



Lister Wilder, White House Farm

Mineral Resource Assessment

1st December 2025



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1 Introduction & Overview

- 1.1 Land & Mineral Management have been instructed to prepare a Mineral Resource Assessment relating to a proposal to redevelop and enlarge existing buildings and storage area (the Development) at White House Farm, Beech Hill Road, Spencers Wood, Wokingham, RG7 1HR (the Site). This report has been prepared after a review of relevant maps, policy documents, and available information.

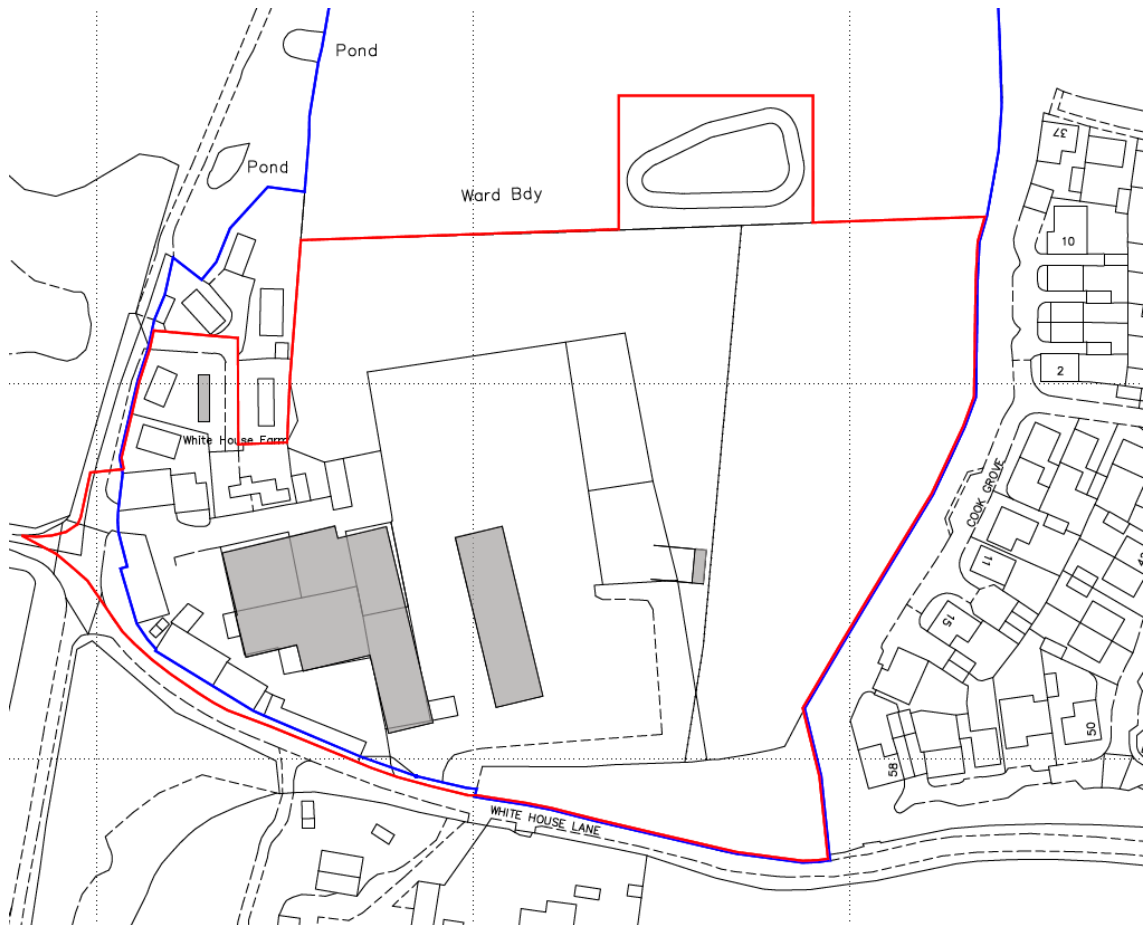


Figure 1 – The site at White House Farm, outlined in red.

The Site & Surroundings

- 1.2 The Site is approximately 3.1ha in area, of which approximately 1.4ha is already developed for buildings and a storage yard. There is an area of woodland in the southern corner, approximately 0.1ha in size, and the remaining 1.6ha comprises an arable field and part of a further field to the north.

- 1.3 The Site is bound to the north by further arable land; to the east by residential development; to the south by White House Lane (beyond which lies woodland, offices and an arboretum); and to the west by further woodland.
- 1.4 The Site lies within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for sharp sand and gravel, as identified in the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (2023), meaning development has the potential to sterilise finite mineral deposits and prevent their future extraction.
- 1.5 This report assesses the feasibility of mineral extraction at the Site and finds that the proposed Development will not lead to sterilisation because mineral it is already largely sterilised by existing development and land use; and any remaining mineral would not be economically viable to extract.
- 1.6 There would not be any further sterilisation caused by the Development as the adjoining reserves are small and also non-viable whilst the proposed use is also not considered to be sensitive and require any level of significant standoff. There is therefore no conflict with mineral safeguarding policies.

2 Planning Policy

National Planning Policy

- 2.1 Paragraph 223(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024 (NPPF) requires local authorities to provide planning policies that:

“safeguard mineral resources by defining Mineral Safeguarding Areas and Mineral Consultation Areas; and adopt appropriate policies so that known locations of specific minerals resources of local and national importance are not sterilised by non-mineral development where this should be avoided (whilst not creating a presumption that the resources defined will be worked)”.

Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (2023)

- 2.2 Policy M2 of the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (2023) seeks to protect minerals resources against unnecessary sterilisation by non-minerals development and requires the preparation of a Mineral Resources Assessment for proposals that affect a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) so that the option of prior extraction is fully considered at the planning application stage, which states:

1. *Sharp sand and gravel and soft sand resources of economic importance, and around active mineral workings, are safeguarded against unnecessary sterilisation by non-minerals development.*
2. *Safeguarded mineral resources are defined by the Minerals Safeguarding Area illustrated on the Policies Map.*
3. *Non-minerals development in the Minerals Safeguarding Area may be permitted if it can be demonstrated through the preparation of a Mineral Resources Assessment, that the option of prior extraction has been fully considered as part of an application, and:*
 - a) *Prior extraction, where practical and environmentally feasible, is maximised, taking into account site constraints and phasing of development; or*
 - b) *It can be demonstrated that the mineral resources will not be permanently sterilised; or*
 - c) *It would be inappropriate to extract mineral resources in that location, with regard to other policies in the wider Local Plans.*

- 2.3 Paragraph 6.44 of the Plan states; *“Safeguarding does not necessarily mean that other forms of development should not take place where sand and gravel deposits occur. However, developers will need to demonstrate, through the preparation of a Mineral Resource Assessment, that the*

sand and gravel deposit has no commercial value, or that they have fully explored the use of the underlying sand and gravel in preparing development proposals”.

Pre-Application Advice

2.4 Wokingham Borough Council provided pre-app advice that states:

“The site is shown as having sand and gravel deposits and is partially located within a Minerals Safeguarding Area. Policy M2 of the 2023 of the Joint Minerals & Waste Plan states that non-minerals development in the Minerals Safeguarding Area may be permitted if it can be demonstrated through the preparation of a Mineral Resources Assessment, that the option of prior extraction has been fully considered as part of an application, and:

- a. Prior extraction, where practical and environmentally feasible, is maximised, taking into account site constraints and phasing of development; or*
- b. It can be demonstrated that the mineral resources will not be permanently sterilised; or*
- c. It would be inappropriate to extract mineral resources in that location, with regard to other policies in the wider Local Plans.*

The supporting text to M2 states a minimum plot size of 3 hectares will apply in the safeguarding process to avoid repeated consideration of prior extraction where this can be assumed to be uneconomic, due to the small size of the parcels of land involved. However, applications will be monitored to ensure a piecemeal approach is not taken which could accumulate to have an impact on resources.

Any future application will need to be submitted with justification that the development is not piecemeal eroding the Mineral Safeguarding Area.”.

3 The Mineral Deposit

Superficial Deposits & Bedrock

- 3.1 Site-specific ground investigation data is not available, however, according to the mapping produced by the British Geological Survey (BGS), the Site overlies London Clay bedrock but is partially underlain by superficial deposits of River Terrace Deposits – a well-known source of sand and gravel (the Mineral). This can be seen in Figure 2 below:

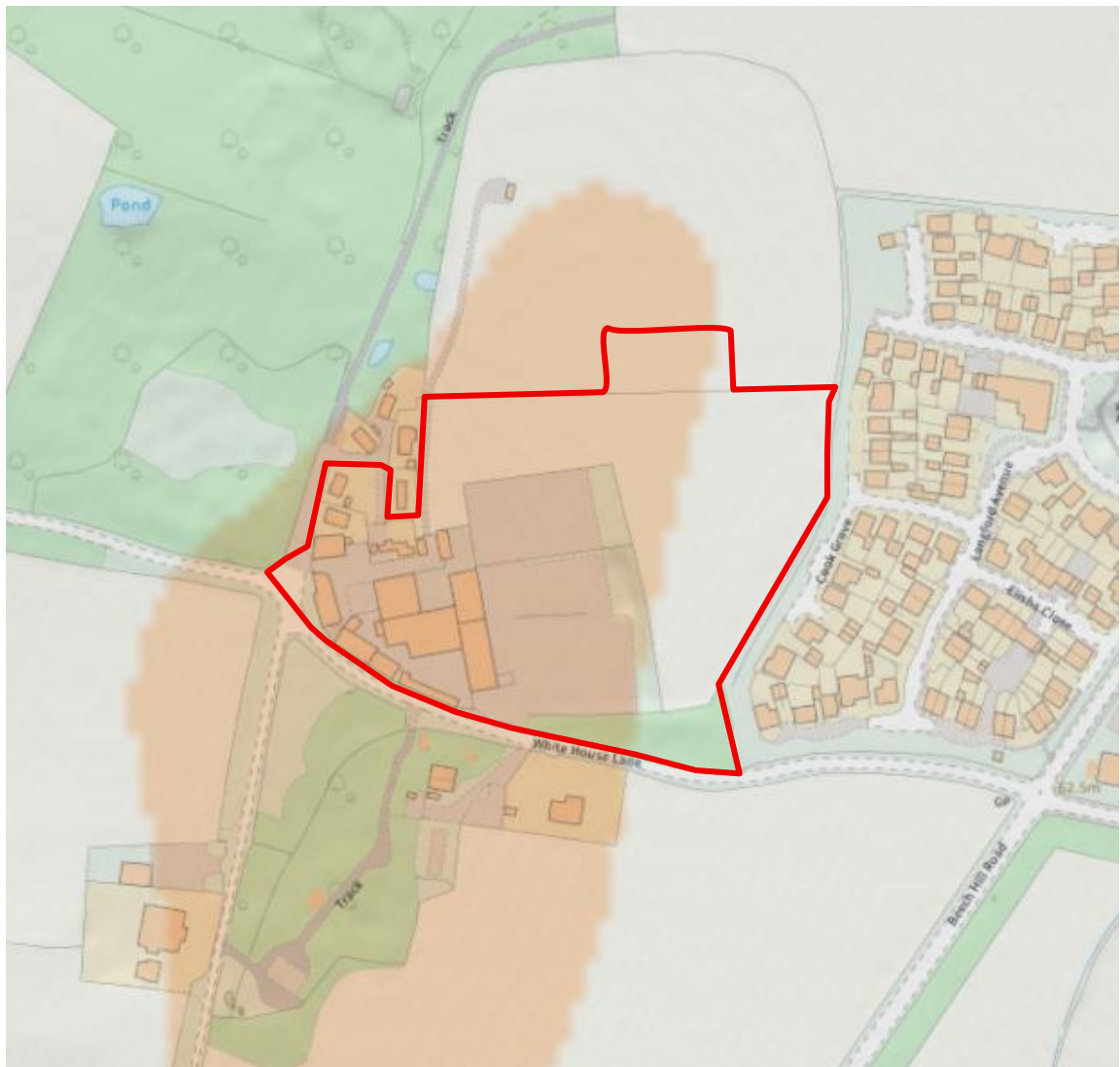


Figure 2 - Extract from BGS mapping. River Terrace Deposits shaded orange. Site outlined in red.

- 3.2 The majority of the Mineral within the Site is already sterilised through both existing development and woodland on the Site and by the adjacent housing development to the east.

- 3.3 If the Mineral were ever to be extracted, then standoffs (or buffer zones) must be taken into account to protect features such as retained vegetation and the amenity of sensitive receptors such as houses or offices. In this instance, standoffs to existing housing, commercial buildings and boundary vegetation would need to be applied.
- 3.4 Using a hypothetical standoff of 50m from residential properties and existing commercial workplaces (as a professional judgement on the minimum likely required standoff to provide adequate protection of amenity, specialist assessments (such as noise and dust) may find greater distances are required); and a 10m to boundary vegetation and woodland, only approximately 0.3ha of mineral within the Site remains.
- 3.5 Even disregarding the potential access issues, this is clearly not going to yield any level of viable reserve. BGS mapping shows the deposit of Mineral upon which the site sits to be relatively small within the wider landscape meaning it is likely to be relatively shallow. No publicly available boreholes are located within the specific deposit to inform depth but, even if a 1m depth were assumed this would yield just 3,000m³ or roughly 4,800 tonnes¹. In an industry where sites are generally required to yield several hundred thousand tonnes to achieve viability (due to high costs of investment in earth moving and processing plant; long and expensive planning processes; need to establish site infrastructure; etc.), this is clearly a non-starter and the Mineral cannot be considered to be of “economic importance”.
- 3.6 Wider-scale piecemeal erosion of the Mineral Safeguarding Area is also not a concern in this instance. Even if the remainder of the adjoining deposit upon which the Site sits were worked (i.e. that lies within the field to the north), the “workable” area is increased to just 0.8ha. Using the same assumed 1m average depth, this equates to only c.12,800 tonnes. The Mineral to the south has already been developed upon or would be entirely unaffected by the Development.
- 3.7 The Mineral underlying (and adjoining) the Site is clearly not of economic importance and therefore should not fall under the safeguarding outlined in part 1 of Policy M2.
- 3.8 Even if adjoining mineral were considered viable or worthy of safeguarding, the proposed Development is unlikely to sterilise it further. Much of the proposed Development consists of expansion to a storage area which would not be considered as a particularly sensitive feature

¹ Using a common ratio of 1m³ = 1.6 tonnes.

worth of amenity protection and would therefore not justify standoffs greater than those that would already be required for the existing boundary hedgerow.

Prior Extraction

- 3.9 Some small level of prior extraction may be viable during construction of the Development. For example, excavations into the Mineral for any footings, foundations, drainage features etc will yield some Mineral, albeit a relatively negligible amount.
- 3.10 This Mineral can be retained on-site and used as part of the development in as “as-dug” form for lower-end uses such a pipe or cable bedding or as subbase for roads and pathways. This will reduce the volume of Mineral needed to be imported from elsewhere to enable the Development.

4 Conclusions

- 4.1 The Site overlies a small quantity of Mineral, although not any volume that could be considered to be economically viable or hold commercial value and, therefore, in line with Policy M2, safeguarding should not be pursued.
- 4.2 There is no piecemeal erosion of the wider Mineral Safeguarding Area as the only Mineral that has the potential to be affected by the Development is also not economically viable or of commercial value – either standalone or combined with that beneath the Site.
- 4.3 There may be limited scope for prior extraction as part of the Development, and this should be encouraged, however should the Development not go ahead it is highly improbable that the underlying Mineral would ever be extracted.
- 4.4 There is therefore no conflict between the Development with mineral safeguarding.