

## MINUTES

Minutes of Extra Ordinary Meeting of Woodham Walter Parish Council.  
Held at 7.00pm at Woodham Walter Village Hall.

**Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

### **Present:**

Cllr. James Rushton (Chairman)  
Cllr. John Brown (Vice Chairman)  
Cllr. James Bunn  
Cllr. Jenny Hughes  
Cllr. Joanna Symons  
Cllr. John Tompkins  
Cllr. Peter Warren

Others: Jacky Bannerman (Parish Clerk)  
County Councillor Jane Fleming  
Mark Clayton (Spokesperson of Village Campaign Group)

Public: Approx. 100

**3140. Welcome** Cllr. Rushton welcomed those present to the meeting. He explained the procedure and order of the meeting.

### **3141. To report, approve and record apologies for absence**

RESOLVED to accept apologies received from District Councillors Mark Durham and Simon Morgan.

**3142. Disclosure of Interests/Consideration of Dispensations** To disclose the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs), Other Registerable Interests (ORIs), or Non-Registerable Interests (NRIs) relating to items of business on the agenda having regard the Code of Conduct for Members. (Members are reminded they are also required to disclose any such interests as soon as they become aware should the need arise throughout the meeting).

There were no interests declared.

### **3143. To receive briefing from Cllr. John Tompkins**

Cllr. Tompkins gave a detailed and comprehensive briefing including examination of the RAG assessments for the key considerations of: Landscape, Historic Landscape, Archaeology, Hydrography, Infrastructure and Transport, Air Quality, Health & Wellbeing, Biodiversity, Public Rights of Way.

General Overview and Site A66 Whitehouse Farm: *Appendix 1*

Site A58 Little Smiths: *Appendix 2*

Radius Map: *Appendix 3*

### **3144. Representative from the Village Campaign Group**

In recognition of the number of people being represented by the campaign group the Parish Council allocated up to 10 minutes for their spokesperson.

Mr Mark Clayton thanked the Chairman, Cllr. Tompkins and the Parish Council for allowing them the opportunity to address the meeting. He also thanked members of the village group for their help.

He outlined that the group had been established to promote the concerns of the village population and offer advice and guidance on how to respond to the consultation.

Progress so far:

- Leaflet delivered to all residents (the group also delivered a Parish Council leaflet)
- Website created ([www.stopthequarry.co.uk](http://www.stopthequarry.co.uk))
- Registered with group so far: 130 (92 residents/38 outside/visitors)
- Engaged with Essex Live and Nub News to help promote awareness

- Evidence for opposition responses is available within a database on their website which gives example reasons for objection

He outlined the main areas of concern including the road network, arcadian village, light, noise, dust, impact on local residents, school, church and the threat to the woodland habitats.

Each adult member of a household should make their own submission to the consultation.

The campaign group are very happy to help, they have forms available, will be happy to visit residents and assist in any way.

### **3145. Open Letter received from Lisa & Lee Carter (Whitehouse Farm)**

The letter was read by Cllr. Rushton. **Appendix 4**

### **3146. Public Forum**

The Clerk explained to those present the rules for the Public Forum. The Chairman then opened the meeting up to the public.

Cllr. Peter Irvine, Little Baddow Parish Council

- Concerns with rat running which will be detrimental to Little Baddow.
- Woodham Walter Common is part of the Danbury Ridge which is a large area of woodland and concerns were raised at the detrimental impact including to bats, moths and birds including rare species.
- Recently applied for an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which includes Woodham Walter Common as a buffer zone.

Chris Wheadon, Volunteer Warder at Woodham Walter Common for Essex Wildlife Trust

- He has referred the consultation to the EWT Planning coordinator who will examine the review.

Cllr. Jacob Armstrong, Danbury Parish Council and Chelmsford City Councillor

- Suggests that the term deer is used rather than muntjac as this is an invasive species.
- Referred to two documents which may be useful to include.  
GeoEssex – which lists 2 local geological sites in Danbury  
ECC Highways review: A414 Chelmsford to Maldon Route Based Strategy

Essex County Cllr. Jane Fleming

- ECC used outside consultants to complete the RAG assessments. Following the consultation, ECC officers will decide which sites will be recommended for inclusion and this will then be voted on by the ECC Cabinet. The document then goes to the Planning Inspectorate who make the final decision.

Other Members of the Public commented:

- Concern that with potential for 180 lorry movements a day that Tom Tit Lane will become a carpark.
- How often is the RAG updated?
- What has changed since the previous refusal?  
Advised: Nothing, except more minerals are required.
- Royal Oak now refilled with inert waste, are there any details about what will happen to the sites proposed once they have been dug? Will they be lakes or refilled?  
Advised: That would be considered at planning application stage and is not part of this ECC review
- Do we get another opportunity for imposing conditions?  
Advised: That would be considered at planning application stage and is not part of this ECC review

The Chairman brought the Public Forum to a close.

### **3147. How To Respond**

The Parish Clerk outlined the steps for responding to the consultation.

There was a brief break during which most members of the public left the meeting room at 8.50pm. Approximately 10 members of the public remained.

### **3148. Replacement Minerals Local Plan Review 2025-2040 – Essex County Council Consultation**

#### **3148.1 To consider response of Parish Council**

It was noted that there was unanimous public antipathy shown during the meeting. There were no further comments from Councillors.

Cllr. John Tompkins stated that...

- having studied the consultation documents and the files dating back to 1979 and having lived in the village for 47 years, I am of the opinion that the desktop exercise in the form of a RAG assessment is inaccurate.
- It is all very well to say that elements are subject to a degree of mitigation but without details it is impossible to determine as to whether these will be satisfactory or not.
- My recommendation is therefore to object to the inclusion of the Whitehouse Farm site (A66) in the LMPR and to ask for it to be completely withdrawn for the reasons stated. *(See Appendix 1)*
- And having studied the consultation documents and given that the Little Smiths site (A58) is outside of the Parish but nevertheless will significantly impact on WW residents, my recommendation is to object to the inclusion of the site in the LMPR and to ask for it to be completely withdrawn for the reasons stated. *(See Appendix 2)*

Cllr. John Brown seconded the motion and all councillors unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to object to the inclusion of Site A58 and A66 in the Replacement Minerals Local Plan Review.

Cllr. Rushton thanked Cllr. Tompkins for providing the comprehensive briefing report.

#### **3148.2 To consider how the Parish Council will convey information to village residents.**

RESOLVED to inform the village by email and to produce a leaflet for distribution to properties in the parish offering guidance with a summary of the main points and information on how to respond.

RESOLVED that Cllr. Rushton/Clerk will work on a synopsis document for printing and distribution by 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> March.

RESOLVED that Clerk will send village emails and update website page

#### **3149. Date of Next Ordinary Parish Council Meeting:**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 8pm in Woodham Walter Women's Club, Top Road, CM9 6RQ.

#### **3150. The Chairman to close the meeting**

The Chairman thanked those present including Graham Bannerman and Richard Sandlan for providing technical support.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 9.00pm.

Signed

Dated

**Briefing Document  
Minerals Local Plan Review**

**Whitehouse Farm**

**1. Overview**

- 1.1. The purpose of this briefing is to focus on appropriate evidence to be used when considering a response to the consultation on the Essex County Council (ECC) Minerals Local Plan Review (MLPR) that will include:
  - 1.1.1. The facts as presented in a RAG assessment produced from a desktop exercise and
  - 1.1.2. public input and
  - 1.1.3. knowledge of the area.
- 1.2. In short, every five years ECC is required to review the effectiveness of its Minerals Local Plan and propose amendments as necessary. This is the second Regulation 18 public consultation and acts to extend the Plan period to 2040. It is to be stressed that this is **NOT** a planning application but a consultation upon the review to establish whether the promoted sites **in principle** should be included into the plan.
- 1.3. Before any quarrying takes place on any promoted site, a planning permission will be required. Planning applications can be expected to have a great deal of additional data and reports. The allocation of a site in the MLP is **no guarantee** that planning permission would be granted.
- 1.4. The consultation is to review the plan and take into consideration the following:
  - 1.4.1. The Minerals Core Strategy, which sets out the long-term direction for minerals development and a plan to deliver this.
  - 1.4.2. Development management policies for minerals planning.
  - 1.4.3. Strategic site allocations and safeguarding for mineral extraction.
  - 1.4.4. A Policies Map, showing promoted site locations.
- 1.5. This MLPR is targeted to last until 2040.
- 1.6. Promoted within the review are two potential quarries for mineral extraction that will affect the Parish of Woodham Walter (WW):
  - 1.6.1. The Whitehouse Farm (WhF). A large area amounting to some 53ha (approx.131 acres) plus land required for a haul road.
  - 1.6.2. Little Smiths (LS) although this is outside of the MDC area it will affect the village approach.
  - 1.6.3. The consultation lasts for six weeks and residents of the Parish are urged to respond individually as individual responses count as more than a multi-signature partition. The closing date for submissions is 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

**2. Background**

- 2.1. The location of the site is well known and comprises of two arable fields laying between the Wilderness and Curling Tye Lane and bounded on the north side by properties in Blue Mill Lane and Curling Tye Green and to the west by the Wilderness and the village core.
- 2.2. The Parish of WW is located on glacial sand and gravel resting directly on London Clay with patches of head and brickearth. Early boreholes suggest a 15.5m depth (51 ft.). (*The Institute of Geological Sciences Report 73/1*). The mineral is there by nature and not by choice. Mineral extraction is not new to WW with several quarries having been in use in the latter part of the 20thC.
- 2.3. The planning history of the WhF site:
  - 2.3.1. A planning application was made in 1979 and refused.
  - 2.3.2. A further planning application was made in 1983 and refused.
  - 2.3.3. An appeal was made in 1985 and dismissed.
  - 2.3.4. In 1987 the Appeal was taken to the High Court as a result of a Judicial Review and the appeal decision was overturned and referred back to the Sec. of State.
  - 2.3.5. At the new Appeal the Inspector dismissed both of the previous appeals believed to be the quarry and the haul road.
  - 2.3.6. The site was subsequently promoted in the Essex Mineral Review of 2011 but due to representations made by the PC and residents it was not included in the MLP adopted in 2014 either as a silica extraction or a gravel extraction.
  - 2.3.7. The current review is considering the same site.

### 3. Key Considerations

#### 3.1. Landscape.

- 3.1.1. The landscape is agrarian i.e. relating to the ownership and use of land, especially farmland. It is a rich area with a highly developed agrarian economy. The proposal would remove over 53+ hectares plus additional land for transport connections.
- 3.1.2. The landscape character is Arcadian. Arcadian areas are defined as being significant for their strong and dominant visual element of landscaping. In such areas, there are a large proportion of trees and hedges that make a positive contribution to character and appearance of the green infrastructure. They have value in terms of climate change, air quality, good design, and mental health and wellbeing.
- 3.1.3. The area promoted is within the Danbury Ridge Conservation area and also the Chelmer- Blackwater Ridges Special Landscape Area. The planning inspector taking the appeals in 1988 stated that the proposal [essentially the same as the current one] 'would be seriously detrimental to the character of this rural area ... both in the short-term whilst the works are in progress and also in the longer-term'.
- 3.1.4. The same planning inspector commented unfavourably on the effects upon the part of the site known as the Wilderness. He considered that gravel extraction would undoubtedly cut through the aquifer which supplies the multitude of springs in the Wilderness; and this would in turn almost inevitably lead to the death of many trees and wild plants in this ancient woodland. This in turn would affect the fauna.
- 3.1.5. Site is part of Maldon District Council Historic Environment Characterisation Zone 2008 (Ref HECZ 7.1). It describes the zone as lying on the gradual slope down from Danbury Hill towards the Chelmer Valley.
- 3.1.6. The excavation of as much as the suggested 4 million tonnes to a significant depth over an optimistic 15 years will leave a significant void in the Arcadian landscape landform interrupting the vistas towards the Chelmer Valley and severely destroy the local landscape character.
- 3.1.7. The site is within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) minerals Impact Risk Zone for the Blackwater Estuary SSSI, Special Protection Area and Ramsar site and the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation. It is 2.5km directly from these sites and the Blackwater, Crouch, Roach, and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone.
- 3.1.8. The adjacent Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS) are The Wilderness, Wood Corner Grove and Old London Road verge. The Wilderness is a streamside woodland that may have ancient origins. The pits to the north have a great wildlife diversity and include Wet Woodland Priority habitat. There is also Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Priority habitat beyond the boundary in the southwest corner. Bog Wood (Ma22) LoWS is 220m the east and comprises probably ancient woodland. Manor Road Complex LoWS (Ma14) is c.1km downstream of the Site, connected by the watercourse.
- 3.1.9. Being agrarian, the site is composed of two large fields. The fields are calibrated as being grade 2 BMV agricultural land. The Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land is defined as land which falls in ALC grades 1 to 3a. In the context of food security, as championed by the Prime Minister recently, referring to the loss of such arable land.

#### 3.2. Historic Landscape

- 3.2.1. The promoted site is bordered by a significant number of Heritage assets. 13 in the immediate vicinity of the proposal and some 20 within the wider village area as well as several non-designated assets. Any quarrying will impact on the setting of the Scheduled monuments and Listed Buildings and may have a direct impact on drying out of deposits and land beneath and around them.
- 3.2.2. The area of both proposed workings and access road are rich in historical significance, having been a Deer Park dating from at least 1275. The promoted site flanks, and the access road is shown immediately behind the original Woodham Walter Hall, leaving them exposed to inappropriate uses or any development that would damage that designation.
- 3.2.3. Woodham Walter Hall, an Historic England Scheduled Ancient Monument of National Importance, adjoins the site as do several other Listed Buildings including the nearby Elizabethan Grade II\* Parish Church of St. Michael the Archangel. The undeveloped, agrarian landscape of the Site contributes to the setting and significance of these assets and the fundamental change in land use and land character would undermine the ability to understand and appreciate their significance.
- 3.2.4. The northern part of the Site lies within an extensive cropmark landscape with large enclosures, probably containing settlement evidence, which extends into the Site. A double circular enclosure is recorded in the centre of the Site. From the shape and dimensions this is likely to be of prehistoric date.
- 3.2.5. The adjacent core of WW Village is a Conservation Area.
- 3.2.6. The loss or physical damage to, and the settings of these historical assets by gravel extraction would undoubtedly cut through the aquifer which supplies the multitude of springs in the Wilderness; and this would in turn almost inevitably lead to the death of many trees and wild plants in this ancient woodland. This in turn would affect the fauna.
- 3.2.7. None of this has been addressed fully in the RAG assessment.

### 3.3. Archaeology

- 3.3.1. The surrounding area of the promoted site has many historic and archaeological points of interest. A hoard of silver coins was found in the village, dated to c. 700. At Oak Farm in 1991 three gold and bronze torcs were discovered dated to c.1000 BC. Woodham Walter has a long history as a settlement that the archaeological interest is likely to extend over the proposed site. Any change in land use would deny the ability to understand this area's importance further by further excavation.

### 3.4. Hydrography

- 3.4.1. The network of ditches, springs and the tributary to the Chelmer create hydrological connectivity to the Chelmer. Potential pollution will be likely to have significant effects to the Blackwater Estuary Special Protection Area, the Ramsar site and the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation.
- 3.4.2. In addition, some local residents including the community at Wood Corner still extract domestic water from boreholes or nearby river and streams. Any modification in the aquifer could have serious consequences to the viability of the dwellings.
- 3.4.3. As previously mentioned at a planning appeal (3.1.4), gravel extraction would undoubtedly cut through the aquifer which supplies the multitude of springs in the Wilderness; and this would in turn almost inevitably lead to the death of many trees and wild plants in this ancient woodland. This in turn would affect the fauna.
- 3.4.4. The stream running to the west of the site emanates from the Danbury Ridge area and is also fed via the old fishponds of WW Hall to the Royal Oak Quarry (ROQ) where the water table was found to be higher than initially thought. The cumulative effect of this when linked with the Little Smiths extension to the ROQ is likely to severely disturb the natural balance of hydrography within the whole area.
- 3.4.5. This is not addressed fully in the RAG assessment.

### 3.5. Infrastructure and Transport

- 3.5.1. The promoted site is only directly accessible via Curling Tye Lane, a narrow single width country lane accessed off Old London Road. (OLR) Neither road is suitable for HGV use nor is Tom Tit Lane. To resolve this issue a haul road is suggested from the A414. There are no details at this stage but previously it meant a junction on the stretch between Tom Tit Lane and the Crematorium site, a traverse across the field to Old London Road, crossing the road and then traversing the adjacent field to the site.
- 3.5.2. Crossing OLR will be a danger given the increasing amount of traffic especially during peak times using the road as a rat run towards the A12. There is also the danger during wet weather of debris being left on the carriageway adding to the danger.
- 3.5.3. HGV movements could be in the order of 120+/day over a potentially uneven track giving rise to noise and dust. This would be in addition to labour force and servicing transport. Established village residents may recall the situation at the Warren pit especially during early morning starts.
- 3.5.4. With such a large pit and an obvious requirement for plant it opens the opportunity to import material from other sites for processing. This will in turn increase the number of HGV movements.
- 3.5.5. Having to cross Old London Road will offer the opportunity for local drivers to diverge from the haul road onto adjacent lanes some of which have a 6'6" width restriction. This will increase danger to all road users including cyclists and walkers.
- 3.5.6. There is an aircraft landing strip located adjacent to the potential haul road that will require protected safe zones.
- 3.5.7. This is not addressed fully in the RAG assessment.

### 3.6. Air Quality

- 3.6.1. Air Quality Management (AQM) will be affected by three principle sources viz. road transport, on-site plant and dust. This is not addressed fully in the RAG assessment.
- 3.6.2. HGV transport, especially when heavily laden, are noted to pollute the atmosphere. In the absence of other forms of transport air quality will be compromised not only adjacent to the site but also in the wider community such as Danbury that already has AQM issues.
- 3.6.3. On-site plant such as excavators, conveyor belts and sieving and washing plant also will compromise AQM through exhaust pollution and dust creation.

- 3.6.4. Dust, grains and smaller particulates will be released to the atmosphere through operations. Particulates could adhere to tree foliage or wind-blown and will undoubtedly affect the village as past experience has shown.
- 3.6.5. Such exposure is detrimental to health and is of particular concern given the proximity of the primary school with 111 pupils, Forest School and the Traveller's site, Rectory Road houses and the village as a whole. The school playing field is as near as 200m from the promoted site and the building line of The Street is approximately 400m.
- 3.6.6. The potential danger from this level of exposure to pollution is likely be injurious to health affecting residents and visitors. Exposure to airborne particles of respirable crystalline silica (RCS) can lead to life-changing respiratory conditions such as silicosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and lung cancer as well as exacerbating other conditions such as asthma and bronchiectasis. This is not addressed fully in the RAG assessment.
- 3.6.7. Legislation currently passing through Parliament at present (*2<sup>nd</sup> reading*) is indicating that quarrying should not take place within 1.5km from dwellings. Clearly the WhF site does not and will not comply with this.
- 3.6.8. In addition to the AQM there is also the level of noise and light pollution. With winter working early starts and late finishes will require a level of illumination as will the traffic leaving and entering the site. Within an agrarian landscape this level of light pollution is unacceptable. This is not addressed fully in the RAG assessment.
- 3.6.9. Similarly with noise created in such a quiet country area. This is not addressed fully in the RAG assessment.

### **3.7. Health and Wellbeing**

- 3.7.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Clause 217 states that when determining planning applications, great weight should be given to the benefits of mineral extraction, including to the economy.
- 3.7.2. In considering proposals for mineral extraction, minerals planning authorities should at clause 217(b) *'ensure that there are no unacceptable adverse impacts on the natural and historic environment, human health or aviation safety, and take into account the cumulative effect of multiple impacts from individual sites and/or from a number of sites in a locality; at 217(c) ensure that any unavoidable noise, dust and particle emissions and any blasting vibrations are controlled, mitigated or removed at source, and establish appropriate noise limits for extraction in proximity to noise sensitive residential areas.*
- 3.7.3. In the Regulation 18 Consultation 2021, reference was made to the Plan setting out that the extraction of sand and gravel can have impacts on surroundings and local communities, such as through dust and noise emissions, and vehicle movements. It was noted that the Plan states that activities like sand and gravel extraction should avoid being developed near hospitals, clinics, retirement homes, residential areas, schools, offices, horticultural production, food retailing and certain industries like high tech, painting, furnishing and food processing. This has not been addressed by the RAG Assessment.
- 3.7.4. The potential exceedingly long haul road presents other serious concerns. The access road will pass through the highest and driest parts of the site, where screening by tree planting would be unlikely to succeed, so the traffic movements would disturb not only Woodham Walter residents but also people living in Woodham Mortimer down Tom Tit Lane. More important still, the use of the A414 would add an intolerable burden upon the village of Danbury and its long-suffering inhabitants, where traffic congestion has become much greater in the last 30 years.

### **3.8. Biodiversity**

- 3.8.1. In the immediate vicinity of the site there are three areas of sites for nature conservation being the Wilderness (MA21), Wood Corner Grove (MA21) and Old London Road verge.
- 3.8.2. There is evidence of a diversity of animal life within the proposed site and near it. Advice suggests that this includes but is not limited to; badgers, barn owls, bats, Brent geese, buzzards, common lizards, hares, muntjac deer, newts (believed to be great crested), skylarks, tawny owls, many insects important to the local ecology and many other visiting and feeding birds.
- 3.8.3. The promoted site will have a major impact on the biodiversity of the area by permanently changing the landscape and altering wildlife routes.

### **3.9. Public Rights of Way**

- 3.9.1. The proposed site is crossed by three footpaths (FP14, FP16 and FP19). The promoted development will destroy these footpaths. These footpaths are currently enjoyed by many residents, visitors and groups of birdwatchers and walkers. One of the footpaths is a component of the Maldon Millennium Way, established in 1991 to commemorate the Battle of Maldon in 991.

- 3.9.2. With the size of the promoted site, diversion of these footpaths would not be an option considering the H&S requirements of any proposed site.

**TO BE GIVEN TO THE PC ONLY AFTER DISCUSSION**

### **3.10. Summary and recommendation**

- 3.10.1. Having studied the consultation documents and the files dating back to 1979 and having lived in the village for 47 years, I am of the opinion that the desktop exercise in the form of a RAG assessment is inaccurate.
- 3.10.2. It is all very well to say that elements are subject to a degree of mitigation but without details it is impossible to determine as to whether these will be satisfactory or not.
- 3.10.3. My recommendation is therefore to object to the inclusion of the site in the LMPR and to ask for it to be completely withdrawn for the reasons stated.



**Briefing Document  
Minerals Local Plan Review**

**Little Smiths**

**1. Overview**

- 1.1. The overview for Little Smiths is in the main as per WhF.
- 1.2. The promoted site is mainly outside of WW Parish and MDC boundary, falling into Danbury PC and Chelmsford City Council.
- 1.3. The promoted site could be considered as an extension to the Royal Oak Pit.

**2. Background Little Smiths**

- 2.1. The site is located adjacent to The Street (*Old London Road*) leading to Old London Road and Herbage Park Road at the junction with The Warren Estate.
- 2.2. The Site is bound to the east by Thrift Wood, designated an Ancient Replanted Woodland and Priority Habitat. The western boundary is defined by The Street (*Old London Road*) with established hedgerow. The southern boundary remains fairly open to other arable fields, separated only by a ditch and occasional trees.
- 2.3. The Site is located within a rural setting abutting a medium sized settlement to the west, Runsell Green. Large irregular field patterns are distributed evenly across the immediate landscape bar the west where ribbon settlement continues in a north -west direction. Notably the landform is significantly elevated to the west at Danbury forming a peak in the landscape with well wooded areas of which the Site begins to form the plateau that extends east.
- 2.4. There does not appear to be any planning history available.

**3. Key Considerations**

**3.1. Landscape.**

- 3.1.1. The site is small in scale and possess few of the characteristic features of the Landscape Character of Danbury Hills. The surrounding landscape however does demonstrate the wooded hills particularly immediately east abutting the boundary where Thrift Wood is located.
- 3.1.2. Thrift Wood is a Priority Habitat of Deciduous Woodland and extends along the full length of the eastern boundary of the Site. This coincides with National Historic Landscape Characterisation defining the Site as typically ancient in origin.

**3.2. Historic Landscape**

- 3.2.1. The allocation of the Site would result change to the wider setting of seven listed Grade II listed buildings, including: The Anchor Inn, Gill House, Barn at the Rear of Gill House, Keepers Cottage, Black Cottages, Old Little Smiths, and Forge Cottage.
- 3.2.2. The significance of the heritage assets is principally derived from their architectural, archaeological, and historic interest as well as from the setting.
- 3.2.3. Views of the agrarian landscape from the listed buildings, across and from the agrarian landscape back towards the listed building, permits an understanding of the historic context, contributing positively to significance.
- 3.2.4. One Grade II Listed Building is located within the immediate surrounding area, which includes Brock's Farmhouse.
- 3.2.5. Adjacent to the site at the entrance to the Warren are the two Arts and Craft style gatehouses and the Grade II listed golf club and barns together with the Warren House.
- 3.2.6. Other 20thC properties front the adjacent Herbage Park Road and Old London Road.
- 3.2.7. There are several fields between The Anchor Inn, Gill House and associated barn and The Site. There is dense woodland and several fields between The Site and the Keepers Cottage, Black Cottages, Old Little Smiths, and Forge Cottage. Therefore, the allocation of The Site would have a limited impact upon the setting of the heritage asset and is considered to not result in harm to their significance.

### **3.3. Archaeology**

- 3.3.1. The Historic Environment Record shows the presence of a series of cropmarks, comprising a track way and enclosure. Immediately to the south of the trackway is a ring ditch (potential Bronze Age burial mound).
- 3.3.2. To the north of Thrift Wood there are extensive cropmarks indicative of a road, settlement and enclosures of unknown date extending into the woodland area. A further enclosure is recorded on the western side of Thrift Wood, just to the north of the Site. The enclosures may be related to the woodland or alternatively be of earlier date and related to the ring ditch.

### **3.4. Hydrography**

- 3.4.1. The site has a watercourse as the adjacent Royal Oak Pit (ROP) has a very high water table requiring 24-hour dewatering.
- 3.4.2. The water course links with the stream running through WhF and into the River Chelmer thus the same conditions apply.
- 3.4.3. The Site is not located within a flood zone.

### **3.5. Infrastructure and Transport**

- 3.5.1. On the assumption the Site will be accessed from the existing quarry there appears to be little to no consequence other than increased traffic from the ROP.

### **3.6. Air Quality**

- 3.6.1. The same conditions apply as for the WhF other than the AQMA along the A414 extends to this area particularly in view of the adjacent dwellings and the 102 Warren Lodges.

### **3.7. Health and Wellbeing**

- 3.7.1. WhF comments apply in this instance particularly in view of the adjacent dwellings in Old London Road, Herbage Park Road and the 102 Warren Lodges.

### **3.8. Biodiversity**

- 3.8.1. There is a potential pollution for water quality between the watercourse and a number of statutory wildlife sites. The potential for Likely Significant Effects to the Blackwater Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar site and the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation is prevalent.
- 3.8.2. Site is within the Impact Risk Zone for the Woodham Walter Common SSSI, which is located approximately 1km north-west. The intervening land use is currently farmland with hedgerows and a golf course, creating habitat connectivity between the site and the SSSI.
- 3.8.3. Thrift Wood Local Wildlife Site is immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary. It is Ancient Replanted Woodland and therefore classed as irreplaceable habitat. Warren Pit Local Wildlife Site (LoWS) is 10 metres to the north of the Site and there are two other LoWS within 1km.
- 3.8.4. A specimen veteran Oak tree is located on the eastern boundary on the edge of the adjacent Thrift Wood, and another specimen is to the north of the Site on the western boundary. Specimen veteran trees have some of the required veteran features and have the potential to develop further features during the tree's life cycle that were not captured at the time of the survey. Veteran trees are classed as irreplaceable habitat.
- 3.8.5. The Site is a relatively narrow field bordered by mature Hedgerow Priority habitat with mature standard trees on the north and western boundaries. The southern boundary comprises a partially wet stream valley and hedgerow with no mature trees. This watercourse runs eastwards into the adjacent ancient woodland.
- 3.8.6. The Site could have major impacts upon the adjacent ancient woodland, which is irreplaceable habitat, and a serious impact upon the LoWS and Priority habitats and species. Impacts may include changes to the hydrology of the ancient woodland, candidate veteran trees and Hedgerows and watercourse, smothering of leaves by dust, disturbance e.g. by noise and lighting. It could result in disturbance and loss of habitat for Priority farmland species.

### **3.9. Public Rights of Way**

- 3.9.1. Adjacent to the proposed site are 2 footpaths that are unlikely to be affected.

**3.10. Summary and recommendation**

- 3.10.1. Having studied the consultation documents and given that the site is outside of the Parish but nevertheless will significantly impact on WW residents, my recommendation is therefore to object to the inclusion of the site in the LMPR and to ask for it to be completely withdrawn for the reasons stated.





**An open letter to the Parish of Woodham Walter regarding WHITEHOUSE FARM**

February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Dear fellow Parishioners

**We have lived at Whitehouse Farm on Blue Mills Lane since 2000, after purchasing the old farmstead plus just a few acres of the adjoining land from one of our family Companies. Over the years we have converted the ruined buildings into a home for ourselves and sons.**

We were already well aware of the proposals for possible mineral extraction in the fields directly behind our property. The whole estate of Whitehouse Farm was purchased by our family Company many years ago, specifically because of this potential. Indeed, historically, we already had three quarries in the immediate area – one in Blue Mills Lane, one at the Warren and at Ulting (now two fishing lakes.)

Despite the fact that the village has co-existed with quarrying in the past with minimal ill effect, we can appreciate the concerns of some local residents, and are glad that there is likely to be a Special Parish Council Meeting and then an ECC public drop-in Session. These will hopefully counter some of the scaremongering and inaccuracy that has already been published.

Our main reasons for this letter are firstly, to point out that our home Whitehouse Farm, is our own privately-owned and completely separate property where we have committed our long-term future as residents; and secondly, to point out that the current Application regarding the Minerals Structure Plan is being independently made by a large construction materials organisation. They have no connection whatsoever with our family Company (who are no longer directly involved in quarrying) and are taking an Option to lease the relevant parcel of land in the event that they can ever secure Planning Permission from Essex County Council.

We are proud to live in Woodham Walter and wholeheartedly support the preservation of the village both in a physical and spiritual sense. We hold dear the amenity of the countryside and are confident that any actual future extraction works that might eventually be permitted here would be extremely tightly controlled and have minimal adverse impact. You may be assured that we shall be taking an extremely close and personal interest in all further developments.

*Lisa & Lee Carter*