

Mineral Assessment

DATE:	21 November 2023	CONFIDENTIALITY:	Public
SUBJECT:	Application LPA Ref: 23/00948/FUL		
PROJECT:	Twycross Zoo - National Science and Conservation Centre	AUTHOR:	ZW
CHECKED:	MS	APPROVED:	MS

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of Twycross Zoo, WSP have submitted an application for the development of a National Science and Conservation Centre (NSCC) and new habitats at the existing Twycross Zoo. The application (LPA ref: 23/00948/FUL) was received and validated on 13 October by Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC).

On 25 October 2023, HBBC received a consultation response from Leicestershire County Council (LCC) regarding minerals. As the site is located within a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA), LCC have requested a Mineral Assessment. This Assessment has been produced to meet that request.

ASSESSMENT

As outlined, the Zoo is located within an MSA, the extent of which can be found in Figure 1 below. It falls within the 'Sand & Gravel' designation, which is the most abundant designation in the borough.

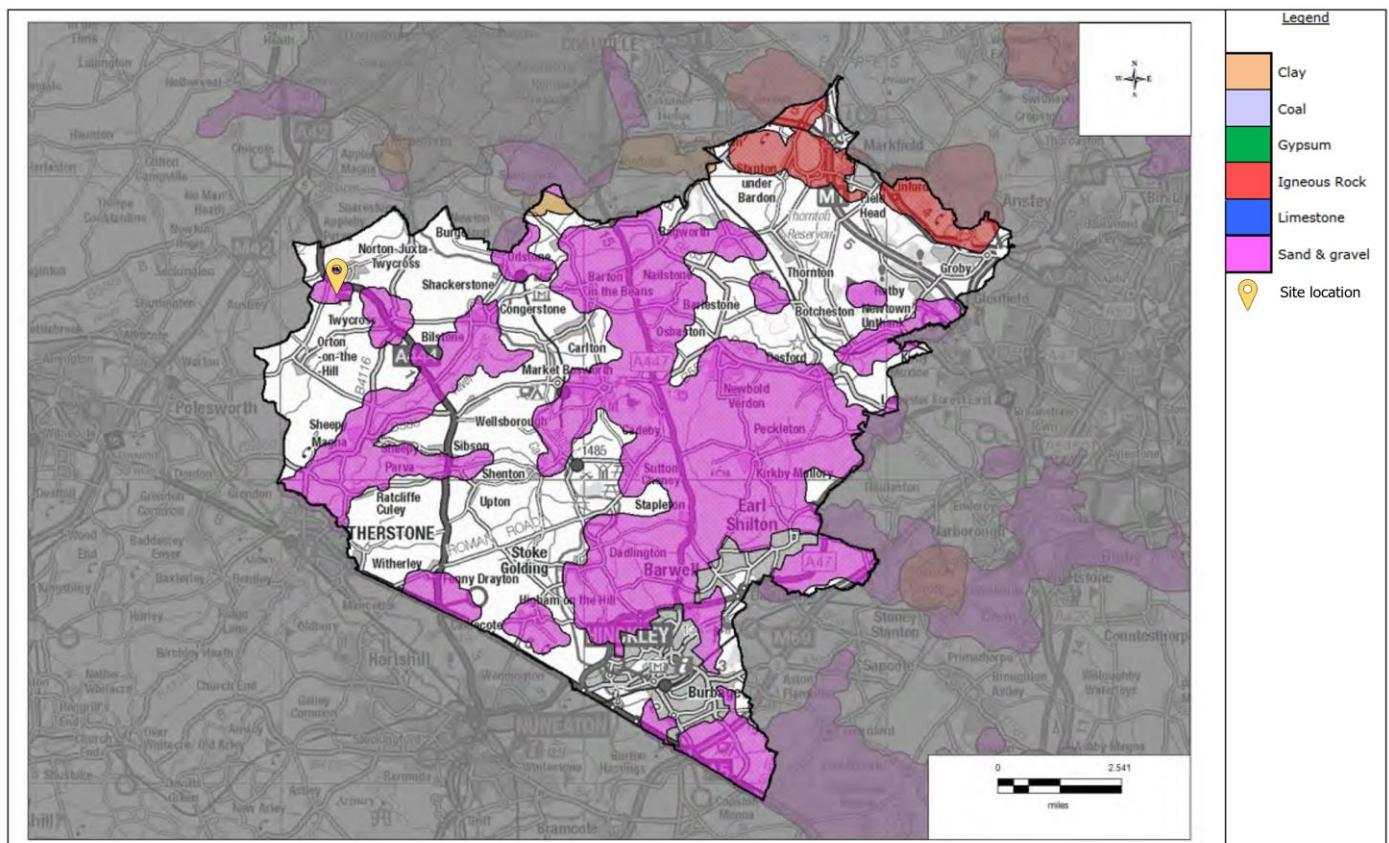


Figure 1 - Mineral Safeguarding Area



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The development proposed in this application is an extension of the existing use of the Zoo, which has previously been found acceptable within the MSA. Therefore, the proposal is for development, within the existing boundary/ownership of the Zoo, for a use consistent with the Zoo's existing and well-established use.

The principle of this kind of development on the site and within the MSA is well-established and the benefits have been recognised by both HBBC and LCC (by virtue of the approval of previous planning applications) and therefore acceptable.

The Zoo site's use is allocated in the Local Plan 2006 to 2026 (NOR07) and the area of the Zoo that is subject to this application is allocated as Twycross Zoo within the draft Local Plan (2020-2041) Regulation 19 document. This therefore recognises that the Council consider the expansion of the Zoo (despite the minerals) to be acceptable and appropriate use of the site; and also recognise the many benefits that this would bring, outweighing its sterilisation for mineral safeguarding.

In addition to the above, it is clear from Figure 1 that there is ample remaining land remaining safe guarded for sand and gravel which could be used in response to any future demand. The development on the site would therefore not be risk to future supply.

Additionally, the site's location within the MSA was flagged during the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening process, and HBBC confirmed that there would be an unlikely impact on mineral uses, stating that "*the application site contains some greenfield land, but this is not considered to contain or be utilised by... mineral uses*". This confirms that there is no significant environmental impact of the development on the potential minerals.

Further, as outlined in the Planning Statement that supports the submission, the development represents holistic sustainable development and has significant environmental, economic and social benefits associated with the development.

The proposed development represents a high quality, sustainable development that would provide significant benefits, which include:

- Opportunities for further research into the animals and the enhancement of the Zoo's conservation efforts;
- Enhanced habitats and environments for the animals;
- High-quality design of architectural merit for both the habitats and NSCC buildings;
- Opportunities for additional funding streams associated with research;
- Creation of 44 permanent jobs in addition to jobs in the construction phase;
- Enhanced facilities at the Zoo;
- Increased education opportunities for school children; and
- Enhanced landscaping scheme.



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This demonstrates that the benefit of the development outweighs safeguarding the mineral potential of the land that may have no economic, social or environmental value, whereas the development proposals clearly do.

SUMMARY

In short, the proposed development is acceptable from a mineral perspective for several reasons. Firstly, it is recognised that there will be no significant environmental impacts on the ground or minerals as a result of the development. Further, the use of the land is consistent with a well-established use of the site and is simply an extension of this use. Finally, there are significant social, environmental and economic benefits of the scheme. Therefore, in light of these benefits, and in the context of the existing situation of the site/lack of environmental harm, there is no reason to delay the determination of this application on the grounds of minerals.