

Hanborough Parish Council has serious concerns with the proposal of Lower Evenlode Valley becoming a principal location for sharp sand and gravel extraction as stated in policy M3 of the new OCC Minerals and Waste Local Plan Core Strategy. The site as drawn on the map published on the 19th of August, 2015 (encompassing the previously designated SG08) covers a large area west of the Evenlode River and stretches over 2 miles from A40 in the South to the Cotswold Lane railway track in the North; the western and northern borders of it come very close to the settlements of the Hanborough villages. The extraction of sand and gravel within such a sizable area along the valley would lead to an irrevocable large scale erosion of the very attractive, rural landscape in this region, which is immediately adjacent to the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and also Church Hanborough and Millwood End conservation areas.

The proposed mineral extraction in the valley would surround entirely more than 20 residential dwellings (including one Grade II listed), two farms and Willow Cottage Nursery School located at Lower Road (60 children; 20 staff) and would be proximal to Daffodil Nursery School in Long Hanborough (42 children, 10 staff). The site is also immediately adjacent to the edge of the Church Hanborough village conservation area, ancient Pinsley Wood and the eastern part of Long Hanborough.

Lower Road, which runs throughout the middle of the proposed site, parallel to the Evenlode River, is a narrow, winding rural road, which lacks proper drainage, has indistinct verges, and is totally unsuited to carry aggregate lorries traffic. The road has no convenient positions that could provide safe access to the extraction workings. Moreover, it has been already badly damaged by the lorries servicing City Farm and Wintles Farm landfill and recycling facilities in recent years. Lower road is also already taking large volumes of traffic escaping congestion elsewhere.

Sand and gravel development along the Lower Evenlode Valley and associated with it noise, dust, vibration, traffic and pollution would affect directly a substantial number of residents living within the valley itself and in the adjoining parts of both villages and children attending both nursery schools and indirectly the whole population of Hanborough Parish (ca 2800) and the nearby villages of Freeland, North Leigh and Bladon.

Two ancient woods in this part of Evenlode Valley, Pinsley Wood and Burleigh Wood, along with the river meadowlands provide important habitats for many flora and fauna species that are declining elsewhere (roe deer, otters, water voles, etc). The numerous hedgerows of this area also support a variety of declining species including owls, kestrels, buzzards, bats, green and spotted woodpeckers, stoats and many others. In addition the Eynsham Mill natural reserve attracts a variety of migratory birds (the lists could be available on request). Great crested newts had been seen in several ponds. Sand and gravel extraction would have a longstanding detrimental effect on these precious ecological niches and would also ruin the connectivity between them.

Considering, the relatively low density of the sand and gravel deposits within this area as compared to other potential mineral sites and its very elongated geography, the Parish Council's opinion is that the damage to the landscape and social and natural environment caused by this extraction would overwhelmingly outweigh the benefits.