficient to justify setting that presumption aside. An overriding need for the additional capacity to be provided in the form proposed may be such a 'very special circumstance'; but it will be for the applicant to demonstrate both that such a need exists, and that it can be met in no other way than through the construction of a new or extended depot.

Policy 25 **The local planning authorities will support the development of new rail terminals for importing primary and/or secondary aggregates from outside the county, and the improvement of facilities for this purpose at existing depots, but will consider all relevant planning applications against the considerations set out in Policy 7 and, where appropriate, the need for the depot.**

Identifying and safeguarding possible depot sites

- 9.27 This Plan does not include proposals for particular sites to be used as rail depots. This is partly because of the doubts about the extent of any new capacity which will be needed over the period of the Plan (see paragraphs 9.14-9.15), and partly because of a lack of any firm basis for 'committing' individual sites for this purpose.
- 9.28 However, it is also important to plan for the longer term. Because sites which might be suitable for rail depots are a scarce resource, the local planning authorities consider it appropriate to seek to safeguard from other forms of development sites which appear suitable in operational terms for the establishment of new rail aggregates depots. The former County Council therefore carried out an assessment of potential sites, having regard in particular to the following operational criteria:
- * depots have to be located to match the operational requirements of Railtrack's track and signalling system;
 - * they normally require sidings of significant length to allow for the manoeuvring and handling of trains (but see also paragraph 9.32 below);
 - * they must be located on routes with capacity to accommodate aggregates trains; and
 - * they require a good access to the primary road network, or to other suitable roads.
- 9.29 In the light of this study, the County Council concluded that three sites – at Padworth, Pingewood and Slough – should be safeguarded for possible depot use. The Council also supported the continuing safeguarding of a site at Poyle which was identified in the Surrey Minerals Local Plan (1993) and which transferred into Berkshire in 1995, and the safeguarding of the site at Colnbrook referred to in paragraph 9.6, pending construction of the depot. These sites are shown on the Proposals Map, and described in more detail in Appendix 7. This Appendix also sets out the concerns which must be addressed in any planning application for a depot at any of these sites.
- 9.30 The act of safeguarding these sites implies no presumption in favour of their use as rail depots, because the sites have not been assessed to see whether there would be overriding environmental objections to the establishment of a depot, or whether the other requirements of Policy 25 and Appendix 7 are satisfied. These are matters which can only be resolved on an application-by-application basis.
- 9.31 Similar safeguarding provisions will also be applied in respect of any site where planning permission is granted for the establishment of a new depot, pending the establishment of the depot itself.
- 9.32 The local planning authorities cannot rule out the possibility of other sites coming forward for the establishment of rail depots in the future. Just as there will be no presumption in favour of the establishment of rail depots at the sites named in Policy 26 below, neither will there be an automatic presumption against the development of a new depot at other sites merely because the site is not

named in the policy. It is also possible that more lower-capacity depots could be established, for example if use were to be made of self-discharging trains, which require a shorter length of siding. All applications will be judged on their merits in the light of Policy 25.

Policy 26 **The local planning authorities will seek to safeguard**

- (i) sites at Padworth, Pingewood, Slough, Poyle and Colnbrook as indicated on the Proposals Map and in Appendix 7, and**
 - (ii) any sites where planning permission is given for the establishment of new rail aggregates depots,**
- from development which would prejudice their use as rail aggregates depots.**

The safeguarding of the sites at Padworth, Pingewood, Slough and Poyle will not imply any presumption in favour of their use as rail depots. Any planning applications for the establishment of depots at these sites will be judged strictly in terms of Policy 25.

OTHER ISSUES RELATING TO RAIL AGGREGATES DEPOTS

The content of planning applications

- 9.33 The local planning authorities will expect applications for new rail aggregates depots, or for changes to existing arrangements at established depots, to be accompanied by full supporting information. Under new Regulations introduced in 1999, applications for new depots will have to be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (see paragraphs 8.5-8.6) if they are in a sensitive area such as the AONB or if the site area exceeds 0.5 hectare, and if it is considered that the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. Supporting guidance in Circular 2/99 states that "in addition to the physical scale of the development, particular impacts for consideration are increased traffic, noise, emissions to air and water. Developments of more than 5 hectares are more likely to require EIA.
- 9.33A Whether or not any particular proposal requires EIA, the local planning authorities will expect rail depot applications to include a description of the likely effects on the environment of the proposed development, and of the measures envisaged in order to avoid, reduce or remedy any adverse environmental effects. Examples of some of the more detailed issues which should be addressed, as appropriate, in individual applications are given in the section headed 'General comment' on page 150. Applications should also include a clear statement of the way in which the proposal relates to the concerns on need set out in paragraph 9.24. Details will also be required of expected levels of activity at the depot (including the expected number of train movements involved), of expected levels of road traffic generation from the site, and of intended haul routes to the main road network. Proposals for the sites named in Policy 26 must also address the specific concerns regarding those sites which are contained in Appendix 7.

- Policy 27** **Every application for the establishment of a new rail aggregates depot, or for additional or altered facilities or working arrangements at existing depots, must be accompanied by full details sufficient to enable the local planning authority to assess the application. In appropriate cases, these details should include a statement of the likely environmental effects of the development and of the traffic to be generated by it, along with details of the measures proposed to avoid, reduce or remedy those effects. Where required by the provisions of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 1999 and DETR Circular 2/99, these details should be supplied in the form of a formal Environmental Statement. In the case of the sites listed in Policy 26(i), applications must also address the issues relating to the site as detailed in Appendix 7.**

- 9.34 The provisions of this Plan relating to conditions and planning obligations (paragraphs 8.28-8.30) and to early consultation (paragraph 8.31) apply with equal force to proposals for rail depots as to those for mineral extraction.

Temporary depots

- 9.35 The local planning authorities may be prepared to allow the establishment of temporary rail depots for importing aggregates for use in association with specific development or civil engineering projects. Any applications for such depots will be considered on their merits in the light of Policy 25, with additional weight given if appropriate to the desirability of importing materials by rail for the project in question. Appropriate provision must be made in any application for the satisfactory reinstatement of the site once the depot facilities are no longer required.

10 PLANT AND BUILDINGS

Introduction

- 10.1 The operation of a mineral site may require the erection of various associated structures or buildings. For example, sand and gravel dug from the ground generally requires washing, grading and sorting before it can be put to use. These tasks are carried out by **mineral processing plant**. Separate plant, known as **manufacturing plant**, is needed if the sand and gravel is to be used to make a product such as concrete or asphalt. Gravel pits and other mineral sites may also need such **ancillary structures** as site offices, weighbridges, conveyor belts, or vehicle maintenance buildings.
- 10.2 Certain buildings and structures can be erected at a mineral site without separate planning permission, because a general permission is granted for them under the General Permitted Development Order. The policies of this chapter will apply in respect of developments which are not covered by this general permission. They will also be applied in cases where, in order to protect local amenity, the local planning authorities consider it appropriate to remove these 'permitted development' rights at particular sites.

General policy

- 10.3 To minimise environmental and traffic impacts, there are advantages in locating processing and manufacturing plant at the pits where their raw materials are produced. But these are essentially industrial activities, which can be tolerated in locations outside settlements only because, and for so long as, they are related directly to the mineral extraction operation taking place at the same site.
- 10.4 Similarly, there can be advantages in siting these activities at rail aggregates depots. But for the same reasons, they would only be acceptable in such locations for as long as the depot remains in operation.
- 10.5 Policy 28 sets out the issues which will be taken into account in deciding applications for the erection of plant or other structures at extraction sites or rail depots.

Policy 28 **The local planning authorities will normally permit the erection at mineral extraction sites or rail aggregates depots of mineral processing or manufacturing plant, or of structures ancillary to a minerals use, so long as:**

- 1** **in the case of processing plant, the plant is required to process material extracted from the pit at which it is located, or brought into the depot by rail; and**
- 2** **in the case of manufacturing plant,**
 - (i) the substantially greater part of the minerals used in the manufacturing process are extracted from the pit concerned, or brought into the depot by rail, and**
 - (ii) the manufacturing activities at all times remain ancillary to the primary use of the site as a mineral extraction site or an aggregates importing depot, as the case may be; and**
- 3** **in the case of ancillary development, the development is required and used solely in connection with the administration or servicing of the pit concerned; and**
- 4** **in all cases, the processing, manufacturing or ancillary activities (as the case may be) could not be more satisfactorily carried out at an existing or permitted plant, or in an existing or permitted structure; and**

- 5 in all cases, the plant or other development is removed and the site satisfactorily restored as soon as continuous production of minerals from the site ceases, or when the use of the site as a depot for the import of aggregates by rail ceases; and
- 6 in all cases, the plant or other development can be and is sited, designed, constructed and landscaped so as to minimise adverse impact on the amenities of the area and to give rise to no overriding environmental objections; and
- 7 in all cases, the traffic generated by the plant or other development would not give rise to overriding environmental or other objections; and
- 8 in all cases, the size, type, nature and construction of the plant or other development are appropriate to the nature and scale of the permitted mineral extraction or aggregates importing operation for which it is required or with which it is associated; and
- 9 in the case of sites located in the Green Belt,
 - (i) the development is genuinely required in association with a mineral extraction or importing activity which is itself acceptable in terms of Green Belt policy;
 - (ii) there are no alternative locations for the proposed development on land nearby which is not situated in the Green Belt;
 - (iii) all buildings and structures are located and designed to minimise their impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.

10.6 It is important to note that such developments will only be acceptable if there are no overriding environmental or traffic objections, and if there are no existing or permitted locations where the activities could be carried out more satisfactorily in environmental or traffic terms. Moreover, the plant or structures must be appropriate to the nature and scale of the operation proposed. Thus for example the policy will not be interpreted as indicating the acceptability of processing plant at a pit producing material of a type normally sold 'as raised', nor of manufacturing plant where the primary raw material is imported from elsewhere even though the greater part of the minerals used may be won from the site.

10.7 Because different types of plant have different environmental impacts, it will not follow that just because one type of plant is accepted at a particular site, then other plants are automatically acceptable. Each proposal, or each component of a combined proposal, will be considered on its individual merits in terms of the relevant issues from Policy 28.

10.8 Plant and buildings at mineral sites are also acceptable only on the condition that they are removed when extraction from the site has ceased. Mineral extraction is only a temporary use of land. It would be contrary to wider objectives (eg for the protection of the countryside, and for the prompt restoration of all mineral workings) to allow activities and structures whose only justification was their relationship to a mineral working to remain in place or in operation when that mineral working has ceased.

10.9 In interpreting the term "continuous production" from point 5 of Policy 28, the local planning authorities will disregard periods when the pit is briefly inactive for operational reasons, or is inactive simply because of a temporary fall-off in demand. But the authorities will consider that the requirement to remove plant and buildings should come into effect if, for example, extraction has ceased because the pit is substantially worked out, and there seems no realistic prospect of any limited remaining reserves being worked in the foreseeable future (eg because they are sterilised by some other development on the site).

- 10.10 In considering applications for the erection of plant, the local planning authorities will have regard to the relationship between the size of the proposed plant and the size of the reserves to which that plant is related. Applications will be unlikely to be favoured if it appears that, in order to justify the cost or size of the proposed plant, the operator will be looking to extend his operations in due course on to land where extraction would be unlikely to be permitted, or to import material to it now or some time in the future (see Policy 29 below). At smaller sites, the use of temporary low-level plant will normally be preferred to the erection of 'permanent' plant which may need a lifetime of up to 15 years to pay for itself.
- 10.11 In some cases, it is preferable for material to be taken from the working face of the pit to the processing plant or stockpile by means of a conveyor, rather than by using lorries on public roads. In accordance with Policy 7, the local planning authorities will take into account the environmental acceptability of proposed conveyor routes when applications for mineral extraction are being decided. In general, routes which involve the conveyor crossing roads, footpaths, bridleways, rivers, or canals above ground level will not be favoured.

Importing aggregates to plant sites

- 10.12 To avoid intensifying or prolonging activities at a mineral extraction site beyond what is strictly necessary to treat the minerals won from that site, the local planning authorities will normally resist proposals to process or otherwise treat at one site aggregates which have been won at another. The principle in Policy 29 will apply equally to proposals to import aggregates to a plant on an active gravel pit, and to proposals to import to a plant which has been worked out or where extraction has ceased.

Policy 29 The import to a processing or manufacturing plant of material won elsewhere, and used for the same purpose as the minerals extracted from the pit at which the plant is located, will normally be refused.

- 10.13 The principle in Policy 29 will not normally apply to the use of an existing plant to process materials won from an extension to the original pit, so long as no overriding environmental objections derive either from the presence of the plant on its present site, or from the transporting of minerals to it from the extension. The presumption may also be set aside in particular cases where there are clear environmental advantages in doing so, with no associated environmental disadvantages such as the continued retention of an unacceptably-located plant.
- 10.13A Notwithstanding Policy 29, there are a number of sites in the county where mineral extraction no longer takes place but which are used to process minerals won at other sites. At such sites, and at any new 'remote' plant sites which may be permitted in the future as exceptions to Policy 29, the content of Policy 28 will apply to proposals for additional plant or structures, subject to the following variations:
- * the terms "the pit at which it is located" in proviso 1, and "the pit concerned" in provisos 2i and 3, will be interpreted as including other permitted mineral workings which may lawfully send their extracted material to the site concerned for processing;
 - * the term "a mineral extraction site" in proviso 2ii will be interpreted as "a site for mineral processing";
 - * the term "continuous production of minerals from the site" in proviso 5 will be interpreted as referring to the continuous supply of mineral to the site for processing.

Developments not covered by the policies of this chapter

- 10.14 The provisions of Policy 28 will not apply to proposals for plant or buildings for use for the manufacture of end-products such as bricks and tiles, or any structures of permanent construction. Proposals for such developments will be judged on their merits in terms of their environmental and traffic impact and of all other relevant considerations (including other planning policies, eg for the

protection of Green Belts or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). This judgement will take into account also the possible impacts which would result from having to transport the mineral elsewhere for manufacturing, and the possible long-term consequences of erecting a building at a mineral site whose lifetime is expected to be longer than that of the pit itself.

- 10.15 Subject to the previous paragraph, the policies of this chapter will be applied to all proposals for new plant or buildings, or to proposals for the renewals of temporary permissions of established plant or buildings. But some established plant and buildings have permanent planning permissions, and there are therefore only very limited opportunities for the local planning authorities to apply the aims or policies of this chapter to them. The authorities will take every reasonable opportunity to do so. This might involve for example the completion of legal agreements to secure the removal of an intrusive permanent plant at one site in return for a grant of temporary permission for a replacement plant elsewhere.

Plant and buildings away from extraction sites and rail depots

- 10.16 In some circumstances – for example, when there are no active gravel workings within a suitable journey-time of the point of demand – proposals may be made for the erection of permanent manufacturing plant (eg concrete-batching plant) on sites away from mineral sites or rail depots. In deciding these proposals, the local planning authorities will take into account (among other things) environmental and traffic impacts. The authorities support the principle of the establishment of permanent plant on suitable sites, so long as the need for the additional manufacturing capacity is demonstrated. But in terms of strategic policy, "suitable sites" will normally mean sites in established industrial areas. The permanent establishment of these activities on sites outside built-up areas will not therefore normally be supported.

11 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Implementation

- 11.1 The policies of this Plan will be implemented principally through the normal development control process. The local planning authorities will be guided by them when making decisions on planning applications for mineral extraction or related development, and in deciding on the conditions which should be attached to any permissions.

Monitoring

- 11.2 The monitoring and review of regional aggregates policy is, in the first instance, the responsibility of the South East Regional Aggregates Working Party (SERAWP), and the preparation of revised national guidelines on aggregates provision is the responsibility of central government. The local planning authorities will continue to work with SERAWP on all matters relevant to regional minerals planning.
- 11.3 The Berkshire Unitary Authorities will liaise with each other and with local planning authorities outside Berkshire over matters of common concern relating to minerals planning. In particular, the Berkshire authorities individually and collectively will endeavour to ensure that the policies of other local plans (including their own District- or Borough-wide Local Plans) would not conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the policies of this Plan, nor lead to the unacceptable sterilisation of mineral resources.
- 11.4 The local planning authorities are committed to regular monitoring of operations at mineral extraction sites and sites of related activities in Berkshire, to ensure that planning conditions and the terms of legal agreements are being complied with. The authorities will take appropriate action (including enforcement action if necessary) to remedy breaches of planning control. Regular meetings will be held with major mineral operators in the county to review progress and any problems at individual sites.
- 11.5 Annual reports will be prepared on the operation of this Plan. These will consider above all the continuing effectiveness and appropriateness of the Plan's policies regarding levels of production and the size of the county's landbank, along with the implications of the grant of any 'windfall' permissions.

Review

- 11.6 The Replacement Minerals Local Plan as altered in 2001 provides policies covering the period to the end of 2006, and aims to make provision for a seven year landbank of sand and gravel permissions at that date. Following the completion of the current review of national guidance, consideration will be given to the need for a full review of the Plan (see paragraph 2.19A). In any event, national guidance requires that the Plan be reviewed in five years. In accordance with statutory requirements, there will be full public involvement in future reviews of this Plan.

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1 STRUCTURE PLAN POLICIES

*The following are the 'Overall strategy' policy and the Minerals policies contained in the **Berkshire Structure Plan 1991-2006**, adopted in November 1995.*

Overall strategy for Berkshire

- Policy OS1 The overall strategy of the Plan is to seek sustainable development and improvement to the quality of life in Berkshire by pursuing the following objectives:
- (i) to restrain development to levels that respect the limits set by environmental, infrastructure and other constraints upon the development of land;
 - (ii) to give priority within (i) to meeting Berkshire's economic and social needs, including the provision of low-cost housing and wider employment opportunities;
 - (iii) to protect and enhance the character and quality of Berkshire's landscape, environment and heritage;
 - (iv) to steer development to locations which minimise the need for travel and can be well served by public transport;
 - (v) to conserve natural resources;
 - (vi) to minimise pollution;
 - (vii) to seek improvements to infrastructure, services and amenities;
 - (viii) to promote an appropriate balance between all forms of transport by continuing to develop an integrated transport strategy.

Minerals: Reconciling the conflicts of interest

- Policy M1 In making provision for mineral extraction, the County Council will seek to balance the need for extraction with the need to protect living conditions and the environment generally.

Meeting the demand for aggregates: Towards a more sustainable approach

- Policy M2 The County Council will seek to promote an environmentally sustainable approach to minerals planning, in particular by preventing the wasteful use or sterilisation of minerals resources; by encouraging the use of secondary and recycled aggregates; and by seeking to secure future levels of mineral production that respect the nature and scale of environmental constraints in the County.
- Policy M3 The County Council will seek to provide an appropriate contribution to meeting national, regional and local demands for minerals, compatible with the environmental capacity of the County and with the aims of Policy M2. This will be implemented by seeking to maintain a sand and gravel landbank of suitable size and duration, having regard to prevailing Government advice.

Areas for Mineral Working

Policy M4 The County Council will identify areas, known as 'Preferred Areas', where (subject to various detailed considerations) the extraction of sharp sand and gravel will normally be allowed. Extraction elsewhere will not normally be allowed. Outside the Preferred Areas, the Council will resist applications for extraction in areas subject only to local planning constraints, will strongly resist applications for mineral working in areas subject to constraints of County importance (including areas protected under other policies in this Plan), and will resist particularly strongly applications for mineral extraction in areas subject to constraints of recognised national importance.

Consideration of planning applications

Policy M5 Within the framework of Policy M4 mineral extraction will normally be permitted only if the County Council is satisfied that:

- (i) the need for the mineral outweighs all adverse environmental and other impacts of the proposal;
- (ii) a satisfactory scheme for the working and restoration of the site has been agreed, including details of lorry haul routes, in order to minimise the impact on living conditions;
- (iii) the land will be promptly restored to a high standard for an agreed after-use; and
- (iv) the proposals for restoration, aftercare and after-use of the site make provision for suitable environmental and (wherever appropriate) other public benefits.

Importation as an alternative to local sand and gravel extraction

Policy M6 The County Council recognises that the use of imported primary aggregates will continue to be necessary until secondary materials can be substituted and/or demand is reduced to an appropriate level. The County Council will in principle support the development of new rail terminals for importing additional primary or secondary aggregates into Berkshire, subject to there being no overriding environmental or other objections and to satisfactory protection of living conditions.

- 1 *The following are extracts from MPG6 'Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England', published by the Department of the Environment in April 1994.*

Future supply of aggregates

"At present it is estimated that the traditional sources of supply in England and Wales (sand and gravel pits, quarries producing crushed rock) have existing levels of consented reserves totalling some 6,400mt, of which over 4,000mt could be worked in the next 15/20 years. However, whilst the aggregate resource base is not finite in any geological sense the Government takes the view that future sources of aggregates are likely to become increasingly constrained in terms of the country where they can be acceptably worked.

"The Government has therefore considered a number of alternative supply sources. These include marine dredged aggregates, coastal superquarries and secondary and recycled aggregates. And it has considered the views which have been expressed about the merits and availability of the alternative sources of supply. Whilst these alternative sources of supply may offer some environmental advantages, the Government recognises that they too have environmental implications which need to be considered. Furthermore for technical and economic reasons the availability of such materials may be restricted particularly in the early part of the period to which this Guidance Note applies.

"Nevertheless, in order to meet the aims of this Guidance Note in a way which is consistent with the principles of sustainable development, the Government has concluded that a gradual change from the present supply approach is called for, so that over time less reliance will be placed on the traditional land won sources. The Government recognises that over the period of this Guidance Note a substantial proportion of aggregates demand will need to be met from the traditional sources. But alternatives are expected to make an increasing contribution to supply. So that options for future supply from alternative sources are not foreclosed by long term land won provision, the Government has concluded that provision should be made now for the period to 2006 only. In the light of this assessment the Government has concluded that the provision to be made is as set out in Table 4 [as follows]:

SOURCE	1992-2006	
	SUPPLY (bn tonnes)	% OF TOTAL
Land won provision in England	3.11	73
ASSUMPTIONS FOR OTHER SOURCES		
Marine dredged sand and gravel	0.32	7
Imports from outside England and Wales	0.16	4
Imports from Wales	0.16	4
Secondary and recycled	0.53	12
TOTAL	4.28	100

"It is important to note that future levels of demand are inevitable uncertain and the balance between land won provision and other sources of supply cannot be predicted with any certainty, neither can the balance between the various other sources such as marine dredged sand and gravel, secondary and recycled material imports from Wales, and imports from

outside England and Wales. It is also important to note that the planning system provides flexibility and scope for the market to respond. Thus if circumstances change, requiring a change in assumptions, the provision to be actually made can be adjusted. Consequently the figures contained in these Guidelines are not targets but are indicative figures for the purposes of preparing development plans and the administration of development control. Nevertheless a broad objective of this Guidance Note is to reduce the proportion of supply from primary land won sources in England from 83% to 74% by 2001 and 68% by 2006."

(MPG6 – paragraphs 23 to 26. Original punctuation and syntax.)

Regional guidelines for South East England

****Current patterns of supply and production*** In 1989, the last year for which Aggregate Minerals Survey information is available, the South East produced almost 40% of its aggregates consumption, 4% of which is from crushed rock sources, 25% from land sourced sand and gravel and an assumed 10% from secondary/recycled material. The remaining 63% of consumption was met from: imported crushed rock (42%); marine dredged sand and gravel (18%); and imports of sand and gravel from adjoining regions (3%). 5% of sand and gravel production and 9% of crushed rock production was exported to other regions.

****Future demand*** Over the 15 year period to 2006 there is likely to be a demand from within the region for approximately 1270mt of aggregate materials. Other regions are likely to make demands on the region for an additional 30mt of primary aggregates.

****Guidelines for land won primary aggregates*** On the basis of the anticipated demand in the region and demands from other regions the South East will need to produce 450mt of aggregate material from primary won land sources *[sic]* within the region. 420mt of this is anticipated to be sand and gravel and 30mt crushed rock. About 7% of the sand and gravel production is anticipated to be exported, principally to the South West region. **MPAs in the region should make provision in their development plans for 420mt of sand and gravel and 30mt of crushed rock, over the period 1992-2006 *[original emphasis]*.**

****Assumptions about imports from other regions*** The Department has assumed that 300mt of the region's aggregates supply will be imported from other regions of England, principally the South West and East Midlands. the majority of these imports will be crushed rock.

****Assumptions about other sources of supply*** So that the context of the guidelines can be understood, the Department has made a number of broad assumptions about supplies from other sources. These are that 550mt of aggregates supply will come from sources other than primary land based production in England. Of this supply it is assumed that about 260mt may be provided from marine dredged sources, 145mt may be provided by imports from outside England and Wales, 5mt by imports from Wales, and 140mt may be provided from secondary and recycled material.

****Landbanks*** Landbanks in the South East will be based on the provision in minerals local plans that reflect the sub-regional apportionment of these guideline figures made by SERPLAN as described in paragraph 81 of this Minerals Planning Guidance Note. Alternatively where plans do not reflect these guidelines the landbank should be based on the apportionment as set out in the appropriate guidance from SERPLAN."

(MPG6 Annex A, paragraphs A3.1 to A3.6)

- 2 **The following are extracts from SERPLAN document RPC 2705: 'Aggregates Apportionment – The sub-regional apportionment of the regional sand and gravel requirement in MPG6' (formally agreed by SERPLAN in December 1994, and published in the same month)**

"SERPLAN has considered the sub-regional apportionment of the sand and gravel figure [for the South East region given in the April 1994 version of MPG6]. Following discussion of the options and consideration of the views of SERAWP, SERPLAN proposes that the new sub-regional apportionments should be derived by reducing the [previous] MPA apportionments by 10%, rounded to the nearest 0.1 mtpa, as set out below.

County	All sands and gravels		County	All sands and gravels	
	Previous apportionment (mtpa)	New apportionment (mtpa)		Previous apportionment (mtpa)	New apportionment (mtpa)
Bedfordshire	2.2	2.0	Hertfordshire	2.7	2.4
Berkshire	2.5	2.3	Kent	3.5	3.2
Buckinghamshire	1.3	1.2	London	1.0	0.9
East Sussex	0.4	0.3	Oxfordshire	2.2	2.0
Essex	6.9	6.2	Surrey	3.8	3.4
Hampshire	3.0	2.7	West Sussex	1.6	1.4
			TOTAL	31.1	28.0
			SE Region		

"Although this new apportionment results in a reduced level of provision for each MPA, some authorities have indicated that their levels of apportionment, when tested through the Minerals Local Plan process, may prove incapable of being realised for the whole of the guidance period. Paragraph 58 of MPG6 states that MPAs, in drawing up MLPs, should pay due regard to the regional guidance figures, but adds that 'the preparation of development plans provides an important opportunity to test the practicality and environmental acceptability at the local level of the guidelines figure'. SERPLAN therefore gives the following undertaking:

'MPG6 accepts that the apportionments represent guidance, are not inflexible, and are for testing through the Minerals Local Plan process. If this process demonstrates that an MPA is unable to meet its apportionment in full for the whole of the guidance period, SERPLAN undertakes (in consultation with SERAWP) to review the provision within the overall regional guidance figure.'

"Annex B of MPG6 recommends to MPAs that 'sand and gravel provision should remain at similar levels throughout the period covered by these guidelines', but accepts that 'local circumstances such as availability of resources, planning constraints and present levels and capacity of production should be taken into account when apportioning the MPA guidelines over time'. SERPLAN takes the view that a steady level of supply should be the norm. However, local circumstances in parts of the South East could suggest that provision levels might need to be varied during the guidance period; such variations would need to be justified through the Minerals Local Plan process."

(RPC 2705, paragraphs 5, 7 and 8)

- 3 ***The following are extracts from the 'Regional Commentary for the South East' published by SERAWP in January 1992, as part of the process which led to the issue of the latest (1994) version of MPG6.***

"The key constraints affecting the future supply from local land-won sand and gravel are its environmental impacts and consequences. The SERPLAN regional strategy states: 'The level of development envisaged in the Strategy and the weight given to environmental constraints should ... be major factors in the shaping, through regional arrangements, of policies for aggregates supply and for the restoration and after-use of extraction sites'. For these reasons, SERPLAN officers consider that the future level and pattern of aggregates supply should reflect the three key principles of demand management, supply-led distribution patterns and a shift in supply to sea-borne sources in the longer term ... In SERPLAN's view, the area of land affected by extraction of sand and gravel, the need to conserve sensitive resources and the environmental concerns arising from extraction in heavily populated areas all point to growing difficulties in maintaining, let alone increasing, the level of output set out in the existing [1989] guidance. The aggregates industry representatives on SERAWP do not accept this view."

(Commentary, paragraphs 4.6-4.7)

"Assessment of the environmental impacts of the extraction and transport of aggregates has concluded that all of the types of material used have an adverse impact. Continuation of the present level of land-won sand and gravel extraction is likely to prove increasingly difficult to sustain over time ... For the longer term, environmental constraints on nearly all the sources of supply will grow ... This points to the need for some fresh thinking about both demand and supply."

(Commentary, paragraphs 5.14-5.15)

This Appendix sets out the local planning authorities' detailed requirements which (subject to paragraph 5.18 of this Plan) must be satisfied before planning permission could be granted at each of the Preferred Areas. It also sets out the authorities' detailed restoration requirements for individual Preferred Areas, along with the authorities' more general Landscape and Restoration Strategy for the section of the Kennet Valley between Newbury and Reading.

The issues and requirements set out in this Appendix are not necessarily a comprehensive set of all the matters which must be addressed in the preparation of a planning application at the site concerned.

The figures given for the yields of the Preferred Areas are either estimates made by the former Berkshire County Council using the best available information, or else estimates made by mineral operators and verified by the County Council. In some cases, the total figure for a site has been derived by a combination of these methods. Such instances are identified as "BCC/operator estimates".

The key to the maps of the individual Preferred Areas is on the following page.




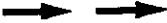













Please note that certain factual information in this Appendix reflects the position when the RMLP was originally drafted in the mid-1990s, and has not been updated as part of the 2001 Alterations. This relates in particular to

- *details of the sites' planning histories (e.g. para P1.1, etc)*
- *'expected' dates of completion of extraction at particular sites (e.g. para P2.12, etc)*
- *the factual information in paragraphs KV2-3, including the table in KV3.*

Where updates on these matters have been judged necessary to the understanding of the Plan, they have been included either

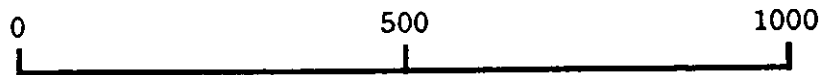
- *as part of the formal 2001 Alterations to the main text of the Plan (e.g. the note after para P1.15, the text of para P4.2, etc)*
- *as 'post-scripts' at the end of the relevant section, added or updated through the formal Alteration procedure (e.g. for Preferred Areas 2, 6 and 9)*
- *by explanatory footnotes added outside the terms of the formal Alterations (e.g. the footnotes to paragraphs P4.1, P10.18, P12.2 and P12.5), or by minor textual updates (e.g. in paragraph KV5).*

Key to Preferred Area Plans

	Preferred Area
	Location of site access (generalised)
	Possible location of site access (generalised)
	Haul route to and from site
	Haul route from site (if different from route to site)
	Permitted Site - Active
	Permitted Site - Previously worked (whether or not restored)
	Permitted Site - General
	Existing mineral processing plant
	Site of Special Scientific Interest / Wildlife Heritage Site (WHS)
	Footpath
	Bridleway
	Road used as a Public Path
	Claimed Right of Way
	Conservation Area
	Listed Building (not shown in Conservation Areas)
	County Boundary

SCALE 1: 10 000

metres



Inset Maps A, B and J are reduced from 1: 10 000 scale

Features such as SSSIs / Wildlife Heritage Sites and Listed Buildings are only shown in the vicinity of the Preferred Areas.

KENNET VALLEY - GENERAL REMARKS

Introduction

- KV1 About one-fifth of Berkshire's resources of valley gravel lie in the Kennet Valley between Newbury and the western edge of Reading, and a further 10% in the valley upriver of Newbury. There is currently no working in the valley west of Newbury, though some extraction has taken place there in the past, notably at Barton Court near Kintbury. The valley upriver from Marsh Benham lies in the North Wessex Downs AONB, as does the area north of the A4 between Beenham and the A340 at Theale.
- KV2 The reserves between Newbury and Thatcham are now largely worked out. Other workings between Newbury and Reading have until recently been concentrated in three main locations - to the south of Woolhampton, the Beenham/Aldermaston Wharf area, and between Theale and South West Reading. More recently attention has also moved to the area between Colthrop and Woolhampton, and two workings have now been permitted in this area, or permitted subject to the completion of legal agreements. Other parts of the valley - notably around Aldermaston - have also come under pressure for extraction in recent years.
- KV3 The following table shows the current permitted workings in the Kennet Valley between Newbury and the M4 at Theale.

Site	Date of current planning perm. (1)	Estimated period of extraction and restoration	Processing plant on or adjacent to site?	Planned after-use
Lower Farm, Greenham	1987	to 2000	Yes	Nature conservation & agriculture
Kennetholme Farm, Midgham	(1990)	1995-2006	(Permitted)	Agriculture & nature reserve
Bath Road, Midgham	1994	1994-2000	No	Agriculture
Woolhampton Quarry	(1994)	1995-2001	Yes	Agriculture, nature conservation & recreation
Adj Butt Inn, Aldermaston	1948	Unknown	Yes	To be decided
Grange Lane, Beenham	1946	to 1994 (2)	Yes	Agriculture
Aldermaston Wharf	1946	(3)	(3)	(3)
Haywards Farm, Theale	1984	to 1997	Yes	Nature reserve, fishing & agriculture

(1) Brackets indicate sites where the issue of planning permission is awaiting the completion of legal agreements.

(2) The operators have moved to the site at Bath Road Midgham in 1994, leaving some permitted reserves at Beenham still unworked.

(3) Recent proposals by a gravel company suggest that the area could be extracted and restored to a recreational after-use by about 2006. The proposals include a new processing plant at the site.

In addition to the plants indicated in the Table, there is one further processing plant in the Kennet Valley between Theale and Reading. This is at Sheffield Bottom, south of Theale.

Description, issues and constraints

- KV4 The landscape of the Kennet Valley between Newbury and Reading is a generally attractive mix of fields, woodland and watercourses. Although some attractive wide views are available in parts of the valley, in general (and especially away from the A4 Bath Road) the hedgerows, woodland blocks and tree belts serve to limit the long-distance views available within the

valley, giving much of it a small-scale and intimate character. This character is reinforced by the nature of the valley's road system, which apart from the A4 consists primarily of narrow, winding, tree-lined lanes running across the valley from north to south. The A4, the railway, the canal and the canal towpath are the only corridors of movement which run the length of the valley.

- KV5 River valleys in general are very important for wildlife. They support a wide range of habitats, from the aquatic environment of the river itself, through wet meadows, marshes and reedswamp to woodlands. In the Kennet Valley, the river itself is designated as an SSSI from the Berkshire border to Woolhampton Bridge in recognition of its richness in plants, invertebrates and birds. As in many valleys, many wet meadows and marshes have been lost to land drainage, gravel extraction, and changes in agricultural practices. However, the valley still retains a concentration of significant wetlands, many of which (such as those at Thatcham and Woolhampton Reedbeds) are SSSIs, while the edges of the valley have important woodland SSSIs, such as that at Bowdown & Chamberhouse Woods south of Thatcham. The valley also hosts a variety and wealth of semi-natural habitats, and acts as a wildlife corridor along which animals can freely move.
- KV6 The River Kennet and its tributaries are important as a major water supply source, and are also a first class fishery. In addition, large parts of the Kennet Valley are vulnerable to the risk of widespread flooding. Mineral extraction and site restoration can have significant impacts on the management of flood defences, land drainage and the riverine environment generally.
- KV7 The Kennet Valley between Newbury and Reading contains farmland of varying quality. The generalised survey data published by MAFF indicates that between Newbury and Reading the river itself flows through relatively poor quality land (Grade 4). Apart from some areas of Grade 2 farmland south of Thatcham and Colthrop, and away from the river is generally in intermediate Grade 3, with local variations between subgrades 3a and 3b. Government advice is that land in Grades 1, 2 and 3a constitutes the country's best and most versatile farmland, and that the long-term loss of such land should be avoided.
- KV8 The Kennet Valley is an important recreation corridor serving both the general locality and also, through the Kennet & Avon Canal, a wider catchment area. Restoration of the canal, leading to its full reopening in 1990, has greatly enhanced the valley's recreation potential. The Countryside Recreation Local Plan (a statutory local plan adopted by the former County Council in 1985) and the Newbury District Local Plan (adopted in 1993) both contain policies designed to encourage appropriate forms of recreation in suitable parts of the valley, whilst retaining the valley's present overall character¹.
- KV9 The Kennet Valley generally is known to be of considerable archaeological significance. It contains nationally important archaeological sites, and is of international renown for the quality of the archaeological evidence that has been recovered. However, the precise archaeological interest or importance of all individual sites within the valley is not yet fully known.

POLICIES FOR FUTURE WORKING

Phasing of workings in the Kennet Valley

- KV10 Phasing of mineral workings in an area such as the Kennet Valley is a vital element in ensuring that the local impacts of working are kept within tolerable limits. Phasing needs to take account of several issues, and in particular the relationship of proposed sites to the sites of existing mineral workings, their relationship to the location of processing plants, and more general considerations of the environmental impact of individual workings and the cumulative impacts of a number of workings in relatively close proximity.

ⁱ The Countryside Recreation Local Plan is no longer in force in this area, following adoption of a District-wide Local Plan for West Berkshire.

- KV11 As the table in paragraph KV3 indicates, several of the current mineral workings in the valley have some years' permitted reserves remaining. For environmental and traffic reasons, the local planning authorities consider that most of the Preferred Areas identified in the Kennet Valley could be worked most acceptably through certain of the existing plants. (Details are given in the notes for each Preferred Area elsewhere in this Appendix.) It is therefore expected that most of these Preferred Areas would be progressively released for extraction as the relevant existing plants run out of their currently-permitted reserves.
- KV12 Accordingly, to avoid an unnecessary proliferation of mineral-related activities on separate sites in the valley, the local planning authority will not be prepared to allow the total number of processing plants between Thatcham and Reading to increase over the number currently in existence or permitted in principle, as described in paragraph KV3. This should not preclude the timely release of any of the Preferred Areas identified in this Plan, since none of them appears to require the erection of new processing plant over and above that already in existence or permitted in principle. In accordance with the provisions of Policy 28 of the Plan, the authority will take every opportunity to secure the removal of individual plants when their retention is no longer considered appropriate, and thus to achieve a reduction in the total number of processing plants.
- KV13 In the light of the comments in paragraph KV10 (and notwithstanding the comments in paragraphs KV11-12), in accordance with Policy 7ix of this Plan any proposals in the Kennet Valley which would be likely to lead to a significant increase in the amount of mineral extraction at any one time to an extent which would harm the character or amenities of this section of the valley or the valley as a whole will be resisted. This provision will apply in addition to all other requirements of this Plan regarding the need for extraction from individual sites to respect the character and amenities of the immediate area of the extraction site.

Water resources, flooding and the water environment

- KV14 The flow and water quality of the Kennet and its tributaries must be maintained and protected. In any application for mineral extraction in the valley, measures must be taken to ensure river control, to protect water resources, to minimise risks of pollution, and generally to protect and enhance the river corridor.
- KV15 Concerns relating to flood storage and flood routing must also be addressed in any applications for mineral extraction in the Preferred Areas in the Kennet Valley. Where appropriate, applications must demonstrate that their potential flood impacts and their flood alleviation proposals have been fully tested, including testing by use of hydraulic and hydrogeological models. The aim should be to ensure that there is no increased flooding risk to people and property in areas adjacent to mineral workings as a result of mineral extraction, and that the valley as a whole upriver of Reading is utilised to its maximum advantage for flood attenuation purposes.
- KV16 Detailed assessments will also be required of the impact of extraction proposals on properties, septic tanks, watercourses, the water table, local water supply systems, and possible groundwater pollution. Leaving suitable margins between excavated areas and buildings or watercourses, together with other measures such as suitable bunding and/or pumping arrangements, should ensure minimum detriment to third party interests.
- KV17 To avoid risks of groundwater pollution, it is expected that any filling of sites in the Kennet Valley would involve the use of inert filling materials only.
- KV18 To ensure no adverse impacts on the valley's groundwater regime, applications should address the need for monitoring of groundwater levels within and, where appropriate, outside proposed mineral sites before and during extraction, and throughout the restoration process.
- KV19 Prospective applicants for planning permission should discuss these and other issues relating to water resources, flooding, and similar concerns in detail with the Environment Agency when preparing their applications, and should make appropriate provision in their applications to deal with the issues affecting the site in question.

Archaeology

- KV20 The detailed requirements for each Preferred Area set out below indicate that in most cases an archaeological evaluation will be required before any application for mineral extraction will be determined, and require that, in cases where Environmental Statements are necessary, the results of those evaluations should be included within the Statement. As detailed knowledge of the archaeology of the valley improves, it may be that the need for evaluation can be dispensed with in particular cases in the future. This will be a matter to be decided by the local planning authority at the time when any application is submitted.
- KV21 The Kennet & Avon Canal is an important industrial archaeological monument. Mineral operators will be expected to have regard to the need to protect the fabric of the canal, as well as its setting, when preparing proposals for extraction.

Landscape, recreation and agriculture

- KV22 Provisions and policies for the landscape, and for recreational and agricultural interests in the Kennet Valley, are included in the documents referred to in paragraph KV8, in the Structure Plan, in the county-wide landscape strategy (see paragraph 7.21), and in the detailed Landscape and Restoration Strategy set out below. Regard should be paid to these documents, as well as to this Minerals Local Plan, in the preparation of any application for mineral extraction in the Kennet Valley.

LANDSCAPE AND RESTORATION STRATEGY

- KV23 To provide a context within which restoration proposals for individual Preferred Areas can be drawn up and assessed, the former County Council prepared a broad landscape and restoration strategy representing a vision for the future of the whole of the Kennet Valley between Newbury and Theale. The objectives of the strategy will be sought through other means than just through the restoration of mineral extraction sites; therefore the strategy applies to the whole of the valley, and not just to the Preferred Areas within it which the present Plan identifies. The drawing-up of the strategy therefore implies no commitment to longer-term mineral extraction elsewhere in the valley after the period covered by the present Plan.
- KV24 By virtue of Policies 8ii and 20 of this Plan, this broad strategy and its underlying aims must be read as forming part of the formal proposals of this Local Plan. Along with all other considerations, planning applications for mineral extraction will therefore be judged in terms of their conformity with the strategy, or of the extent to which they might prejudice the implementation of that strategy.
- KV25 The broad strategy is show diagrammatically in Figure A1. Its aims are as follows:
- * to retain the best of the existing character of the valley;
 - * to maintain and enhance the present general character of the valley in the restoration of sites which are to be worked for minerals;
 - * to protect and enhance existing wildlife habitats, and to create new and more diverse ones where appropriate;
 - * to restore much of the area to agricultural use, interspersed with broadleaved woodland blocks and hedgerows;
 - * to provide for the continued expansion of recreational facilities of an appropriate scale and character; and
 - * to protect the quality and quantity of water resources and the area from flooding.

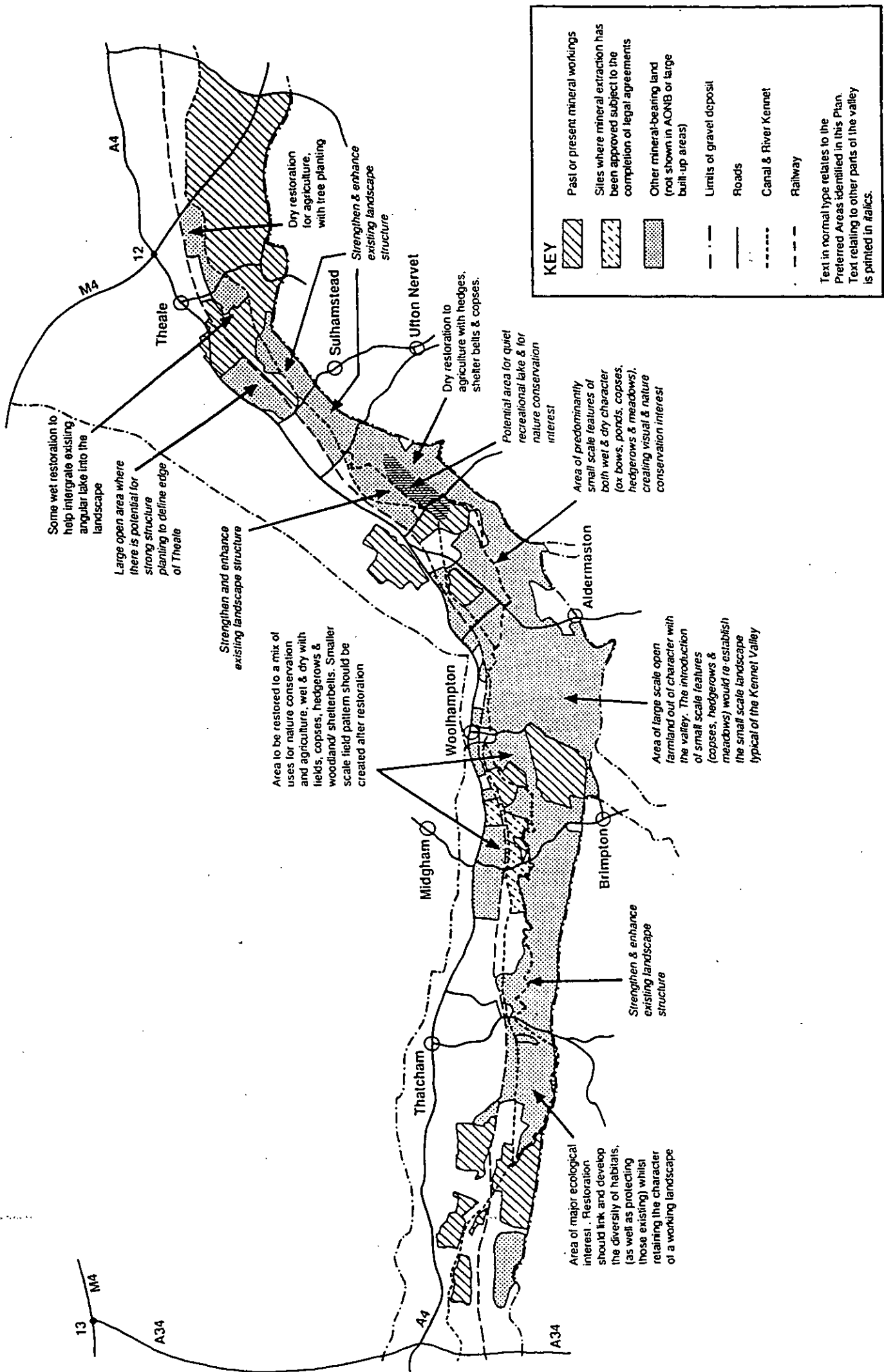


Figure A1 - Landscape and Restoration Strategy for the Kennet Valley

- KV26 As stated in Policy 19(ii), the local planning authority will look to mineral operators to help to implement this strategy not just through the restoration of the areas they work for minerals, but also by carrying out improvements to the landscape and providing other public benefits in the wider area to which their extraction relates.
- KV27 Implementing this strategy through the restoration of mineral sites needs to take account of three inter-related key facets: landscape character, wildlife conservation and enhancement, and recreational potential.

Landscape character

- KV28 The strategy requires that restoration of future mineral workings should be mainly dry, to a landscape character which is small in scale to reflect that existing. However, as explained in Chapter 7 of the Plan, it is not realistic to assume that the whole of the Kennet Valley can be restored back to dry land after any future mineral extraction. To minimise the visual effects of 'wet' restoration, the strategy requires that restoration should include provision for areas whose appearance belies their wet nature (e.g. flood meadows, carr woodland or reed-beds), and other areas where small-scale water features (ox-bows, ponds etc) should be provided. Thus 'wet' restoration does not mean simply lakes - although the strategy provides for these also in areas where they could be most beneficial for recreation and/or nature conservation. The intention is that the landscape character of the valley remains like that existing, or comparable to that before modern agricultural drainage improvements. Thus where restoration is not to a wholly dry landform and landscape it must nonetheless give that overall impression.
- KV29 Arrangements should be made by mineral operators wherever possible for the continuing long-term management, through and beyond periods of extraction and restoration, of blocks of woodland and other features which at present serve to screen particular Preferred Areas (or parts of those Areas) from view from public vantage points. This applies as much to screening which lies outside the boundaries of the Preferred Areas shown on the Inset Maps in this Appendix as to that within those boundaries. Any screening of mineral extraction or processing operations, and subsequent restoration, should not have the effect of closing-off the occasional wide views which can present an attractive contrast to the generally more small-scale character of the valley as a whole. The nature and extent of screening therefore needs to be tailored to suit the requirements of the particular case and the character and function of the area concerned.

Wildlife conservation and enhancement

- KV30 If the character of the valley is to be maintained, it is vital not only that existing sites and features of wildlife interest are safeguarded, but also that restoration provides the opportunities to attract wildlife, and allow wildlife movement within the area. Restoration to nature conservation use does not necessarily mean restoration to lake or wetland, so a strategy proposing restoration to a mainly dry character (see paragraph KV28) is not incompatible with the third aim in paragraph KV25. The key will be to provide a varied habitat on dry land (e.g. woodlands of appropriate species and community mixes; dense hedgerows; species-rich grasslands etc) as well as on any wet areas.
- KV31 To protect the valley's role as a wildlife corridor, it is important that individual sites do not become isolated. The strategy therefore provides for links such as hedgerows and riverside vegetation to be retained and enhanced, and for new links of this type to be created.
- KV32 Water-bodies intended for nature conservation use should be designed with that specific after-use in mind. The margins and islands should be designed to create a diversity of attractive habitats, and the water-bodies themselves should show a range of sizes to provide variety and contrast.
- KV33 The local planning authority will seek to ensure, through legal agreements, that restoration for nature conservation makes provision for the proper long-term management of the restored area - for example, through funding and/or through the designation of the area as a nature reserve with assured specialist advice available at all times.

Countryside recreation

KV34 The provision of improved facilities for recreation of a scale and character in keeping with the other objectives is a third key component of the Kennet Valley strategy. To this end, in appropriate cases the local planning authority will wish to discuss with mineral operators, as part of the planning application process, means of improving access to and the enjoyment of the countryside. Examples of such improvements might be, in appropriate cases:

- * The provision of new definitive rights of way (footpaths and/or bridleways), to link into existing rights of way to provide new circular routes of different lengths and interest, and in particular to provide new east-west routes along the valley;
- * The provision of small car parks which would serve both the canal and other recreational facilities, where this can be done without raising environmental or other objections;
- * The provision by mineral operators working close to the Kennet & Avon Canal of contributions (either direct or indirect) to the maintenance of the canal or towpath, to offset the loss of enjoyment to users of those facilities resulting from the proximity of mineral workings.

In discussing such improvements, the local planning authority will not on its own initiative seek to go beyond the prevailing legal framework and national policy guidance regarding the provision of 'benefits' in association with the grant of planning permission.

CONCLUSIONS

KV35 The landscape and restoration strategy for the Kennet Valley is a key element in the local planning authorities' future planning for mineral extraction. It is designed to secure the greatest degree of long-term benefit to offset the inevitable shorter term disadvantages of necessary mineral extraction. The authorities will therefore expect and require that all the aims and principles indicated above are taken fully into account when restoration schemes are in preparation for individual sites. The extent to which proposals make relevant provision will be taken into account in assessing the merits of such schemes against Policies 18 to 21 of this Plan. More detailed comments on the restoration and after-use of each of the selected Preferred Areas within this stretch of the valley are included in the following section of this Appendix.

KV36 As mentioned in paragraph 7.33 of the Plan, consideration will be given to setting up a 'Kennet Valley Working Party' to guide and monitor implementation of the strategy for this area.

PREFERRED AREA 1 : CHAMBERHOUSE FARM, THATCHAM

Location and use	Farmland south of Thatcham, bounded by the Kennet & Avon Canal to the north and the River Kennet to the south and east.
Site area	65 hectares
Deposit	Valley gravel
Potential yield	1,100,000 tonnes (Operator estimate)

Planning history

P1.1 There have been no previous applications for mineral extraction from this land. Most of this area was shown as a 'Restricted Area' in the original Minerals Local Plan, because of the high agricultural quality of the land. Following a change to government policy in 1987, this is no longer regarded as a barrier of principle to mineral extraction.

Site planning requirements

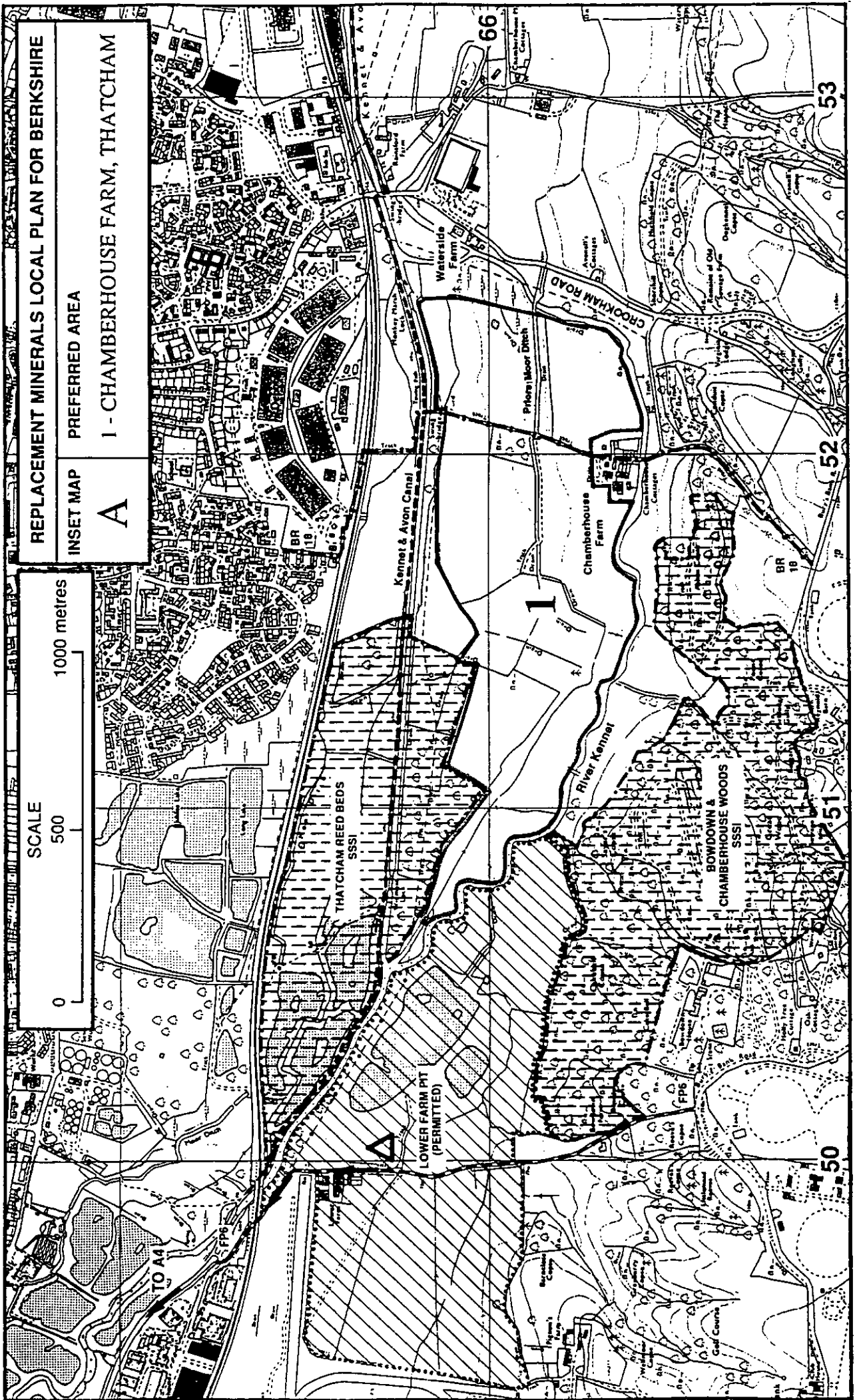
P1.2 This is a large Preferred Area, and extraction here would raise many important issues. Accordingly, an Environmental Statement will be required in connection with any application for mineral extraction. The following issues and requirements should be addressed in the Environmental Statement:

(i) Proximity of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Wildlife Heritage Sites

P1.3 It will be necessary to demonstrate that any mineral extraction proposals do not adversely affect the hydrology and the wildlife interest of the Thatcham Reed Beds SSSI which lies immediately to the north (part of which is a candidate Special Area of Conservation - a designation of international importance), or the River Kennet SSSI which runs along the southern boundary of the site, the Bowdown and Chamberhouse Woods SSSI close to its southern boundary, and a Wildlife Heritage Site lying immediately beyond its north-eastern boundary. This may require, for example, that a strip within the Preferred Area adjacent to the Reed Beds SSSI be left undisturbed. Appropriate measures must be taken to ensure the hydrological regime of the reed beds is not harmed by extraction and restoration.

(ii) Landscape, ecology, and the setting of the Kennet and Avon Canal

P1.4 This Preferred Area occupies a sensitive area of the Kennet Valley in terms of its landscape and relationship to the Kennet and Avon Canal. The use, enjoyment and fabric of the canal and towpath must be safeguarded at all times. In particular, this may require that a wide buffer strip is left to the canal where this approaches the boundary of the Preferred Area. Advance planting should be provided to break up views into the immediate foreground of the site from the canal, without prejudicing the attractive wider views across the valley which are at present obtainable from the canal at this point. Copses and major tree and hedge lines within the site or on its borders which would act to screen mineral workings, or to provide wildlife corridors, or to break the area up into smaller units, should be retained and protected. In particular, the copse about 300m north of the Chamberhouse Farm buildings, the smaller copse around 300m west of it, and the corridor linking the two, should be left undisturbed; and so should the area of wet woodland on the eastern boundary of the Preferred Area. The continuing viability of the woodland which acts to screen the western part of the site from the canal should be assessed, and appropriate management measures secured to ensure its continuing effectiveness in this role. The north-eastern part of the Preferred Area contains other areas of nature conservation interest - sedge beds and wet grassland. Measures should be taken to protect them during extraction elsewhere within the Preferred Area.



SCALE

1000 metres

500

0

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP

A

PREFERRED AREA

I - CHAMBERHOUSE FARM, THATCHAM

(iii) Archaeology

P1.5 The area around Chamberhouse Farm itself is thought likely to be of particular archaeological interest, but other parts of the Preferred Area may prove to be of equal or greater importance. An archaeological evaluation of the site will be required to provide information for inclusion in the Environmental Statement and before any application for extraction is determined.

(iv) The impact on Chamberhouse Farm and other properties

P1.6 Adequate protection, in the form of buffer strips, screen planting or walling, and/or noise attenuation bunds, must be provided to protect the amenities and setting of Chamberhouse Farm and Chamberhouse Cottages (having particular regard to the presence of listed buildings in the farm complex), and to protect living conditions in Waterside Farm.

P1.7 The effects of dewatering and changes to the water-table in the vicinity of the listed buildings shall be assessed, and adequate measures shall be taken to protect the listed buildings. Because of the possible impact of working this site on the current well-water supplies to Waterside Farm and Chamberhouse Farm, any application should make provision for these properties to be connected to mains water supply.

(v) Access to and within the site, and the impact on local highways

P1.8 The impact of servicing the site on the local highway network, and the environmental effects of movements to and from, and within, the site will need to be assessed. The site should preferably be served by conveyor to the existing processing plant at Lower Farm, crossing the Kennet on a suitably-designed bailey bridge. An important practical issue will be providing suitable access arrangements to allow the backfilling which will be necessary to achieve the desired form of restoration (see below). Lorry movements across the site for this purpose may be acceptable, but all routes must be well away from the Kennet & Avon Canal.

P1.9 No vehicle access to Crookham Road will be allowed, either in association with extraction or with filling. Vehicle access from the plant should be to the A4 via Hambridge Road, as at present. A continuation of the present legal agreement regarding the use of this haul route will be requested, and contributions may be sought towards necessary improvements to the road structure of Hambridge Lane and to road maintenance at the junction of Hambridge Road and Hambridge Lane.

(vi) Flooding and hydrological issues

P1.10 See paragraphs KV14-19 of the general statement on the Kennet Valley at the start of this Appendix.

(vii) Other issues

P1.11 Other requirements to be taken into account either in the Environmental Statement or elsewhere in the preparation and submission of any planning application include:

- (a) Suitable margins must be provided to the River Kennet along the south side of the Preferred Area, and to Priors Moor Ditch within it.
- (b) The north-south bridleway linking the canal to the Chamberhouse Farm buildings must be kept open at all times during extraction and restoration, and its recreational value must be safeguarded.
- (c) No processing plant, nor any permanent plant, buildings or other structures, will be permitted within the Preferred Area.
- (d) Consideration should be given to reducing the detrimental visual impact on this section of the valley (particularly when viewed from the canal) of the electricity line which runs adjacent to the northern boundary of the Preferred Area.

Timing and phasing

- P1.12 If worked through Lower Farm, as indicated above, operations at this site would be expected to follow in sequence after extraction from the Lower Farm site, which is currently expected to cease around 1998. However, there may be a case for the closer integration of the working of these two sites. Extraction from the permitted area at Lower Farm which lies west of Greenham FP6 (where extraction has already started) must be completed before extraction commences at any part of Chamberhouse Farm. Working of the remainder of the permitted area at Lower Farm should either be completed before Chamberhouse Farm is disturbed, or else be reprogrammed to follow the working of Chamberhouse Farm. The latter course of action would then allow extraction east of FP6 to proceed in a generally east-to-west direction, enabling restoration to take place in a westerly direction back towards the plant. Any such reprogramming of operations at Lower Farm must be agreed as an integral part of any planning application for extraction at Chamberhouse Farm. The local planning authority will not permit more than one active mineral extraction operation in the Preferred Area at any one time.
- P1.13 Care should be taken to ensure that the areas of the site to be worked which lie close to the canal are worked and restored in a way which will minimise the amount of visual or other disturbance close to the canal at any one time.
- P1.14 The advance planting referred to above should be provided as early as possible, to allow it to have maximum effect before extraction takes place in the eastern part of the site.
- P1.15 At the rate of extraction originally envisaged for Lower Farm, extraction from this site might be expected to take around 10 years, although the operator at Lower Farm has indicated that a faster rate might be possible without need for additional plant.
- In 2000, West Berkshire Council granted permission for the extraction of gravel from part of Greenham Common as a 'windfall' in association with the restoration of the Common. The gravel from Greenham Common would be processed at Lower Farm, and it would be expected that extraction from Chamberhouse Farm will not now take place at least until the Greenham Common operation is completed. In view of these changes, West Berkshire Council intend to produce a development brief for the Lower Farm/Chamberhouse Farm sites, incorporating and building upon the requirements set out in this Appendix, in order to guide development in this area.*

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

- P1.16 See the general strategy for the Kennet Valley set out earlier in this Appendix. Within that framework, the restoration of Preferred Area 1 should be directed above all towards strengthening nature conservation value and interest, designed to link and develop the diversity of adjacent habitats. A mix of shallow wetland (e.g. reed-bed), flood meadow, and broadleaved woodland is suggested. Restoration to agriculture of part of the site, including restoring the visual relationship of Chamberhouse Farm to surrounding farmland, would be acceptable.
- P1.17 The local planning authority will look to restoration proposals to include provision for the creation and dedication of new rights of way, including a new public footpath adjacent to the River Kennet (either on the north side of the river, linking to the canal towpath, and/or on the south side to provide a possible link to FP6 through Bowdown Woods), and the provision of other circular route/s linking to the canal towpath and bridleway 18. In addition, the authority will wish the restoration proposals to include the dedication as a public footpath of the track leading eastwards across the site to Crookham Road, and/or of the roadway which links the Chamberhouse Farm buildings to Crookham Road.

Filling

- P1.18 Achieving the above restoration requirements will necessitate the import of filling materials to the site. As this Preferred Area is within the floodplain of the River Kennet, it is suitable for filling with inert materials only.

PREFERRED AREA 2 : BATH ROAD/BRIMPTON ROAD, MIDGHAM

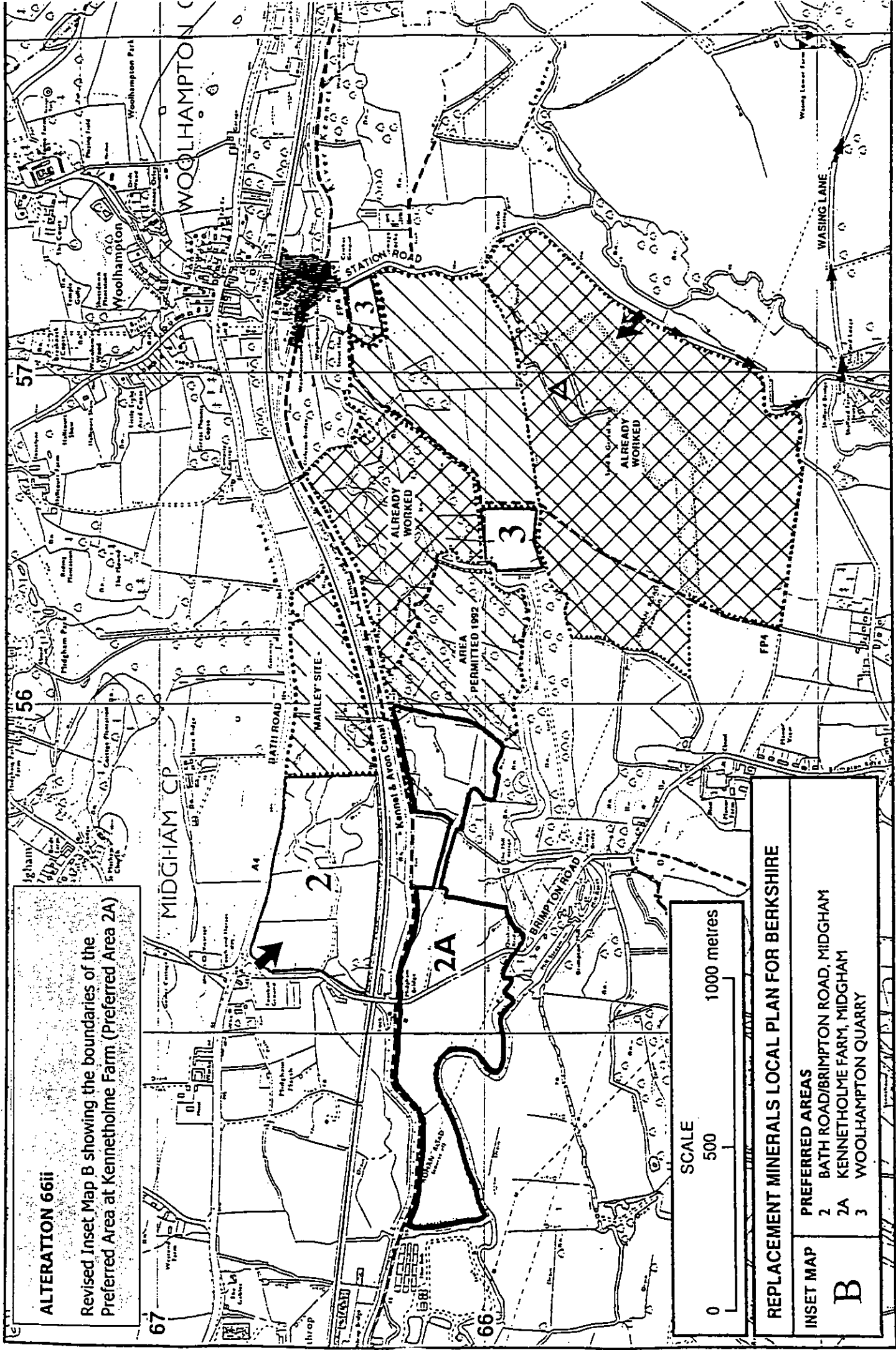
Location and use	Farmland lying between Brimpton Road (to the west), the A4 Bath Road (to the north), the Reading-Newbury railway (to the south), and an area to the east where extraction has recently commenced.
Site area	22 hectares
Deposit	Valley gravel
Potential yield	875,000 tonnes (BCC estimate)

Planning history

P2.1 An application for extraction from this site was refused in 1965, because of the effect on the rural character of the area, the lack of need to disturb the land, and the effect of turning traffic at the Brimpton Road/A4 junction. The site was shown as a 'Prospect Area' in the original Minerals Local Plan. Planning permission was granted in 1994 for extraction from the land immediately to the east, to maintain supplies to the Marley Tile Co factory at Beenham, 4 kilometres further east.

Site planning requirements

- (i) Relationship to adjacent areas of mineral working
- P2.2 This Preferred Area could most logically be worked as an extension to either the Marley operation on the land immediately to the east, or to the operation at Kennetholme Farm to the south (Preferred Area 2A). Separate working through a new processing plant on the site would not be permitted.
- (ii) Screening and planting, and the protection of living conditions
- P2.3 The proposals for the site to the east make provision for additional planting along the Bath Road and Brimpton Road boundaries of this Preferred Area, with a bund behind the Brimpton Road planting to limit the sight and sound of vehicle movements along the adjacent internal access route. This screening may need to be strengthened during extraction from this site, to protect the amenities of the cottages on Brimpton Road.
- P2.4 Consideration should be given to additional planting in advance of extraction, designed to enhance the character of the south-western corner of the site.
- P2.5 Screening of the site from the south must be carefully designed so as not to close off views of Midgham Church (to the north of the Preferred Area) from users of the railway or canal.
- (iii) Access
- P2.6 Access to and from the site must be by the access at the north-west corner constructed in connection with the 'Marley' application. A legal agreement will be sought to prevent the use of Brimpton Road south of the site entrance by any heavy goods vehicles travelling to or from the site. No peak-hour turning movements will be allowed at the A4 junction, and outside peak hours limits may be imposed on the total number of movements of gravel traffic at this junction from all the sites which it may serve. If the site is worked through the plant at Kennetholme Farm, the minerals should be transported to the plant site by conveyor.



ALTERATION 66ii
 Revised Inset Map B showing the boundaries of the Preferred Area at Kennelholme Farm (Preferred Area 2A)

SCALE
 0 500 1000 metres

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE	
INSET MAP	PREFERRED AREAS
B	2 BATH ROAD/BRIMPTON ROAD, MIDGHAM
	2A KENNETHOLME FARM, MIDGHAM
	3 WOOLHAMPTON QUARRY

(iv) Archaeology

- P2.7 An archaeological evaluation of the site will be required before any application for mineral extraction is determined, to supplement the results of a preliminary auger survey carried out in 1989.

(v) Other issues

- P2.8 No extraction will be permitted in the south-west corner of the Preferred Area, between the new planting proposed in the Marley application and Brimpton Road.
- P2.9 A gas pipeline crosses this site from north to south, and care must be taken to safeguard it at all times.
- P2.10 Appropriate margins must be left to protect the stability of the railway line which runs adjacent to the southern boundary of this Preferred Area.
- P2.11 Flooding and other hydrological issues must also be addressed - see paragraphs KV14-19 in the general statement on the Kennet Valley at the start of this Appendix.

Timing and phasing

- P2.12 Depending upon which plant this site were to be operated through, it would be expected that the site would not be worked until after extraction from either the nearby Marley or Kennetholme operations have been completed. At present, these operations are expected to run until about 2000 and 2004 respectively.
- P2.13 At the rates of operation envisaged for these two sites, extraction from this Preferred Area might take between about 6 and 9 years from start to finish.
- P2.14 The site should be worked in strips from east to west, in order to minimise visual and other disturbance in the vicinity of the canal, and similar disturbance to the view of and from Midgham Church.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

- P2.15 See the general strategy for the Kennet Valley set out elsewhere in this Appendix. Within that framework, restoration of the site to flood meadow is favoured. An area in the south-west of the site close to the railway would be a suitable location for the planting of a block of woodland.
- P2.16 A field pattern should be established in the area to be restored to agriculture, rather than leaving it as a single large block of open land. Field boundaries should be marked by hedgerows (i.e. hedges with some standard trees), to reflect the traditional character of the valley.

Filling

- P2.17 Achieving the above restoration proposals will require the import of limited quantities of filling materials to the site. Because this Preferred Area is within the floodplain of the River Kennet, it is suitable for filling with inert materials only.

- *In 2000, West Berkshire Council gave approval in principle to two applications which between them propose extraction from the whole of this Preferred Area. The applications remain undetermined as at May 2001 pending the completion of associated legal agreements.*

PREFERRED AREA 2A : KENNETHOLME FARM, MIDGHAM

Location and use: Farmland in the Kennet Valley to the east and west of Brimpton Road, between the Kennet & Avon Canal and the River Kennet.

Site area: 32 hectares

Deposit: Valley gravel

Potential yield: 1,080,000 tonnes (mineral company's estimate)

Planning history

P2A.1 Two applications for extraction from this land – one on either side of the Brimpton Road – were approved in principle by the former County Council in the late 1980s, but the associated legal agreements were never signed, and as a result the applications were formally refused in March 1996. An area to the north and south of the eastern part of the site was extracted during the 1960s and 1970s, while the land immediately to the east of the site has been extracted more recently as part of Woolhampton Quarry.

Site planning requirements

P2A.2 Because of the size of the site, an Environmental Statement will be required in association with any application for mineral extraction. The following issues and requirements should be addressed in the application and/or the Environmental Statement.

(i) Method of working, access, and haul route

P2A.3 Material from the site should be processed at a new plant located within the boundaries of the Preferred Area. The location and design of this plant should be selected to minimise its environmental impacts, and additional screening of the plant (whether by new planting or by screening mounds, or by a combination of the two) should be provided if necessary. Gravel from within the site should preferably be taken to the plant by conveyor rather than by internal lorry traffic. Any conveyor crossing of Brimpton Road should be positioned below ground level if possible.

P2A.4 Access to the site should be via a new access on to Brimpton Road, with all vehicles required to enter and leave the site from/to the north. A legal agreement will be needed to secure the widening and improvement of the stretch of Brimpton Road between the site access and the A4 (including provision of a vehicle parking bay at a suitable location north of the railway); to prevent any movement of gravel or related traffic to and from the site along Brimpton Road south of the access; and to secure provision of traffic signals to control vehicle movements over the railway and canal bridges. The Environmental Statement should consider the cumulative effect of HGV traffic from this and other gravel sites on the local road network (especially on Brimpton Road and on its junction with the A4), both within and outside peak hours. Depending on the findings of this part of the Statement and the assessment of it by the highway authority, measures may be required (which may include restrictions on vehicle routing and/or on the numbers or hours of turning movements at the Brimpton Road/A4 junction) to reduce any adverse impacts to an acceptable level.

(ii) Impact on residential amenity

P2A.5 The site is relatively distant from any substantial residential areas, but the application should incorporate measures to safeguard living conditions in the individual dwellings, or small groups of dwellings, close to the site boundary or adjoining the haul route to the A4.

P2A.6 In particular, consideration should be given to the impact of working the site on well water supplies to nearby properties, and provision should be made if necessary for the connection of affected properties to mains drainage.

(iii) Archaeology

P2A.7 An archaeological evaluation of the site took place in association with the applications submitted in the late 1980s. This indicated that a more formal archaeological investigation will be required at the eastern end of the site. Arrangements for this investigation would have to be secured by means of a legal agreement. Because a lengthy period has elapsed since the initial evaluation of the site took place, the local planning authority reserves the right to require further evaluation works, using more recent techniques, in association with any future application. Applicants are advised to seek guidance on this issue from the local planning authority's archaeological advisers before finalising the relevant content of the Environmental Statement.

(iv) Ecology and landscape

P2A.8 The River Kennet, which forms the southern boundary of much of the western part of the site and runs close to the southern boundary of the remainder of the site, has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Care must be taken to ensure that mineral extraction and related activities do not adversely affect the hydrology or the wildlife interest of the SSSI. A suitable undisturbed buffer strip, free from minerals-related development or activities, should be established between the workings and the SSSI.

P2A.9 Trees on the site boundaries must be retained, protected and managed throughout extraction and restoration. Measures must also be taken to safeguard the health and long-term value of groups of trees and woodland areas immediately beyond the site boundaries.

P2A.10 During the period of extraction, planting (in the form of hedgerows and hedgerow trees) should be provided to screen views into the site from Brimpton Road. This should form advanced planting in keeping with the final restoration scheme for the site. Similarly, small groups of trees or shrubs should be planted along the Kennet & Avon Canal boundary, to meet screening and longer-term landscape objectives.

(v) Other issues

P2A.11 Flooding, groundwater protection and other hydrological issues must also be addressed – see paragraphs KV14-19 in the general statement on the Kennet Valley at the start of this Appendix.

P2A.12 The northern boundary of the site adjoins the Kennet and Avon Canal. The use, enjoyment and fabric of the canal and its towpath must be safeguarded at all times, and an appropriate buffer strip must be left between the edge of the workings and the towpath.

Timing and phasing

P2A.13 Extraction should ideally be phased so that this site acts as a replacement for one or more existing sites in this section of the Kennet Valley, rather than forming an additional operating unit. The local planning authority will not permit more than one active mineral extraction operation in the Preferred Area at any one time.

P2A.14 At the rate envisaged in the applications submitted in the late 1980s, extraction from the site would take 12-13 years.

Restoration and after-use

P2A.15 See the general strategy for the Kennet Valley set out earlier in this Appendix. Within that framework, the restoration of the eastern end of the site should be to nature conservation lakes/reedbeds/wet woodland and/or managed reedbeds to link to and strengthen the adjacent restored parts of Woolhampton Quarry. Arrangements for the long-term management of the nature conservation area should be secured by means of a legal agreement. The more westerly part of the site east of Brimpton Road, together with the area west of Brimpton Road, should preferably be restored dry to flood meadow, or otherwise to nature conservation lakes/reedbeds and/or managed reedbeds.

P2A.16 The aim should be to restore the site to the intimate character of the Kennet Valley as currently found adjacent to the Kennet below Brimpton, and elsewhere. Planting should be in copses and small groups, avoiding long tree belts in order to maintain the open character of the valley bottom at this point. Opportunity should be sought to screen views of the industrial area at Colthrop from Brimpton through appropriate planting.

Filling

P2A.17 Achieving the above restoration proposals will require the import of limited quantities of filling materials to the site. Because the site is within the floodplain of the River Kennet, it is suitable for filling with inert materials only.

PREFERRED AREA 3 : WOOLHAMPTON QUARRY

Location and use: Two residual areas of farmland adjacent to Woolhampton Quarry, to the south and south-west of the village of Woolhampton

Site area: 5 hectares

Deposit: Valley gravel

Potential yield: 200,000 tonnes (BCC estimate)

Planning history

P3.1 Mineral extraction at Woolhampton Quarry has taken place under a series of planning permissions issued between the 1960s and the 1990s. The two parcels which make up the Preferred Area are now the only part of the land west of Station Road and south of the River Kennet which have not received planning permission for gravel extraction.

Site planning requirements

(i) Method of working, access, and haul route

P3.2 The Preferred Area should be worked as an extension to the existing operations at Woolhampton Quarry. As at present, access from the plant site should be southwards to Wasing Lane, and thence eastwards to Aldermaston village and the A340.

(ii) Rights of way

P3.3 The rights of way adjacent to the two separate parcels of the Preferred Area must be safeguarded, and measures must be taken to protect their recreational value during extraction operations.

(iii) Archaeology

P3.4 Although the Preferred Area has not been the subject of an archaeological evaluation, archaeological sites have been identified within the western parcel. Any application for extraction from any part of the Preferred Area must be accompanied by an archaeological evaluation of the land in question, and must indicate the measures which are proposed in response to the findings of the evaluation.

(iv) Other issues

P3.5 Measures must be taken to protect the amenities of nearby houses, including those in Woolhampton village, from the adverse effects (and especially noise impacts) of mineral operations in the Preferred Area.

P3.5A Measures must be taken to avoid any adverse impact on the River Kennet SSSI, which touches the north-western corner of the western parcel of the site and lies just to the north of the eastern parcel.

P3.6 Flooding and other hydrological issues must be addressed - see paragraphs KV14 to KV19 in the general statement on the Kennet Valley at the start of this Appendix.

P3.7 Any necessary measures must be taken to avoid disturbance to the sewage works which lies to the east of the eastern parcel, to ensure that groundwater contamination does not occur during dewatering operations and on restoration.

Timing and phasing

- P3.8 Existing permissions, or permissions in principle, at Woolhampton Quarry are expected to provide for extraction up to about the year 2000. It would be expected that the Preferred Area would be worked in sequence with the 'permitted' areas, although some adjustments to the existing approved phasing for those areas may be acceptable to allow the Preferred Area to be worked in logical geographical sequence with the 'permitted' areas. On their own, the reserves in the Preferred Area would be likely to take about one year to extract.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

- P3.9 See the general strategy for the Kennet Valley set out elsewhere in this Appendix.
- P3.10 Within this framework, restoration of the Preferred Area must be designed to fit in with the agreed restoration and after-use details for adjacent parts of the quarry, which consist of a mix of wetland (nature conservation) and agricultural after-uses.

Filling

- P3.11 The importing of fill to assist the restoration of the Preferred Area will not in general be acceptable. Restoration of the sites should aim to use only overburden stripped from the site, if necessary supplemented by basal material from the adjacent extraction area.

PREFERRED AREA 4 : SOUTH OF THEALE

Location and use: Farmland to the south of Theale, lying north of the Kennet & Avon Canal.

Site area: 16 hectares

Deposit: Valley gravel

Potential yield: 635,000 tonnes (BCC estimate)

Planning history

P4.1 This site formed part of Preferred Area 10 in the original Minerals Local Plan. Land to the north of Area 4 (Haywards Farm) is currently being extracted under a permission granted in 1984, although production has temporarily ceased in recent years¹. There have been no applications for mineral extraction from this Area in the past.

Site planning requirements

(i) Access and processing issues

P4.2 Following the closure in 1998 of the processing plant at Woolwich Green, material from this Preferred Area would have to be taken off-site for processing. Options are for it to be taken to the Sheffield Bottom plant either using an extension of the conveyor system referred to in relation to Preferred Area 5 (para P5.3), or using pipelines and barges across Theale Lake, or for it to be taken to that plant or elsewhere by road. If this latter option is chosen, mineral or waste traffic to or from the site should be routed northwards to the A4 Theale by-pass via Station Road. In this event the local planning authority will seek to secure this routing and any associated improvements to the roadway or signage, and any necessary restrictions on vehicle movements in the morning peak period, by means of a legal agreement. A legal agreement would also be required to cover the maintenance and minor improvement of Arrowhead Road before it could be used by heavy goods vehicles in association with mineral extraction or related activities.

(ii) Safeguarding living conditions

P4.3 Measures must be taken to safeguard the amenities of houses and commercial premises close to the boundaries of this Preferred Area. This may involve screen planting, buffer strips, and/or the construction of noise attenuation bunds. Care must be taken to safeguard the character and appearance of the Conservation Area centred on Sheffield Bridge from the adverse effects of mineral extraction and processing operations.

(iii) Protection of the canal and rivers, and their environments

P4.4 The use, enjoyment and fabric of the canal and towpath must be safeguarded at all times, and appropriate buffer strips must be left adjacent to the canal. Canalside screening, and the nature and layout of activities within Area 4, must be carefully designed to ensure that existing 'windows' allowing attractive views from the canal into and beyond the Preferred Area - and in particular views of Theale Church - are retained at all times.

P4.5 The trees along the banks of the Kennet must be retained, managed and protected throughout extraction and restoration. Some additional planting should take place adjacent to Arrowhead Road in the eastern part of Area 4, to break up views into this area without screening it off altogether.

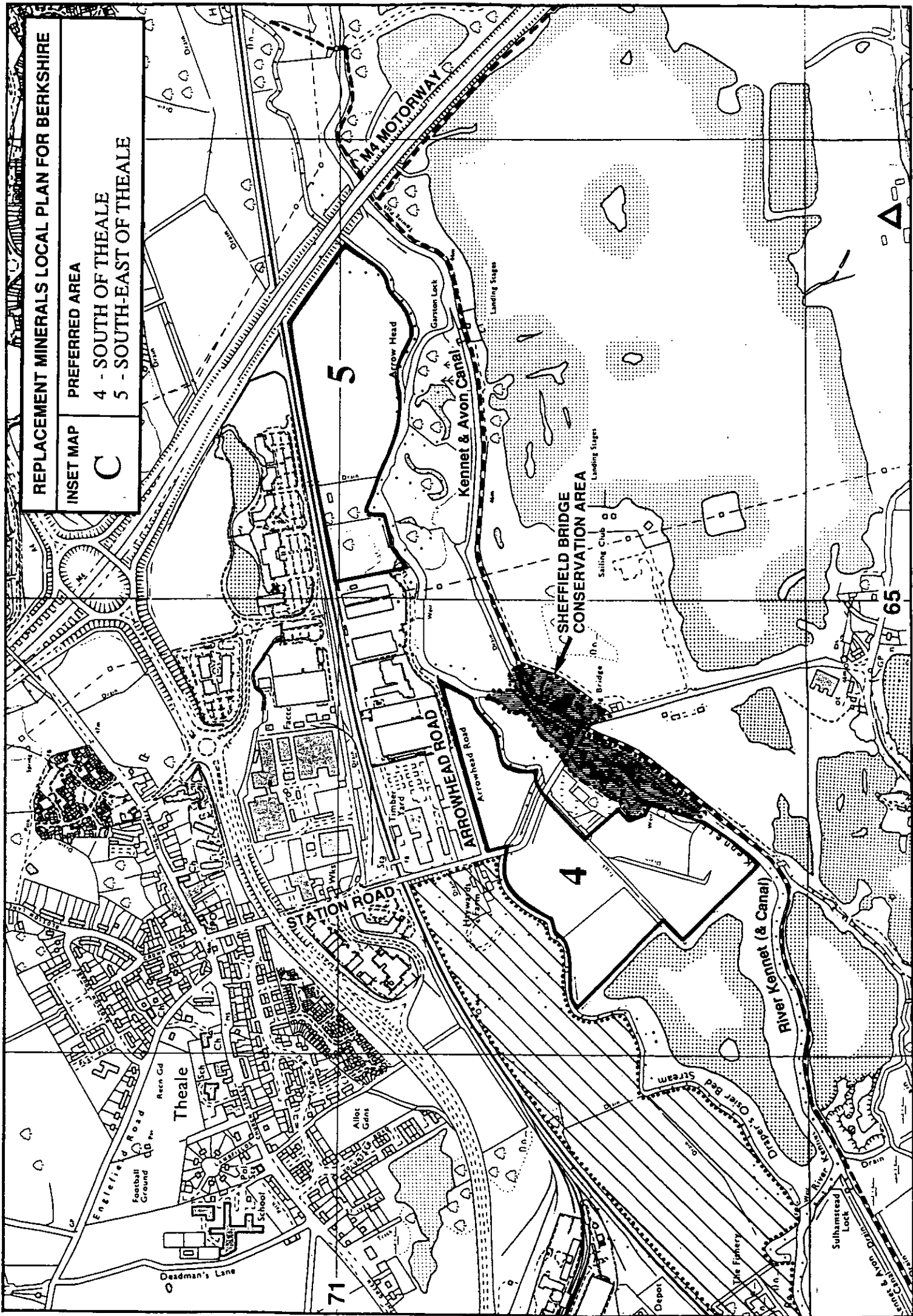
¹ *Extraction at Haywards Farm ceased permanently in 1998, and the associated processing plant at Woolwich Green was removed in 2000.*

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP

- PREFERRED AREA
- 4 - SOUTH OF THEALE
- 5 - SOUTH-EAST OF THEALE

C



P4.6 Suitable margins must be left to Draper's Osier Bed Stream, which forms the northern boundary of Area 4 west of Station Road, crosses the site east of Station Road, and then forms the southern boundary of this part of the site for much of its length. This stream is regarded by the Environment Agency as a main river watercourse.

(iv) Archaeology

P4.7 An archaeological evaluation of the Preferred Area will be required before any planning application for extraction is determined.

(v) Other issues

P4.8 Flooding, groundwater protection and other hydrological issues must also be addressed - see paragraphs KV14-19 at the start of this Appendix.

Timing and phasing

P4.9 The currently-permitted reserves at Haywards Farm are expected to last until around 1997. If they are both worked by the same operator, Areas 4 and 5 would then fall to be worked in sequence. At typical rates, extraction from Area 4 might take around four years. Because the two Areas will require different access arrangements, it would be physically possible to work them simultaneously. Any proposals to do so would have to demonstrate that this would not place an unacceptable burden on plant capacity or on the local road system, nor cause other environmental problems.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

P4.10 See the general strategy for the Kennet Valley set out elsewhere in this Appendix.

P4.11 Within that framework, it would be expected that this site would be restored to agriculture with additional blocks of woodland on the eastern side of Station Road, and (on the western side) to a mixture of wet and dry woodland with lakes and pools of varying depth.

P4.12 The scope should be investigated for improving the shape and appearance in the landscape of the lake created in recent years by extraction from the land immediately south-west of Area 4. This could be achieved by means of a limited extension of the lake into Area 4.

P4.13 (Deleted)

Filling

P4.14 Achievement of the above restoration proposals will require the import of limited quantities of filling materials to the site. Because the Preferred Area is within the floodplain of the River Kennet, it is suitable for filling with inert materials only.

PREFERRED AREA 5 : SOUTH-EAST OF THEALE

Location and use: Farmland to the south-east of Theale, lying north of the Kennet & Avon Canal and adjacent to the M4 motorway.

Site area: 13 hectares
Deposit: Valley gravel
Potential yield: 481,000 tonnes (Operator's estimate)

Planning history

P5.1 The site formed part of Preferred Area 10 in the original Minerals Local Plan. There have been no applications for mineral extraction from this Area in the past.

Site planning requirements

(i) Access and processing issues

P5.2 *(Deleted)*

P5.3 The local planning authority considers that this site should ideally be worked as an extension to the existing operations at Sheffield Bottom, with material being transported all the way to that processing plant by conveyor. In this event, careful consideration would have to be given to the impact of the conveyor on previously restored areas, on adjacent footpaths, and on the River Kennet and the Holybrook. Alternatively, it may be possible for material from this Preferred Area to be taken by road for processing elsewhere. If this latter option is chosen, mineral or waste traffic to or from the site should be routed northwards to the A4 Theale bypass via Station Road, and the local planning authority will seek to secure this routing by means of a legal agreement. A legal agreement would also be required to cover the maintenance and minor improvement of Arrowhead Road would be required before it could be used by heavy goods vehicles in association with mineral extraction or related activities.

P5.4 In order to safeguard the character of the Sheffield Bridge Conservation Area, the local planning authority would prefer that whichever of the above options is chosen, mineral and waste traffic should avoid using Sheffield Bridge. The authority will seek to ensure arrangements to this effect by means of a legal agreement.

(ii) Ecology and landscape issues

P5.5 Care must be taken to protect at all times the wetland habitat south of this Preferred Area, between the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal. The trees on the northern bank of the river must be retained and protected throughout extraction and restoration. Additional planting should be provided adjacent to the railway and motorway, designed to break up views into this area without screening it off altogether.

(iii) Archaeology

P5.6 An archaeological evaluation of the Preferred Area will be required before any planning application for extraction is determined.

(iv) Other issues

P5.7 This Area may be affected by proposals for widening the M4, and regard must be paid to these proposals when drawing up any scheme for extraction.

- P5.8 A suitable margin should be left to ensure the stability of the railway which adjoins the northern boundary of the site.
- P5.9 Flooding and other hydrological issues must also be addressed - see paragraphs KV14-19 in the general statement on the Kennet Valley at the start of this Appendix.

Timing and phasing

- P5.10 If this site were worked as an extension of Haywards Farm, it would fall to be worked in sequence with Area 4 (qv). If it were worked through Sheffield Bottom, it would be expected that extraction would take place early in the Plan period, because of the relatively limited scale of local reserves currently available to that plant. At typical rates, extraction from this site might take around 2-3 years. Because Areas 4 and 5 will require different access arrangements, it would be physically possible to work them simultaneously. Any proposals to do so would have to demonstrate that this would not place an unacceptable burden on plant capacity or on the local road system, nor cause other environmental problems.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

- P5.11 See the general strategy for the Kennet Valley set out elsewhere in this Appendix.
- P5.12 Within that framework, it would be expected that this site would be restored dry for a primarily agricultural after-use. Additional hedge- and tree-planting should be used to keep field sizes small, in keeping with the small-scale character of the valley as a whole. Additional blocks of woodland - for example adjacent to the railway - would provide diversity of habitat and in the appearance of the landscape, as well as helping to retain and enhance the general character of the valley.
- P5.13 *(Deleted)*

Filling

- P 5.14 Achievement of the above restoration proposals will require the import of filling materials to the site. Because the Preferred Area is within the floodplain of the River Kennet, it is suitable for filling with inert materials only.

PREFERRED AREA 6 : LARKWHISTLE FARM, BRIMPTON COMMON

Location and use: Farmland on the plateau to the south of the Kennet Valley, south of Brimpton and west of Heath End (Tadley)

Site area: 10.5 hectares

Deposit: Plateau gravel

Potential yield: 314,000 tonnes (operator's estimate)

Planning history

P6.1 There have been three planning applications for extraction of this Preferred Area. The first two were both approved by the former County Council subject to the prior completion of a legal agreement, but in the event neither agreement was completed. The first application was refused in 1983, following non-completion of the agreement. The second application was withdrawn by the applicants in May 1993. The third application was submitted in 1994, and is currently (November 1994) awaiting determination.

Site planning requirements

(i) Access and haul routes

P6.2 Access to the site should be gained via a new access from Brimpton Road. The junction of Brimpton Road and the B3051 will require improvement. A legal agreement will be sought to provide this, to secure the routing of vehicles northwards to the B3051, and to prevent the movement of heavy vehicles to and from the site along Brimpton Road south of the access-point.

(ii) Archaeology

P6.3 An archaeological evaluation has been submitted with the most recent application at this site. Any future application should verify the findings of this evaluation, taking account of any more up-to-date information which may have come to light since the earlier evaluation was carried out.

P6.4 Care must be taken to protect the site and setting of the barrow lying immediately south of the site boundary, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

(iii) Safeguarding living conditions

P6.5 Measures must be taken to safeguard the amenities of the houses and the school close to the boundaries of this Preferred Area. This may involve screen planting, buffer strips, and/or the construction of noise attenuation bunds.

(iv) Processing issues

P6.6 The erection of processing plant will not be permitted at this plateau gravel site.

Timing and phasing

P6.7 The release of this Preferred Area will be primarily dependent on future demands for 'as-raised' sand and gravel. At customary production rates for such sites, extraction may be expected to take about 3 years.

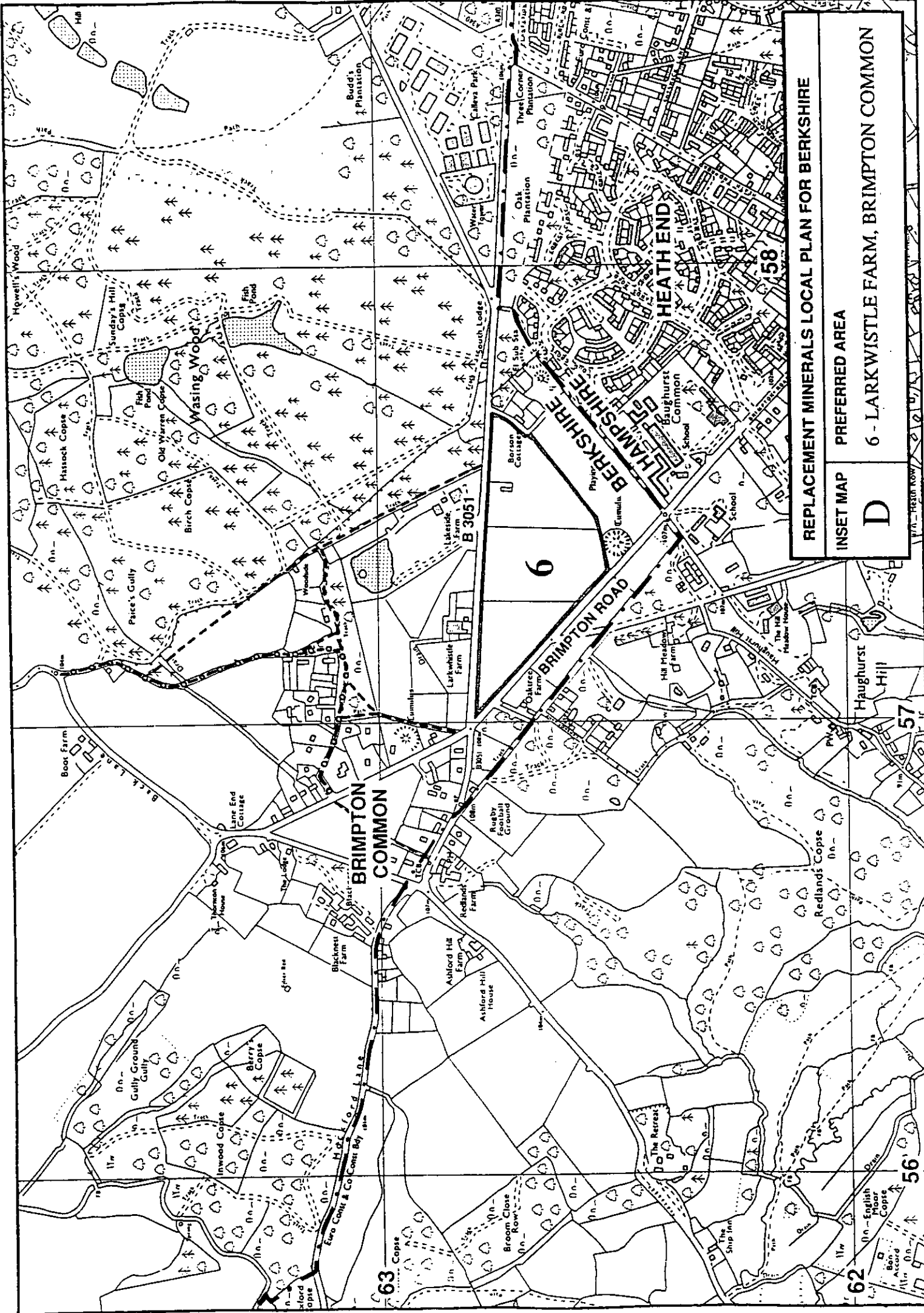
Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

P6.8 The site should be restored to agriculture, with additional tree and hedgerow planting to strengthen the boundaries of the site.

Filling

P6.9 Achievement of the above restoration proposals is likely to require the import of filling materials to achieve satisfactory levels for drainage purposes.

- *Planning permission for the extraction of sand and gravel from this site was granted in May 1995, and extraction has since been completed.*



REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP

D

PREFERRED AREA

6 - LARKWISTLE FARM, BRIMPTON COMMON

PREFERRED AREA 7 : RAGHILL FARM, ALDERMASTON

Location and use: Farmland east of Raghill Farm, south-east of the village of Aldermaston and south-west of Padworth

Site area: 25 hectares

Deposit: Plateau gravel (hoggin)

Potential yield: 500,000 tonnes (BCC/operator estimate)

Planning history

P7.1 There have been no previous applications for mineral extraction from this site. It formed part of a much more extensive 'Preferred Area' (also numbered Preferred Area 7) in the original (1984) Minerals Local Plan.

Site planning requirements

(i) Access and vehicle routeing

P7.2 Access from the site should be directed on to Raghill. The haul route should be south to Red Lane, and then south-eastwards to the Burghfield-Tadley road. No gravel traffic from the site will be allowed along Soke Road. A legal agreement will be sought to secure this routeing, and also to provide for necessary improvements to Raghill and for continuing maintenance of Red Lane during mineral extraction and site restoration. (See also 'Timing and phasing' below.)

(ii) Processing

P7.3 Because of the small size and yield of this Preferred Area, and of the adverse environmental and traffic impacts which would result from the carrying out of mineral processing in this location, the local planning authority will not permit the establishment of mineral processing or manufacturing plant on the site.

(iii) Protection of living conditions

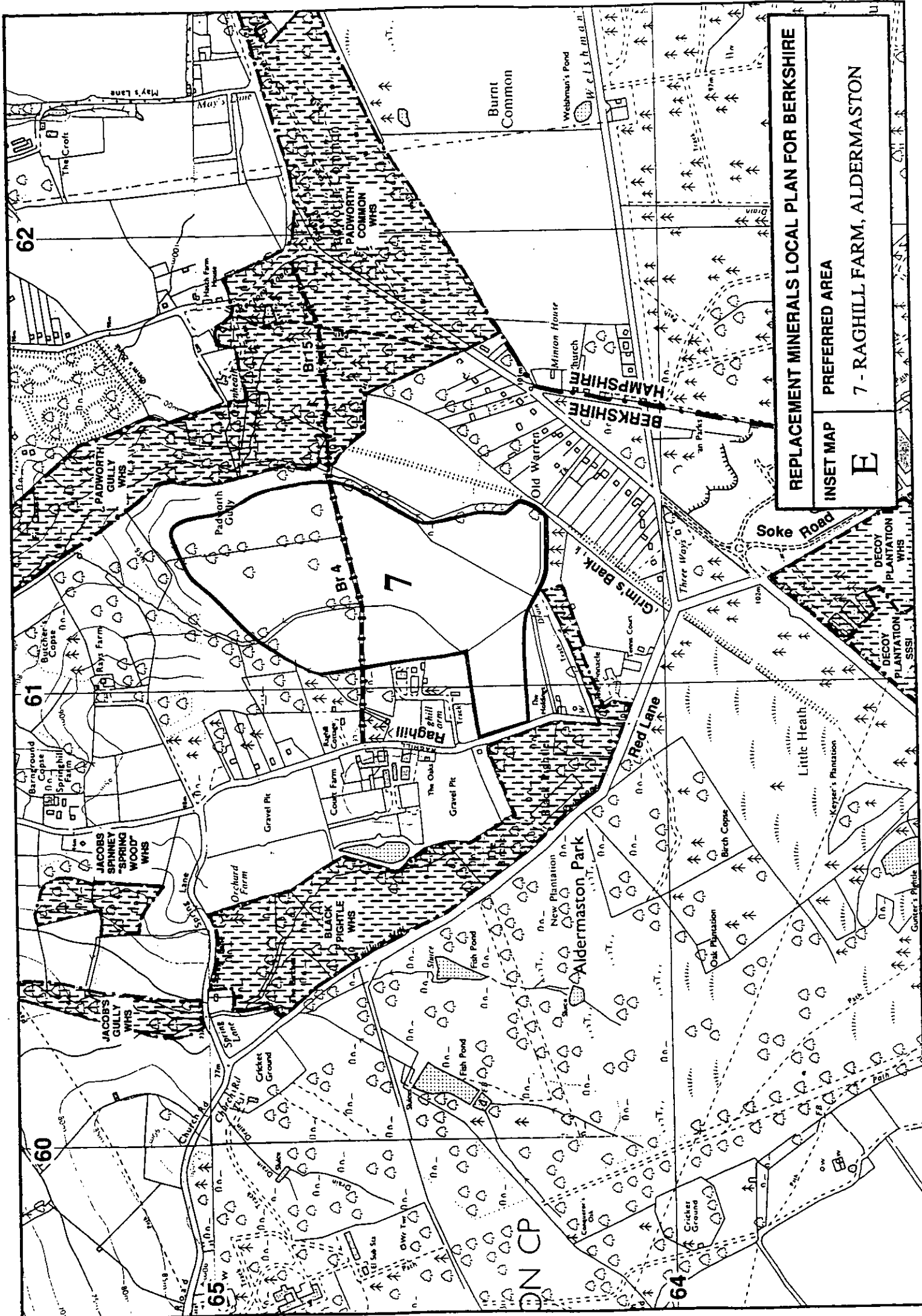
P7.4 Adequate measures must be taken to protect the houses in Raghill from the adverse effects of mineral extraction and site restoration activities.

(iv) Protection of other interests within and adjacent to the site

P7.5 The route of the bridleway which crosses the site centrally from west to east must be safeguarded at all times. It will be acceptable for vehicles to cross this bridleway to gain access to the northern part of the site, but not at the expense of the severance (even for a temporary period) of the bridleway as a whole. A minor temporary diversion may be acceptable to allow minerals to be extracted from beneath the bridleway itself.

P7.6 It is thought unlikely that workable mineral deposits underlie the small valley north of the bridleway in the western part of the Preferred Area. In any event, no mineral working will be allowed in this valley, and the trees in the valley must be retained and protected throughout extraction and restoration operations.

P7.7 On present knowledge, and archaeological evaluation of the Preferred Area will be required before any planning application for mineral extraction is determined. Particular regard must be paid in formulating extraction proposals to the need to safeguard at all times the nearby Grim's Bank, which is a scheduled ancient monument, and its setting. Consideration should also be given, if possible, to the incorporation in any proposal of arrangements for the longer-term management of any parts of the scheduled monument which are within the control of the same mineral operator or landowner.



REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP

E

PREFERRED AREA

7 - RAGHILL FARM, ALDERMASTON

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7

ON CP

BERKSHIRE

HAMPSHIRE

May's Lane

Burrit Common

Webbman's Pond

Minton House

Church

Old Warren

Gim's Bank Lane

Red Lane

Aldermaston Park

New Plantation

Fish Pond

Cricket Ground

Cricket Ground

The Croft

Padworth Gully

Padworth Gully

Butcher's Copse

Springhill Farm

JACOBS SPINNEY "SPRING WOOD" WHS

JACOBS GULLY WHS

Cricket Ground

Cricket Ground

Padworth Farm

Padworth Farm

Orchard Farm

Gravel Pit

Gravel Pit

Gravel Pit

Gravel Pit

Gravel Pit

BR 4

BR 4

Raghill Farm

Gravel Pit

Gravel Pit

Gravel Pit

Gravel Pit

Gravel Pit

Padworth Common

Padworth Common

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- P7.8 The area of common land immediately to the east of the Preferred Area must be safeguarded at all times.
- P7.9 Care must be taken to protect the water supply to Padworth Gully, which is a Wildlife Heritage Site, and to ensure that the hydrology of Decoy Pit, Pools and Woods SSSI is not adversely affected.
- P7.10 In hydrological terms, this is a sensitive area of plateau gravels located between two watercourses, where the perched water table in the gravels is very responsive to rainfall. Early discussions should be undertaken with the Environment Agency to ensure that hydrological interests are taken fully into account in the preparation of any planning application. As indicated in the section on 'Filling' below, these concerns could have implications for the details of the site's restoration, as well as for the nature of the extraction operation.
- P7.10A The setting of the nearby registered historic park and garden at Aldermaston Court should be protected from visual intrusion during extraction and restoration, and the restored landform of the site should be designed to avoid adverse visual effects on the historic park and garden.

Timing and phasing

- P7.11 The timing of the release of this land, and the phasing of its working, must be co-ordinated with the timing and phasing of other nearby mineral workings and waste disposal operations, including those on nearby sites in Hampshire, which also make use of the Burghfield-Tadley road. For environmental reasons and because the local road network is unsuited to take very heavy volumes of mineral traffic, it may be necessary to limit the number of vehicle movements per hour to and from the site, and/or the hours of working at the site. Any proposals for working this site which, when taken with other nearby permissions, are judged in environmental and/or traffic terms to constitute an unacceptable over-concentration of workings on the area will be resisted.
- P7.12 At customary production rates for sites producing the poorer-quality plateau gravels, extraction from this site may be expected to take around 5 years. A longer period may be appropriate in this instance, to reflect both the variable market for unprocessed sand and gravel, and the possible need to limit vehicle movements to and from the site (and hence to limit the rate of extraction).

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

- P7.13 The site should preferably be restored to agriculture, with additional woodland planting to strengthen the western and parts of the eastern boundaries, incorporating provision if possible of heathland rides and some open glades. In the restoration of the site, the local planning authority will encourage the provision of increased public access to the site, with new access routes dedicated as public rights of way or the subject of a wider-ranging access agreement.
- P7.14 The levels of the restored site must be carefully integrated with those of the surrounding land, especially (though not exclusively) at the northern end of the site.

Filling

- P7.15 Achievement of the above restoration proposals may require the importing of some filling materials to achieve satisfactory ground contours and for drainage purposes. However, the former National Rivers Authority opposed infilling - even with inert materials - at a nearby plateau gravel site. The need for filling materials to secure a satisfactory landform after restoration, and the nature of any imported filling materials used for this purpose, will therefore need careful consideration in the formulation of proposals for this site.

PREFERRED AREA 8 : SMALLMEAD, READING

Location and use: Farmland adjacent to former gravel workings (now being landfilled) to the south of Reading Town Centre

Site area: 8.5 hectares

Deposit: Valley gravel

Potential yield: 240,000 tonnes (BCC/operator estimate)

Planning history

- P8.1 The land north of this area was approved for extraction in 1957, and an extension was allowed on appeal in 1974. Extraction from most of the permitted area was completed in the late 1980s. This land has been filled with domestic and other wastes, and filling continues. Working of a smaller area south of the canal and north of the existing workings was permitted in March 1993.
- P8.2 In the original Minerals Local Plan (1984) the site was shown as part of Preferred Area 12. Subsequently the former County Council agreed that most of the remainder of that 1984 Preferred Area may be developed for business use without prior extraction of the underlying sand and gravel.

Site planning requirements

(i) Method of working, access and processing

- P8.3 This site should be worked as an extension to the extraction from neighbouring land, with the extracted material taken by road to an established off-site plant for processing. Hitherto, processing of material from Smallmead has taken place at the former plant at Cottage Lane to the west. This plant has now been removed. In these circumstances, the material from this site might be taken to some other nearby plant for processing, subject to satisfactory access and routing arrangements and to the acceptability to the local planning authorities, having regard to Policy 29 of this Plan, of allowing importation to the plant concerned.
- P8.4 Access to the site could be from Island Road (as to the present landfill site) or via Smallmead Road. Traffic leaving the site would be expected to use Smallmead Road, to minimise travelling distances on public roads. A legal agreement may be necessary to ensure adequate maintenance of, and any necessary improvements to, the haul routes.

(ii) Water resources and flooding

- P8.5 The principles set out for the Kennet Valley in paragraphs KV14-16 and KV18-19 on page 85 should also apply to this site.
- P8.6 A flood relief channel is proposed to be provided along the south-eastern boundary of the site, in connection with the development of Green Park on the land further south-east. Appropriate measures to safeguard the line of that channel must be included in any proposals for extraction.

(iii) Archaeology

- P8.7 Areas adjacent to this site have been the subject of archaeological evaluation in the past. These evaluations, and discoveries during extraction at nearby sites which were not evaluated prior to extraction, have demonstrated the high archaeological potential of this locality. An archaeological evaluation of Area 8 will therefore be necessary before any proposals for extraction from the site are determined.

Timing and phasing

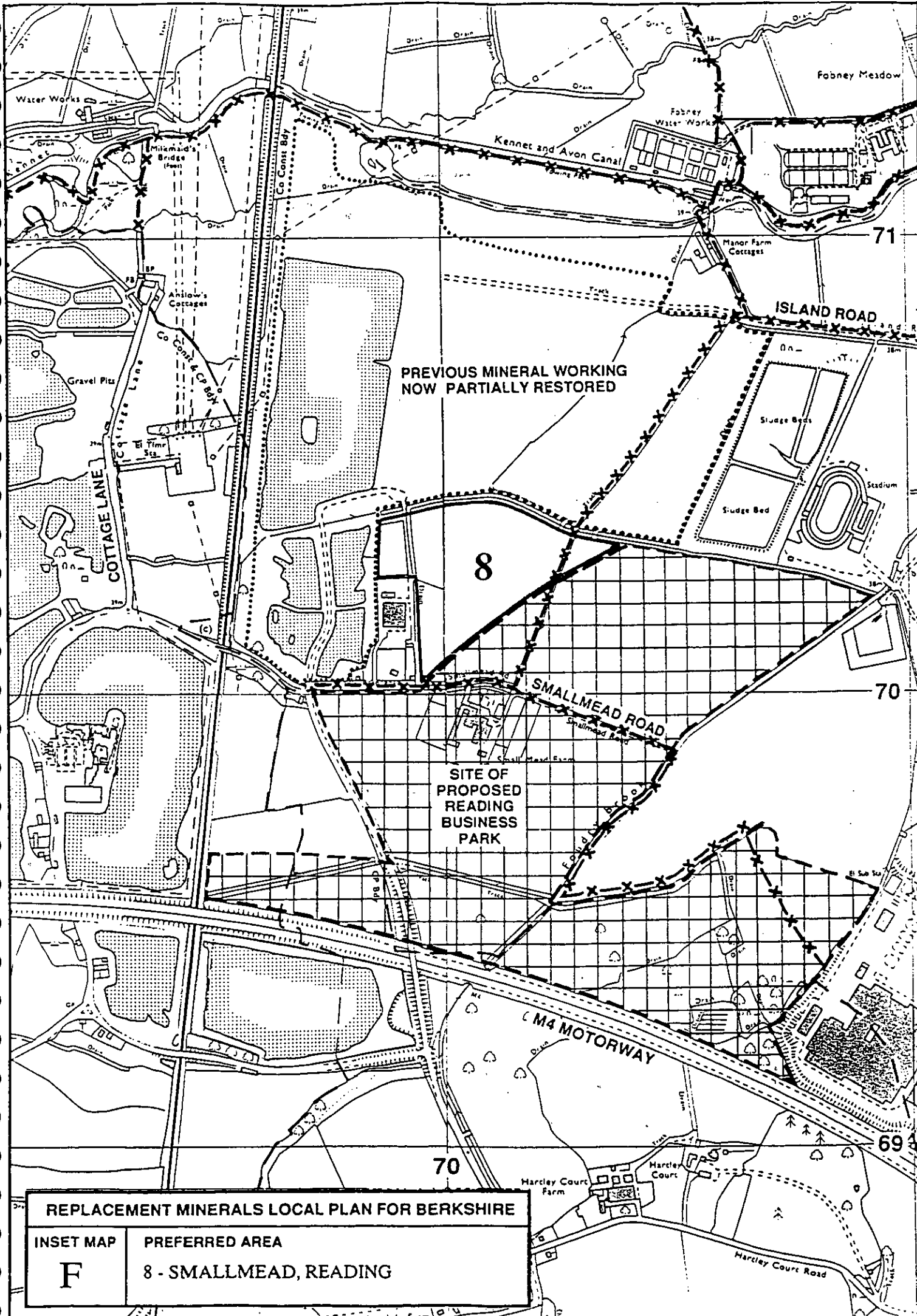
- P8.8 It would in principle be preferable for extraction from this site to take place early within the plan period, to maintain continuity of operations in the Smallmead area as a whole and to avoid prolonging the disturbance to this area.
- P8.9 It would be desirable, though not essential, for the site to be extracted before the adjacent development of Green Park is occupied.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

- P8.10 The site should be restored to agriculture, with substantial tree and hedge planting, to marry in with the proposals for final restoration of the land to the north and to enhance the general appearance of the area.
- P8.11 The local planning authority will look for restoration proposals to include proposals for public access to and across the Smallmead area as a whole, including (but not necessarily limited to) the dedication as public rights of way of the claimed paths shown on Inset Map F, or equivalents.

Filling

- P8.12 Imported filling materials will be required to achieve the above form of restoration. The types of waste to be used in filling must have regard to the Environment Agency's Groundwater Protection Policy and to the fact that the site at present lies within the floodplain.



PREVIOUS MINERAL WORKING
NOW PARTIALLY RESTORED

SITE OF
PROPOSED
READING
BUSINESS
PARK

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE	
INSET MAP	PREFERRED AREA
F	8 - SMALLMEAD, READING

PREFERRED AREA 9 : SHEEPHOUSE FARM, MAIDENHEAD

Location and use: Farmland immediately north-east of Maidenhead, within the extensive permitted extraction area of Sheephouse Farm and Spencers Farm.

Site area: 10 hectares

Deposit: Valley gravel

Potential yield: 550,000 tonnes (BCC/operator estimate)

Planning history

P9.1 An extensive area between Maidenhead and Cookham Rise was granted planning permission for sand and gravel in stages between 1951 and 1975. Most of this Preferred Area was expressly excluded from the permitted areas, because at the time it was being protected for possible construction of a new east-to-west link road. The land is no longer protected for that purpose.

Site planning requirements

(i) Protection of living conditions

P9.2 No extraction will be allowed close to houses in Elmwood, Maidenhead Court Park, West Mead and Aldebury Road, or near Cuba Cottages. Adequate protection, in the form of screen planting and/or noise attenuation bunds, must be provided to safeguard the amenities of these houses.

(ii) Access and processing issues

P9.3 The site should be served via internal roads or conveyor to the existing processing plant which serves the area already permitted. Some additional screening of the plant site from adjacent public rights of way would be desirable. Lorries travelling to and from the site should follow existing established routes: to the site via Ray Park Road and Blackamoor Lane, and from it via Summerleaze Road and Ray Park Avenue. Vehicle access into or out of the site via Lower Cookham Road will not be permitted. Contributions will be sought towards the construction of the proposed link between Blackamoor Lane and the 'Fire Station Roundabout' on the A4.

(iii) Public rights of way

P9.4 The site is crossed by several rights of way, forming part of a complex network of footpaths between Maidenhead and Cookham. Great care must be taken at all times to protect the integrity of this network throughout extraction and restoration operations. The more westerly of the two north-south footpaths must be maintained on its current alignment, whilst the more easterly of these footpaths must be maintained on its existing or a temporarily-diverted alignment at all times during extraction and restoration, and links must be maintained to the other footpaths crossing the site. Diversions of the paths to the boundaries of the site may be acceptable provided that wide and well-surfaced paths are provided as replacements - even if only temporary replacements. However, in general any temporary diversions should follow as closely as possible the existing routes of the rights of way concerned.

(iv) Archaeology

P9.5 Archaeological evaluation of the site will be required prior to the determination of any application for mineral extraction.

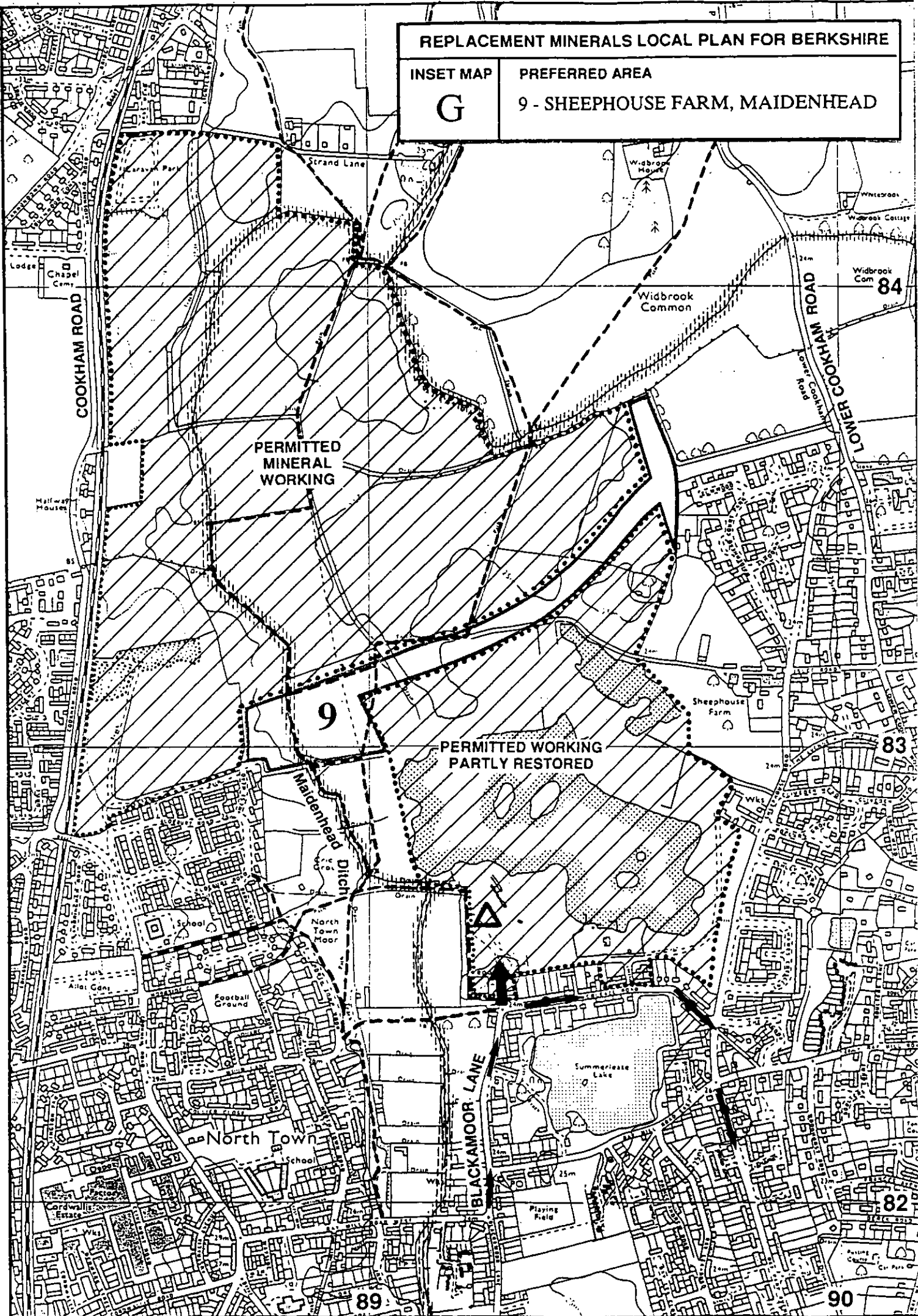
REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP

PREFERRED AREA

G

9 - SHEEPHOUSE FARM, MAIDENHEAD



(v) Protection of trees and hedges, and of Wildlife Heritage Site

- P9.6 Existing trees and hedges along the north-eastern and south-western boundaries of the Preferred Area should be retained and protected throughout the period of extraction and restoration. As part of any proposals for extraction, the applicant will be required to indicate the steps proposed to ensure the protection and retention of the poplar trees in the hedgerow which forms the north-eastern boundary of the site; to carry out remedial work where required, and the steps proposed to ensure the continued screening of the site if any of the poplars are found to be dead or dying.
- P9.7 Maidenhead Ditch is a Wildlife Heritage Site. Any planning application must include proposals to ensure that the Wildlife Heritage Site is not adversely affected by any operation related to the extraction of minerals from the site.

(vi) Water resources and flooding

- P9.8 The flow and quality of nearby watercourses, and in particular the Maidenhead Ditch, should be maintained and protected. In any application for mineral extraction, measures must also be taken to ensure river control; to protect water resources; to minimise risks of pollution; and to address concerns relating to flood storage and flood routeing.
- P9.9 The site is within the outer protection zone of both the Cookham Dean and the College Road (Maidenhead) public water supply boreholes, and care will be needed to avoid pollution of these sources.
- P9.10 The site is also affected by the alignments of new floodbanks proposed by the Environment Agency as part of the Maidenhead, Windsor & Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme. The integrity of these banks, if and when constructed, or alternative banks which may be constructed in accordance with a permission granted by the relevant planning authority, must be protected during extraction and restoration.
- P9.11 The principles set out in paragraphs KV16 and KV19 on page 85 should also apply to this site.

Timing and phasing

- P9.12 The extensive permitted area between Maidenhead and Cookham still has many years of reserves remaining. The local planning authority will expect the working of this Preferred Area to be integrated with the working of the area already permitted. A broad south-to-north direction of working across the wider area has been approved, and working is now approaching this Preferred Area. It would therefore be expected that this Area would be phased into an early stage of the remaining operations of the Sheephouse Farm/Spencers Farm area. The local planning authority will not permit more than one active mineral extraction operation to take place in the Preferred Area and adjacent permitted areas at any one time.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

- P9.13 Because the site is in the Green Belt, it is particularly important that high environmental standards are maintained, and that the site is well restored.
- P9.14 A sailing lake has been established on the worked-out area immediately south of this Preferred Area. Restoration to a lake is also approved for the area to the north, but no after-use has yet been agreed for this lake.
- P9.15 The Preferred Area should be restored to dry land, to provide a 'land bridge' between the two lakes. Restoration should be directed towards an after-use of informal recreation, in association with adjacent land.
- P9.16 The whole area currently performs an important function as open land, criss-crossed with public rights of way, readily accessible from the centre of Maidenhead (including a section of

the Cookham-to-Bray 'Green Way'). This function must continue during and after extraction and restoration. To secure the future of the wider area as a 'lung' for informal recreation serving Maidenhead, a restoration and after-use plan for the entire Sheepphouse Farm/ Spencers Farm area should be submitted as part of any planning application for extraction from this Preferred Area. This should take account of the existing approved proposals for the land south of Preferred Area 9. An increase in tree cover generally should be provided. The location and distribution of new tree-planting should have regard to the ability of trees to screen and to demarcate, and to provide attractive margins to lakes and paths; but regard should also be paid to the desirability so far as possible of not interrupting prevailing winds over sailing areas.

- P9.17 Restoration proposals must also provide for the retention and enhancement of the present rights of way network across the area, although some changes to the present alignment of rights of way may be acceptable to allow for the creation of the northern lake. A high standard of widths, surfaces and footpath infrastructure (gates, stiles etc) will be expected. New footpath links into the site should also be provided, for example from the railway bridge in Cookham Road. As part of the restoration proposals for the permitted and Preferred areas, consideration should be given to the provision of a small car park/picnic area located so as to facilitate public access to the rights of way network.
- P9.18 The local planning authority will expect any planning permission for extraction from this Preferred Area to be linked into a legal agreement to secure the agreed restoration package for the permitted extraction area. The authority will also seek to secure the eventual removal of the processing plant at Blackamoor Lane through this legal agreement.
- P9.19 Restoration and after-use proposals for this area must have regard to relevant policies of the Green Belt Local Plan for Berkshire and the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Local Plan.

Filling

- P9.20 Restoration of this Area to dry land may require the import of some filling materials. Because the area is liable to flooding, it is suitable for filling with inert materials only.

- *Planning permission for the extraction of sand and gravel from this site was granted in November 1998.*

PREFERRED AREA 10 : MANOR FARM, SLOUGH

Location and use: Farmland (largely disused at present) south of Slough and the M4, and adjacent to Slough sewage works.

Site area: 19 hectares

Deposit: Valley gravel

Potential yield: 1,130,000 tonnes (BCC estimate)

Planning history

- P10.1 This Preferred Area was shown as part of a 'Prospect Area' in the original Minerals Local Plan (1984). It was the subject of an application for extraction in 1987 to allow the formation of sludge lagoons in association with the adjacent sewage works. The application was refused in January 1988 solely on highways grounds relating to the proposed access through residential areas.
- P10.2 The northern part of the site might be required for the widening of the M4 motorway, the most recent proposals for which also envisage the reconstruction of Junction 7 to the north-west of the site. The land immediately to the south forms part of the site of the Maidenhead, Windsor & Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme - see Appendix 6.
- P10.3 The western boundary of the Preferred Area is the boundary between the former county of Berkshire (now Slough UA) and Buckinghamshire. The land immediately to the west was proposed as a Preferred Area in the Deposit Draft of Buckinghamshire's Replacement Minerals Local Plan (1990). Following consideration of the Inspector's Report concerning that Plan, Buckinghamshire County Council omitted this site from the final version of its Plan.

Site planning requirements

P10.4 Although this is a relatively small site, extraction would raise a number of complex issues. Accordingly, an Environmental Statement will be required in connection with any application for mineral extraction. The following issues and requirements should be addressed in the Environmental Statement:

- (i) Contaminated soils, groundwater pollution, and other hydrological issues

P10.5 Parts of the site have been affected by long periods of sludge disposal, leading to contamination of the soil by heavy metals. Any planning application for extraction must ascertain the extent of this pollution, and show that the proposals for extraction and restoration have made suitable provision for its containment, or for the satisfactory disposal elsewhere of the contaminated soils.

P10.6 The issue is of particular importance because of the need to prevent any spread of contaminants during flood surges, and to prevent any spread of pollutants to the nearby groundwater abstraction source at Dorney.

P10.7 The flow and water quality of nearby watercourses must be maintained and protected. In any application for mineral extraction, measures must also be taken to ensure river control; to protect water resources; and to address concerns relating to flood storage and routing. The principles set out in paragraphs KV16 and KV19 on page 85 should also apply to this site.

- (ii) Co-ordination with proposals on adjacent land

P10.8 The site could be used either as a borrow pit in association with the projected widening of the M4, or as a general market supplier. In the latter event, access would be via Lake End Road (Dorney), and gravel lorries would be routed northwards to the A4. To protect highway and conservation interests, Buckinghamshire County Council has indicated that under present conditions an upper production limit of 100,000 tonnes a year should be imposed if this access is used.

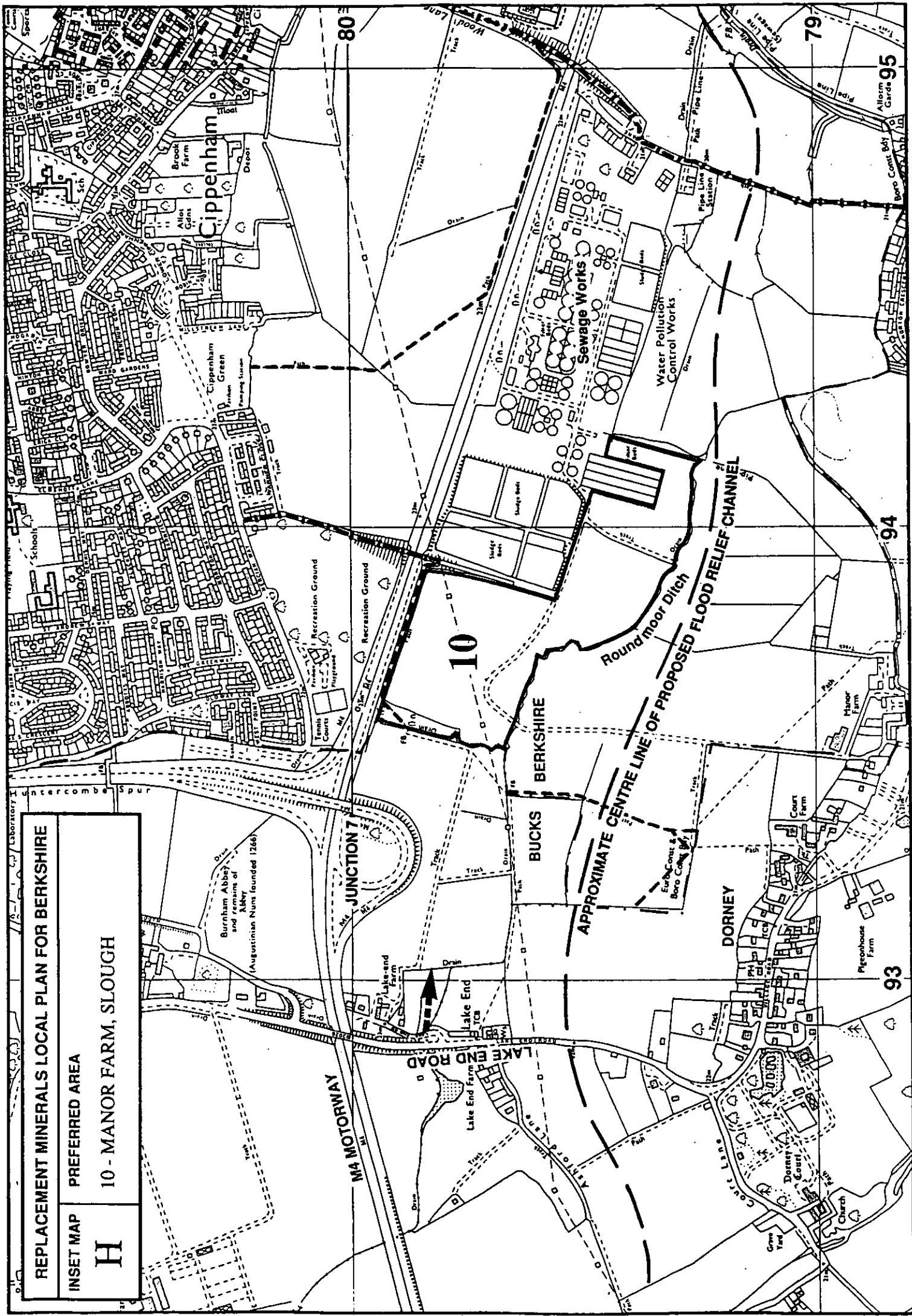
REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP

H

PREFERRED AREA

10 - MANOR FARM, SLOUGH



- P10.9 If the former Bucks' Preferred Area is ever reinstated in a future review of that county's Local Plan, the land on either side of the Bucks/Slough boundary should ideally be treated as a single site. Any application for the site in Slough Borough should indicate how it could link to the working of the adjacent land in Buckinghamshire.
- P10.10 In any event, access arrangements for Preferred Area 10 (if it is used as a general market supplier) must be as described above, unless the Environment Agency agrees to the site being extracted in conjunction with the flood relief channel. No access northwards through the housing areas of Chalvey/Cippenham would be acceptable. Extraction would not be acceptable from the Bucks and the Slough sites simultaneously, unless the two sites were required simultaneously as M4 borrow pits.
- P10.11 The land to the south of Area 10 forms part of the proposed Flood Alleviation Scheme. Extraction and restoration of Area 10 should ideally be phased to co-ordinate with the construction of the flood channel (if permitted), in which event surplus materials from the flood channel could be used in the restoration of this Preferred Area. If co-ordination between the two schemes is not possible, proposals for Area 10 must show how they relate to the proposals for construction and landscaping of the flood alleviation scheme.
- P10.12 Permission has recently (1994) been granted on appeal for mineral extraction from nearby land at Dorney (Bucks) to form a rowing course for Eton College. The nature and timing of extraction from Preferred Area 10 should have regard to the details (including the details of access and timing) of this proposal. In considering any application for extraction from the Preferred area, the local planning authority will have regard to the possible cumulative impacts of simultaneous mineral working (or related activities) from nearby sites on either side of the local authority boundary. Proposals for extraction from the Preferred Area should demonstrate measures to minimise such impacts.

(iii) Processing

- P10.13 A new processing plant would be required to serve this site, if it is to be used as a general market supplier. A location close to and to the south of the sewage works would minimise the spread of intrusive activities. Care must be taken to ensure that the plant is screened from view from outside the site, including views from Dorney Common and Lake End Road.
- P10.14 If the adjacent land in Buckinghamshire is ever reinstated as a Preferred Area in a future review of that county's Minerals Local Plan, any subsequent application for Preferred Area 10 should seek to co-ordinate the choice of the plant site, so that it is positioned where (having regard to both operational and environmental considerations) it may most acceptably serve the combined Bucks/Slough site.

(iv) Nature of filling materials to be used in site restoration

- P10.15 See under 'Filling' below.

(v) Other issues

- P10.16 Other issues to be taken into account either in the Environmental Statement or elsewhere in the preparation and submission of any planning application include
- (a) The need to retain and protect the small area of woodland on the western boundary of the Area, the screen planting along the motorway boundary of the site, and Roundmoor Ditch on the southern boundary;
 - (b) The possibility of burying the power line which crosses the site from east to west;
 - (c) The fact that the site is in the Green Belt, and that it is therefore of particular importance that high environmental standards are maintained and that the site is well restored;
 - (d) The need for buffer strips to protect the adjacent sewage plant and apparatus; and

- (e) The need to safeguard the public rights of way network within and adjacent to the site throughout extraction and restoration operations.

P10.17 As a result of its previous land uses, there is believed to be no archaeological constraint associated with this site. An archaeological evaluation will therefore not be required prior to the determination of any planning application.

Timing and phasing

P10.18 See the comments above regarding the co-ordination with operations on adjacent land. The timing of the M4 widening and the construction of the flood relief channel are not at present known with certainty¹. Neither is it known how much (if any) of the material from this site might be required in connection with the motorway widening, or over what period any extraction for this purpose might have to take place.

P10.19 With an upper limit of supply to the general market of 100,000 tonnes, extraction from this site would take around 11 years.

P10.20 The local planning authority will not permit more than one active mineral extraction operation in the Preferred Area at any one time.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

P10.21 Restoration should be co-ordinated across the wider area including, if appropriate, the land in Buckinghamshire and the proposals for the margins of the flood relief scheme if it is implemented. In preparing restoration proposals, regard should be paid to any continuing need of Thames Water for additional sludge lagoons for the sewage works on part of the area. Elsewhere, restoration should be directed primarily to nature conservation (although not open lakes), and/or informal recreation use. Close integration will be required between the proposals for restoring, shaping and landscaping this site and equivalent proposals for the flood relief channel.

P10.22 Restoration should make provision for the re-routeing, and upgrading to a bridleway, of the public footpath which crosses the site, in order to link into the nearby bridleway over the M4 and to new bridleways proposed further south as part of the flood alleviation scheme. This would then provide an unbroken cycling and riding route out of Slough to Dorney and beyond, to complement the existing route further east between Slough and Eton Wick.

Filling

P10.23 Imported fill will be required to assist in achieving the above restoration proposals. Information available on the underlying geology suggests that, with appropriate lining and other engineering measures, the use of putrescible waste in restoration could be acceptable in technical terms. If filling with such materials is proposed, the environmental impacts would have to be considered in detail in the Environmental Statement. The acceptability of using putrescible waste would be assessed by the local planning authority in the context of the particular planning application in question, having regard, among other things, to the technical details proposed, the environmental impacts of the proposed filling, and the nature of the prevailing policies for waste disposal at the time of the application.

P10.24 It is stressed that no commitment is given in this Plan to accepting the principle of using putrescible waste in the restoration of this site.

¹ See Appendix 6 for more up-to date details regarding the timing of construction of the flood relief channel.

PREFERRED AREA 11 : RIDING COURT FARM, DATCHET

Location and use: Farmland to the south-east of Slough, north of and immediately adjacent to the M4, and north of Datchet

Site area: 40 hectares
Deposit: Valley gravel
Potential yield: 1,750,000 tonnes (BCC estimate)

Planning history

P11.1 There have been no applications for mineral extraction from this land in the past. The area was shown as being within a 'Restricted Area' in the original Minerals Local Plan because of its high agricultural quality. This designation is no longer regarded as an over-riding constraint against mineral extraction.

Site planning requirements

P11.2 Because of the size of this site and the many issues which extraction would raise, an Environmental Statement will be required in association with any application for mineral extraction. The following issues and requirements should be addressed in the Environmental Statement:

(i) Protection to listed buildings and existing occupiers on the site

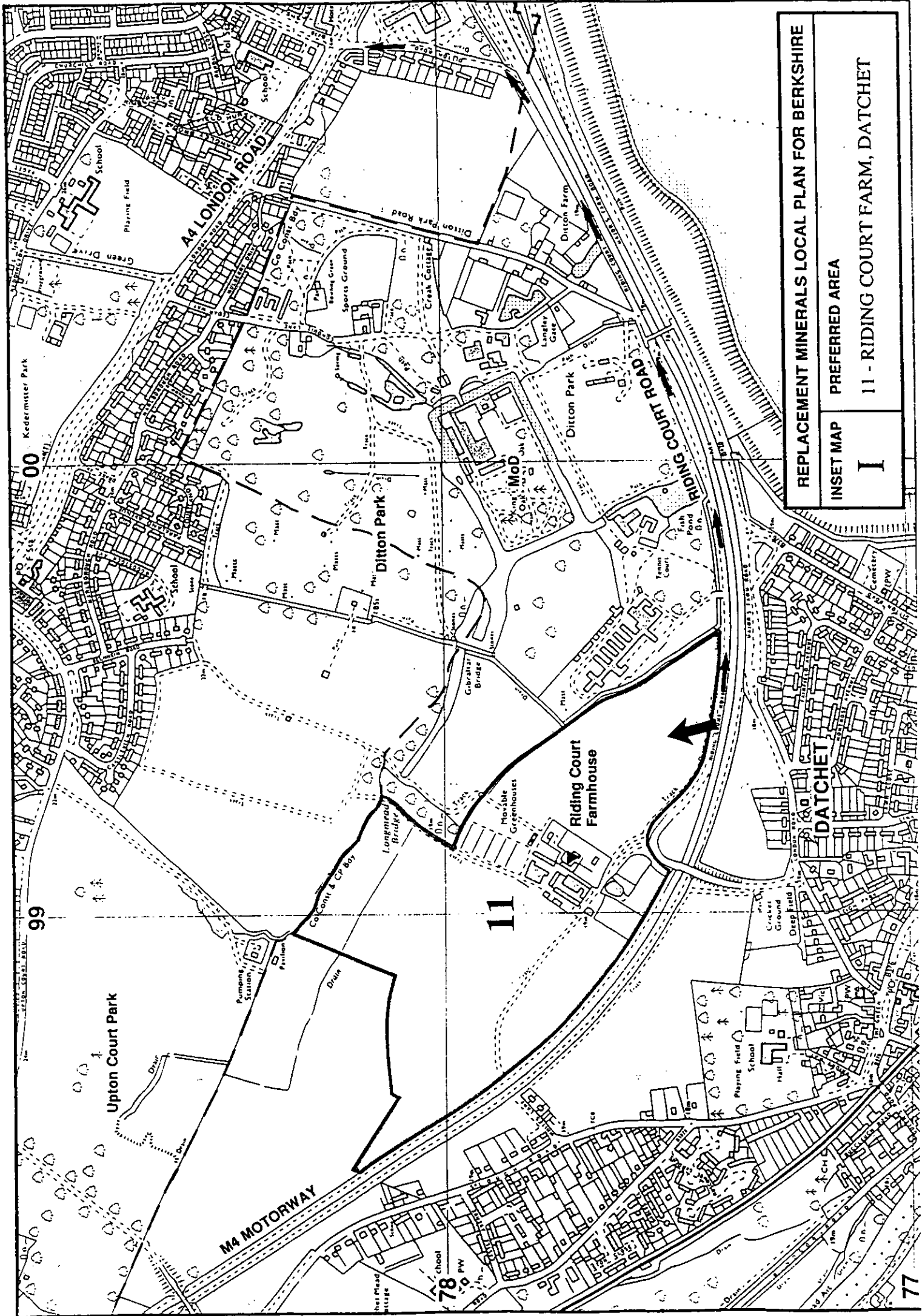
P11.3 Riding Court Farmhouse is a listed building, while former farm buildings within the site have recently been converted to office use. Adequate protection, in the form of buffer strips, screen planting and/or noise attenuation bunds, must be provided to protect the listed building and its setting, and to protect the occupiers of the houses and restored farm buildings within the site.

(ii) Impact on houses in Slough

P11.4 Adequate protection must be provided to protect the amenities of the houses and school some 55 metres to the north of the site in Slough. Particular regard must be paid to minimising the visual and other impacts of extraction and restoration operations, including the impacts of noise and dust. At the same time, existing views from the houses of Windsor Castle and Datchet Church should be protected. Advance planting to screen workings on the site must be designed so as not to obscure these longer views. Trees planted within existing hedges, or within hedges proposed to screen operations, could be used to improve and frame these views. Existing woodlands which currently help to screen the site from view from the north must be retained at all times (see point (vi) below).

(iii) Relationship to Upton Court Park

P11.5 Upton Court Park north-west of the Preferred Area is a well-used recreation area. The use and enjoyment of the Park must be protected during the working and restoration of the Preferred Area. Although there is no authorised access into the Preferred Area from the Park, nevertheless measures should be taken to ensure adequate separation between the two areas, and to minimise risks (e.g. from plant, machinery or water bodies) to members of the public who (albeit unauthorised) may seek to enter the extraction site from the Park.



REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP I

11 - RIDING COURT FARM, DATCHET

PREFERRED AREA

(iv) Processing

P11.6 A new processing plant will be needed to serve this area. This should be located to minimise noise and visual intrusion. A location close to, but screened from, the motorway would appear most suitable. The plant should also be screened from more distant views from Slough and Datchet.

(v) Access and routeing issues

P11.7 Access should be via Riding Court Road and Ditton Road to the A4 and M4. A new access should be provided to Riding Court Road towards the eastern boundary of the site. Use of the existing access to Riding Court Farmhouse by vehicles serving the extraction site will not be acceptable. Depending on the scale of traffic generation, some minor improvements may be required to Riding Court Road. A legal agreement will be needed to secure necessary routeing and signing to and from this site, and to prevent gravel traffic from the site travelling through the centre of Datchet.

(vi) Protection of woodland

P11.8 Existing woodland, copses and hedges within and adjacent to the site must be retained and protected at all times. Arrangements should be made for the continuing management of existing trees, copses and hedges before, during and after the period of extraction and restoration.

(vii) Relationship to other nearby land-uses

P11.9 Steps must be taken to safeguard the established operations at the nearby Ministry of Defence (MoD) establishment at Ditton Park. Early discussions with MoD over this issue are advised. Steps must also be taken to safeguard the environment of, and working conditions in, the adjacent Computer Associates offices at Ditton Park, immediately to the east of the Preferred Area. The Environmental Statement should indicate the steps taken to ensure that the interests of these nearby users are not adversely affected by gravel extraction and associated activities.

(viii) Archaeology

P11.10 Only limited archaeological information is available concerning this area at present. An archaeological evaluation will therefore be required as part of the Environmental Statement.

(ix) Protection of agriculture

P11.11 This land is high grade farmland, and proposals for extraction and restoration of the Preferred Area should take account of the need to minimise disruption to other farming activities on adjacent land, and to ensure that the land is restored to its previous standard so far as it is practicable to do so.

(x) Nature of materials to be used in site restoration

P11.12 See under 'Filling' below.

(xi) Water resources and flooding

P11.13 The flow and water quality of nearby watercourses, including the supply to the canalised moat at Ditton Park, must be maintained and protected. In any application for mineral extraction, measures must be taken to minimise risks of pollution, and to address concerns relating to flood storage and flood routeing. The principles set out in paragraphs KV16 and KV19 on page 85 should also apply to this site.

(xii) Other issues

P11.14 Other issues to be taken into account in the preparation and submission of any planning application include

- (a) The need to safeguard living conditions in Datchet south of the M4.
- (b) The fact that the site is in the Green Belt, and that it is therefore of particular importance that high environmental standards are maintained and that the site is well restored.
- (c) The need to take account of proposals for widening the M4 adjacent to the site.
- (d) The need to maintain the integrity of existing screen planting adjacent to the motorway, and to protect, manage and retain existing woodland elsewhere within or adjacent to the site boundaries.
- (e) The need to take account of the fact that land to the east of the Preferred Area is included on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, as forming part of the original parkland of Ditton Park.

Timing and phasing

P11.15 In view of the long lead-time needed to prepare a site of this size for extraction, it is unlikely that extraction could start before the mid- or late 1990s at the earliest. To provide for the steady release of sites through the period covered by this Plan, this site is considered as more suitable for release in the later part of that period.

P11.16 Operations should be staged so that the areas closest to Upton Court Park are extracted and restored at an early stage, to minimise the period of disturbance to nearby residents and to users of the Park. Operations should also be designed to minimise the period of disturbance to the complex of former farm buildings at Riding Court.

P11.17 At typical rates, extraction from a site of this size might take about 9 years. Any planning application should put forward proposals for phased extraction and restoration designed to minimise the area affected by extraction operations at any one time.

P11.18 The local planning authority will not permit more than one active mineral extraction operation in the Preferred Area at any one time.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

P11.19 This is a relatively featureless landscape at present, and advance planting and restoration should be designed to enhance its appearance. The area should be restored to high-grade farmland, with additional woodland and hedge- and tree-planting to reinforce the landscape structure and diversify its appearance and wildlife interest, and to enhance the setting of the farm buildings. New planting should be designed to retain and enhance existing views of and across the site, whilst at the same time screening glimpses of the motorway from the houses to the north.

P11.20 The final levels of the restored land should be designed so that any measures needed to screen restoration activities from the houses to the north will not themselves be unduly obtrusive. Account must also be taken of the site's relationship with Upton Court Park, and the levels of the restored land must be very carefully designed to ensure that the landform of the restored area is not perceived as an alien intrusion in this generally flat landscape.

Filling

P11.21 Imported fill will be required to assist in achieving the above restoration proposals. Information available on the underlying geology suggests that, with appropriate lining and other engineering measures, the use of putrescible waste in restoration may be acceptable in technical terms. If filling with such materials is proposed, the Environmental Statement

should present detailed analysis of the impacts of such filling on living conditions in nearby residential areas and on the environment generally, and the measures proposed to ameliorate those impacts. The acceptability of using putrescible waste would be assessed by the local planning authority in the context of the particular planning application in question, having regard, among other things, to the technical details proposed, the environmental impacts of the proposed filling, and the nature of the prevailing policies for waste disposal at the time of the application.

P11.22 It is stressed that no commitment is given in this Plan to accepting the principle of using putrescible waste in the restoration of this site.

PREFERRED AREA 12 : NORTH OF HORTON

Location and use: Farmland east of the Queen Mother Reservoir between Colnbrook to the north and Horton to the south.

Site area: 96 hectares
Deposit: Valley gravel
Potential yield: 3,800,000 tonnes (BCC estimate)

Planning history

- P12.1 Most of this Preferred Area was shown as a 'Restricted Area' in the original Minerals Local Plan (1984), because of its high agricultural quality. This is no longer an overriding constraint against its selection for mineral extraction. A small extension of the Preferred Area on to land that was in Buckinghamshire until boundary changes in 1995 was incorporated into this Plan through the Alterations approved in 1997.
- P12.2 The land immediately to the east of the main part of this site was identified as Preferred Area 18 in the 1984 Plan. In April 1992, the former County Council agreed to grant planning permission for extraction from this land, subject to the prior completion of a legal agreement¹.
- P12.3 The site lies in the Colne Valley Park.

Site planning requirements

- P12.4 Because of the size of this Preferred Area, and because of the many issues which extraction here would raise, an Environmental Statement will be required in connection with any application for mineral extraction. The following issues and requirements should be addressed in the Statement:
- (i) Impact on Colnbrook and Horton villages
- P12.5 Appropriate measures must be taken, in the form of buffer strips, screen planting and/or noise attenuation bunds, to protect the amenities of houses and schools in Colnbrook and Horton (including Horton Road and Mill Lane) adjacent or close to the site boundaries, and to protect the recreation ground adjacent to the southern end of the site. Specifically, no more than minimal extraction will be permitted in the area of the site bounded by Drift Way, Rayners Close and the Colnbrook primary school, the Colne Brook, and the former county boundary², and extraction in this part of the site will only be permitted in the areas furthest from the houses and school. However, this part of the site may be used, in whole or in part, for necessary screening measures to provide a buffer to working within the remainder of the Preferred Area. Particular regard must be paid to ensuring that extraction causes no harm to the structure, character or immediate setting of any of the listed buildings close to the site boundaries (see Inset Map J). All peripheral trees and hedges should be retained, and additional advance planting carried out, especially along Horton Road, to screen operations on the site without shutting out attractive longer-distance views across and beyond the site.
- (ii) Archaeology
- P12.6 The land to the east of the Preferred Area is known to contain some areas of considerable archaeological importance, and the Preferred Area itself is regarded as an area of high archaeological potential. Evaluation of the Preferred Area will therefore be required as part of the Environmental Statement, to provide basic information before any application for extraction is determined. The results of this evaluation must be taken into account in formulating extraction proposals. Known archaeological interests on the land to the east must also be safeguarded.

¹ Following completion of the legal agreement, planning permission for extraction from this land to the east was granted in 1998.

² Now the boundary between the Boroughs of Slough and Windsor & Maidenhead.

(iii) Processing of material and access

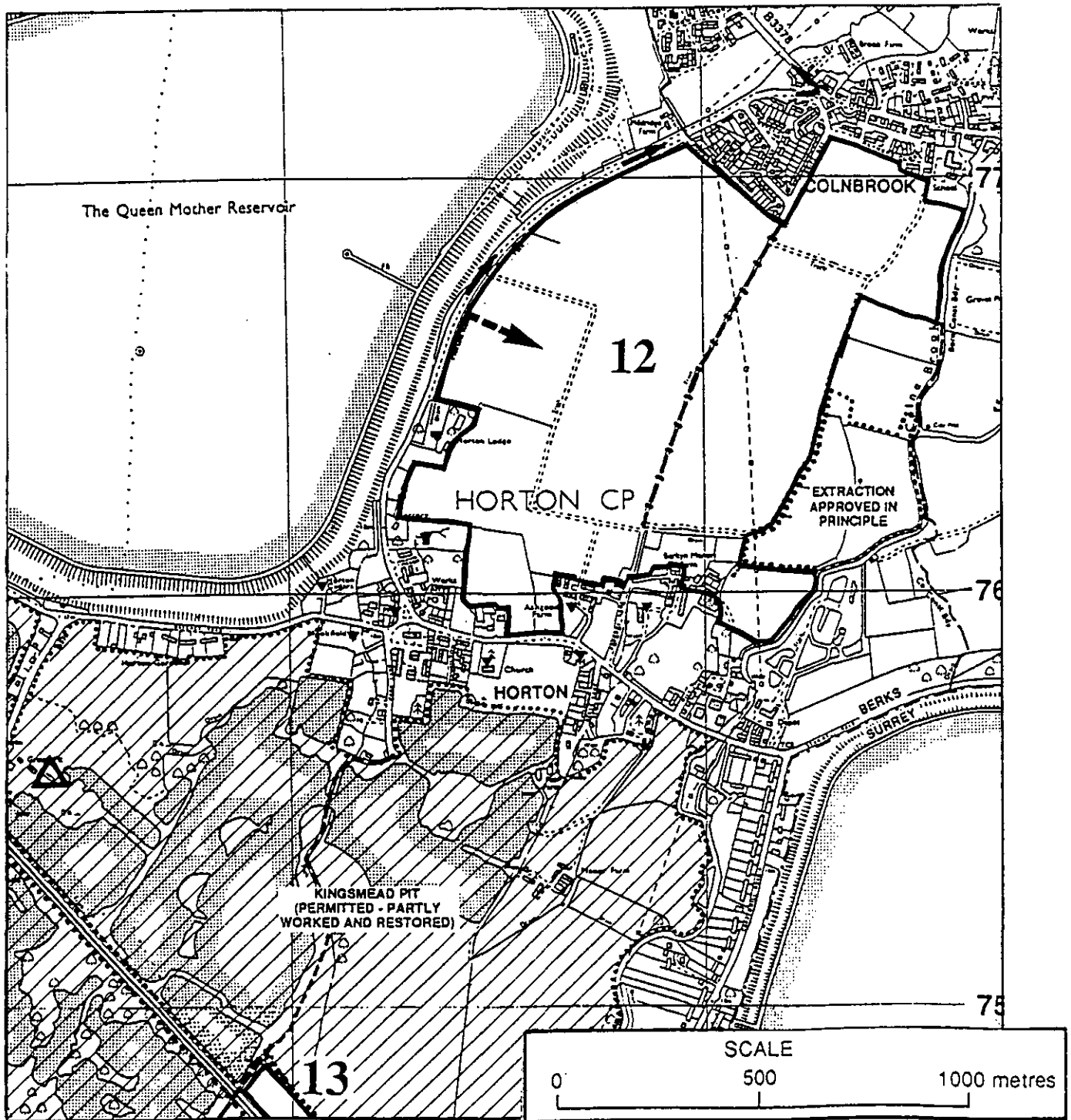
- P12.7 It is acknowledged that the current permission for retention of the processing plant at Poyle (outside and to the north-east of this Preferred Area) relates only to the duration of extraction from the land to the east of the Preferred Area, and that there is likely to be local objection to any longer retention of that plant. Nevertheless, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with the continued use of an existing access and plant to process material from this Preferred Area: just as there would be with the establishment of a new plant on a relatively open site - which would be required if the Poyle plant were not available to serve this Preferred Area.
- P12.8 The alternative to Poyle is for material from this site to be processed at a new low-level plant positioned in a suitable location within the Preferred Area. The location for such a plant should be chosen to ensure that it is seen against a backdrop of trees when viewed from public vantage points, rather than breaking the skyline. Planting and other measures to screen the plant area and internal haul roads should be designed so far as possible to restrict views from public areas on the nearby reservoir embankment, as well as from ground level.
- P12.9 The Environmental Statement should consider the relative merits of these alternatives, and provide clear conclusions to support the processing location proposed in association with any application for extraction from this area. In doing so, the Statement should have regard to all relevant prevailing policies of the appropriate mineral planning authorities.
- P12.10 Without prejudice to that consideration, it is considered that any material to be processed at Poyle must be transported there by internal roads and/or conveyor only. Alternatively, if material is processed within the site, vehicular access should be to Horton Road at a suitable point between Horton Lodge and Mildridge Farm. All vehicles leaving the site by this access would be required to turn right, and follow a haul route direct to the B3378 and A4. No gravel traffic from the site will be allowed to travel through Horton or Colnbrook villages. A legal agreement will be necessary to secure these arrangements.

(iv) Flooding and related issues

- P12.11 The site lies outside and immediately to the north of the floodplain of the River Thames, but wholly within the floodplain of the River Colne. Some flood alleviation for this area has recently been provided by the regrading of the Colne Brook, but full alleviation (to cater for a 1 in 100-year flood) will not be achieved until associated works are carried out within the Colne system. In 1992, the then National Rivers Authority anticipated that these works would not be carried out until the beginning of 1996 at the earliest.
- P12.12 Proposals to work this site must take account of local and wider flooding issues. The Environmental Statement accompanying any application must assess the impact of the proposed operations on existing flooding problems, and demonstrate the steps taken to ensure that those problems would not be worsened as a result of extraction. In particular, proposals must be designed so as not to obstruct the flow of flood water across the site, or to give rise to a loss of flood storage capacity.
- P12.13 In addition, the wider area is at risk from flooding as a result of increases in groundwater levels. The form of restoration proposed (see below) would involve filling below the level of the water-table, which may give rise to a build-up of groundwater levels on the up-gradient side of the site. The Environmental Statement should therefore consider the impacts of filling on the levels and flows of groundwater in the surrounding area, and put forward appropriate measures to prevent any unacceptable changes in groundwater levels or flows in groundwater-fed streams, ditches or springs, and to maintain groundwater flow to the south. The impact on groundwater quality must also be considered.
- P12.13A In this connection, care must also be taken to protect the integrity of the South West London Waterbodies proposed Ramsar site and potential Special Protection Area, which includes the SSSIs at Wraysbury Lakes to the south-west of the site.
- P12.14 Proposals for extraction and restoration must ensure that the yield and quality of groundwater are maintained at the abstraction point at Berkyn Manor.

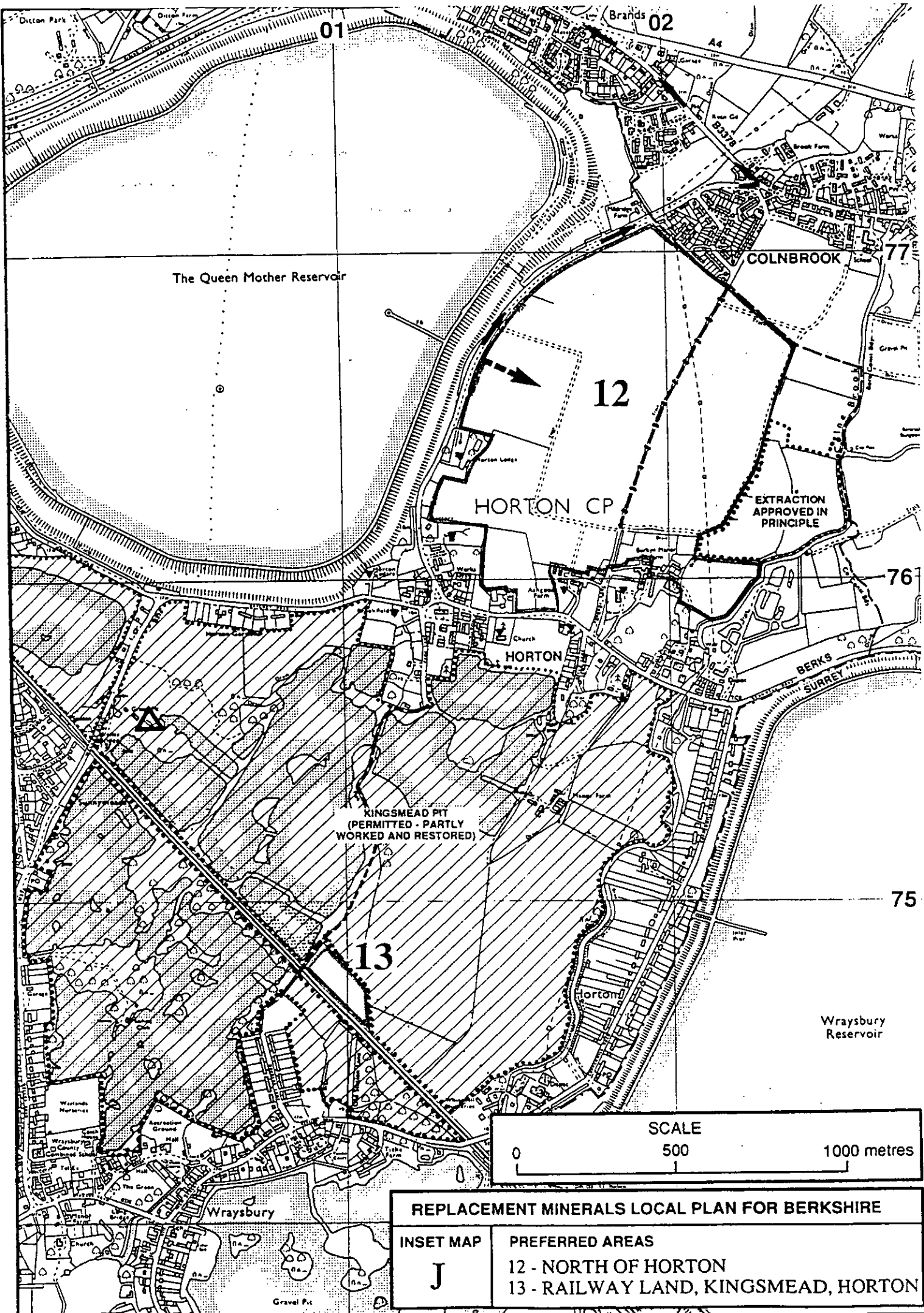
Insert to Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire - Incorporating the Alterations adopted in December 1997 and May 2001.

Due to a printing error on page 131 of the above plan the site boundary of Preferred Area 12, shown on Insert Map J, has not been accurately depicted. The map shown on this insert shows the accurate site boundary of Preferred Area 12, as adopted in December 1997, and as such replaces the site boundary shown on page 131 of the Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire (2001).



11th November 2002

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE	
INSET MAP	PREFERRED AREAS
J	12 - NORTH OF HORTON
	13 - RAILWAY LAND, KINGSMEAD, HORTON



REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE	
INSET MAP	PREFERRED AREAS
J	12 - NORTH OF HORTON 13 - RAILWAY LAND, KINGSMEAD, HORTON

P12.15 The principles set out in paragraphs KV16 and KV19 on page 85 should also apply to this site.

(v) Running sands

P12.16 It has been suggested that there may be running sands in this locality. The Environmental Statement should investigate the extent of any such sands which may be affected by the working of this Preferred Area, and demonstrate the steps taken to minimise any risks of ground instability resulting from the movement of sands into the working area.

(vi) Other issues

P12.17 Other requirements to be taken into account either in the Environmental Statement or elsewhere in the preparation and submission of any planing application include:

- (a) The fact that the site is in the Green Belt and the Colne Valley Regional Park, and that it is therefore of particular importance that high environmental standards are maintained and that the site is well restored.
- (b) The bridleway running approximately north-south across the centre of the site is part of the 'Colne Valley Way', a regional route linking the Thames at Staines to the Grand Union Canal at Uxbridge. The bridleway must be protected at all times, though its temporary diversion during the relevant phase of operations on the site may be acceptable.
- (c) The route of, and access to, the overhead power line crossing the site from north to south must be safeguarded at all times.
- (d) Regard must be paid to the requirements of Thames Water in respect of mineral working close to the embankment of the Queen Mother Reservoir.

Timing and phasing

P12.18 The timing and phasing of extraction at this Preferred area will be carefully controlled to ensure the following:

- * that the Area is not worked simultaneously with the land to the east (the land on which planning permission in principle was granted in April 1992). It is envisaged that this eastern land will take about 3 years to extract from start to finish, which indicates that extraction from Area 12 would not be acceptable before about 1998 at the earliest.
- * that working does not take place simultaneously on land within Area 12 which lies immediately north of Horton, and on the part of the permitted Kingsmead pit which lies immediately to the south of the village.
- * that working of this site would not unreasonably prolong extraction and restoration operations at the Kingsmead pit (for example, through the Kingsmead pit closing temporarily to allow this site top be worked first). However, simultaneous operation of this site and Kingsmead would in principle be acceptable, subject to the previous point.
- * that proposals for phased extraction and restoration are designed to minimise the area within the site affected by the operations at any one time.

P12.19 As indicated above, the timing of the release of this land for extraction will also have regard to the progress of measures to improve local flooding problems.

P12.20 The scheme of working for the site should have regard to

- * the need to give maximum opportunity for advance screen planting to take effect
- * the need to avoid prolonging operations close to either Colnbrook or Horton villages

- * the location of the processing plant
- * the considerations set out in paragraph P12.18.

P12.21 The local planning authorities will not permit more than one active mineral extraction operation in the Preferred Area at any one time.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

P12.22 The local planning authorities will require the highest standards of restoration and after-care of this Green Belt site, and will seek to secure appropriate longer-term management of it.

P12.23 Much of the site is high-grade agricultural land. High standard restoration to agriculture, with a strong structure of new woodlands, copses and hedgerows, is therefore the ideal, and would accord with the prevailing policies for the Colne Valley Park.

P12.24 Those policies also seek to increase opportunities for countryside recreation. In the context of a primarily agricultural after-use of this site, this aim would best be met by the provision of new public rights of way - both bridleways and footpaths - through the site, and the enhancement of existing rights of way. In particular, a new public footpath should be provided (if it is not already available) alongside the Colne Brook linking to other public rights of way to the north and south; and the surface and drainage of the bridleway which forms part of the Colne Valley Way should be improved, and additional planting provided to enhance its setting. Measures should also be taken to limit its use by agricultural vehicles, for example by the provision of a new and separate track for those vehicles, physically separated and screened from the bridleway.

P12.25 More organised forms of countryside recreation are less likely to be favoured, above all because they would result in the effective loss of an area of high-grade agricultural land, and are likely to conflict with the prevailing policies in respect of recreation development in the countryside.

P12.26 Restoration of the small part of the site east of the farm buildings at Berkyn Manor Farm should be designed to link in with the proposed form of extraction for the adjacent area to the north, where mineral extraction has already been approved in principle.

Filling

P12.27 Information available on the underlying geology suggests that, with appropriate lining and other engineering measures, the use of putrescible waste in restoration could be acceptable in technical terms. If filling with such materials is proposed, its environmental impacts (including impacts on Horton and Colnbrook villages) would have to be considered in detail in the Environmental Statement. The acceptability of using putrescible waste would be assessed by the local planning authorities in the context of the planning application in question, having regard, among other things, to the technical details proposed, the environmental impacts of the proposed filling, and the nature of the prevailing policies for waste disposal at the time of the application.

P12.28 It is stressed that no commitment is given in this Plan to accepting the principle of using putrescible waste in the restoration of this site.

PREFERRED AREA 13 : RAILWAY LAND, KINGSMEAD, HORTON

Location and use: Unused land adjacent to the Staines-Windsor railway line north-east of Wraysbury, surrounded on three sides by the permitted Kingsmead pit.

Site area: 2 hectares
Deposit: Valley gravel
Potential yield: 135,000 tonnes (BCC estimate)

Planning history

P13.1 The surrounding land east of the railway was first given permission for mineral extraction in 1944. There are still many years' reserves remaining. Extraction from an adjacent small area west of the railway commenced in 1987, and has now been completed. Preferred Area 13 has not been the subject of any previous application for mineral extraction. It was identified as Preferred Area 17 in the original Minerals Local Plan.

P13.2 The site lies in the area of the Colne Valley Park.

Site planning requirements

(i) Method of working

P13.3 The site forms a natural extension to the permitted working at Kingsmead, and should be worked as an integral part of that operation.

(ii) Protection of margins and marginal features

P13.4 Suitable measures must be taken to ensure the stability of the margins to the railway and Horton Drain during extraction and restoration of this Preferred Area. A 20-metre margin will be required to the railway.

P13.5 The footpath on the west side of the site (Wraysbury FP6) should be adequately protected during extraction and restoration, while trees adjacent to the Horton Drain must similarly be retained and protected throughout extraction and restoration from this site.

(iii) Archaeology

P13.6 A statement of intent regarding archaeological investigation, recording and publication for the unworked permitted areas at Kingsmead is to be prepared by the mineral operator, and is to be submitted for the approval of the local planning authority. Although a full archaeological evaluation of this small Preferred Area on its own would probably not be required, the statement of intent should be extended to include this site.

(iv) Impact on SSSIs and potential Special Protection Area

P13.6A Care must be taken to protect the integrity of the South West London Waterbodies proposed Ramsar site and potential Special Protection Area, which includes the SSSIs at Wraysbury No. 1 and No. 2 Pits to the south and west of the site.

Timing and phasing

P13.7 Operations at this site should be planned to fit in with the approved scheme of working for the wider Kingsmead area. Logically, the Preferred Area should be worked as an extension to the adjacent phase of working at Kingsmead, which is currently expected to take place in the late 1990s.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements, and filling issues

- P13.8 It is the intention to establish the restoration and after-use requirements for this small Preferred Area (including any filling requirements) in the context of those for the wider Kingsmead area.
- P13.9 The planning conditions relating to restoration and after-use at Kingsmead require the majority of that site to be backfilled with inert waste and restored to its original levels. The predominant after-use will be agriculture. there are also a number of lakes and areas of nature conservation value in the locality.
- P13.10 In the context of the wider Kingsmead area, therefore, either dry restoration to agriculture (in accordance with the existing Kingsmead permission) or wet restoration for fishing and nature conservation would be appropriate.

PREFERRED AREA 14 : OLD SLADE, COLNBROOK

Location and use:	Farmland to the west of the Iver Sewage Treatment Works, south of the M4 motorway and north of Colnbrook..
Site area:	2.5 hectares
Deposit:	Valley gravel
Potential yield:	150,000 tonnes (Buckinghamshire County Council/BCC estimate)

Planning history

- P14.1 The site, which was in Buckinghamshire until boundary changes in April 1995, is located in an area of extensive past and existing gravel working between the A4 and the M4 motorway. As part of the 'Old Slade Farm Complex' it was originally designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest but it was denotified in 1981 since it no longer met the criteria for designation. The wider area has however continued to act as a valuable resource for nature conservation in a regional context. It is currently being resurveyed by Slough BC to identify and redefine sites which now merit local designation for their wildlife interest.
- P14.2 An application for extraction from this and adjoining land was refused in 1981 since it was considered that the proposal would adversely affect a site of nature conservation value and because at that time part of the application area (including this site) was not identified as a Preferred Area in the original Buckinghamshire Minerals Local Plan. However, when that Plan was reviewed the site was proposed as a Preferred Area and following testing through the inquiry process, the site was confirmed as a Preferred Area when the Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Buckinghamshire was adopted in January 1995. Following the 1995 boundary changes, this site was incorporated as a Preferred Area in the present Plan through the Alterations approved in 1997.
- P14.3 The site lies in the Colne Valley Regional Park.

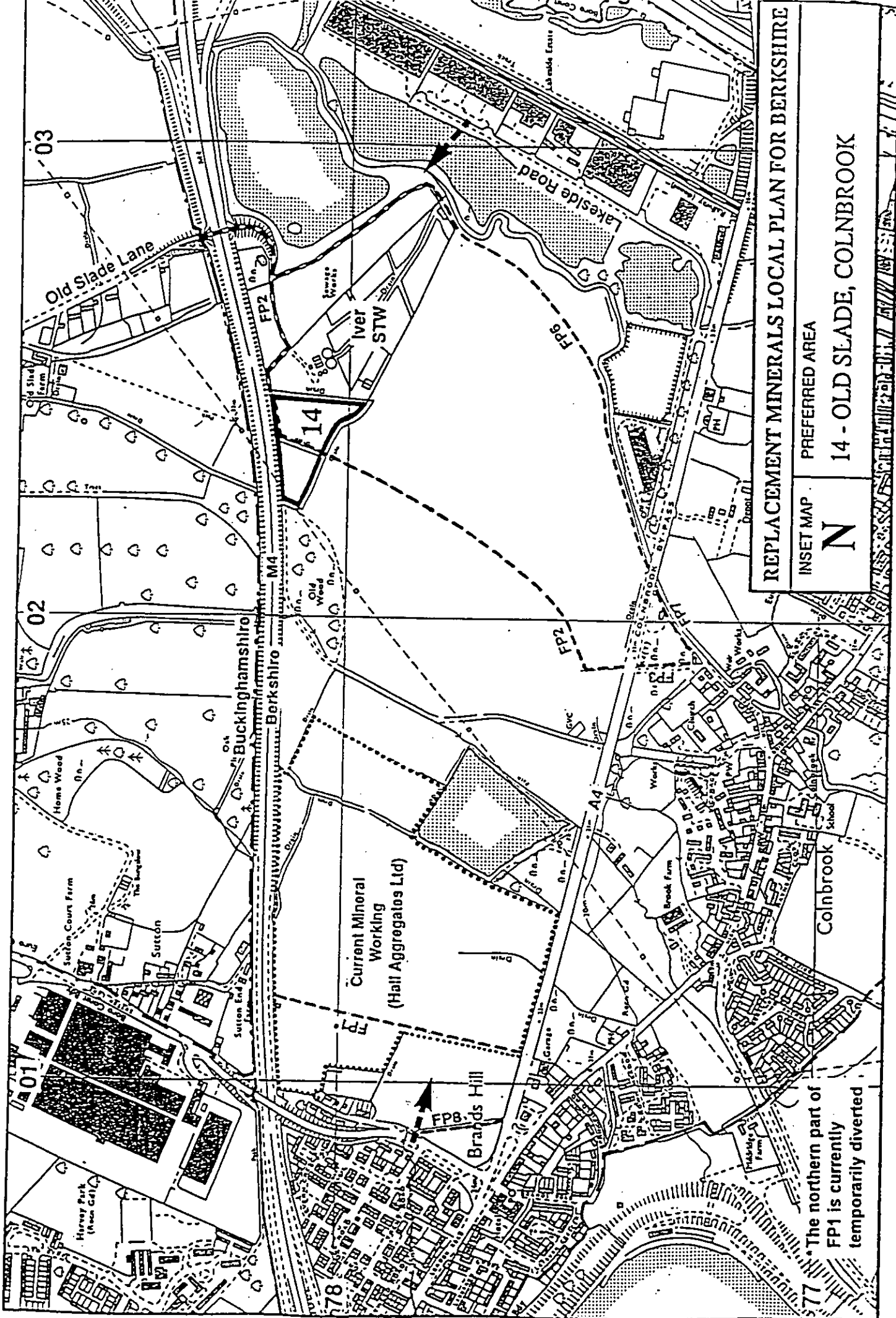
Site planning requirements

(i) Access and processing issues

- P14.4 Access could be gained either from Sutton Lane (through the adjacent Hall Aggregates pit), or via Lakeside Road to the A4. the western (Sutton Lane) route would minimise disturbance to existing lake areas and to the rights of way network, and is therefore in principle favoured over the eastern (Lakeside Road) route. However, use of the eastern route would be acceptable if the western one proves impracticable, or if the eastern route is created in association with other development (as is currently proposed by other developers). The use of Old Slade Lane for access will not be permitted.
- P14.5 Because of the small size of the site and the proximity of other processing plants nearby, the local planning authority will not permit the establishment of mineral processing or manufacturing plant on the site.

(ii) Ecology

- P14.6 Part of the site forms part of a larger area of potential nature conservation value. It will be necessary to ensure that any proposals for extraction do not adversely affect the hydrology and wildlife interest of the wider area. Appropriate protection must also be given to the woodland to the west of the site (Old Wood).
- P14.7 Any proposals for extraction will be considered in the context provided by the latest available assessment of the wildlife interest of the site itself and of the surrounding area (see paragraph P14.1).



REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP PREFERRED AREA

N

14 - OLD SLADE, COLNBROOK

The northern part of FP1 is currently temporarily diverted

(iii) Public rights of way

P14.8 The site is crossed from north to south by a public footpath which links into the Colne Valley Way. This footpath forms part of a circular route running between the M4 motorway and the A4. A scheme of improvements to the local footpath network, including the upgrading to bridleway status of the circular route (including the section crossing this site) is currently (1997) in an advanced state of negotiation between Berkshire County Council, Slough Borough Council, landowners, and users.

P14.9 Great care must be taken to protect the integrity of the local rights of way network and its recreational value during extraction and restoration operations. A diversion of the footpath/bridleway currently crossing the site to the site boundary may be acceptable provided that a wide and well surfaced path is constructed - even if only on a temporary basis.

(iv) Archaeology

P14.10 A staged scheme of archaeological assessment and evaluation of the Preferred Area will be required before any planning application for extraction is determined.

(v) Relationship to adjoining land-uses

P14.11 Appropriate measures must be taken to safeguard the stability of the M4 motorway during extraction from the site. Account must also be taken of any proposals for widening the M4 adjacent to the site.

(vi) Other issues

P14.12 Other issues to be taken into account in the preparation of any planning application include the following:

- (a) the need to take account of the requirements of the CAA Directorate of Aerodrome Safeguarding when preparing details of any extraction proposal (including details of any structures or lighting proposed), and of any filling proposals.
- (b) the need to ensure that extraction or associated operations do not compromise the integrity of the nearby tunnel bringing water from the Thames and the Wraysbury Reservoir Complex to the Iver Water Treatment Works.
- (c) the need to take account of the relationship of extraction from this site with other development proposals on surrounding or adjoining land. In recent years, a number of major planning applications have been made close to the site, including one - related ultimately to the proposal for a Fifth Terminal at Heathrow Airport - for the redevelopment of the Iver South STW as a major sludge dewatering works; and another for a major 'freight exchange' (a rail-linked goods storage and transfer facility), the boundaries of which actually incorporate this Preferred Area. Neither proposal has yet been determined; both will be decided by the Secretary of State following public inquiries.

Timing and phasing

P14.13 The site could be used either as a borrow pit in association with the possible widening of the M4 motorway or as a general market supplier. If the latter is the case, there is a possibility that the site could be extracted as an extension of the existing operation at Sutton Lane. At present extraction from the Sutton Lane site is expected to be completed around 1998.

Restoration and after-use aims and requirements

- P14.14 Since the site is in the Green Belt and Colne Valley Regional Park it is particularly important that a high standard of restoration is achieved. In view of the nature conservation value of this and the adjoining land, it is considered that restoration proposals should have regard to the character of the adjoining sites and augment the nature conservation interest of the area. In order to achieve these objectives the site should be left as open water or as marsh/ reed-bed and suitably landscaped, particularly along its boundary with the M4 motorway.
- P14.15 If the improvement and upgrading of the local rights of way network referred to in paragraph P14.8 is not already in place at the time of any planning application, the local planning authority would expect any scheme of restoration for this site to incorporate proposals for the upgrading of the path crossing the site to a bridleway, either on its existing alignment or - if needed to protect the integrity of the site's after-use - on an alignment diverted around the site boundaries.

Filling

- P14.16 No imported filling materials will be required to achieve restoration of the site to open water. Restoration to marsh or reed-bed may require the import of some filling materials. The nature of any such materials would be considered at the time of a planning application.

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Appendix 4 described nine sites where, at the time of preparing the version of the Plan that was adopted in 1995, the principle of granting planning permission had been agreed, but the issue of the permissions was awaiting the completion of associated legal agreements. Subsequently, planning permissions have been issued at eight of the sites, and refused at the ninth. The content of Appendix 4 is now not required in the Plan, and it has therefore been deleted under the 2001 Alterations.

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APPENDIX 5

EXAMPLES OF ISSUES DERIVING FROM POLICY 7 RELEVANT TO THE DETERMINATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Not all the issues listed here would necessarily be relevant in every application. Neither is this list intended to be a comprehensive checklist of all the issues which might be relevant in the decision on particular proposals.

Consideration from Policy 7	Detailed issues arising	See also Policies
Effects on living conditions	Effects of noise, dust and vibration Visual effects of operations and plant Need for buffer zones Hours of working Effects of traffic to and from site	
Effects of traffic	Effect on living conditions Suitability of access to site Necessary haul route limitations Effect on road safety Effect on traffic congestion Ability of local road network to accommodate vehicle movements generated Measures to prevent mud on public roads Hours of operation	
Safeguarding the character and amenities of settlements, and important open land between settlements	Effect on open land within or integral to a settlement	13
	Effect on areas within which the amenities of a settlement should be safeguarded	13
	Need for buffer zones to protect the edges of settlements Extent to which extraction would breach a 'natural barrier' forming a limit to acceptable working near a settlement Effect and duration of operations (including the operation of plant) on the function of land which keeps settlements separate	13
Safeguarding areas of –		
Ecological or geological importance	Effect on SSSIs and statutory nature reserves	11
	Effect on Wildlife Heritage Sites	12
	Effect on other sites, areas or features of ecological importance or local significance	
Archaeological importance	Effect on Scheduled Ancient Monuments	11, 23, 24
	Effect on sites of county or regional importance	12, 23, 24
	Effect on sites of minor or unknown importance	12, 23, 24
Historic or architectural importance	Effect on historic parks and gardens	11, 12
	Effect on National Trust land	11
	Effect on Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings	11, 12
	Effect on Common Land and Town or Village Green	11
Safeguarding farmland and farm structure	Protecting Grades 1, 2 and 3a land from inappropriate development The feasibility of a high standard of restoration Effect on the viability of farm units	
Safeguarding woodland	Effect on areas of commercial woodland Effect on ancient woodlands (Wildlife Heritage Sites) Effect on woodland of amenity value Effect on woodland habitats Relationship to commercial timber-cropping schemes	12

Safeguarding landscape areas and features	Effect on AONB	11
	Effect on other Areas of Special Landscape Importance	12
	Effect on local landscape character	
	Effect on the setting of rivers and canals	12
	Effect on the wider character of rivers and canals	
	Effect on the landscape heritage	
Protecting recreation sites and public rights of way	Effect of working visually prominent sites	
	Effect on land or buildings used for formal recreation	12
	Effect on sites used for informal recreation	12
	Effect on water-based recreation	12
	Effect on allotments	12
	Effect on nature trails, recreation routes, and other public rights of way	12
Protecting the water environment and water supplies, and guarding against increased flood risk	Contribution to safeguarding and enhancing the rights of way network	12
	Effect of any changes to the water table	
	Effect on public and private water supplies	
	Effect on extent and location of flood storage capacity and flood flows	
	Effect on the stability of waterways	
	Effect on river maintenance	
Orderly progression of working and restoration	Effect on aquatic dependent flora and fauna	
	Conformity with any agreed or desirable sequences of working or restoration of sites in the area	
	Whether operations will help to 'finish off' an established working area	
	Whether site is an extension to an existing working	
	Contribution to over-concentrating workings in one area	
Resisting workings in new areas	Whether there is a need to move working into a new area	
Other considerations (examples)	Whether there is a need to move working into a new area	
	Effect on interests, plant and apparatus of statutory undertakers, etc	
	Does size or expected yield of the deposit justify the disturbance caused?	
	Effects on sites committed or identified for other development	
	Significance of other planning policies affecting the site	
	Operator's past record of adherence to conditions, good quality restoration, etc	
Effects on businesses and commercial premises adjacent to the site		

THE MAIDENHEAD, WINDSOR AND ETON FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

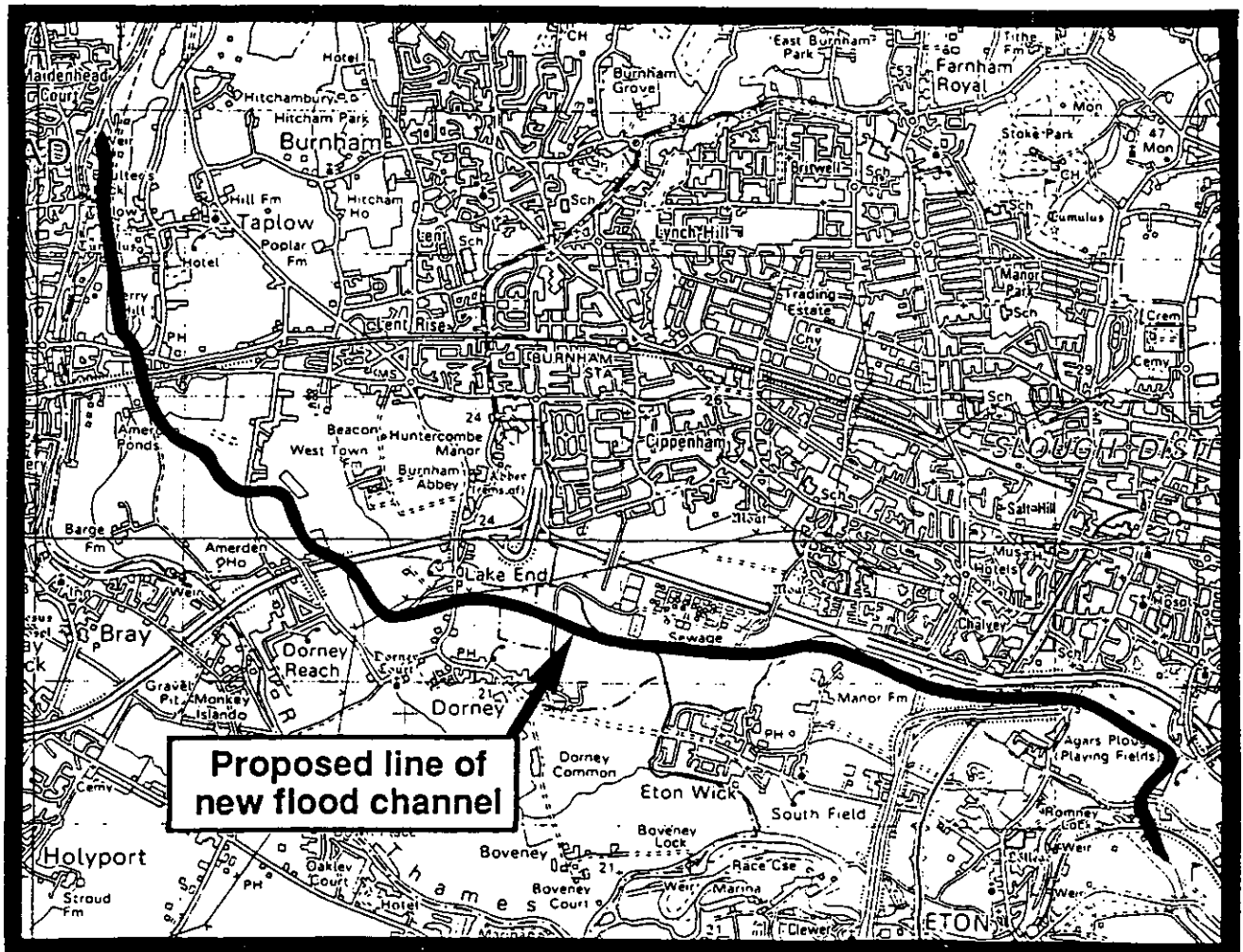
To help solve problems of repeated flooding in the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton area, the Environment Agency (formerly the National Rivers Authority) is constructing a new channel to the east and north of the main course of the Thames between Maidenhead and Datchet. The route of the new river channel is shown on the map below.

The channel runs through sand and gravel deposits for the majority of its length. It is estimated that construction of the channel will yield about 2.0 million cubic metres (approximately 3.45 million tonnes) of sharp sand and gravel for processing. About 1,163,400 cu m (2,035,900 tonnes) of this material will come from land within Berkshire, with the remainder coming from the section of the channel in Buckinghamshire (between Maidenhead and Dorney).

Planning permission for the scheme was granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment in March 1995. Works for the construction of the channel began in 1996, and the excavation of the main channel began in 1999. The whole project is due to be completed by 2002.

The sand and gravel from within Berkshire, and some of that dug from the Buckinghamshire section of the channel, is being removed unprocessed by lorry via junction 6 of the M4, or else is being taken to the existing processing plant at Monkey Island Lane, Bray via a conveyor bridge over the main Thames channel.

The gravel-winning component of the scheme is regarded as a 'windfall' (see paragraphs 5.26-5.28), and the gravel reserves in the part of the channel in Berkshire contribute usefully towards the county's landbank of permitted reserves.



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APPENDIX 7

SAFEGUARDED RAIL DEPOT SITES

Policies 25-27 of this Plan deal with the safeguarding of sites that might be suitable for use as rail aggregates depots.

Policy 25 indicates that the two key issues in the determination of any planning applications for new depots are the need for the new facility and its environmental impact. Policy 26 provides for the safeguarding of five sites from development which would prejudice their future use as rail aggregates depots, while Policy 27 sets out various general requirements regarding the details to be included in any planning application for depot facilities at these or any other sites.

Policy 27 also requires that applications at the five safeguarded sites should address a series of more detailed issues. This Appendix therefore describes in more detail a series of environmental and related issues which should be considered in the preparation of any planning application for a rail depot at one of the four safeguarded sites where no planning permission has to date been granted. These issues will also be considered by the local planning authorities when determining any application to use the site concerned as a rail depot. For the fifth site, at Colnbrook, it describes the planning permission granted in 1987 and indicates the environmental and other issues that were addressed in the preparation and consideration of that application.

It is stressed that the issues set out in this Appendix are not necessarily a comprehensive list of all the factors to be taken into account in the preparation and determination of any application. The local planning authorities therefore reserve the right to add to or amend the details in this Appendix in the light of the most up-to-date information available at the time of any application, or in the light of the precise nature of any particular development proposal.

Policy 25 requires all relevant environmental issues set out in Policy 7 of this Plan to be taken into account in deciding any planning applications for rail depots, and this Appendix does not seek to identify all possible issues from that Policy which might have a bearing on any particular application. Early consultation with the relevant local planning authority is therefore recommended when any application for a rail depot or related activity is proposed on any of these sites.

Please note that certain factual information in this Appendix reflects the position when the RMLP was originally drafted in the mid-1990s. Only updates essential to the understanding of the Appendix have been incorporated in the Plan through the 2001 Alterations.

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DEPOT SITE 1**PADWORTH SIDINGS**

- Location** South of the A4 between Woolhampton and Theale, and adjacent to the Kennet & Avon Canal. The site is adjacent to sidings linked to the Paddington – Exeter main rail line.
- Site area** The total area of the safeguarded site is around 10 hectares, but it is not suggested that the whole of the site would necessarily be required in operational terms for the establishment of a viable rail-importing operation. (For comparison, the area of Foster Yeoman's established depot at Theale is just over 4 hectares.)
- Current use** Most of the safeguarded site is currently vacant. Adjacent land is used as rail-linked coal and oil depots.

Planning history

- D1.1 Gravel was extracted from the site in the 1940s. In the 1970s it was used by British Rail as a tip for spent ballast and as a coal yard. The current coal depot was used by Foster Yeoman to import substantial volumes of limestone prior to the opening of their depot at Theale in 1981.
- D1.2 In 1973, outline planning permission was granted for the establishment of a rail depot on a 1.3 hectare site adjacent to the canal. It was envisaged that this site would have a throughput of 500,000 tonnes per year, importing chiefly granite from the East Midlands. The outline permission provided for the construction of plants for manufacturing asphalt and for using this asphalt to coat some of the imported stone. Details pursuant to this outline permission were approved in 1976. Some minor works were carried out in the 1980s with a view to keeping this permission alive, but in the light of subsequent legal judgements in respect of other sites, the continuing validity of the 1973/1976 permissions is open to question.
- D1.3 In 1992 planning permission was granted on appeal for the establishment of a similar but much smaller-scale operation (maximum throughput 60,000 tonnes per year) on a site overlapping the site of the 1973 permission. This operation has not commenced to date (see *the footnote to paragraph 9.6*).
- D1.4 The approximate sites of the 1973 and 1992 permissions are shown on Inset Map K.

Site planning considerations

- D1.5 The three key issues to be addressed in any future application for the use of all or part of this site as a rail depot are as follows:
- (i) The effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and on the setting and use of the canal
- D1.6 The visual impact of any development on this site will have to be carefully considered to ensure that it is not visually intrusive or otherwise detrimental to the character of this predominantly rural area. Any development close to the canal must safeguard the use of the waterway and towpath at all times. This might require comprehensive perimeter planting and other forms of amenity protection. Existing tree and shrub planting on the southern (canal) and western boundaries of the site must also be safeguarded.

(ii) The effects on living conditions in nearby houses

D1.7 The northern and western parts of the safeguarded site are close to existing housing at Lower Padworth and Aldermaston Wharf respectively. Any proposals will have to demonstrate that adequate screening has been provided to reduce visual intrusion at these houses to an acceptable level, and that protection has been provided against intrusion by noise and smell.

(iii) The effects of traffic using Padworth Lane and the Padworth Lane/A4 junction

D1.8 Access to the site must be via the existing access to Padworth Lane. All heavy road vehicles leaving the site will be required to turn left and follow Padworth Lane northwards to the A4. Lorries arriving at the site will be required to follow the same route in reverse. Improvements to Padworth Lane, and to its junction with the A4, will be required in association with any future planning application which proposes any substantial increase in the levels of activity allowed under the planning permission granted in 1992.

General comment

D1.9 The Inspector who decided the appeal in 1992 made a number of comments which bear directly on the future use of this site as a rail depot. He concluded that the relatively low-key proposal before him, which envisaged delivery of only two trainloads of stone in every three weeks, was acceptable in terms of the three issues identified above, so long as appropriate controls and regulations were introduced to minimise (above all) visual and aural intrusion. He therefore imposed conditions on the planning permission, or incorporated requirements in an associated legal agreement, providing (inter alia) for the following:

- Limiting the maximum annual throughput
- Spraying of loaded rail wagons before they leave the quarry which supplies the site
- Banning stone deliveries to the site by road, except in very special circumstances
- Limiting hours of operation (including separate limits on the times of train movements and unloading, on movements of road vehicles on the site, and on the operation of plant
- Limiting overall levels of noise emission from the site
- Greasing of rail tracks and rubber-lining of hoppers, to reduce noise impacts
- Preventing crushing or grading of rock on the site
- Making provision for the control of dust
- Hard surfacing of roads and parking/manoeuvring areas within the site
- Landscaping and fencing of the site
- Painting plant a suitable colour
- Preventing the stockpiling of waste or reject materials
- Controlling overhead lighting and floodlighting
- Requiring the provision and use of wheel washing facilities
- Requiring loaded vehicles leaving the site to be covered
- Restricting vehicle routeing, and providing for sanctions in the event of non-compliance
- Controlling the effect of the development on the extent and location of flood storage capacity

D1.10 The local planning authority will require all these issues to be addressed and provided for (where relevant) in any future applications for depot facilities and related activities within the safeguarded area.

D1.11 The safeguarding in this Plan of an area wider than that covered by the 1992 permission implies no commitment by the local planning authorities to any more intensive or extensive use of the safeguarded area than was allowed in that permission. Any proposals to reposition, intensify or enlarge the permitted activities will be judged on their merits in terms of their effects on the three key issues identified above, and on any other relevant considerations.

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP SAFEGUARDED RAIL DEPOT SITE

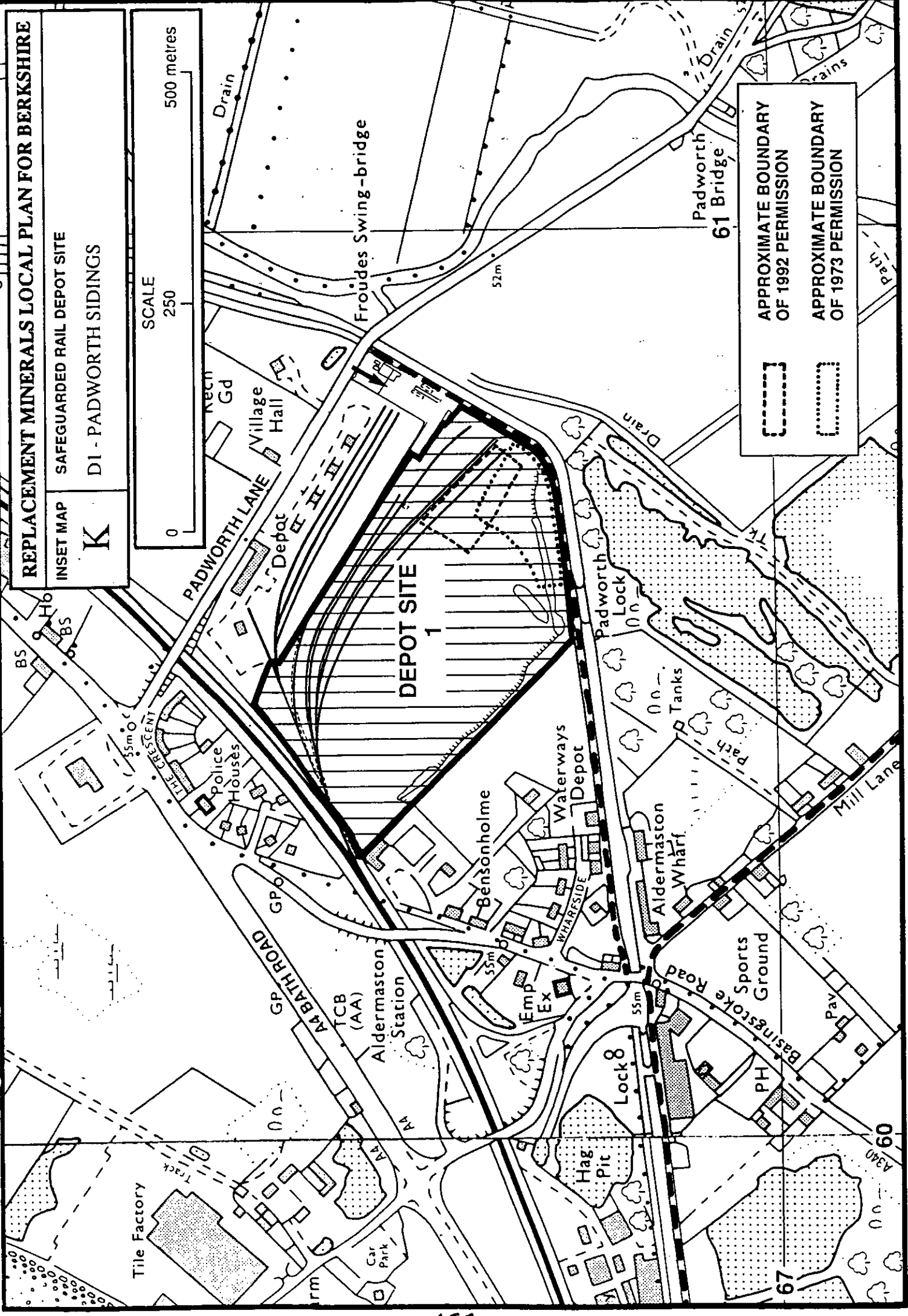
K

D1 - PADWORTH SIDINGS

SCALE

250

500 metres



APPROXIMATE BOUNDARY OF 1992 PERMISSION

APPROXIMATE BOUNDARY OF 1973 PERMISSION

DEPOT SITE 2

PINGEWOOD

- Location** South-west of Reading and north of the M4 between junctions 11 and 12. The site is adjacent to the Reading-Basingstoke railway line, about 3km south of Reading West station. The railway line at this point forms the boundary between West Berkshire District (to the west) and Reading Borough (to the east).
- Site area** There are no existing sidings in this location which might form the basis of a new rail depot. The safeguarded site extends to around 5ha. It is not suggested that the whole of the site would necessarily be required in operational terms for the establishment of a viable rail-importing operation.
- Current use** The site is currently unused. The eastern part of it comprises two lakes resulting from earlier gravel extraction. There is a large electricity sub-station to the west of the railway line immediately north-west of the safeguarded site.

Planning history

- D2.1 Apart from the site of the sub-station, all land adjacent to the railway line in this vicinity has been the subject of past gravel extraction.
- D2.2 Extraction from the safeguarded site was permitted in 1957, and had been completed by the mid-1970s. The permission allowed the land to be filled with putrescible waste, but filling has not yet taken place.
- D2.3 This Plan's Preferred Area 8 for mineral extraction lies to the east of the safeguarded site, with Green Park and the new A33 beyond.

Site planning considerations

- D2.4 The principal concerns to be addressed in any future application for a rail depot or associated activities are the following:
- (i) Relationship to other nearby development proposals
- D2.5 This site is seen as a suitable location for a depot serving the general market. It also has the added advantage of being well located to meet the possible needs of Green Park, which may benefit from having access to a nearby siding to allow the importing of construction materials by rail.
- D2.6 The timing, location, and nature of the operations proposed at any new rail depot here should therefore have regard to the potential for meeting short-term needs created by nearby development areas, as well as the longer-term needs of the general market.
- (ii) Access issues
- D2.7 Although the local roads have long been used by heavy traffic in association with local gravel extraction, they are not considered suitable for the high levels of use by such traffic which would be generated by a large new rail aggregates depot. Ideally therefore, a new depot should not be constructed here unless and until it can obtain satisfactory access to the primary road network. The means by which this access would be achieved would be an important consideration (in terms of its wider environmental impact as well as its traffic impacts) at the time of any planning application.

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP

SAFEGUARDED RAIL DEPOT SITE

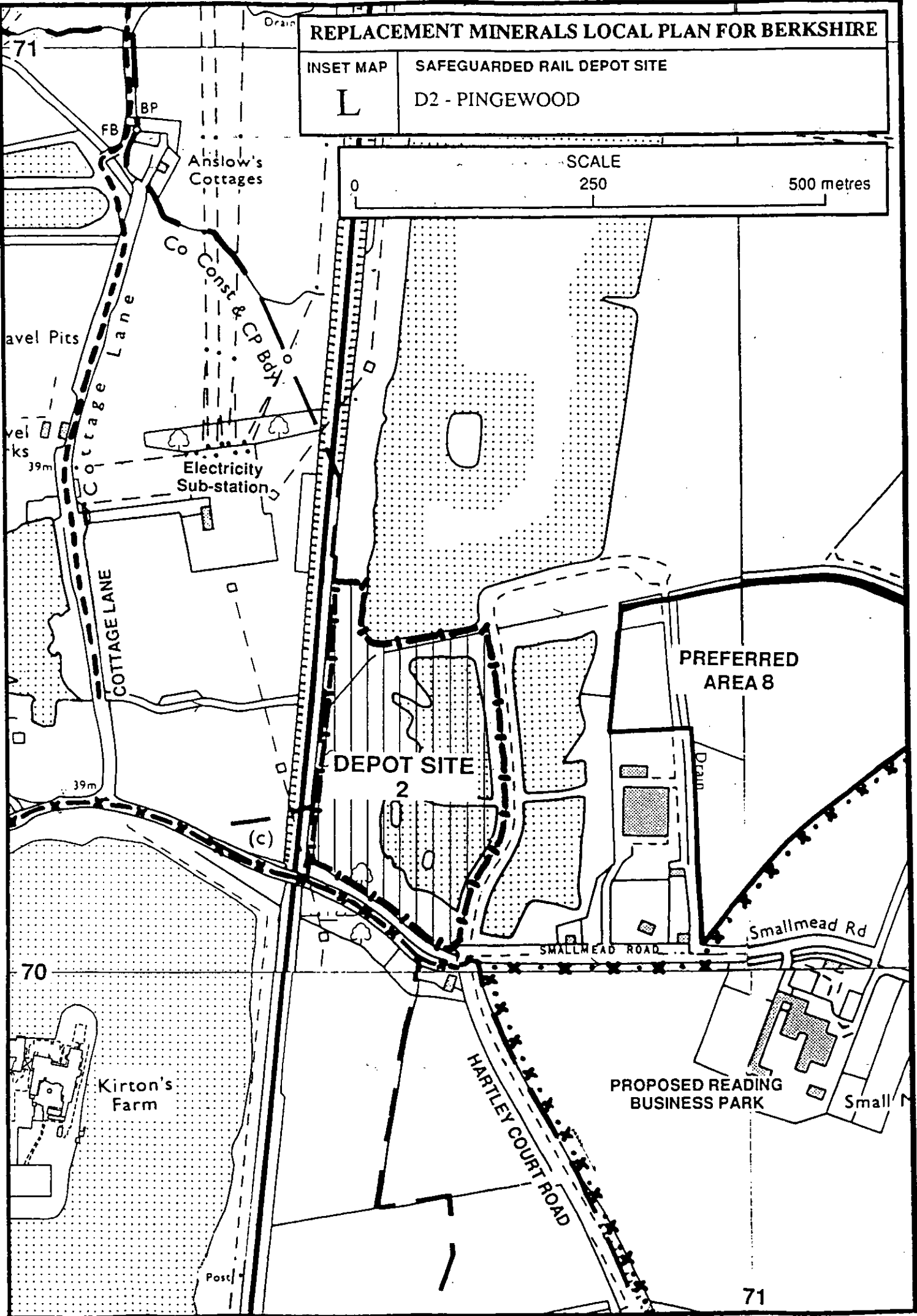
L

D2 - PINGEWOOD

SCALE

250

500 metres



(iii) Sources of materials

- D2.8 A further reason for safeguarding this site is that it lies on a different rail line from that serving the existing depots at Theale, or the other sites safeguarded in this Plan. This creates the opportunity to diversify the source and nature of aggregates brought into Berkshire. In particular, this site's direct rail link to Southampton means that it is well positioned to import marine-dredged or sea-borne materials landed there (although this would involve some double-handling at the Southampton end, as the importing wharves are not rail-linked). The site can also be readily reached (via Reading West Junction) by trains importing granite from the East Midlands, only very little of which is imported into Berkshire at present.
- D2.9 Having regard to the local planning authorities' wish that new depots will increase the amount of imported material available to the county (see paragraph 9.24), the authorities will wish these opportunities for using material from new sources to be taken if at all possible. At the same time, the site can also be reached (via a reversing manoeuvre in Reading) by trains from the established rail-linked quarries in South West England which already serve Theale, and so it is well positioned to receive additional aggregates from those sources over and above the amounts already brought into the county.

(iv) Landscape impact, and impact on living conditions

- D2.10 There are a few relatively isolated houses close to the safeguarded site. Any planning application would have to demonstrate how living conditions in these houses are to be safeguarded against unacceptable environmental damage. Provision must also be made for measures to reduce the visual and other impacts on the landscape of any depot in this location, including screening and other landscape enhancement measures.

(v) Other issues

- D2.11 Any proposal will have to have regard to the presence of the nearby electricity sub-station and the associated network of overhead power lines.
- D2.12 Proposals should safeguard the environment of and working conditions in Green Park.
- D2.13 Suitable arrangements must be made for filling the site as necessary prior to construction of any depot.
- D2.14 Flooding and other hydrological issues must also be addressed – see paragraphs KV14-19 in the general statement on the Kennet Valley on page 85 of this Plan.

General comment

- D2.15 Additionally, any applications must also address and make provision for all the issues and concerns identified under the heading of 'General comment' on page 150, where relevant.

DEPOT SITE 3

SLOUGH GOODS YARD

- Location** The site lies at the western end of the former Slough Goods Yard, about half a mile west of Slough Town Centre. The site is adjacent to sidings linked to the main BR Paddington lines.
- Site area** About 0.3 hectares.
- Current use** Between 1990 and early 1992, the site was used as an aggregates depot by Redland Aggregates Ltd. The site is now vacant. The adjacent land which forms the remainder of the former goods yard is used for various industrial and storage uses, including the storage of coaches, a builders' merchants, and a waste transfer station.

Planning history

- D3.1 Slough Yard was in use as a goods yard until the 1970s, but by the mid 1980s the sidings within the yard had been lifted and the land given over to industrial and storage uses. In 1973, a planning application was submitted for an enclosed rail aggregates depot with a concrete-batching plant on a 0.5ha site which included some of the present safeguarded site. This application was refused in January 1974 on grounds of its visual impact, the impact on the amenities of the nearby residential area, the poor access to the site (which has since been improved), and the effects on the local highway network. There have been no later applications referring specifically to the safeguarded site. Other current activities on the former goods yard are operating under planning permissions issued on either a temporary or a permanent basis.

Site planning considerations

- D3.2 The principal concerns regarding this site have not altered since the refusal of the 1973 rail depot application, although the precise circumstances on each issue have changed considerably in the meantime.
- (i) Access and highway issues
- D3.3 As mentioned, the access into the goods yard from Stoke Poges Lane has been improved since the refusal of the 1973 application, and it is now considered adequate to serve the existing uses (including the recent use of the safeguarded site as a rail depot). However, movements to and from the site from the north would involve heavy vehicles passing through residential areas, and this is unacceptable. A routing agreement to prevent movements to or from this direction would therefore be needed in conjunction with any permission for a depot on the safeguarded site. Vehicles serving the site would thus be required to travel vis Stoke Poges Lane directly to or from the A4 to the south. This would require these vehicles to cross the relatively narrow bridge over the railway immediately to the south of the site entrance. Consideration will have to be given, at the time of any application for a depot at the safeguarded site, as to whether the additional traffic generated by a rail depot could be accepted on this route. The small size of the safeguarded site, and the fact that it has operated in recent years as a rail depot without apparently overloading the highway network, suggests that a low-key depot facility may be capable of being accommodated in the future without unacceptable impacts on the highway network; but a definite decision on this matter must depend on the exact situation prevailing at the time of any application.

(ii) Impact on nearby residential areas

D3.4 Since the 1974 decision, a tree screen has grown up between the site and the houses in Baylis Road which means that, in summer at least, the site is effectively screened from the houses. Any proposals for a rail depot at this site would have to make provision for the protection, strengthening (as necessary) and maintenance of this screen. They must also have regard to other potential disturbance which the depot might cause to living conditions in the area; the list of considerations under the heading 'General comment' on page 150 should therefore be addressed in the preparation of any application for a rail depot. Again, it appears that operations on the scale carried out between 1990 and 1992 would be acceptable in these terms, but the local planning authority will consider any proposal to revive that use, or to intensify it, strictly on its merits in terms of its likely impacts on the residential area.

(iii) Other matters

D3.5 Measures to prevent pollution of surface water drainage would be required before any disposal of effluent from the site to local watercourses.

D3.6 Note The operation carried out on the safeguarded site between 1990 and 1992 did not have express planning permission, and the question of whether such a permission should have been sought was still being investigated by the former County Council at the time when the use ceased. The local planning authority therefore reserves the right to take enforcement action to regularise the position in the event that this use resumes without an express planning application.

- *Planning permission for the use of land at Slough Goods Yard for an aggregates depot and a materials recycling facility was granted on appeal on 9 June 1999.*

81

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP

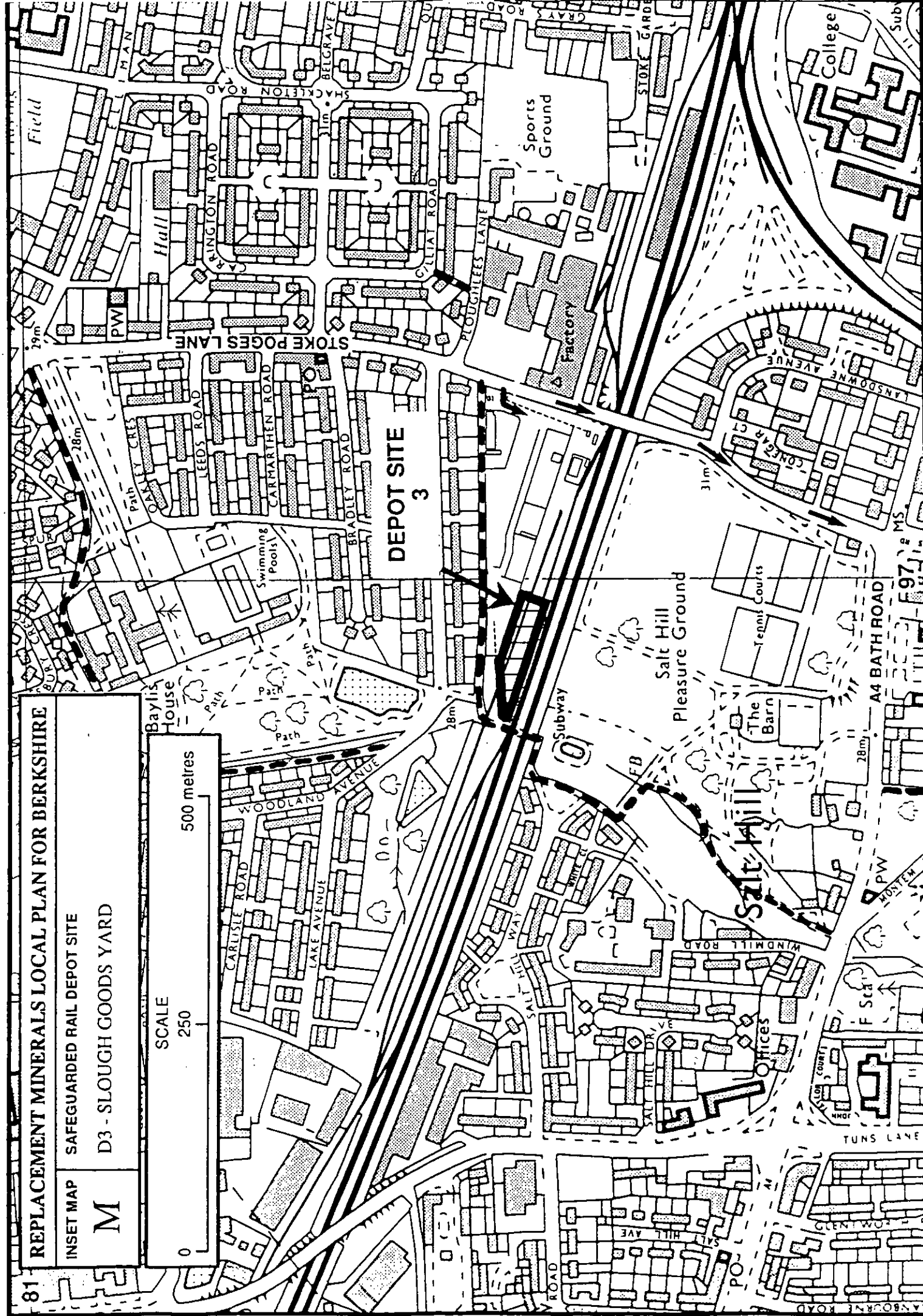
M

SAFEGUARDED RAIL DEPOT SITE

D3 - SLOUGH GOODS YARD

SCALE

0 250 500 metres



DEPOT SITE 4 POYLE

- Location** The site lies to the west of the M25 motorway and to the east of the Poyle Industrial Estate. It is bounded on the western side by the former West Drayton - Staines branch line which is currently disused.
- Site area** The safeguarded site comprises some 17 hectares. However, the whole of the site would not necessarily be required in operational terms for the establishment of a viable rail-importing operation.
- Current use** The site is part of a former gravel working which has been partially restored to grassland.

Planning history

- D4.1 The site, which was in Surrey until boundary changes in April 1995, was first granted permission for gravel extraction in 1949. The majority of the site was worked out and filled some years ago. Extraction occurred most recently from a parcel of land in the north-western part of the area, which was extracted in association with the construction of the M25 motorway. The restoration of this area has yet to be completed. Revised proposals for the restoration of this north-western site and adjoining land to the east were submitted in 1995 and are currently (September 1996) awaiting determination.
- D4.2 The safeguarded area has been the subject of two applications for a rail aggregates depot. The first proposal in 1973 related to 4 ha in the south western part of the site and was not determined because of uncertainties at the time about the line of the M25 motorway. The second application related to 5.2 ha of land to the south of the Wraysbury River. This was refused in 1987 and a subsequent appeal was dismissed on the grounds that the need for the depot and associated plant at that time was not sufficient to override the presumption against such development in the Green Belt.
- D4.3 The site was safeguarded as a rail aggregates depot in the adopted Surrey Minerals Local Plan (1993), and following the 1995 boundary changes this safeguarding was carried across the to present Plan through the Alterations adopted in 1997. The site lies within the Green Belt and Colne Valley Park.
- D4.4 The former Staines branch railway line runs along the western boundary of the site. This line is currently disused, and to the south of the site the track has been lifted. If the remaining section of the line were re-opened it would be suitable for use by aggregates trains, with a link to the main line further north at West Drayton.

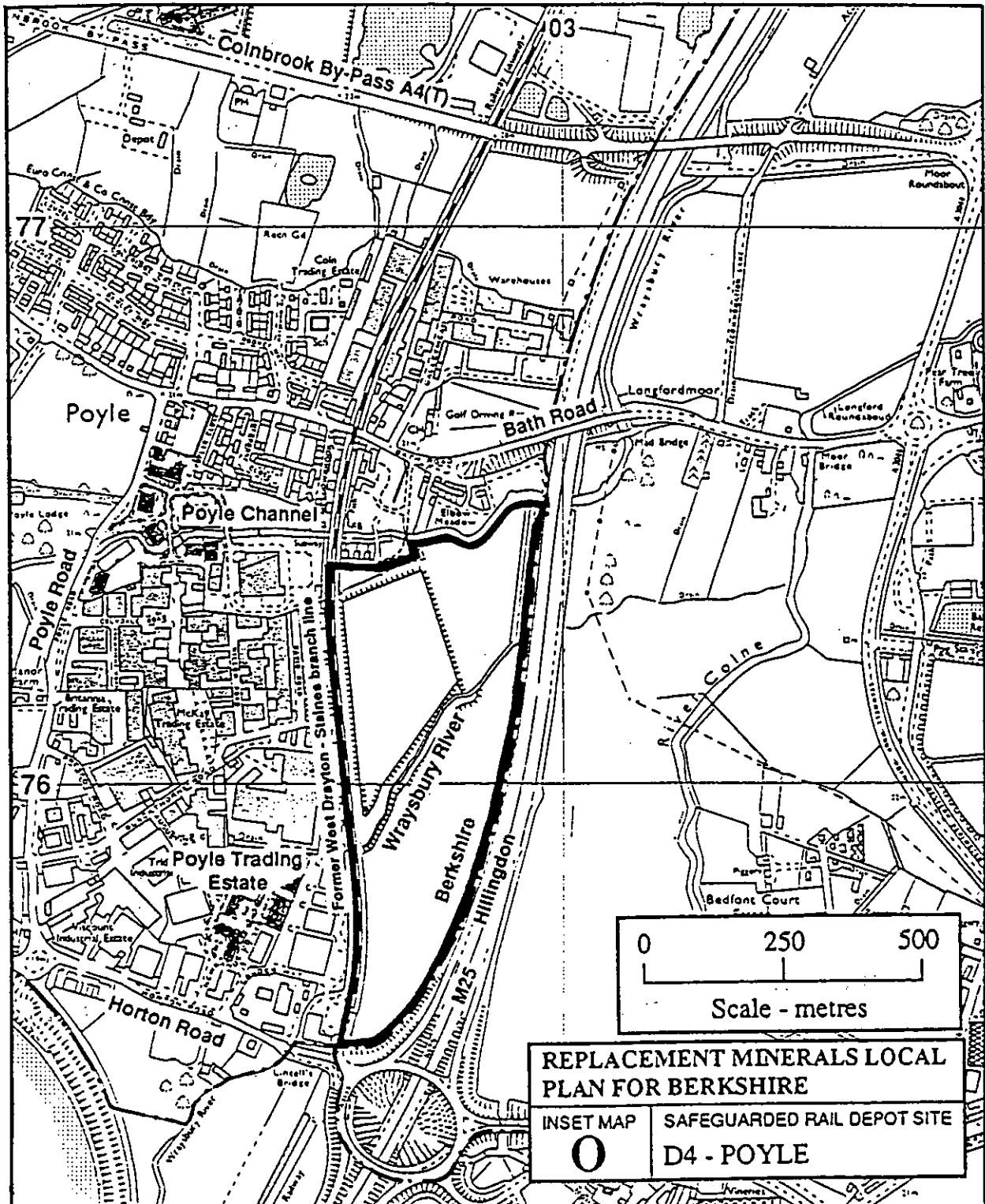
Site planning considerations

- D4.5 The principal issues regarding this site have not altered since the refusal of the 1987 application.
- (i) Road access and highway issues
- D4.6 The safeguarded area has two road access points. The access on the southern boundary of the site adjoins a roundabout which gives access to the motorway network, while that from the northern boundary of the site would link to the A4 via Bath Road (passing a number of residential properties in the process). Both access points are currently inadequate for serving a rail aggregates depot. Any new application would therefore need to demonstrate that satisfactory access could be achieved to the primary road network.

aggregates depots, because such sites are a scarce resource. Any proposals for other development on this site would therefore be assessed against this consideration, and any application for other development should address the issue of the relative importance of the proposed development against the importance of safeguarding the site for aggregates depot use.

(v) General

D4.14 Any application for a rail depot must also address and make provision for all the issues and concerns identified under the heading of 'General comment' on page 188, where relevant.



D4.7 A major concern is the volume of traffic that such a facility could generate. It has been estimated that the scale of depot that might be proposed for the site could generate in the region of 300 vehicular movements a day. Any application submitted will have to give full consideration to the impact that this traffic could have on the safety and free flow of traffic on the surrounding road network, and on the local environment and local living conditions.

(ii) Ecology and landscape issues

D4.8 The Wraysbury River runs south-west to north-east across the site, and is of considerable ecological value. Care must be taken to protect the watercourse by establishing a buffer zone between the river and any development on the site. The course of the river is also lined with mature trees (including the nationally rare Black Poplar) which, in addition to being of nature conservation value, are of significance to the landscape and amenities of the area. These trees should be retained and protected.

D4.9 The Poyle Channel on and adjacent to the northern boundary of the site is also thought to be of ecological importance. Appropriate measures must be taken to safeguard this interest.

D4.10 Any planning application should be accompanied by a landscaping scheme which includes the enhancement of the Wraysbury River corridor (and of appropriate the Poyle Channel corridor). Additional planting should be provided across the site, particularly for the purposes of screening any proposed structures. This would accord with the objectives of the Colne Valley Park, which seek environmental enhancements where possible.

(iii) Green Belt issues

D4.11 The site is located in the Green Belt where there is a normal presumption against development. It will therefore be necessary for any applicant to demonstrate that very special circumstances exist sufficient to warrant setting that presumption aside. As indicated in paragraph 9.26 of this Plan, an overriding need for additional depot capacity may be such a 'very special circumstance', but it will be necessary to demonstrate that the claimed need exists, and that it cannot be met in any other way than through the construction of a new depot. In considering issues of need, the local planning authority will take account of the general arguments and conclusions on this issue which contributed to the dismissal of the appeal of the 1987 application - whilst recognising of course that the detailed circumstances at the time of any future application may not be the same as those obtaining at the time of that appeal.

(iv) Relationship to other development proposals

D4.12 In view of the strategic location of this site, adjacent to the urban area and with access potentially available to the primary road network, it is subject to considerable development pressures, particularly those associated with Heathrow Airport. During the summer of 1996, the Department of Transport's Highways Agency published revised draft Orders for the surface access roads which are proposed to be provided in conjunction with the proposed fifth terminal at Heathrow. These Orders proposed the construction of some sliproads on the part of the Depot Site south of the Wraysbury River. The former Berkshire County Council objected to the draft Orders - as indeed it objected to the fifth terminal proposal. Interest has also been shown in this site for the development of an interchange facility associated with a western rail connection to Heathrow.

D4.13 The safeguarding of this land as a potential rail depot site does not imply a presumption in favour of its use for that purpose, as explained in paragraph 9.30 of the Plan. However, the local planning authorities consider it important to safeguard sites which might be suitable for use as aggregates depots, because such sites are a scarce resource. Any proposals for other development on this site would therefore be assessed against this consideration, and any application for other development should address the issue of the relative importance of the proposed development against the importance of safeguarding the site for aggregates depot

USE

(v) General

D4.14 Any application for a rail depot must also address and make provision for all the issues and concerns identified under the heading of 'General comment' on page 150, where relevant.

DEPOT SITE 5

COLNBROOK

- Location** The site lies to the north of the A4 Colnbrook by-pass, between the M25 to the east and the former West Drayton-Staines branch railway line. Its northern boundary adjoins slip-roads forming part of the junction of the M4 and M25 (M4 junction 4A, M25 junction 15).
- Site area** The safeguarded site has an area of some 22 hectares, and comprises the site of an application for a rail depot that was approved in 1987. Within this, an area of 5.2ha was shown on the permitted application as the operational area for rail depot activities and associated uses.
- Current use** The site is a former gravel working which has been restored to grassland.

Planning history

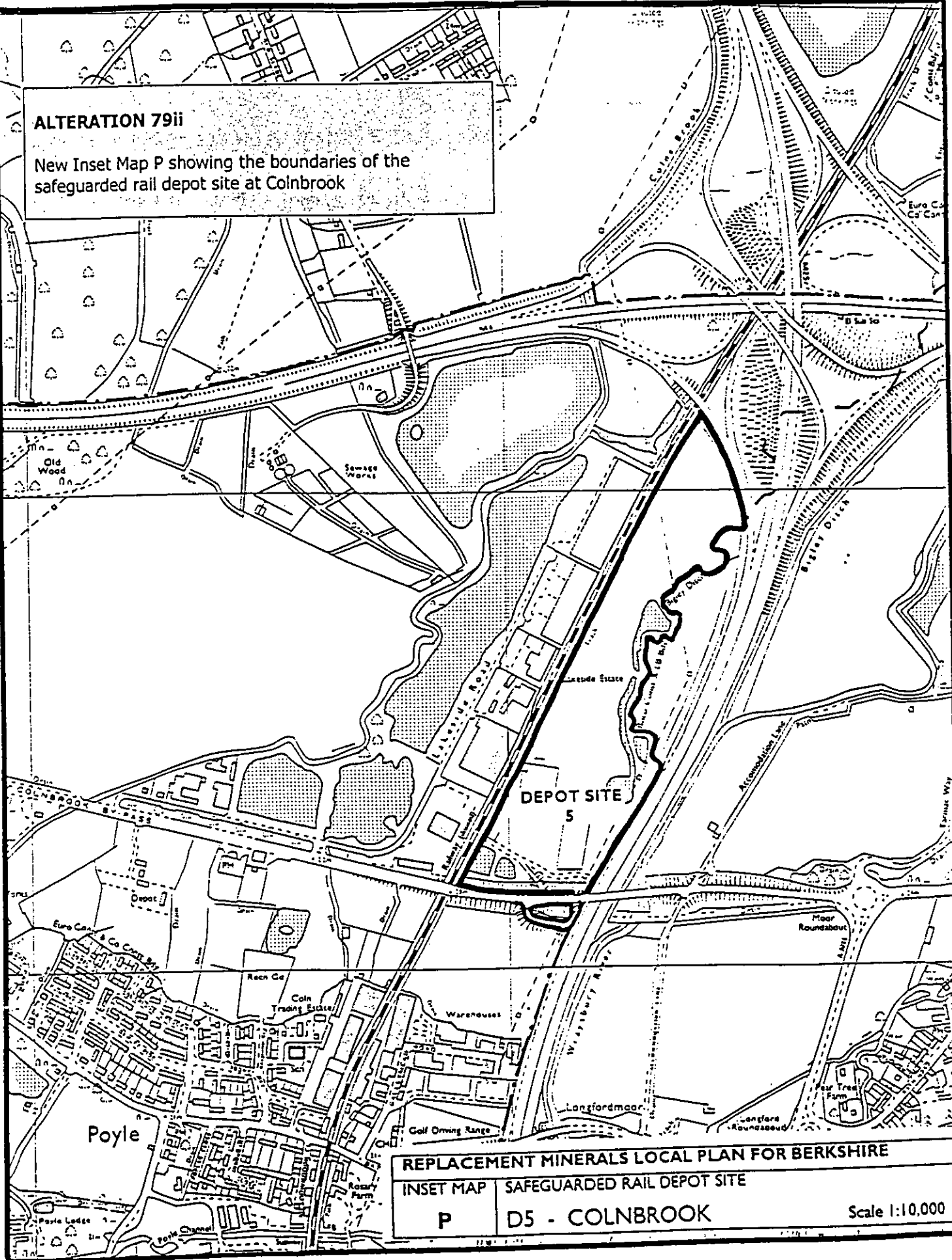
- D5.1 Planning permission was issued by Buckinghamshire County Council on 19 November 1987 on a planning application for the construction of a rail terminal, aggregate storage, lorry loading facility, asphalt coating plant and ready mix concrete plant. In 1992, Buckinghamshire confirmed their view that this permission had been implemented through the construction of embankments as required by one of the conditions on the permission. The successor mineral planning authorities (first Berkshire County Council, and more recently Slough Borough Council) have accepted that the 1987 permission is still valid and capable of implementation. However, to date no works have been undertaken for the construction of the depot proper, though the prospective operator (Foster Yeoman Ltd) continues to state a wish to construct a depot at this site when economic conditions are more favourable.
- D5.2 Both before and after the grant of permission, the site was safeguarded as a rail aggregates depot site in successive versions of the Buckinghamshire Minerals Local Plan. Following its transfer to Berkshire on county boundary changes in 1995, the safeguarding provisions were incorporated in the Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire by means of Alterations to that Plan adopted in 1997, though at that time the site was not expressly named in the policies of the Plan. It was first included by name in this Plan in the [date] Alterations.
- D5.3 The Waste Local Plan for Berkshire, adopted in 1998, identifies the 'operational area' of the site as a Preferred Area for waste recycling and green waste composting, but on a temporary basis only pending the construction of the aggregates depot.
- D5.4 In recent years, two major planning applications have been submitted covering the safeguarded site and extensive areas to the west. One was for a 'Construction Logistics Facility' in connection with the proposed Fifth Terminal at Heathrow Airport; the other is for a major 'freight exchange' (i.e. a storage and transfer facility for goods brought into the site by rail, and taken away by road). Both proposals allow for the construction or retention of the rail aggregates depot. Neither proposal has yet been determined; both will be decided by the Secretary of State following public inquiries.
- D5.5 The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the Colne Valley Park.

Issues

- D5.6 The following environmental and related issues were addressed in the planning application approved in 1987, or in the conditions imposed on that permission.

ALTERATION 79ii

New Inset Map P showing the boundaries of the safeguarded rail depot site at Colnbrook



REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN FOR BERKSHIRE

INSET MAP SAFEGUARDED RAIL DEPOT SITE

P D5 - COLNBROOK

Scale 1:10,000

(i) Residential and general amenity issues

D5.7 There are no residential properties near the site, and so no special measures were incorporated to protect **residential amenity**. There is also no public access to the site – no **public rights of way** run through or adjacent to the site.

(ii) Structures and site operations

D5.8 The unloading of trains, and the eventual loading of lorries to take material off site, would be carried out in the open. Nevertheless, numerous structures were approved on the site as part of the application, including plant such as the stone coating plant, semi-enclosed structures such as those for storing aggregates, and conveyors for moving material around the site. The **design and locations** of these structures were fixed by the permission, but details of their **colour, texture, and cladding and facing materials** were reserved for the subsequent approval of the planning authority.

D5.9 The application detailed the **arrangements for removing the materials from trains** and carrying it to storage areas within the site. It was stated that for an initial period during the establishment of the site, the materials brought in by train would be unloaded by 'grab discharge' and taken to the storage areas by lorries. Within two years, by which time the coating plant will have been erected, a system of 'bottom discharge' would be introduced, whereby the material is discharged directly from the base of the rail wagons on to a conveyor system taking it to the storage areas. A requirement to introduce this system within two years of the site becoming operational is included as a condition on the planning permission.

D5.10 No restrictions on **hours of working** were imposed on the permission. The operators envisaged a two-shift, 16-hour day, with provision to increase to 24-hour working to serve specific contracts. It was expected that 24-hour working would be infrequent, and because of the nature of the contracts requiring 24-hour working, it was expected that they would only generate little traffic movement.

(iii) Noise, dust and pollution

D5.11 The site's location well away from houses, adjacent to the M25, and close to Heathrow flight paths meant that the issue of **noise** from the operations was not a major consideration in determining the proposal. Nevertheless, a condition was imposed to ensure that all plant, machinery and vehicles used in connection with the development was silenced by the best practicable means. Issues relating to noise arising from possible night-time train movements were regarded purely as rail operational matters over which the planning authority had no control.

D5.12 Aggregates stored within the site would be kept in a semi-enclosed building, constructed along the eastern edge of the works site and open only on the lower half of its inward side. This would serve to reduce emissions of **dust** resulting from the operations. There were nevertheless concerns over wind whipping of dust especially during the initial construction phase, and dust created by lorry movements on the site. To ensure proper control, the planning permission requires the installation of dust suppression facilities before the commencement of operations at the site.

D5.13 Various conditions were imposed to prevent **water pollution** arising from the site.

D5.14 The site is a former mineral working which has been restored using controlled waste. Although the application indicated that the site had been filled only with inert wastes, a condition was imposed requiring adequate precautions to be taken to ensure that no pollution was caused as a result of possible **disturbance to deposited putrescible waste**. Precautions were required to control any tip leachate which might be found within the site; to minimise ground disturbance generally; and to safeguard the integrity of any clay layers within the site.

(iv) Traffic and access issues

- D5.15 The operators hoped that sales from the site would reach a total of 1mt/year, made up of about 50% drystone, 40% coated stone, and 10% ready-mixed concrete. This was estimated to equate to around 200 loaded lorry movements out of the site each day (i.e. 400 in or out movements per day in total). **Access** would be on to the A4 Colnbrook by-pass. Traffic arriving from the east, or leaving to the west, would use the underpass running from the site beneath the A4 to avoid the need for any turning movements across the main carriageway. Traffic arriving from the west, or leaving to the east, would use the existing direct access on the north side of the main road. From the site accesses, the motorway network (M4 and M25) can be readily reached without vehicles having to be directed through any major residential areas. There were no objections to the proposal on highway grounds, and no **routing agreement** was required in connection with the planning permission. A condition was imposed requiring some **improvements to the access junction** on the north side of the A4, to ensure that vehicles could arrive and depart from this access simultaneously without any risk of vehicles having to wait on the A4 carriageway.
- D5.16 The supporting statement with the planning application stated that all lorries leaving the site would be required to be **sheeted**, to prevent material spilling from loaded lorries on to the highway.

(v) Visual impact and landscaping

- D5.17 There are no buildings overlooking the site, and no footpaths through or adjacent to it. As a result, **views into the site** are restricted to those from passing traffic on the A4 and M25. The site is prominent from the M25 which, particularly around the northern end of the site, is elevated. The structures on the site, some of which would be over 20 metres in height, could not be totally screened from view. Proposals for landscaping the site, and for the final treatment (colouring) of cladding and plant, are therefore intended to lessen the impact of the development on its surroundings, rather than to try and hide it altogether.
- D5.18 **Existing trees** on the site are to be retained, and in some cases improved by tree surgery. The area round the operational part of the site was required to be **mounded and planted** with trees and shrubs, with the remainder of the site left as pasture. Restrictions of land ownership (see D5.20), and the need to protect the interests of the (then) Southern Electricity Board and the Civil Aviation Authority, meant that it was not possible to require the 'ideal' form of landscaping for the area between the site and the M25, which would be to plant it as **amenity woodland**. Specifically, the SEB required no planting to take place within 20 metres either side of the **power line** crossing the site, and the CAA wished the total area of planting, and the spacing of trees, to be limited to minimise the risk of **bird-strike** from starling roosts.
- D5.19 Some general landscaping details were approved as part of the planning permission. In addition, a condition was imposed requiring the submission and approval of a detailed **landscaping scheme and programme** covering 4 hectares of the site. This scheme was required to include both mounding and planting, and implementation was to be completed within 12 months of the completion of the development of the site. Provisions for **maintenance of the landscaping** for a further 10 years after that date were also included in the planning condition.
- D5.20 At the time of the application, discussions were continuing over securing agreement with third parties over **planting of an area of land adjacent to the west side of the M25** which was outside the control of the prospective operators of the depot or of the planning authority. Woodland planting of this land (which today is still in the London Borough of Hillingdon) was considered desirable to help to minimise the visual impact of the development as seen from the motorway. The depot operators agreed at the time to make a financial contribution towards planting on this land if agreement over planting could be reached with the landowners.

(vi) Services

D5.21 A condition was imposed on the planning permission designed to ensure proper protection for the interests of **statutory undertakers and other agencies** responsible for service installations on or affecting the site. The permission identifies the authorities known to be affected as including (the then) British Rail, British Telecom, British Gas, and the Southern Electricity Board. As noted in paragraph D5.18, specific limitations were imposed on the landscaping of the site to protect the interests of the electricity board.

Requirements for future proposals for a rail depot at the site

D5.22 Although the 1987 permission is considered to remain valid, it is possible that given the lapse of time since that date, the prospective operator (when he comes to implement the permission in full) may wish to vary to a greater or lesser extent the details of the development allowed by that permission. Without prejudice to the view that might be taken by the planning authority on any specific proposal, it is considered that any new or substantially revised proposal would need to address again all the issues referred to in the previous section, to ensure that the scheme takes account of the contemporary circumstances of the site and its surroundings, and incorporates the most appropriate and up-to-date measures for minimising its environmental impact.

D5.23 In addition to the issues described above, any future proposal for a rail depot at the site should also consider, along with any other relevant matters -

- the need to make allowance for any contemporary proposals for, or safeguarding for, widening of the M4 and/or M25;
- the need to minimise adverse effects on the environment of and working conditions in the nearby Lakeside Road commercial area;
- the relationship of the depot proposals to other development proposals on surrounding or adjoining land (see paragraph D5.4);
- the need for the depot at the time, having particular regard to the location of the site in the Metropolitan Green Belt (see Policy 25 and the details in paragraph D4.11);
- the issues and concerns identified under the heading of 'General comment' on page 150, where relevant.

D5.24 In accordance with the new Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations introduced in 1999, any new or substantially revised application for a rail depot at this site would have to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement.

- *Planning permission for a revised rail aggregates depot proposal at this site was granted by Slough Borough Council in October 2000.*

APPENDIX 8

REPLACEMENT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN - POLICIES

For ease of reference, this appendix brings together all the policies of this plan.

- Policy 1 The local planning authorities will seek to husband the mineral resources of Berkshire, to prevent their wasteful use or sterilisation.
- Policy 2 The local planning authorities will oppose development proposals which would cause the sterilisation of mineral deposits on the proposed development site, or which would prejudice the future working of minerals on adjacent sites, except where it is demonstrated that
- (i) the mineral deposit is of no commercial interest, and is unlikely to be so in the future; or
 - (ii) having regard to all relevant planning considerations, there is an overriding case in favour of allowing the proposed development to proceed without the prior extraction of the mineral; or
 - (iii) extraction of the mineral would be subject to such strong environmental or other objection that it would be highly unlikely that it would ever be permitted in any circumstances.
- Policy 2A In appropriate cases, the local planning authorities will encourage the extraction of minerals prior to other more permanent forms of development taking place. Planning permission will be granted on applications for prior extraction of minerals, provided that
- (i) mineral extraction and restoration to an appropriate standard can be completed within a timetable that would not unreasonably prejudice the timetable for the subsequent development; and
 - (ii) mineral extraction and restoration operations, or their associated traffic, would not cause unacceptable impacts on the environment or living conditions.
- Policy 3 Subject to the outcome of any future reviews of national or regional policy guidance, the local planning authorities will aim collectively to make provision for the release of land to allow production of sand and gravel in Berkshire to be maintained at an average level of 2.3 million tonnes a year.
- Policy 4 The local planning authorities will aim collectively to provide for the maintenance of a stock of planning permissions in the county (a landbank) equivalent to at least seven years' extraction of sand and gravel at a rate in accordance with the provisions of Policy 3.

- Policy 5** In furtherance of Policy 1, and in accordance with regional policy, the local planning authorities consider that aggregates demands in excess of those provided for under the terms of Policy 3 should be met by
- * the use wherever possible of secondary and recycled aggregates either produced in or imported into the county; and
 - * importing (preferably by rail) sand and gravel and suitable alternative primary aggregates such as crushed rock and marine-dredged aggregates.
- Policy 6** Proposals for sand and gravel extraction will be judged in accordance with Policies 7 to 24 of this Plan. In all cases, planning permission will only be granted if the local planning authority is satisfied
- (i) that an acceptable balance has been struck between the need for the mineral and all relevant environmental, agricultural, amenity and other relevant planning considerations; and
 - (ii) that the details of the proposal, including the proposals for the method of working, site restoration, after-care and after-use, satisfy the detailed requirements set out in this Plan.
- Policy 7** Within the framework provided by Policy 6, the merits of all applications for the extraction of sand and gravel will be assessed having regard to all material considerations, including
- (i) the likely effects of the proposal on living conditions, and the likely effects of the traffic which it would generate;
 - (ii) the need to protect the character and amenities of individual settlements, and to protect important open gaps between settlements from development which would cause long-term harm to the land's function;
 - (iii) the need to protect sites or areas of ecological, geological, archaeological, historic, or architectural importance;
 - (iv) the desirability of protecting Grade 1, 2 and 3a farmland, and the likely effects of the proposal on farm structure;
 - (v) the need to protect woodland, areas of attractive landscape, and individual landscape features;
 - (vi) the need to protect existing recreation sites, and to protect and enhance the recreation value of the public rights of way network;
 - (vii) the need to guard against environmental damage resulting from changes to the water table;
 - (viii) the need to protect water bodies and other water features, and to protect the water environment generally, including the protection of the flow, quantity and quality of water supplies, and protection against increased risks of flooding to property and people;
 - (ix) the need to minimise disturbance by securing the phased release of extraction sites; by encouraging (subject to all other planning considerations) the orderly progression of working and restoration in areas where extraction is to take place or is already taking place; and by resisting the unnecessary spread of working to new areas.

- Policy 8** In the Preferred Areas indicated on the Proposals Map and shown in more detail in Appendix 3, there will be a presumption in favour of allowing applications for the extraction of sharp sand and gravel, so long as
- (i) the requirements of Policy 6 are all satisfied; and
 - (ii) the proposals have full regard to the statement of detailed requirements for each area as set out in Appendix 3, or such other amended requirements as may be agreed with the local planning authority so long as these fully address the issues and respect the principles contained in that Appendix, and do not diminish the standard of development as provided for in that Appendix.

Policy 9 has been deleted

- Policy 10** Outside the Preferred Areas, applications for extraction of sharp sand and gravel will normally be refused. In considering whether or not to make an exception to this general presumption, the local planning authorities will take account of
- (i) whether there is a need to disturb land outside the Preferred Areas in order to maintain provision for the levels of production set out in Policy 3, or the landbank figure indicated by Policy 4;
 - (ii) whether that need could be more acceptably met elsewhere than on the application site, having particular regard (among other things) to the presumptions against extraction in specific areas indicted in Policies 11 to 13;
 - (iii) whether the proposals overcome or accommodate all constraints deriving from the considerations set out in Policy 7.

- Policy 11** There will be the strongest presumption against allowing the extraction of sharp sand and gravel from
- (i) the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - (ii) designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (including classified and designated Special Protection Areas, designated and candidate Special Areas of Conservation, and Ramsar sites and Nature Conservation Review and Geological Conservation Review sites);
 - (iii) statutory nature reserves;
 - (iv) scheduled ancient monuments, and other monuments of national importance;
 - (v) land owned by or covenanted to the National Trust;
 - (vi) common land, and town or village green;
 - (vii) registered parks and gardens of special historic interest, and registered battlefields;
 - (viii) the sites and settings of Grade 1 and Grade 2* listed buildings;
 - (ix) statutory Green Belt land;
 - (x) land within built-up areas.

- Policy 12** There will be a strong presumption against allowing the extraction of sharp sand and gravel from
- (i) Areas of Special Landscape Importance, Wildlife Heritage Sites (including Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites), parks and gardens of county importance, non-scheduled archaeological sites meriting preservation in situ, Conservation Areas and the sites and settings of Grade 2 listed buildings, and the immediate settings of rivers and canals; and
 - (ii) allotments and land in established recreational use.
- Policy 13** There will be a strong presumption against allowing the extraction of sharp sand and gravel
- (i) from land outside any of the areas of land specified in Policies 11 and 12 but which would adversely affect any of those areas; or
 - (ii) which would adversely affect the function of land important to the character or amenities of individual settlements, including land important to the separation of settlements.
- Policy 14** Outside the Preferred Areas, proposals for borrow pits to serve major construction projects will be acceptable so long as
- (i) material from the pit is only used in connection with the specific project with which it is associated;
 - (ii) extraction from the site will cause less environmental disturbance than would result from using material won from established sources of supply, and so long as the local planning authority is satisfied that none of the Preferred Areas identified in this Plan is able to meet the particular needs of the project;
 - (iii) the pit is sited and operated so as to minimise environmental disturbance;
 - (iv) provision is made for the rapid restoration of the pit following extraction, preferably using only materials from elsewhere on the construction site; and
 - (v) the location and operation of the pit have full regard to the issues set out in Policy 7.
- Policy 15** Applications for the extraction of building sand will be judged on their merits having strict regard to the provisions of Policies 6 and 7, to the issues in Policy 10, and to the presumptions in Policies 11 to 13. Notwithstanding Policy 11(i), the local planning authorities will be prepared to grant permissions for the extraction of up to 150,000 tonnes a year from sites within the North Wessex Downs AONB, so long as all other requirements of these policies are met and the authorities are satisfied that the AONB will not be adversely affected by the operations proposed.
- Policy 16** Applications for the extraction of chalk or clay, or of minerals not at present worked in the county (apart from oil and gas) will normally only be permitted if
- (i) the minerals are shown to be required to meet a specific local need which cannot be met from existing permitted sites or by secondary and recycled aggregates; and

- (ii) the need for the mineral outweighs all environmental, agricultural, amenity and other relevant planning considerations; and
- (iii) the proposal is acceptable in terms of national or county constraints, as set out in Policies 11 to 13; and
- (iv) the details of the proposal, including the proposals for the method of working, site restoration, after-care and after-use, satisfy the detailed requirements set out in this Plan; and
- (v) proposals for related plant and buildings are acceptable in terms of Policy 28.

Policy 17

Proposals relating to oil and gas will be judged in accordance with the following principles:

- (i) Proposals to carry out exploratory drilling will normally be permitted unless they would cause harm to sites or areas which are particularly sensitive in environmental terms, and provided that they are accompanied by satisfactory schemes of working and restoration;
- (ii) Proposals for further drilling at the appraisal stage will be considered on their merits in terms of the issues listed in Policy 7 of this Plan, having particular regard to the long-term suitability of the site for commercial production and distribution;
- (iii) Proposals for the commercial production of these minerals, or for the establishment of related plant, will be judged strictly on their merits in terms of the key principles set out in Policy 6 and the issues listed in Policy 7. Applications will normally only be permitted if
 - (a) the need for the development outweighs all environmental, agricultural, amenity and other relevant planning considerations; and
 - (b) the proposal is acceptable in terms of national and county constraints, as set out in Policies 11 to 13; and
 - (c) the details of the proposal, including the proposals for the method of working, site restoration, after-care and after-use, satisfy the detailed requirements set out in this Plan; and
 - (d) proposals for plant and building are acceptable in terms of Policy 28.

Policy 18

- (i) Before they will be prepared to grant planning permission for mineral extraction, the local planning authorities will require to be satisfied that the land will be progressively restored within a reasonable timescale to an appropriate standard and an acceptable landform, landscape character and ecological character which are appropriate to its location and its intended after-use.
- (ii) When considering other applications relating to the restoration of present or former mineral workings, the local planning authorities will be guided by the aim of ensuring the completion without undue delay of site restoration to an appropriate standard and an acceptable landform, landscape character and ecological character which are appropriate to its location and its intended after-use.

The local planning authorities will impose conditions to secure these ends on any planning permissions granted, and may request the completion of legal agreements to secure matters which cannot be secured by planning conditions.

- Policy 19** When considering applications for mineral extraction, the local planning authorities will seek to secure environmental and other public benefits (including, where appropriate, recreational benefits) through
- (i) the restoration, after-care and after-use of extraction sites; and
 - (ii) the environmental conservation and enhancement of the wider surrounding area to which the proposed extraction relates, and the promotion of recreational opportunities within this area.
- Policy 20** Proposals for restoration, after-care and after-use of the Preferred Areas must conform to and not prejudice the broad aims and strategies indicated in Appendix 3.
- Policy 21** Every application for mineral extraction must be accompanied by
- (1) a comprehensive description of existing site conditions; and
 - (2) a working plan indicating all aspects of the extraction operation; and
 - (3) a restoration plan showing how the site is to be restored and managed after extraction so as to facilitate the introduction and continuing implementation of suitable after-care measures and an acceptable after-use; and
 - (4) a written statement providing comprehensive supporting details, including details of the relationship of the proposals to the wider surrounding area.
- Policy 22** The local planning authorities will require an Environmental Statement to be submitted with a planning application where, having regard to the provisions of the Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 and DETR Circular 2/99, it appears to them that proposals for mineral extraction or related development will constitute 'EIA development'. Any decision not to require such a statement in a particular case will not preclude the authority, when taking the decision on the overall merits of the application concerned, from judging that the environmental effects of the proposal are sufficient to justify refusing planning permission.
- Policy 23** In order to allow an informed judgement to be made on the archaeological implications of an application for mineral extraction, the local planning authorities will, in appropriate cases, require the results of an archaeological evaluation of the site to be submitted before the application is determined. The brief for such an evaluation must be agreed with the local planning authority before the evaluation takes place.
- Policy 24** The local planning authorities will seek to ensure that archaeological sites and monuments meriting permanent preservation are left undisturbed and appropriately managed, and that elsewhere provision is made where necessary for an appropriate level of archaeological investigation prior to damage or destruction. Where appropriate the requirement for this provision will be safeguarded by planning conditions. Conditions may be imposed, or planning obligations may be sought, to ensure that no development takes place within the area of archaeological interest until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority.

- Policy 25** The local planning authorities will support the development of new rail terminals for importing primary and/or secondary aggregates from outside the county, and the improvement of facilities for this purpose at existing depots, but will consider all relevant planning applications against the considerations set out in Policy 7 and, where appropriate, the need for the depot.
- Policy 26** The local planning authorities will seek to safeguard
- (i) sites at Padworth, Pingewood, Slough, Poyle and Colnbrook as indicated on the Proposals Map and in Appendix 7, and
 - (ii) any sites where planning permission is given for the establishment of new rail aggregates depots,
- from development which would prejudice their use as rail aggregates depots.
- The safeguarding of the sites at Padworth, Pingewood, Slough and Poyle will not imply any presumption in favour of their use as rail depots. Any planning applications for the establishment of depots at these sites will be judged strictly in terms of Policy 25.
- Policy 27** Every application for the establishment of a new rail aggregates depot, or for additional or altered facilities or working arrangements at existing depots, must be accompanied by full details sufficient to enable the local planning authority to assess the application. In appropriate cases, these details should include a statement of the likely environmental effects of the development and of the traffic to be generated by it, along with details of the measures proposed to avoid, reduce or remedy those effects. Where required by the provisions of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 1999 and DETR Circular 2/99, these details should be supplied in the form of a formal Environmental Statement. In the case of the sites listed in Policy 26(i), applications must also address the issues relating to the site as detailed in Appendix 7.
- Policy 28** The local planning authorities will normally permit the erection at mineral extraction sites or rail aggregates depots of mineral processing or manufacturing plant, or of structures ancillary to a minerals use, so long as:
- 1 in the case of processing plant, the plant is required to process material extracted from the pit at which it is located, or brought into the depot by rail; and
 - 2 in the case of manufacturing plant,
 - (i) the substantially greater part of the minerals used in the manufacturing process are extracted from the pit concerned, or brought into the depot by rail, and
 - (ii) the manufacturing activities at all times remain ancillary to the primary use of the site as a mineral extraction site or an aggregates importing depot, as the case may be; and
 - 3 in the case of ancillary development, the development is required and used solely in connection with the administration or servicing of the pit concerned; and

- 4 in all cases, the processing, manufacturing or ancillary activities (as the case may be) could not be more satisfactorily carried out at an existing or permitted plant, or in an existing or permitted structure; and
- 5 in all cases, the plant or other development is removed and the site satisfactorily restored as soon as continuous production of minerals from the site ceases, or when the use of the site as a depot for the import of aggregates by rail ceases; and
- 6 in all cases, the plant or other development can be and is sited, designed, constructed and landscaped so as to minimise adverse impact on the amenities of the area and to give rise to no overriding environmental objections; and
- 7 in all cases, the traffic generated by the plant or other development would not give rise to overriding environmental or other objections; and
- 8 in all cases, the size, type, nature and construction of the plant or other development are appropriate to the nature and scale of the permitted mineral extraction or aggregates importing operation for which it is required or with which it is associated; and
- 9 in the case of sites located in the Green Belt,
 - (i) the development is genuinely required in association with a mineral extraction or importing activity which is itself acceptable in terms of Green Belt policy;
 - (ii) there are no alternative locations for the proposed development on land nearby which is not situated in the Green Belt;
 - (iii) all buildings and structures are located and designed to minimise their impact upon the openness of the Green Belt.

Policy 29

The import to a processing or manufacturing plant of material won elsewhere, and used for the same purpose as the minerals extracted from the pit at which the plant is located, will normally be refused.



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