CHAPTER 5

SAND AND GRAVEL EXTRACTION IN THE UPPER THAMES VALLEY

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The Upper Thames Valley has a legacy of sand and gravel workings containing the South West’s major source of river terrace sharp sand and gravel, which has been widely worked since the 1930’s with intensification taking place in the 1950’s and 1960’s. The identification of Preferred Areas in the Upper Thames Valley (Policy 35), and future concentration of sharp sand and gravel extraction in the Upper Thames Valley in Gloucestershire mean that the area is likely to experience further large scale mineral operations in the future. Accordingly, potential conflicts, between mineral operators and the people who live nearby will inevitably be concentrated in this area. In order to resolve or reduce as many of these conflicts as possible, this chapter addresses detailed aspects of existing workings and proposed sites in the Upper Thames Valley that require control through specific policies in addition to the general policies outlined in Chapters 2-4.

5.2 Existing Mineral Working in the Upper Thames Valley - The Cotswold Water Park

5.2.1 Sharp sand and gravel deposits in the Upper Thames Valley directly overlie impermeable Oxford Clay. Here the water table is very close to the surface, and this has resulted in the creation of the largest concentration of gravel pit lakes in Britain. During the 1960’s the recreational potential of the land was officially recognised and the concentration of lakes around Ashton Keynes and Somerford Keynes in the west, and Fairford in the east became known as the Cotswold Water Park. Of these well over 1000 hectares of the Western section around Ashton Keynes are in Wiltshire.

5.2.2 Since 1967 the development of the Cotswold Water Park has been guided by the Cotswold Water Park Joint Committee, in partnership with Wiltshire County Council, North Wiltshire District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Cotswold District Council. The Committee is made up of elected members to guide and advise on the pattern and use of existing and proposed lakes and associated land areas, development control and management matters.

5.2.3 The Cotswold Water Park Report of 1969 provided the initial framework to co-ordinate mineral extraction in the Water Park, setting the objectives of restoration to sport, recreational and conservation uses. This report was superseded by the Cotswold Water Park Review of 1993 which assessed progress and identified further ways in which the objectives of the Water Park could be met. Both of these documents have played a significant role in co-ordinating mineral extraction and particularly afteruses in the old Cotswold Water Park area.
5.2.4 In 1995 it was agreed to extend the old Cotswold Water Park boundary to incorporate land east of the A419(T) in Latton Parish. This new area incorporates Preferred Areas 1-4 and 6. The revised Cotswold Water Park boundaries are shown on the Proposals Map: Upper Thames Valley Inset.

5.3 Upper Thames Valley - A Strategy for Development

5.3.1 In order to provide a planned approach to the continued development of the “old” (pre 1995) Cotswold Water Park and the Preferred Areas in the central section of the Upper Thames Valley (see Policy 35) a strategy for mineral extraction in this area has been developed. A number of statutory consultees including English Nature, The Environment Agency and the adjoining Gloucestershire County Council have been involved in the evolution of this strategy which has the broad support of many interested parties. The strategy seeks to provide, oversee and co-ordinate the development of the central section of the Upper Thames Valley and link in with the areas of existing mineral working to the east and west in the most appropriate manner. Protection and improvement of the environment would be achieved through the safeguarding of local residential amenity, the advancement of road safety, respecting hydrological, nature conservation and landscape values of the area and ensuring that appropriate and practical restoration takes place so as to maximise nature conservation and wildlife potential.

5.3.2 This chapter establishes a framework in which the MPA’s consider that these aims can best be achieved, providing specific policies to address detailed site specific development issues. The provisions of the strategy are couched within the scope of the general policies of the Plan particularly those relating to transportation and minimising the impact of mineral working. The following policies should be viewed as supplementary to the more general countywide policies and regard should be paid to these when considering development in the Upper Thames Valley.

5.4 Settlement Protection Measures

5.4.1 Certain villages in the Upper Thames Valley are very close to the Preferred Areas for sharp sand and gravel identified in Policy 35, and it is recognised that their landscape setting will be affected by mineral working. It is, therefore, important for areas to be identified within which the landscape setting of these settlements can be protected to provide certainty to local communities that the landscape character of their villages will be maintained. Settlement Protection Zones have been identified on physical boundaries between Preferred Areas, existing mineral workings or mineral reserves of known workable quantity and the settlements of Latton, Marston Meysey, Dunfield, Ashton Keynes and Cricklade, which are close to them. These are shown on the Proposals Map: Upper Thames Valley Inset and seek to protect the setting and character of these settlements rather than the amenity of individual dwellings per se, which is the purpose of Buffer Zones, covered by Policy 13. Buffer Zones are separate requirements to Settlement Protection Zones and apply to all dwellings and settlements. Where the distance between a property and the outside edge of a defined Settlement Protection Zone is less than the distance required for Buffer Zones by Policy 13, then the protection offered by the larger designation would apply. Accordingly, Policy 42 applies to Settlement Protection Zones.
POLICY 42: SETTLEMENT PROTECTION ZONES

MINERAL EXTRACTION AND ASSOCIATED DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN SETTLEMENT PROTECTION ZONES DEFINED ON THE PROPOSALS MAP.

5.4.2 It is anticipated that the visual landscape setting of these settlements can best be protected by adopting a policy of landscape preservation in these zones. Accordingly, any environmental improvements including landscaping of mineral workings may be required up to the boundary of the mineral working, but will not be permitted within the Settlement Protection Zone.

5.5 Mineral Traffic in the Upper Thames Valley

5.5.1 The complex of sand and gravel quarries in the Cotswold Water Park is by far the greatest generator of minerals traffic in the Plan Area. A number of steps have been taken to improve the road network in the area so as to protect local settlements and the natural environment from the effects of this traffic. The most notable of these has been the construction of the Western Spine Road (B4696), which provides good access between the western section of the Cotswold Water Park and the A419(T).

5.5.2 The Adopted Wiltshire Structure Plan contains a Policy (T9) which encourages HGV’s to use those roads where a minimum of environmental damage will occur, principally the National Primary Route Network, or advisory lorry routes accessed via the most suitable link for such traffic. In order to ensure that minerals traffic in the Upper Thames Valley uses appropriate roads, minerals development proposals should have regard to Policy 7. In the Upper Thames Valley the A419(T), A361, B4696, B4040 and the C124 and C116, (proposed Eastern Spine Road) are regarded by the County Council as the principal access roads for mineral traffic into, and within the Upper Thames Valley, and are shown as such on Figure 4.

5.5.3 Traffic management measures such as mandatory or advisory routes and restriction orders, and the design of any road improvements will be used to ensure that minerals traffic uses these routes. Additionally, where appropriate and with reference to Department of Environment Circular 1/97 ‘Planning Obligations’ voluntary routing agreements may be required prior to the commencement of mineral extraction on new sites. Such voluntary agreements would only be appropriate where the developer can demonstrate that such measures could be effective, i.e. where control can be exercised over lorries visiting the site.

The Proposed Eastern Spine Road

5.5.4 In the Wiltshire Minerals Local Plan, (1989), the County Council identified a need to improve the Class 3 road connecting the A419(T) with the A417 via Whelford and Kempsford, in conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council who will be fully consulted on any improvement works undertaken in Wiltshire. This commitment has been incorporated into the Adopted North Wiltshire Local Plan Review 1995, Policy RT18.

5.5.5 The intention is to provide an Eastern Spine Road (ESR) to function as a primary access/distribution route, initially for minerals traffic east of the A419(T), by improving sections of the C124 and C116 roads.
5.5.6 Currently, much of the mineral reserve in the central section of the Upper Thames Valley is severely constrained by the inadequacies of the road network to accommodate additional traffic. The County Council has investigated the necessary road improvements to the C124, that would be required prior to the commencement of mineral extraction sites necessitating use of the road. These improvements include: the realignment of the section of the C124 between Sheepen and Gally Leaze Bridges, for which planning permission has already been granted.

5.5.7 Another major improvement for the A419(T)/A417 link, (the pESR), proposed by Gloucestershire County Council is for a bypass to be constructed north of Kempsford which joins the existing C116 in Wiltshire, south east of Marston Meysey.

5.5.8 Since all of these proposals necessitate off-line improvements, the County Council will safeguard their routes from mineral extraction or mineral related land uses. Preferred Area 1 has been defined so as to respect these interests.

The Development of Preferred Areas

5.5.9 Currently the inadequacy of the existing road network, particularly the C124 and C116 (proposed Eastern Spine Road) linking the A419(T) and A417, constrains the development of a number of the Preferred Areas. In accordance with Policy 8 it is expected that potential developers of the Preferred Areas which would be accessed via the C124/C116 proposed Eastern Spine Road will enter into agreements to fund the required improvements in order to provide an adequate standard of road for the type and number of vehicles which their development will generate, thereby making their proposals compliant with this policy. It is anticipated that the improved road will then form the only route serving these sites which would be suitable for use by minerals traffic. The MPAs will, therefore, require that new mineral workings in the area are accessed only via the ‘improved’ proposed Eastern Spine Road, and the A419(T) or A417 in order to promote road safety and minimise the impact of mineral traffic on local villages and the environment in accordance with Policy 43. It may be preferable to route mineral traffic through short lengths of side road once suitably improved, onto the Eastern Spine Road in order to make use of existing junctions, again improved as necessary, rather than increasing the number of new accesses onto the Eastern Spine Road itself, which may prejudice road safety. The instances in which such arrangements will be acceptable will be determined at the application stage, with reference to other policies in the Plan.

POLICY 43: ACCESS FOR MINERAL WORKINGS IN THE UPPER THAMES VALLEY

MINERALS DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN LATTON AND CASTLE EATON, INCLUDING PREFERRED AREAS 1 - 5 WILL BE ACCESSED EITHER:

1. FROM THE C124/C116 PROPOSED EASTERN SPINE ROAD VIA SHORT LENGTHS OF SUITABLY IMPROVED EXISTING SIDE ROAD IN ORDER TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF NEW JUNCTIONS ONTO THE PROPOSED EASTERN SPINE ROAD, OR WHERE THIS IS IMPRACTICABLE, OR

2. DIRECTLY FROM THE C124/C116 PROPOSED EASTERN SPINE ROAD UNLESS OTHER MEANS CAN BE DEMONSTRATED TO BE ACCEPTABLE.
5.5.10 In view of the land ownership patterns in the Upper Thames Valley, it is possible that a scheme of access to several Preferred Areas could be developed, using conveyors or internal haul roads. Such proposals may include processing material from several or all of the Preferred Areas at a single operational site to minimise the proliferation of individual processing facilities on each site. If such a scheme does come forward which removes the need to access these sites via the C124/C116, it would be considered on its merits, and if it is acceptable to the MPA, by according with all relevant policies in this Plan, would provide a reasonable alternative to access via the proposed Eastern Spine Road.

The Timing of Development

5.5.11 In order to achieve the aim of ensuring that new minerals traffic generated in the central section of the Upper Thames Valley use only suitable roads, it is essential that traffic-generating mineral development does not commence until the relevant improvements to the C124/C116 Eastern Spine Road are carried out to bring it to a suitable standard to allow for the safe accommodation of the amount and type of additional traffic likely to be generated by the particular development, in accordance with the following policy.

**POLICY 44: HIGHWAY REQUIREMENTS OF MINERAL WORKINGS IN THE UPPER THAMES VALLEY**

MINERALS DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD GENERATE INCREASED LORRY TRAFFIC ON THE C124/C116 PROPOSED EASTERN SPINE ROAD WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO COMMENCE UNTIL AFFECTED PARTS OF THE ROUTE ARE IMPROVED TO A STANDARD SUITABLE TO SAFELY ACCOMMODATE THE AMOUNT AND TYPE OF TRAFFIC LIKELY TO BE GENERATED BY THAT DEVELOPMENT.

5.5.12 In practice this policy represents a specific application of the principles of Policy 8 in the context of Policy 44 requiring access to be via the proposed Eastern Spine Road. It will be implemented, by the imposition of a condition on relevant new planning permissions for mineral extraction prohibiting the commencement of extraction in advance of the required road improvements. Paragraph 2.8.15 makes specific reference to the 14th December 2000 decision letter on the 2001/2 Local Transport Capital Expenditure Settlement from the Government Office for the South West.

5.6 Nature Conservation and Wildlife Protection

5.6.1 The Cotswold Water Park is an important aquatic ecosystem, supporting a nationally important wetland habitat for wintering and breeding birds. In particular it supports nationally significant numbers of Coot, Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck, Gadwall, Pochard, Mute Swan, Lesser Black Backed Gull and breeding Little Ringed Plover, Common Tern, Sand Martin and Hobby. It is the most extensive marl lake system in Britain and is identified in the “Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan 1997-2007” (prepared by the joint committee of the Cotswold Water Park in association with English Nature, the Environment Agency, Local Wildlife Trust, Cotswold District Council and representatives of the minerals industry), as being nationally significant. These lakes and their surroundings support rich submerged plant communities while the diversity of insects in the area is locally important.
5.6.2 English Nature has designated six wet meadows sites in the Cotswold Water Park as SSSI’s which support rich wet grassland habitats, three of these are in Wiltshire. A series of lakes, formed as a result of sand and gravel extraction, have more recently been designated as freshwater SSSI’s. Furthermore, English Nature has identified several lakes and their surrounding areas which combine to support significant wintering and breeding bird populations, based on ongoing evaluations of winter birds surveys from 1989.

5.6.3 In order to protect and enhance the special nature conservation value of the whole Cotswold Water Park, including the Preferred Areas 1 - 4 and 6, proposals for minerals development within or close to it will be assessed against Policy 45.

POLICY 45: NATURE CONSERVATION IN THE COTSWOLD WATER PARK

MINERALS DEVELOPMENT IN THE COTSWOLD WATER PARK WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED IF IT CAN BE DEMONSTRATED TO BE COMPATIBLE WITH MAINTAINING AND/OR IMPROVING THE NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE COTSWOLD WATER PARK, IN PARTICULAR THE SAFEGUARDED LAKES OF IMPORTANCE FOR WINTERING AND BREEDING BIRDS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP AS WELL AS OTHER HABITATS CONTRIBUTING TO THE BIODIVERSITY OF THE WATER PARK, UNLESS EXCEPTIONAL MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS OUTWEIGHT THESE INTERESTS.

5.6.4 In accordance with the Adopted Wiltshire Structure Plan (Policy C6), the above policy recognises the national importance of the whole Cotswold Water Park for nature conservation. The provisions of this policy give a high priority to maintaining nature conservation interest in those areas of the Cotswold Water Park which are identified by English Nature as being of exceptional value in supporting nationally important wildlife interests which are still evolving. These areas, referred to above, are shown on the Proposals Map.

5.6.5 The intention behind this policy is to ensure that the nature conservation value of the Cotswold Water Park is sustained and development proposals must include sufficient information to demonstrate that this is the case. Where a proposed development will result in the unavoidable loss of a nature conservation resource, this resource should be compensated for by the provision of suitable replacement areas of similar or enhanced nature conservation value either on the site or elsewhere, a requirement which may be secured by legal agreement. In certain exceptional circumstances, proposals could theoretically come forward that would need to be restored to a land use other than nature conservation, where, for example, restoration to nature conservation would represent an unacceptable risk of bird strike. In such cases these considerations will be weighed against the need to maintain nature conservation interest in the Cotswold Water Park.

5.6.6 In practice, it is not expected that many, if any, further proposals for mineral extraction in the Cotswold Water Park will be received, except for Preferred Areas and small extensions where they comply with the relevant policies of this Plan, since all the major mineral reserves in the area which could be worked have either already been extracted, have permission for extraction or are identified as Preferred Areas. However, proposals may come forward for changes to currently agreed working plans or for restoration schemes. These too will be judged against the above policy.
5.7  
Hydrological Protection

5.7.1  
As noted in Chapter 3, hydrological issues are a central concern of all mineral operations and to this end proposals for mineral extraction in the Upper Thames Valley will be considered against the general Policies 15 to 18.

5.7.2  
In the floodplain of the Upper Thames Valley, proposals for mineral development will also be subject to statutory Environmental Impact Assessment according to the significance of their environmental effects. This would include hydrological monitoring and analysis to establish their likely hydrological and ecological impacts. In all cases proposals should include measures required to alleviate and compensate for any adverse impact on land drainage, flood risk and ecology at all stages of the development.

5.8  
Archaeological Protection

5.8.1  
The river terrace gravels of the Upper Thames Valley are rich in archaeological remains, which provide evidence of settlements from early prehistoric times right through to the present day.

5.8.2  
Although an archaeological assessment should be undertaken in the Preferred Areas to cover all planning applications for mineral extraction, the County Archaeologist has identified further areas within the Preferred Areas of the Upper Thames Valley which are believed to contain significant archaeological remains. In order to more accurately assess the extent and nature of this archaeology, the MPAs require further information which should be provided in accordance with the general requirements of Policies 25, 26 and Policy 46.

POLICY 46: ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREAS

MINERALS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD AFFECT AN “ARCHAEOLOGICAL AREA” AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP, SHOULD PROVIDE FOR THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION, DEFINITION AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, SAFEGUARDING OF THE AREA.

5.8.3  
It is possible that such evaluations may reveal that these and other areas contain extensive or important archaeology which the County Archaeologist considers to be worthy of preservation “in situ”. Where this is the case, the “archaeological areas” will be redefined to that required to preserve their archaeological interest, and these redefined areas will be omitted from any working scheme on the Preferred Area.

5.8.4  
The estimates of mineral available in the Preferred Areas, as shown on Table 1, Chapter 4, assume that these “archaeological areas” will not be worked, in line with the precautionary principle. However, if it is proven to the County Archaeologist that an “archaeological area” could be worked, then the estimated yield of the Preferred Areas would increase accordingly.

5.9  
Restoration of Sites in the Central Section of the Upper Thames Valley

5.9.1  
The Preferred Areas for sharp sand and gravel defined in Policy 35 will take mineral development into the undeveloped area east of Latton towards Castle Eaton.
5.9.2 During the preparation of the Plan, possible restoration of this area following mineral extraction has been considered in some detail. Various bodies with relevant technical expertise such as the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), English Nature and the Environment Agency have been consulted with a view to developing a suggested restoration strategy which will set clear principles for future landscape character, landform and after-use. The “Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan”, is particularly important in shaping this strategy which has the aim of ensuring that the area is developed in a sensitive and co-ordinated manner in order to achieve a standard and form of restoration and after-uses which are appropriate to its location and character.

5.9.3 The existing landscape, agricultural land, high water table, archaeology and historic environment of the central section of the Upper Thames Valley are likely to be affected to some degree by mineral extraction. Currently the landscape of the area comprises relatively flat, often improved agricultural land surrounding a few small villages and the town of Cricklade which generally occupy land slightly above the floodplain of the River Thames. The Thames and its immediate river corridor is a nationally important feature which must be conserved and favourably enhanced by any development in the area. The farmland is a mixture of agricultural grades 2-4, while a recent biological survey commissioned by Wiltshire and Gloucestershire County Councils revealed evidence of certain semi-improved meadows, with an extensive system of hedges, ditches and drains, many of which are species rich. Ecologically rich watercourses and river corridors are also outlined as being of importance in addition to the nationally important unimproved meadow covered by North Meadow National Nature Reserve/SAC.

5.9.4 The high water table in the sand and gravel deposits of the Upper Thames Valley has resulted in the formation of shallow lakes when restoration treatment has not been undertaken. The high water table limits any potential infilling of worked out sand and gravel pits to inert material consisting of only naturally occurring soils and sub soils and soil forming materials, so as to avoid potential ground and surface water pollution. Furthermore, the severely limited availability of such materials in the locality means there is little scope to achieve large scale landfill. In any event extensive landfilling and a large scale sealing of sites would be likely to cause considerable hydrological concerns over the movement of groundwater and land drainage.

5.9.5 If not undertaken sympathetically, mineral extraction in this area would result in the formation of further large areas of open water. Indeed, the “Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan” includes a target of the creation of a large lake of 30 hectares or more as an important objective. However, the Cotswold Water Park already provides areas that support wildlife habitats and are widely used for recreational activities. Accordingly, the Preferred Areas could more usefully achieve the wetland objectives of the Biodiversity Action Plan, with respect to their size, location, land quality and proximity to Fairford Airfield. Therefore, the creation in the Preferred Areas of lakes similar in size to, or larger than those already in the Cotswold Water Park would be of comparatively limited benefit.

5.9.6 Moreover, through careful restoration the potential exists to create a large area of diverse wetland habitats of huge importance to wildlife, forming a link between the existing habitats in the eastern and western sections of the Cotswold Water Park, enhancing the nature conservation value of the wider area.
Areas Restored to Wetland

5.9.7 Restoration to create a diverse range of wetland habitats is particularly appropriate for Preferred Areas in the floodplain of the River Thames (including 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5). Here willow and alder carr, reed bed, wet grassland and wader scrapes, as well as ponds and a few larger areas of shallow open water preferably with diverse base profiles and indented and shallow shorelines for wintering waterfowl would be appropriate. This type of restoration accords with the objectives of the “Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan” which seeks to create 3 large reedbeds in the area by 2020, which should be part of a wetland complex with adjacent lakes, ponds, wet meadow, open water and carr woodland. As such the restoration of sites in the Upper Thames Valley provides an opportunity to contribute to delivering both national and local biodiversity targets for habitat recreation.

5.9.8 In restoring the sites to wetland uses, consideration should be given first to using land of a lower quality than Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. If however, the Best and Most Versatile land is used for a wetland use in restoration in this area, its land quality potential should be retained. Such areas could usefully provide the establishment of areas of woodland to break up the flatter wetlands or, if sufficient inert fill is available, could form water meadows.

5.9.9 The margins of open water areas should be landscaped to appear natural and, where this would not prejudice the retention of existing landscape features, should not necessarily follow the existing pattern of field boundaries as has sometimes been the case in the more established parts of the Cotswold Water Park. Restoration to water areas should be carefully considered so as to not attract problem birds such as gulls which may be a hazard to aircraft safety.

5.9.10 In accordance with Policy 18, appropriate buffer zones should be provided to the River Thames and other watercourses within which no extraction should take place. These zones should be carefully enhanced to maximise their landscape and nature conservation value. In considering restoration to wetland habitats, hydrological studies must be undertaken to assess the potential impact of such restoration on stream and river flows and on groundwater levels and flows, in accordance with Policy 17.

5.9.11 It is envisaged that areas restored to wetland could support a number of possible after-uses alongside nature conservation such as small-scale rural industry (reed bed management for thatching), periodically flooded grazing areas/marshes for cattle and horses and, in the longer term, tourism. The provision of enhanced public access will be encouraged where it is appropriate.

Areas Restored to Agricultural Land

5.9.12 Preferred Area 6, and parts of 1 and 2, contain a high proportion of the best and most versatile agricultural land. The southern part of Preferred Area 1 and the whole of Preferred Area 2 are situated in the floodplain of the River Thames, and any restoration which would seek to maintain the potential of these areas of high quality agricultural land should be carefully considered against potential impacts on groundwater flows and pollution. Accordingly maximum use should be made of naturally occurring uncontaminated soils and soil forming materials when restoring these areas to agriculture. Preferred Area 6 and the northern part of Preferred Area 1 are situated on higher land off the floodplain and are therefore less susceptible to flooding than those closer to the Thames. Land within Preferred
Area 6 should be infilled with inert waste (excluding builders waste) and returned to its original levels. The remaining parts of Preferred Areas 1 and 2 should be restored to wetland uses to enhance their nature conservation value. This should include the creation of a lake in the northern parcel of Preferred Area 1 where passive recreation may be appropriate.

Conclusions

5.9.13 The restoration and afteruse suggestions made above and in Policy 32 will be regarded as the only acceptable forms of restoration and after-use for each site unless the applicant can demonstrate that an alternative after-use would be more appropriate. With this in mind, co-ordinated restoration across a number of the Preferred Areas and any other mineral extraction sites permitted in the area will be encouraged though the potential adverse impacts of any proposal must be minimised to levels acceptable to the MPA’s, in consultation with relevant expert bodies. Any alternatives proposed in planning applications should however pay regard to the Site Assessment Criteria for each site which accompany the Proposals Map, (Annexe 1) and must be demonstrated to conform to the overall aims of this strategy as required by Policy 47.

POLICY 47: RESTORATION OF MINERAL WORKINGS IN THE UPPER THAMES VALLEY

MINERALS DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR SITES WITHIN THE CENTRAL SECTION OF THE UPPER THAMES VALLEY, BETWEEN LATTON AND CASTLE EATON, INCORPORATING PREFERRED AREAS 1-6 MUST, WHERE RELEVANT, PROVIDE FOR THE RESTORATION OF SITES IN CONFORMITY WITH THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

TO;

1. AVOID THE CREATION OF LARGE AREAS OF OPEN WATER,

2. CREATE DIVERSE RICH HABITATS FOR THE BENEFITS OF NATURE CONSERVATION INCLUDING WETLANDS, WOODLANDS AND OTHER LAND-BASED HABITATS,

3. MAINTAIN THE POTENTIAL OF AREAS OF THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND,

4. MINIMISE ANY POTENTIAL ADVERSE IMPACTS ON GROUNDWATER, AND SURFACEWATER AND LAND DRAINAGE TO ACCEPTABLE LEVELS,

5. CREATE A LANDSCAPE APPROPRIATE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA,

6. SAFEGUARD, AND WHERE POSSIBLE ENHANCE THE NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE OF THE RIVER THAMES, ITS TRIBUTARIES AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT, AND,

7. AVOID ANY INCREASE IN HAZARDS TO AIRCRAFT SAFETY FROM FAIRFORD AND SOUTH CERNEY AIRFIELDS.