

AT CONTRACTING LTD.

Alkerton Quarry, Alkerton, Oxfordshire

REQUEST FOR SCREENING AND SCOPING OPINION
UNDER THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
(ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)
REGULATIONS 2017

Regarding a New Planning Application for the
Modification of the Approved Restoration Scheme
Through Importation of Inert Soil Material for Nature
Conservation Afteruses and Holiday Chalets

June 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PREFACE

- 1.1.1. In January 2021, Bright & Associates (B&A) (the Agent) submitted a Pre Application Advice Request Form and a Request for a Screening Opinion (January 2021)¹ under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 on behalf of AT Contracting (the Applicant) relating to Alkerton Quarry, Alkerton, Oxfordshire. **(the Site)**
- 1.1.2. B&A subsequently submitted a Request for a Scoping Opinion (March 2021).²
- 1.1.3. The above relate to the proposed modification of the Approved Restoration Scheme through importation of inert soil material from the HS2 scheme.
- 1.1.4. In turn, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) issued an EIA Screening Opinion (February 2021)³ and a Pre Application Advice Letter (Reference PRE.0010/21) (February 2021).⁴ Most recently, OCC published an EIA Scoping Opinion (April 2021) (Reference: MW.0029/21)⁵ concerning the aforementioned proposals.
- 1.1.5. In the interim period, the Applicant has confirmed that the above will not proceed. Instead, it is proposed to submit a new planning application for the modification of the Approved Restoration Scheme through the limited importation of inert soil material for nature conservation afteruses and holiday chalets. **(the Proposed Development)**
- 1.1.6. It should be noted that the removal of a small quantity of iron stone remaining at the Site will take place under the existing Review of Old Mineral Permission (ROMP) consent (OCC Reference No. 97/00430/CM) (dated 28 January 1999).

¹ Screening Opinion Request, Regarding a New Planning Application for the Modification of the Approved Restoration Scheme Through Importation of Inert Soil Material, Alkerton Quarry, Alkerton, Oxfordshire, Prepared by Bright & Associates for AT Contracting Ltd., January 2021

² Request For Scoping Opinion Under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, Regarding a New Planning Application for the Modification of the Approved Restoration Scheme Through Importation of Inert Soil Material, Prepared by Bright & Associates for AT Contracting Ltd., March 2021

³ EIA Screening Opinion (Reference MW0009), Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, Is An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Necessary?, Oxfordshire County Council, 10 February 2021

⁴ Pre Application Advice Letter (Reference PRE.0010/21), Oxfordshire County Council, 8 February 2021

⁵ Scoping Opinion (Reference: MW.0029/21), Proposed modification of the Approved Restoration Scheme Through Importation of Inert Soil Material At Alkerton Quarry, Alkerton, Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County Council, 16 April 2021



1.1.7. In summary, the Proposed Development involves the following key aspects:

- ◆ The Site will be restored over **three years based on infill of inert soil material of 50,000 tonnes per year**. This is a significant reduction compared to the previous submissions and is a volume of material required to achieve an effective landform;
- ◆ Drawing AL1198-D10: Concept Restoration Scheme for Nature Reserve and Holiday Chalets identifies the **extent of infill to achieve the restoration landform** (denoted by the grey shading and orange coloured line). All existing soils remaining on site will be integrated for final restoration of the Site;
- ◆ The Site will be restored to a **low level landform** as shown on Drawing AL1198-D10. This would be appropriate in terms of landscape character. The variation in final restoration contour levels when compared to the Approved Restoration Scheme will assist current drainage issues in the partially restored, northern part of the Site;
- ◆ **Enhanced biodiversity and nature conservation afteruse for the Site** in comparison to the Approved Restoration Scheme. The Revised Restoration Scheme (Drawing AL1198-D10) involves a much larger area being committed to biodiversity and nature conservation purposes and allocated as a Nature Reserve (c.5Ha) in the southern part of the Site. This will contribute to county biodiversity targets, concur with the appropriate guidelines set out in published Landscape Character Assessments and complement the Balscote Quarry Local Wildlife Site (Site Ref. 34U01). As the design process evolves for the Site, there is the potential for input by county conservation groups, such as Buckinghamshire Bird Club (British Trust for Ornithology) and Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) regarding nature conservation aims and objectives; and
- ◆ **Small scale cabin/shepherd hut style holiday facilities** located in the northern part of the Site with the possibility of linking such amenities to nature conservation uses and to offer a form of eco-tourism.

1.1.8. The Site is identified on Drawing AL1198-D5: Site Location Plan.

1.1.9. The Site (c.10.8Ha) is located adjacent to the A422 (Stratford Road). The approximate Site centre is E438613/N243211.

1.1.10. The full Site address is Alkerton Quarry, Alkerton with Shenington, Banbury, Oxon, OX15 6HY.

1.2. THE 2017 EIA REGULATIONS

1.2.1. This Request For Scoping Opinion has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, Part 4, Regulation 15 (2) with respect to information to be supplied to the relevant planning authority, namely the provision of a plan sufficient to identify the land, description of development and potential effects resulting from the Proposed Development.



- 1.2.2. The report has been prepared by B&A on behalf of the Applicant. It is being submitted as part of on-going pre-application advice (Reference PRE.0010/21).
- 1.2.3. As part of the Proposed Development, the intention is to incorporate a limited number of holiday chalets into the Revised Restoration Scheme.
- 1.2.4. According to Schedule 2 Regulation 2(1) Descriptions of Development and Applicable Thresholds and Criteria for the Purposes of the Definition of “Schedule 2 Development”, such development would fall within Category 12 Tourism and leisure.
- 1.2.5. The description of development (Column 1) and Applicable thresholds and criteria (Column 2) defines the following:
- ◆ (c) Holiday villages and hotel complexes outside urban areas and associated developments: *‘The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectare’*; and
 - ◆ (e) Permanent camp sites and caravan sites: *‘The area of the development exceeds 1 hectare’*.
- 1.2.6. Paragraph 57 of Planning Practice Guidance (Environmental Impact Assessment) refers to the Annex: Indicative screening thresholds.⁶ This provides thresholds and criteria for the identification of Schedule 2 development requiring Environmental Impact Assessment and indicative values for determining significant effects. (Reference ID: 4-057-2070720, Revision date: 20 07 2017) Column 3 of which cites *‘Major new tourism and leisure developments which require a site of more than 10 hectares. Holiday villages or hotel complexes with more than 300 bed spaces, or for permanent camp sites or caravan sites with more than 200 pitches’*. Column 4 draws attention to *‘Visual impacts, impacts on ecosystems and traffic generation’* as key issues to consider.
- 1.2.7. The Proposed Development is considerably smaller in density and nature of development. The proposed holiday chalets will be arranged with low density of spacing. In total, 18no. are shown on Drawing AL1198-D10 for illustrative purposes. Each chalet will consist of a small scale cabin/shepherd hut style design. Whilst the proposed holiday chalets are set out within a broad area of c.5Ha. The majority of the Site being allocated for nature conservation purposes including a Nature Reserve, also 5Ha in area.
- 1.2.8. Nevertheless it is recognised the development will be likely to fall within the Schedule 2 category. Based on the above information, it is assumed that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be required.

⁶ Planning Practice Guidance (Environmental Impact Assessment), <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessment>, sourced June 2021



1.3. CONTENTS OF THE REPORT

1.3.1. This report consists of the following Sections:

- ◆ **Section 1 Introduction** outlines the background to the Proposed Development;
- ◆ **Section 2 Current Baseline Situation** sets out the Site's recent planning history. A brief description of the Site and its setting is provided;
- ◆ **Section 3 The Proposed Development** describes the proposals in detail and summarises the potential benefits for the Site following restoration;
- ◆ **Section 4 Environmental Issues** outlines the subjects which should be addressed in as part of the EIA, the contents of the Planning Supporting Statement and other documents which will be submitted; and
- ◆ **Section 5 Summary and Conclusions.**

1.3.2. The following Drawings are included and referenced in the text:

- ◆ Drawing AL1198-D5: Site Location Plan; and
- ◆ Drawing AL1198-D10: Concept Restoration Scheme for Nature Reserve and Holiday Chalets.

1.3.3. Footnotes in the report provide reference sources. Distance and direction are given from the nearest Site boundary.

1.4. DEFINITIONS USED IN THE REPORT

1.4.1. **The 2017 EIA Regulations** refers to The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

1.4.2. **The Site** is identified by the proposed planning application boundary (denoted by the red line) on Drawing AL1198-D5: Site Location Plan and refers to Alkerton Quarry.

1.4.3. **The Approved Restoration Scheme** is represented by approved plans and details permitted through OCC Reference No. MW.0020/19 (District Reference No. 19/00407/CM) (dated 21 November 2019) namely:

- ◆ Plan 160118/rest5: Proposed restoration 5 (Dated 20 January 2018). Prepared by Barton Plant Ltd. on behalf of Peter Bennie Ltd.;
- ◆ Plan KB-AQ/101c: Alkerton Quarry Revised Restoration Plan - March 2018 (Dated March 2018). Prepared by Katie Burfitt on behalf of Peter Bennie Ltd.; and
- ◆ Alkerton Quarry Restoration, Soil Placement and Aftercare Scheme, Revised March 2018 (R2 Jan 2019). Prepared by Katie Burfitt on behalf of Peter Bennie Ltd.

1.4.4. **The Proposed Development** concerns the modification of the Approved Restoration Scheme through the importation of inert soil material for nature conservation afteruses and holiday chalets.



1.4.5. **The Revised Restoration Scheme** is illustrated by Drawing AL1198-D10: Concept Restoration Scheme for Nature Reserve and Holiday Chalets. It shows the extent of infill to achieve the restoration landform, existing and proposed habitats including the area assigned for a Nature Reserve and the indicative layout of the holiday chalets.

1.4.6. The following reports and documents relate to the planning application for the modification of the Approved Restoration Scheme through importation of inert soil material, namely from the HS2 scheme:

- ◆ **The Request for a Screening Opinion (January 2021)** refers to the report submitted by B&A to OCC on behalf of the Applicant in January 2021;
- ◆ **The EIA Screening Opinion (February 2021)** refers to the EIA Screening Opinion (Reference MW0009) (dated 10 February 2021) issued by OCC;
- ◆ **The Pre Application Advice Letter (February 2021)** refers to the Pre Application Advice Letter (dated 8 February 2021) issued by OCC. (Reference PRE.0010/21);
- ◆ **The Request for a Scoping Opinion (March 2021)** refers to the report submitted by B&A to OCC on behalf of the Applicant in March 2021; and
- ◆ **The EIA Scoping Opinion (April 2021)** refers to the EIA Scoping Opinion (dated 16 April 2021) issued by OCC. (Reference: MW.0029/21)



2. CURRENT BASELINE SITUATION

2.1. INTRODUCTION

2.1.1. This Section sets out the Site's recent planning history. A description of the Site and its setting is provided.

2.2. RECENT SITE PLANNING HISTORY

2.2.1. The Site forms part of a wider area of permitted ironstone extraction regulated under OCC Reference No. 97/00430/CM, Review of Old Mineral Permissions (ROMP) (dated 28 January 1999).

2.2.2. Table 1 below summarises the most recent planning permissions relevant to the Site.

Table 1: Summary of Site Planning Permissions

OCC REFERENCE NUMBER (DISTRICT REFERENCE NUMBER)	PROPOSAL	DECISION (DATE)
MW.0020/19 (District Reference No. 19/00407/CM)	Section 73 application to vary condition 99 of planning permission ref 12/01365/CM (MW.0113/12); to relocate the ephemeral pond at Alkerton Quarry	Approved (21 November 2019)
MW.0108/13 (District Reference No. 13/01257/CM)	Section 73 application to vary condition 109 of planning application 12/01365/CM to allow the implementation of an updated restoration	Refused (25 October 2013)
MW.0113/12 (District Reference No. 12/01365/CM)	Application to vary conditions 35, 40, 41, 98 & 99 of planning permission Ref 12/00056/CM; to create restoration contours the allow for effective drainage.	Approved (20 November 2012)

2.3. THE SITE AND ITS SETTING

2.3.1. The Site occupies a broadly triangular parcel of land (c.10.8Ha) and borders the A422 (Stratford Road) and Rattlecombe Road to the south. Immediately adjacent to the west is the former Alkerton Landfill Site which features a restored mounded landform in places. There is an established mature hedgerow with hedgerow trees to the east and south of the Site.

2.3.2. Rattlecombe Road provides access in the south-western corner of the Site (see Drawing AL1198-D5).

2.3.3. The Approved Restoration Scheme provides agricultural land (c.6.1Ha), rough grassland with perimeter scrub (c.1.8Ha) and native hedgerows (c.654m linear length). Site restoration was due to be completed in 2019/20. The northern part of the Site was partially restored approximately 14 years ago and this area is in poor condition.



2.3.4. The photographs provided in the Soil Placement and Aftercare Scheme report (which forms part of the Approved Restoration Scheme) show areas of rough grassland and gorse (see page 8). Paragraph 3 notes that this area was due to be re-worked to improve restoration quality and drainage. Following which, it would be re-restored in accordance with agricultural areas elsewhere but using the lower quality soils.

2.3.5. Also of relevance are the following. Unless stated, designations have been identified using Magic online mapping (managed by Natural England) which provides geographic information about the natural environment.⁷:

- ◆ A definitive public footpath (reference 418/6/10) crosses east to west through the Site. A further route (reference 418/12/20 and 418/12/30) passes along the western edge of the Site⁸;
- ◆ The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 which applies to areas with a low probability of flooding⁹;
- ◆ Jenny's Sanctuary (a non denominational centre) and a residential property Heath Farm (also known as White Gables) with blacksmith business are located immediately south-east of the Site;
- ◆ The villages of Alkerton (c.800m) and Shenington (c.1.2km) are to the west of the Site;
- ◆ No Priority Habitats apply to the Site or adjacent areas. South of Rattlecombe Road is an area of woodland categorised under the Priority Habitat Inventory as Deciduous Woodland (England);
- ◆ The northern part of the Site is categorised as a NERC Section 41 designated habitat through the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need, September 2020);¹⁰
- ◆ Balscote Quarry Local Wildlife Site (Site Ref. 34U01) is south of the Site (c.220m)¹¹;
- ◆ There are no Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings within c.500m of the Site. The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is c.1.2km north; and
- ◆ The Site has good access onto the main road network given its proximity to the A422.

⁷ Magic, <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>, sourced May 2021

⁸ Countryside Access Map, <https://publicrightsofway.oxfordshire.gov.uk/standardmap.aspx>, sourced May 2021

⁹ Environment Agency, <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>, sourced May 2021

¹⁰ Cherwell District Council, Cherwell Local Plan, <https://cherwell.maps.arcgis.com/>, sourced May 2021

¹¹ Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre, <https://www.tverc.org/cms/>, sourced May 2021



3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1. INTRODUCTION

3.1.1. This Section outlines the Proposed Development illustrated by Drawing AL1198-D10: Concept Restoration Scheme for Nature Reserve and Holiday Chalets.

3.1.2. The current baseline in terms of the Site in planning terms and for the purpose of the EIA consists of the following:

- ◆ The Approved Restoration Scheme, namely the approved plans and details permitted through OCC Reference No. MW.0020/19 (District Reference No. 19/00407/CM) (dated 21 November 2019); and
- ◆ The context of the Site as active quarry until c.mid-2020 with the removal of the haul road and mineral beneath extracted by the Site's previous owners.

3.1.3. The current condition of the Site means that Approved Restoration Scheme cannot be executed which is acknowledged in the Pre Application Advice Letter (February 2021).

3.2. SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Restoration Working Scheme

3.2.1. As stated, the removal of a small quantity of iron stone remaining at the Site will take place under the existing ROMP consent (OCC Reference No. 97/00430/CM).

3.2.2. The key aims of the restoration working scheme are to compensate for historic over extraction in the south-eastern sector of the Site and to facilitate a reasonable depth of soil making material to achieve effective restoration. Therefore, it will be necessary to import c.90,000m³ of inert waste soils which equates to c.150,000 tonnes.

3.2.3. Drawing AL1198-D10 identifies the extent of infill to achieve the restoration landform (denoted by the grey shading and orange coloured line). All existing soils remaining on site will be integrated for final restoration of the Site.

3.2.4. It is proposed that the Site will be restored over three years based on infill of inert soil material of 50,000 tonnes per year.

3.2.5. The material will be sourced from local building projects over 3 years and is a small proportion of the overall market availability. Based on a forecast of 50,000 tonnes per year, this would broadly equate to 1,020 tonnes per week. Assuming an average payload of 15 tonnes per HGV, it is expected that this would equate to 14 trucks in and 14 trucks out per day of the Site which would represent a very minor increase for the road network.



- 3.2.6. It is expected that some, but not all will come through Wroxton and from the Banbury area with the remainder being transported from the Stratford-upon-Avon area via the A422 from the north.
- 3.2.7. The Proposed Development will lead to approximately 4 direct employment opportunities during this period.
- 3.2.8. There would be no change to the currently permitted hours of working on site. Condition 15 of planning consent MW.0020/19 (District Reference No. 19/00407/CM) (dated 21 November 2019) states that *'No operations authorised or required by this permission shall be carried out and plant shall not be operated or lorries loaded or despatched, other than during the following hours: Between 0700 and 1800 hours, Mondays to Fridays; 0700 and 1300 hours on Saturdays. No such operations shall take place on Sundays or recognised public holidays or on Saturdays immediately following bank holiday Fridays'*.
- 3.2.9. The Proposed Development will be submitted as a stand alone planning application. Thus, an eventual permission would allow Site restoration to progress without being attached to current Conditions through the ROMP consent (OCC Reference No. 97/00430/CM) which affects the broader Wroxton sites.

Revised Restoration Scheme

- 3.2.10. The Site will be restored to a low level landform as shown on Drawing AL1198-D10: Concept Restoration Scheme for Nature Reserve and Holiday Chalets that would follow an eco-tourism strategy.
- 3.2.11. The restored landform will broadly range from c.161mAOD near the pond in the southern environs of the Site to c.172.5mAOD in the northern part of the Site. This will provide similar overall restored Site levels to the Approved Restoration Scheme. The proposed restoration contours have been designed to assist with current drainage issues in the partially restored, northern part of the Site and would also be appropriate in terms of landscape character.
- 3.2.12. The Revised Restoration Scheme will facilitate the removal of the remnant quarry face shown adjacent to the ephemeral pond on Plan KB-AQ/101c: Alkerton Quarry Revised Restoration Plan - March 2018 (Dated March 2018). This represents a safer option.
- 3.2.13. Public footpath (reference 418/6/10) would be returned to its definitive route as opposed to the amended location defined by the Approved Restoration Scheme.
- 3.2.14. Existing access to the Site is provided by Rattlecombe Road and there will be gated access to the holiday chalets and the parking area for Nature Reserve visits as identified on Drawing AL1198-D10.



Proposed Nature Reserve

3.2.15. As part of the Revised Restoration Scheme, the southern part of the Site is assigned primarily as a Nature Reserve (c.5Ha) and includes proposed habitats that will complement the nearby Balscote Nature Reserve.

3.2.16. Proposed habitats within this specific area (denoted by the green line diagonal hatch) include the following:

- ◆ Semi natural grassland;
- ◆ Scrub regeneration;
- ◆ Permanent wetland and island;
- ◆ Ephemeral wetland/drawdown; and
- ◆ Bare ground/exposed stone/rock.

3.2.17. The Nature Reserve will also include a bat and barn owl roost shed, selected parking spaces and viewing areas.

3.2.18. The proposed habitats elsewhere in the Site will include native species woodland or scrub vegetation with limited canopy height, principally in the northern and central part of the Site (c.5Ha). A proposed native species hedgerow will feature along the western Site boundary and in the centre of the Site (c.760m linear length). Existing hedgerows along the eastern and southern Site boundaries will be strengthened by this new planting.

3.2.19. As the design process evolves for the Site, there is the potential for input by county conservation groups, such as Buckinghamshire Bird Club (British Trust for Ornithology) and Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) regarding nature conservation aims and objectives. Recently, the Agent entered dialogue with both county conservation.

Proposed Holiday Chalets

3.2.20. As part of the Revised Restoration Scheme, the proposed holiday chalets will be located in the northern part of the Site with a limited number in a 'quiet zone', fronting the Nature Reserve area (Drawing AL1198-D10).

3.2.21. It is envisaged that the holiday chalets will be of a small scale cabin/shepherd hut style design. There is the potential to link such amenities to nature conservation uses and offer a form of eco-tourism.

3.2.22. The holiday chalets have been arranged with low density spacing and Drawing AL1198-D10 illustrates 18no. in total. Access is provided by a surfaced track, with open grassland and woodland areas with intermediate spacing.

3.2.23. In conclusion, the Proposed Development would represent a sustainable option for the Site. The Revised Restoration Scheme would facilitate appropriate restored landform levels and provide an enhanced biodiversity afteruse in comparison to the Approved Restoration Scheme.



3.2.24. At a strategic level, the proposed habitats including new native broadleaved woodland, native hedgerows and wetland areas (e.g. ponds) would contribute to county biodiversity targets. Such habitats would concur with the appropriate guidelines set out in published Landscape Character Assessments at a county level, through the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004)¹² and at District Council level, through the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (1995)¹³ and the Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance (1998).¹⁴ Also of note is the Community Nature Plan 2020–2022 (2020)¹⁵ recently issued by Cherwell District Council. The Revised Restoration Scheme will also contribute to the broad objectives of Conservation Target Areas (CTA) notably, the nearby Northern Valleys CTA.

¹² Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study, <http://owls.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/occ/OWLS/Home/>, sourced May 2021

¹³ Cherwell District Landscape Assessment, Cherwell District Council, 1995

¹⁴ Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance, Cherwell District Council, 1998

¹⁵ Community Nature Plan 2020–2022, Cherwell District Council, 2020



4. APPROACH OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1. INTRODUCTION

4.1.1. This Section identifies the environmental issues to be assessed as part of the EIA which will inform the Revised Restoration Scheme as it develops. It sets out the contents of the Environmental Statement (ES) including an initial list of relevant planning policies.

4.2. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

4.2.1. The Site comprises an existing quarry which has been partially restored in places. It is proposed that a Cultural Heritage/Archaeological assessment is not required in this instance. As part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, landscape and cultural heritage designations which contribute to a sense of place and/or signify an amenity value for receptors will be reviewed within an adopted study area.

Arboricultural (Trees and Hedgerows)

4.2.2. It is accepted that a detailed Arboricultural Statement will be required of the Proposed Development.

4.2.3. Relevant national and local planning policies will be taken into account.

4.2.4. An assessment will be undertaken to evaluate existing vegetation on Site such as trees and hedgerows. The surveys will be carried out in accordance with the methodology set out in BS5837: 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations. The report will identify whether vegetation will be required to be removed to facilitate the Proposed Development and necessary tree protection measures.

4.2.5. Future tree and hedgerow planting opportunities will be identified which can be incorporated into the design as it evolves.

Ecology

4.2.6. It is accepted that a detailed Ecological Assessment will be required of the Proposed Development. Relevant national and local planning policies will be taken into account.

4.2.7. The assessment will comprise an Extended Phase 1 habitat survey, outline species surveys and consider existing information.

4.2.8. It will assess any effects on statutory and nonstatutory wildlife sites due to the Proposed Development.



4.2.9. It will be carried out in accordance with current guidance and best practice set out by the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM).

4.2.10. The report will identify potential enhancement measures that can be incorporated into the Revised Restoration Scheme which will result in net biodiversity gain in line with current national planning policy.

4.2.11. Relevant sources include the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC).

4.2.12. The assessment will consider the following matters:

- ◆ The impact of the Proposed Development on Species or Habitats of Principal Importance;
- ◆ Whether the Proposed Development has the potential to impact on a European protected species and will result an offence under the Habitats Regulations 2019;
- ◆ The incorporation of ephemeral ponds/wetland habitats in the Revised Restoration Scheme for the Site;
- ◆ Potential impacts on the Balscote Quarry Local Wildlife Site;
- ◆ Habitats which could be incorporated into the Revised Restoration Scheme to complement the Balscote Quarry Local Wildlife Site;
- ◆ An Ecological Management Plan (or similar) will be required for the long-term management of the Site's habitats for 20 years after the 5-year standard aftercare period for nature conservation;
- ◆ The Revised Restoration Scheme will consider the Northern Valleys Conservation Target Areas (CTA) and the broad objectives of the CTA. Although the Site is not within a Conservation Target Area (CTA), it does fall close to the Northern Valleys CTA. The OCC Ecology Officer drew attention to this matter in the Pre Application Advice Letter (February 2021) in relation to former proposals earlier in 2021;
- ◆ The current Biodiversity Metric 2.0 (Natural England) will be used to demonstrate a measurable net gain in biodiversity according to national and local planning policy. This is due to be upgraded to Biodiversity Metric 3.0 in Spring 2021 but has not been issued to date (as of June 2021); and
- ◆ Consideration of the time period for a management plan will be given and the effects evaluated prior to a firm commitment of time.

Hydrology

4.2.13. A detailed Hydrogeological Assessment will be required of the Proposed Development. Relevant national and local planning policies will be taken into account.

4.2.14. This will include an assessment of groundwater issues and consideration of flood risk and drainage issues.



4.2.15. It will entail:

- ◆ Review of information relating to the geology, licensed abstractions, private water supplies, history of site working, water supported sites of ecological interest, etc.;
- ◆ Identification of potential impacts of importing restoration fill material;
- ◆ Identification of how the Site setting relates to the Environment Agency landfill location policy; and
- ◆ Development of mitigation measures, where necessary.

4.2.16. Flood risk and site drainage work items will include:

- ◆ Collation of data from the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority;
- ◆ Assessment of flood risk to the Site and from the Site to the surrounding area;
- ◆ Assessment of mitigation measures to prevent any increase in flood risk;
- ◆ Consideration of the effects of climate change; and
- ◆ Assessment of surface water management/drainage provision after the completion of restoration. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) methods would be proposed where possible and comment made on the on-going maintenance of the SuDS system over time.

Landscape and Visual

4.2.17. A detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be required of the Proposed Development. Relevant national and local planning policies will be taken into account.

4.2.18. Guidance for the undertaking of the LVIA will be sourced from Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition), published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013). Reference will also be made to An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (2014) and An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management, Natural England (2019).

4.2.19. Visual figures will be prepared in line with the Visual Representation of Development Proposals, Technical Guidance Note 06/19 issued by the Landscape Institute in September 2019.

4.2.20. The LVIA will be robust and will examine and assess separately, potential effects on landscape character and the visual amenity. It will take into account the proximity of the Site to the Cotswolds AONB and its setting.



4.2.21. Reference will be made to current Landscape Character Assessments, taking into account applicable guidelines which could influence the Revised Restoration Masterplan as it evolves. This includes National Character Areas (Natural England) and a county level, the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004). At a district council level, the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (1995) and the Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance (1998) are relevant.

4.2.22. Reference will be made to the strategic reports published by both OCC and Cherwell District Council. The latter includes the recent Community Nature Plan 2020–2022 (2020).

4.2.23. Mitigation measures incorporated into the Proposed Development will be considered.

Noise

4.2.24. A detailed Noise Assessment will be required of the Proposed Development. Relevant national and local planning policies will be taken into account. It will be undertaken in line with current guidance and best practice.

4.2.25. The Noise Assessment will address the following matters:

- ◆ Key sources of noise originating from the Proposed Development;
- ◆ Current monitoring regime and results;
- ◆ Describe the noise mitigation measures that are currently in place;
- ◆ Predict the noise levels arising from the Proposed Development and assess these against current standards and guidelines; and
- ◆ Propose additional mitigation measures if required.

Transport

4.2.26. A detailed Transport Assessment will be required of the Proposed Development. Relevant national and local planning policies will be taken into account.

4.2.27. The assessment will consider the likely traffic generation from the Proposed Development when compared to the extant uses of the Site for waste input. It will assess the environmental impact of traffic levels and whether there are any sensitive receptors along transport routes or areas of concern regarding highway safety.

4.2.28. It will also consider the traffic implications given the future uses of the Site once it is restored, namely, for nature conservation and tourism purposes (e.g. holiday chalets).

4.2.29. The Transport Assessment will address the following matters in detail:

- ◆ Review highway accident records for the most recent 5-year period available and highway boundary data from the local highway authority;



- ◆ Consider preliminary access layout design and plot junction visibility splays. Undertake automatic traffic count(s) if required (due to a shortfall in the level of available visibility splays in relation to required standards);
- ◆ Review car parking provision against local authority standards and scheme requirements;
- ◆ Undertake the swept path of the largest service vehicle anticipated to visit the Site, turning within the Site and at the Site access;
- ◆ Calculate the number of peak hour trips likely to be generated by the Proposed Development Identify the likely routing of HGV trips; and
- ◆ Comment on the impact of the number of vehicle trips generated relative to the existing operations at the Site.

Dust

4.2.30. A detailed Dust Assessment will be required of the Proposed Development. Relevant national and local planning policies will be taken into account.

4.2.31. The potential for dust to be created associated with the transport, storage and infilling of waste will be assessed. This will consider dust impacts at all stages of the development including site preparation works, landscaping and restoration.

4.3. THE CONTENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

4.3.1. The EIA will be undertaken following the advice on matters to be included in the EIA Regulations 2017.

4.3.2. The Environmental Statement will be co-ordinated on behalf of the Applicant by B&A. The company has previous experience undertaking similar projects and a good knowledge of Alkerton Quarry.

4.3.3. Based on information received to date, it is envisaged that the Environmental Statement will contain:

- ◆ A detailed description of the characteristics of the Site and surrounding area;
- ◆ Summary of relevant Site planning permissions;
- ◆ A description of the Proposed Development with accompanying plans. The Revised Restoration Scheme will be illustrated and described. It will also outline soil placement and aftercare;
- ◆ Guidance for the Aftercare/Restoration Scheme and Landscape Scheme is provided in the Validation of County Development and County Matters Planning Applications – Local List (March 2018) issued by OCC. A description of any mitigation measures will be included;
- ◆ A comparison of the Approved Restoration Scheme and Revised Restoration Scheme;



- ◆ A description of the reasonable alternatives considered by the Applicant with an indication of why the Proposed Development was chosen (e.g. design, technology, location, size and scale where relevant); and
 - ◆ A summary of the technical reports used to identify the main environmental impacts of the Proposed Development. Full technical reports (and Appendices) will be provided separately. The individual technical reports will each consider how the climate might be affected by the Proposed Development or how climate change might impact upon the proposals. The cumulative impact of the proposals will also be considered where applicable.
- 4.3.4. The ES will include a Statement of Community Involvement, Sustainability Statement and Climate Change Appraisal as outlined in the Validation of County Development and County Matters Planning Applications – Local List (March 2018).
- 4.3.5. A non-technical summary describing the method and findings of the EIA in a clear and concise way will be included as a separate document.
- 4.3.6. A Design & Access Statement will be submitted regarding the proposed Nature Reserve and holiday chalets.
- 4.3.7. A Planning Supporting Statement will be submitted which will bring together planning policy matters addressed in the technical assessment reports. The document will refer to relevant national, county and local planning policies and guidance. An initial list is provided in Table 2 below.
- 4.3.8. There are no Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (1996) Saved Policies applicable to the Site or general location.
- 4.3.9. Many of the Saved Policies from the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (1996) have since been replaced by policies contained in the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011 - 2031 Part 1 (July 2015). The list provided in Table 2 has been guided by Appendix 7 List of Replaced and Retained Saved Policies provided in the latter.
- 4.3.10. It is understood that the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 2 – Site Allocations and the Oxfordshire Plan 2050¹⁶ are both currently being prepared. Cherwell District Council also commenced the Local Plan Review 2040 in 2020.
- 4.3.11. No Neighbourhood Plans or Parish Plans have been published to date relevant to the Site.

¹⁶ Oxfordshire Plan 2050, <https://oxfordshireplan.org/>, sourced June 2021



Table 2: Initial List Relevant Planning Policies

PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENT	POLICIES
County and Local Planning Policy	
The Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy, Part 1 Core Strategy (September 2017)	<i>Minerals Policies</i>
	Policy M10 Restoration of mineral workings
	<i>Waste Policies</i>
	Policy W6 Landfill and other permanent deposit of waste to land
	Common Core Policies
	Policy C1 Sustainable development
	Policy C2 Climate change
	Policy C3 Flooding
	Policy C4 Water environment
	Policy C5 Local environment, amenity and economy
	Policy C7 Biodiversity and geodiversity
	Policy C8 Landscape
	Policy C9 Historic environment and archaeology
	Policy C10 Transport
Policy C11 Rights of way	
Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011 - 2031 Part 1 (July 2015)	Policy PSD1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
	Policy SLE3 Supporting Tourism Growth
	Policy BSC5 Area Renewal
	Policy BSC10 Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision
	Policy ESD1 Mitigating and adapting to climate change
	Policy ESD6 Sustainable flood risk management
	Policy ESD7 Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
	Policy ESD8 Water Resources
	Policy ESD10 Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment
	Policy ESD11 Conservation Target Areas
	Policy ESD12 Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
	Policy ESD13 Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement
	Policy ESD17 Green Infrastructure
Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (1996) Saved Policies	Policy C8 Sporadic development in the open countryside
	Policy C14 Countryside Management Projects
	Policy C28 Layout, design and external appearance of new development
	Policy C32 Provision of facilities for disabled people
	Policy TR7 Development attracting traffic on minor roads
Policy TR10 Heavy Goods vehicles	
Other Material Considerations	
National Planning Policy Framework	Including Section 2 Achieving sustainable development, Section 6 Building a strong, competitive economy, Section 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities, Section 9 Promoting sustainable



PLANNING POLICY DOCUMENT	POLICIES
(NPPF) (February 2019)	transport, Section 11 Making effective use of land, Section 12 Achieving well-designed places, Section 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, Section 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment and Section 17 Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals.
National Planning Practice Guidance	Including guidance provided in the following: Minerals (October 2014), Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements (March 2014), Waste (October 2015), Noise (July 2019), Natural Environment (July 2019) and Design: process and tools (October 2019).
National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) (October 2014)	Sets out detailed waste planning policies including with regards to identifying suitable sites and areas for waste development.

4.4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 4.4.1. During the preparation of the planning application, the Applicant is proposing to undertake a public consultation process (in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions). This will include a web based public consultation explaining the Proposed Development which will allow for comments to be made and collated, a Q&A with local parish councils including Wroxton & Balscote Parish Council, Sherington with Alkerton Parish Council and other councils that may be affected. Plans for the public consultation process will evolve dependent on COVID-19 restrictions at the time.



5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

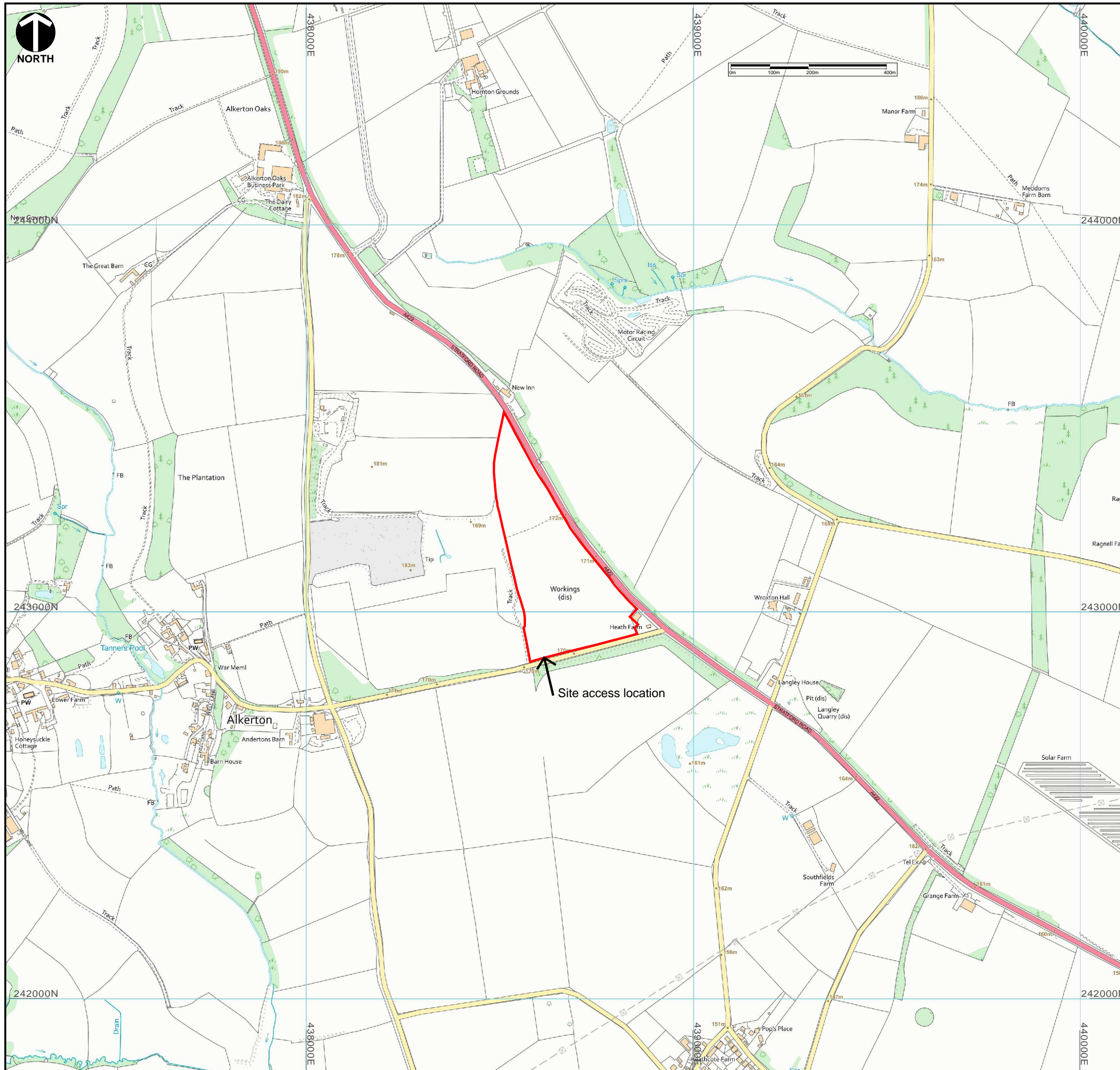
- 5.1.1. The Site occupies a broadly triangular parcel of land (c.10.8Ha) and borders the A422 (Stratford Road) and Rattlecombe Road to the south. The Site forms part of a wider area of permitted ironstone extraction.
- 5.1.2. The removal of a small quantity of iron stone remaining at the Site will take place under the existing Review of Old Mineral Permission (ROMP) consent (OCC Reference No. 97/00430/CM) (dated 28 January 1999).
- 5.1.3. The current condition of the Site means that Approved Restoration Scheme cannot be executed which is acknowledged in the Pre Application Advice Letter (2021).
- 5.1.4. In conclusion, the Proposed Development represents a deliverable restoration design. It will enable the Site to be restored over three years based on infill of inert soil material of 50,000 tonnes per year.
- 5.1.5. The Revised Restoration Scheme (Drawing AL1198-D10) offers enhanced biodiversity and nature conservation afteruse for the Site in comparison to the Approved Restoration Scheme. This includes a much larger area being committed to biodiversity and nature conservation purposes and allocated as a Nature Reserve (c.5Ha) (in the southern part of the Site). It is proposed to locate small scale cabin/shepherd hut style holiday facilities in the northern part of the Site with the possibility of linking such amenities to nature conservation uses and offer a form of eco-tourism.
- 5.1.6. Through the Revised Restoration Scheme, the nature conservation benefits will result in the following at a Site and broader strategic level:
- ◆ New native broadleaved woodland, native hedgerows and wetland areas (e.g. ponds) would contribute to county biodiversity targets;
 - ◆ Concur with the appropriate guidelines set out in published Landscape Character Assessments at a county level, through the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (2004) and District Council level, through the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment (1995) and the Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance (1998). Also of note is the Community Nature Plan 2020–2022 (2020) recently issued by Cherwell District Council; and
 - ◆ It will also contribute to the broad objectives of Conservation Target Areas (CTA) notably, the nearby Northern Valleys CTA.
- 5.1.7. Furthermore, the Revised Restoration Scheme will complement the nearby Balscote Quarry Local Wildlife Site (Site Ref. 34U01). As the design process evolves for the Site, there is the potential for input by county conservation groups, such as Buckinghamshire Bird Club (British Trust for Ornithology) and Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) regarding nature conservation aims and objectives.



- 5.1.8. The proposed holiday chalets which form an integral part of the Revised Restoration Scheme would fall within Schedule 2 Development according to the 2017 EIA Regulations. An indicative number (18no.) and layout is shown on Drawing AL1198-D10.
- 5.1.9. The findings of the EIA will be used to refine the Proposed Development and will form the basis of the ES that will be submitted with the planning application.
- 5.1.10. The planning application will be submitted according to the requirements of OCC set out in the Validation of County Development and County Matters Planning Applications – Local List (March 2018). It is understood that this document is currently being reviewed.
- 5.1.11. Based on information received to date, it is proposed to assess the following matters: Arboricultural (Trees and Hedgerows), Ecology, Hydrology, Landscape and Visual, Noise and Transport.
- 5.1.12. A formal Scoping Opinion is requested from OCC on the scope of the EIA within the time period of 5 weeks as required by the 2017 EIA Regulations.

DRAWING LIST

DRAWING NO.	TITLE
Drawing AL1198-D5	Site Location Plan
Drawing AL1198-D10	Concept Restoration Scheme for Nature Reserve and Holiday Chalets



Key

— Site boundary

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Client:
AT Contracting Ltd.

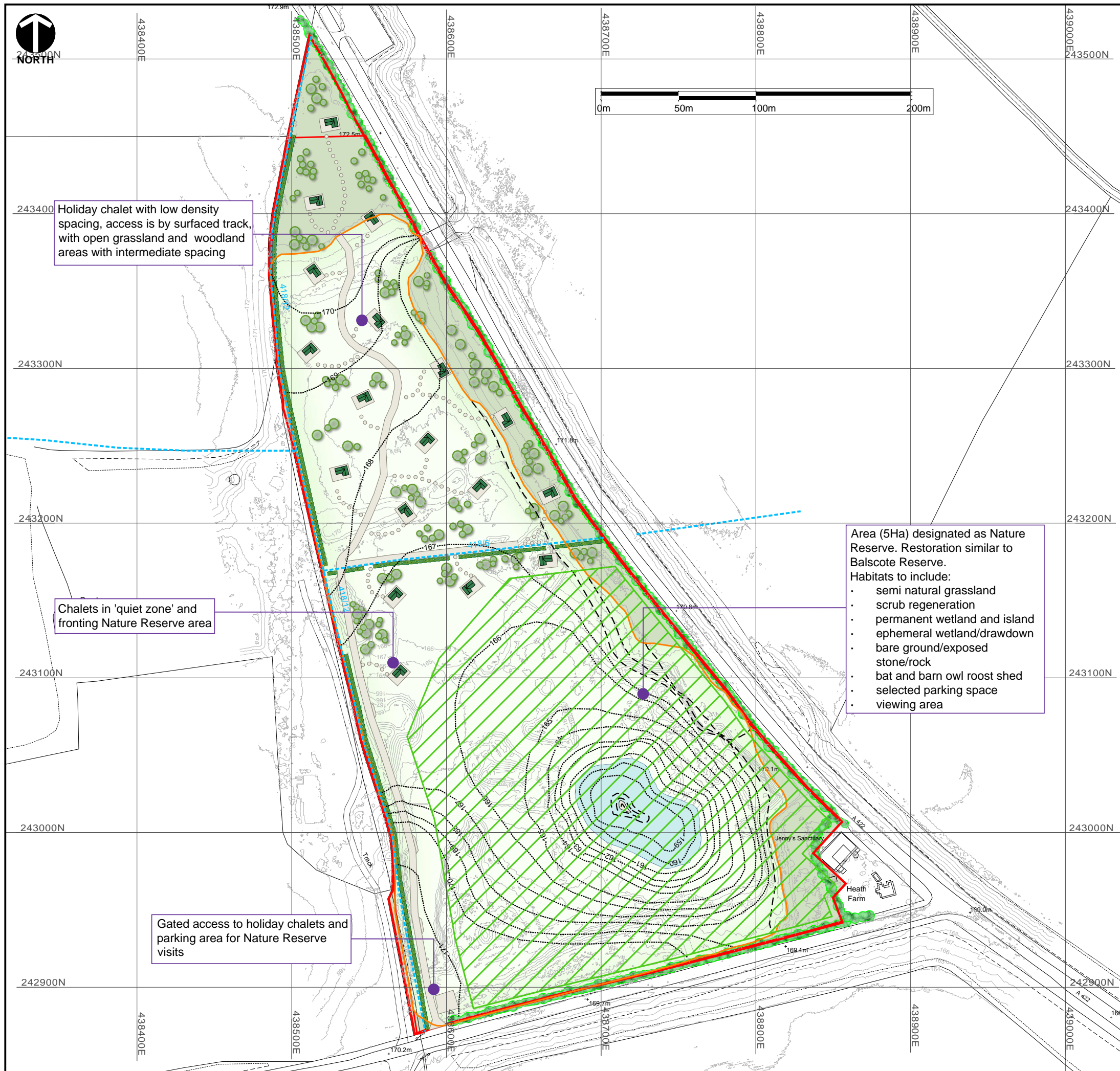
Project:
Alkerton Quarry

Title:
Site Location Plan

CAD Ref:	Version:	Drawn by:	Scale @ A3:	Origin Date:
AL1198-D5v2	2	RB	Plan 1:10,000	Jan. 2021


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Preliminary Issue

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Client:

AT Contracting Ltd.

Project:

Alkerton Quarry

Title:

Concept Restoration Scheme for Nature Reserve and Holiday Chalets

CAD Ref:	Version:	Drawn by:	Scale @ A3:	Origin Date:
AL1198-D10v1	1	RB	Plan 1:2500	May. 2021

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