

## **CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEMORANDUM**

To: James Kirkham – Principal Planning Officer  
(Development Management)

From: Paul Evans – Ecology Officer  
(Enforcement – Development Management)

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018

#### **Ref: 18/01863/CM, Elm Farm Quarry, Bicester Road, Stratton Audley - Ecology Comments**

I have reviewed the information provided regarding the continuation of the previously permitted development (97/01501/CM) to allow for time extension for the completion of restoration of the site and have the following comments.

Within the application site boundary, there are a number of statutory and non-statutory site designations, important habitats and protected & notable species records which represent a constraint.

A large area of the site is designated as non-statutory Local Wildlife Site (LWS) Stratton Audley LWS. The LWS are of county importance designated due to the presence of Habitats of Principal Importance (NERC Act Section 41) including Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land and Lowland Calcareous Grassland.

Parts of Stratton Audley Quarry have statutory designation of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for the geological interest they hold. Viewing the online assessment of the condition of the interest of the SSSI units these are assessed by Natural England in 2008/09 as being partially destroyed due to infilling by tipping and water covering the geological exposures for which the SSSI is designated. Natural England should be consulted on the proposals. There may be opportunities for the proposals to provide restoration of the SSSI.

There are a number of protected and notable species records for the site and the immediate surroundings including:

- Plants
- Invertebrates (including Bettles, Butterflies & Moths)
- Great Crested Newts
- Reptiles
- Red and Amber list Birds
- Badger records within the Quarry, adjacent Airfield, to the immediate north of the Quarry and to the southeast of the adjacent Airfield

Previous Landscape and Ecological Survey Plans (Drawing No PA160/10 dated October 1998 and PA160/01 dated May 1999) identifies that there was previous areas of calcareous grassland, marsh, scrub and wetland habitat interest on site with associated species e.g. butterflies that was to be retained within the final restoration scheme. Since the date of the above plans, nearly 20 years ago, the ecological interest on the site is likely to have developed and current conditions are likely to be significantly different which is likely to present constraints to continuation of the original permission.

Given the ecological interest shown on site by existing records there are a number of potential constraints to the proposals but there may also be potential opportunities for ecological enhancements.

Prior to the continuation of the development and the restoration process a suitably qualified ecologist should be employed to undertake ecological surveys to inform a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA). The list of species and habitats above should be the focus of initial surveys across the whole of the site and immediate surroundings. The appointed ecologist should also assess based upon an up to date view of the site if any additional surveys are required to inform the continuation of the development and the restoration process. Activity surveys for bats would be useful as the quarry area is likely to provide good foraging grounds. The findings of this process can be used to inform future proposals through an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) or a chapter of an Environmental Statement if required.

Policies ESD10 and ESD11 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 sets out the Council's approach to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment, including Conservation Target Areas.

In line with NPPF the aim is to seek a net gain in biodiversity within the planning system, the submission of a Biodiversity Impact Assessment following the locally adopted Defra Offsetting Metrics will assist in assessing the proposal to see if it meets this. Cherwell District Council has adopted a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which has a Nature Conservation and Biodiversity section, submission of a Biodiversity Impact Assessment is in line with paragraph 4.111 of this SPD

Retained and created habitats as part of the proposals should be appropriately managed in the future to ensure they are conserved and maintained in a favourable condition for the species they support. This can be facilitated through the production of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) or Biodiversity Management Plan.