Planning Statement

Proposed Eastern Extension of Gilfach Quarry and Variation to Planning Conditions attached to Permissions P2010/0655 and P2010/0658 to Replace Working Scheme and Extend Duration of Planning Permission

May 2019
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to accompany and support the planning applications made to Neath Port Talbot Council for the extension to mineral workings and variation to planning conditions attached to planning permissions P2010/0655 and P2010/0658 for the amendment to the approved working scheme for the quarry and the extension of the duration of the planning permission for the quarry (“the Proposal”) at the Gilfach Quarry, Gilfach Road, Neath, SA10 8AD.

1.2 The Applicant

1.2.1 The Applicant, CEMEX UK Operations Ltd, is a leading global producer and marketer of cement, concrete and other building materials. In the UK it is a major producer of ready-mixed concrete, aggregates and asphalt. It is also the third-largest cement producer and is the leading supplier of concrete sleepers to the UK’s rail industry.

1.2.2 The Company is responsible for working, processing and marketing crushed rock aggregates and the production of ready mixed concrete, asphalt and coated roadstone within Wales.

1.3 Planning Applications

1.3.1 This Planning Statement supports three interlinked Planning Applications submitted to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), as follows;

1. A full planning application for the Proposed Eastern Extension to Gilfach Quarry;

2. A Section 73 planning application to vary planning conditions attached to planning permission P2010/0655, which relates to the Approved Northern Extension to Gilfach Quarry;

3. A Section 73 planning application to vary planning conditions attached to planning permission P2010/0658, which relates to the Original Quarry Area, which contains the processing plant, stocking areas, water management areas and offices etc.

1.3.2 The two Section 73 planning applications are made in order to vary the approved phasing and restoration plans, and other minor consequential amendments to the approved details of the wider quarry, in order to facilitate the Proposed Eastern Extension.
1.4 **Environmental Impact Assessment**

1.4.1 The Planning Application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES), prepared under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (“the EIA Regulations”). The scope of the EIA was guided by a Scoping Opinion issued by Neath Port Talbot Borough Council on the 1st April 2019, contained within Appendix 3-2 of the ES.

1.4.2 The EIA process is a method of systematically assessing the potential environmental effects of a proposed development and identifying how those potential impacts can be mitigated.

1.4.3 The ES is structured into four volumes, as follows:

- ES – Volume 1: Written Statement
- ES – Volume 2: Figures
- ES – Volume 3: Technical Appendices
- ES – Volume 4: Non-Technical Summary

1.5 **Purpose & Structure of Planning Statement**

1.5.1 The purpose of this Planning Statement is to identify the key planning considerations relating to the Proposal and assess its compliance with the relevant provisions of the Development Plan and any other material considerations. The current Development Plan for this area comprises the adopted Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan 2016.

1.5.2 The assessment of the Proposal contained within this Planning Statement refers to the various assessments contained within the accompanying ES.

1.6 **Planning Fee**

1.6.1 The fees for planning applications is set by The Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications and Site Visits) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

1.6.2 In relation to full planning application for the Proposed Eastern Extension Area, the regulations state that in the case of operations for the winning and working of minerals where the site area is not more than 15 hectares, the application fee is calculated based on the site area, at a rate of £190 per 0.1ha.

1.6.3 The site area for the Proposed Eastern Extension extends to 1.5 ha. The total fee for the full planning application for the Proposed Eastern Extension Area is therefore £2,850.
1.6.4 In addition, two Section 73 planning applications have been made to ‘develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached’ to permissions P2010/0655 and P2010/0658. The planning fee payable for each Section 73 application is £190 per application.

1.6.5 Accordingly, a payment of £3,230 will be made to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to cover the planning application fees associated with the three planning applications.

1.7 Pre-application consultation

1.7.1 In accordance with the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, CEMEX carried out statutory preapplication consultation on the planning application by making the complete planning application, including the accompanying Environmental Statement, available for consultation for a period of 28 days.

1.7.2 Full details of the steps taken to advertise, publish and consult on the planning applications and the comments received and steps taken to address these comments are set out within the accompanying Pre-Application Consultation Report.
2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

2.1 Planning Background

2.1.1 Quarrying at Gilfach commenced operations in the latter part of the 19th century, and it is shown on the First Edition OS Map of 1881. The quarry expanded through the early decades of the 20th century, primarily at that time as a source of building stone. The first planning permission for quarrying was granted in 1947, under the provisions of the Interim Development Order, and where the purpose was described as “to continue working in existing quarry”.

2.1.2 Since 1947, further planning permissions were granted, the first being in 1963 (ref: W/14318), and the second in 1981 (ref: 2/3/79/0448/03). The 1981 planning permission was accompanied by a legal agreement, under the provisions of Section 52 of the 1971 Planning Act, which imposed a number of obligations regarding landscaping and restoration upon completion of quarrying.

2.1.3 The Environment Act 1995 placed a requirement on mineral operators to submit applications to update the planning conditions regulating activities at individual quarry sites. This process of a ‘Review of Old Mining Permissions’ is commonly referred to by the acronym ‘ROMP’. A ROMP application to update the conditions was duly submitted by CEMEX in November 2000, and an updated schedule of conditions was issued by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (P2000/1366).

2.1.4 More recently, two planning applications were submitted in 2010. The first was for the ‘Proposed extension to quarry to extract Pennant Sandstone’ (ref: P2010/0655) and related to the northern extension to the quarry. The red line boundary of this application is illustrated in Figure 2-4. The second (P2010/0658) relates to the ‘Proposed continued implementation of planning permission P2000/1366 without compliance with conditions nos 2, 4, 12, 13, 37, 39 and 40’. The red line boundary of this application is illustrated in Figure 2-5. Both of these planning applications were approved in February 2012 and are the extant planning permissions for the quarry under which the operations are undertaken.
3. SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The Application Site & its Constituent Areas

3.1.1 For the purposes of this Planning Statement, the following terms will be used to refer to the entire quarry and the three constituent areas, which are the subject of the three separate planning applications;

- ‘Application Site’ refers to the entire quarry site, including the approved and proposed extensions to the quarry workings, as bound red on Figure 2-2, which consists of the following areas;
  - ‘Proposed Eastern Extension Area’ refers to the area of the Application Site bound red on Figure 2-3, located to the east of the Original Quarry Area, and which contains the Proposed Eastern Extension;
  - ‘Approved Northern Extension Area’, refers to the area of the Application Site bound red on Figure 2-4, located to the north of the Original Quarry Area, and which is covered by extant planning permission P2010/0655;
  - ‘Original Quarry Area’, refers to the area of the Application Site bound red on Figure 2-5, which contains the site offices, processing plant, stocking yard, water treatment areas etc, which is covered by extant planning permission P2010/0658.

3.1.2 There is a small degree of overlap between the three constituent areas described above.

3.2 Application Site Context

3.2.1 The Application Site lies approximately 2.5km to the north of Neath, and 1km to the east of Bryncoch. It is located towards the southern end of a northeast to southwest trending ridgeline, which separates the Neath and Dulais valleys to the south and east, from the Clydach valley to the west.

3.2.2 In the vicinity of the Application Site, the topography rises from Gilfach Road, on the western side of the quarry, generally at an elevation of 105m AoD, to between 150 and 160m AoD at the top of the western rim of the quarry. The original landform rose in an eastward direction to above 190m AoD along what is now the eastern rim of the quarry. The topography also rises from the south to the north.

3.2.3 Access into the Application Site is taken via a narrow cutting through the western ridgeline which runs for approximately 100m before opening out into the quarry.
workings. Access is obtained directly from the A474 Neath to Pontardawe Road, via a private access road which crosses Gilfach Road.

3.2.4 A number of individual residential properties are present within a 500m radius of the quarry and/or extension area. These are generally farm houses with associated buildings and a small number of residential dwellings. Areas of hard standing are present in the form of roads, access tracks and concrete farm yards.

3.2.5 The closest residential receptors to the Proposed Eastern Extension Area are; *Cefnfaes Farm*, located 110m east of the Application Site and 150m to the south-east of the Proposed Eastern Extension Area, at its closest point, and; *Centfaes Fach* located 120m to the north-east of the Approved Northern Extension Area, at its closest point, and 450m north of the Proposed Eastern Extension Area.

### 3.3 The Application Site

#### The Original Quarry Area

3.3.1 Workings within the Original Quarry Area have developed down to a level of 134m AoD. The levels rise progressively to the north, following the dip of the strata.

3.3.2 A quarry processing plant is located in line with the quarry entrance cutting (See Appendix 2-4 of the ES, Drg No SS7599_CAW_D_21211_A_1). The majority of the surface area of the quarry is ‘operational’ in terms of quarry works, stockpiles and processing. There are perimeter landscape tree belts, notably along the western, north western and, to a lesser extent, eastern margins, with natural woodland on the flanks of the ridgeline abutting the western edge of the site.

3.3.3 Immediately to the south of the quarry a roughly triangular area of land has been used for the storage of overburden and soils. This area has substantially re-vegetated, and is current managed in accordance with an Ecological Management Plan – November 2015 (Appendix 2-4 of the ES).

3.3.4 Workings are currently progressing in a north easterly direction, within the Approved Northern Extension Area.

#### Approved Northern Extension Area

3.3.5 The Approved Northern Extension area incorporates fields to the north of the Original Quarry area which are permitted for extraction under planning permission P2010/0655. This area comprises four approximately rectangular field units to the north. The fields are used for rough pasture and are separated by discontinuous hedgerows. A narrow
linear tree belt separates the Approved Northern Extension area from the Original Quarry Area.

3.3.6 Workings have commenced within the south eastern extent of the Approved Northern Extension Area and are progressing generally northwards. A more detailed description of the Approved Northern Extension is contained within the 2010 Environmental Statement, contained within Appendix 2-1.

**Proposed Eastern Extension Area**

3.3.7 The Proposed Eastern Extension area is located to the east of the Original Quarry area and comprises a collection of small fields / agricultural enclosures and accommodates scrub and small groups of trees.

3.3.8 The land slopes down from west to east from 193mAOD to 186mAOD.

3.3.9 Further details of the Proposed Eastern Extension Area are contained within Chapters 6 and 7 and within the Arboricultural report, contained within Appendix 2-6.
4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

4.1 The Proposal

4.1.1 The ‘Proposal’ consists of three elements, as follows;

- ‘Proposed Eastern Extension’ (Phase 1b) - An extension to mineral extraction operations into the Proposed Eastern Extension Area. The Proposed Eastern Extension Area would be worked following Phase 2, as detailed within the proposed working scheme contained within Figures 2-7 to 2-13.

- An amendment to the approved quarry working and restoration scheme to incorporate the Proposed Eastern Extension, as detailed within Figure 2-14.

- A time extension, of an additional 5 years, to the duration of the planning consent to extraction minerals from Gilfach Quarry.

4.1.2 Appendix 2-5 of the ES contains a review of the current planning conditions attached to planning permissions P2010/0655 and P2010/0658. It is proposed to amend the wording or delete conditions 1, 2, 7, 46, 50 of planning permission P2010/0655 and conditions 1, 2, 6, 43, 47 of planning permission P2010/0658. In addition, it is suggested that other conditions could be amended / deleted, including conditions 3, 6, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 27, 34, 36, 38, 53, 56, 58, 62, 63, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 74, 75, 76 of planning permission P2010/0655 and conditions 3, 13, 15, 18, 19, 21, 26, 33, 35, 50, 53, 57, 58, 60, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71 of planning permission P2010/0658.

Proposed Eastern Extension

4.1.3 It is proposed to extend the Gilfach Quarry extraction operations easterly into the Proposed Eastern Extension Area, also known as ‘the wedge’ or ‘the sliver’. The Proposed Eastern Extension contains approximately 1,500,000 tonnes of mineral.

4.1.4 Soils and vegetation would be stripped to enable access to the underlying mineral. This would include the felling of trees within the proposed extraction area. An Arboricultural Assessment is contained within Appendix 2-6 of the ES.

4.1.5 Once the mineral reserve is exposed, the mineral would be fractured using controlled blasting techniques and fed through the existing processing plant, in line with current practices.

Amendment to Quarry Working Scheme

4.1.6 In order to facilitate the Proposed Eastern Extension, permission is sought to vary conditions attached to the extant planning permissions (P2010/0655 and P2010/0658).
for Gilfach Quarry to replace the approved phased extraction and restoration proposals of the quarry. The amendment to the working scheme involves the inclusion of the Proposed Eastern Extension as Phase 1b (to be worked prior to Phases 3 and 4, as detailed within the proposed working scheme contained within Figures 2-7 to 2-13) and would, if approved, ensure the working scheme relating to each planning permission is consistent and incorporates the Proposed Eastern Extension.

**Time Extension to Planning Permission**

4.1.7 Planning permissions P2010/0655 and P2010/0658 both require quarrying operations to cease by the 28th February 2028 and for the site to be restored by 28th February 2030.

4.1.8 The Proposed Eastern Extension would release in the region of 1.5Mt of additional aggregate, equivalent to approximately 5 years of working (based on current rates of extraction of 300,000tpa). It is therefore proposed to extend the life of the current extant planning permissions to 28th February 2035.

**Restoration**

4.1.9 The restoration principles for the Application Site have been agreed through planning permissions P2010/0655 and P2010/0658. The approved restoration strategy for the site involves the creation of a small water body with ephemeral edges, species rich grassland and treatment of the quarry benches to enhance biodiversity opportunities.

4.1.10 A revised restoration plan is contained within Figure 2-14 of the ES. The proposed restoration scheme generally reflects the previously approved restoration scheme, but has been developed further to incorporate the Proposed Eastern Extension Area and address comments received from consultees during the EIA Scoping process. A detailed description of the restoration proposals is contained within Appendix 2-7 of the ES.

**4.2 Vehicle Movements**

4.2.1 There would be no change to the current arrangements with regards to traffic and transportation. Annual production of over recent years has been in the region of 300,000 tonnes per annum. This is equivalent to between approximately 15,000 HGV loads per annum, or an average of approximately 55 loads per day (110 trips per day).

4.2.2 The Proposal is would not lead to a change in the current output of the quarry. It was agreed during the Scoping process that at assessment of the Proposals Traffic and Transportation impacts would not be necessary within this Environmental Statement.
4.3 Hours of Operation

4.3.1 Conditions attached to both the planning permissions for Gilfach Quarry (P2010/0655 & P2010/0658) limit the hours of operation as follows:

Except in emergencies to maintain safe quarry working (which shall be notified to the Local Planning Authority as soon as practical) or with the prior agreement of the Local Planning Authority in writing:

a. No mineral extraction operations at the site shall take place outside the hours of:

0600 hours to 1800 hours Monday to Friday

0600 hours to 1200 hours on Saturday

b. Operations on the periphery of the site, or at high level, unscreened locations such as the formation, removal and alteration of spoil and topsoil tips, baffle mounds, screening and storage embankments, formation or maintenance of drainage works and the stripping and replacement of soils shall not be carried out except between the following times:

0800 hours to 1700 hours on Monday to Friday.

c. The servicing, maintenance and testing of static and mobile plant (in connection with the maintenance and servicing of said plan) shall only be carried out between the hours of:

0600 hours to 2200 hours on Monday to Friday

0600 hours to 1700 hours on Saturday

d. No operations, other than environmental monitoring and the operation of the silt press shall be carried out on Sundays, Bank or public holidays.”

4.3.2 In addition, the operation of the stone crushing or processing plant is limited to;

0700 hours to 1800 hours Monday to Friday

0700 hours to 1200 hours Saturday

4.3.3 Further limits are applied to the dispatch of HGVs from the site.

4.3.4 No change to the approved hours of operation is proposed.

4.4 Reserve, Sales & Duration of Operations

4.4.1 The Proposed Eastern Extraction Area contains an estimated mineral reserve of 1.5 million tonnes of high PSV sandstone.
4.4.2 Based on the current 300,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) rate of production, the reserve would therefore extend the life of Gilfach Quarry by approximately 5 years.
5. SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Sustainability has developed into a key consideration for CEMEX to ensure business continuity and success. CEMEX takes its responsibility towards sustainability very seriously, as demonstrated through its general approach to sustainability which comprises three main objectives. Within these objectives, CEMEX has identified seven priorities which are key to its approach to sustainability:

Enhance our Value Creation
- Lead to sustainable construction
- Low income housing and infrastructure

Manage our Footprint
- Enhance our Carbon Strategy
- Excellence in Environmental and Biodiversity Management

Engage our Stakeholders
- High Priority to Health and Safety
- Strengthen local communities
- Partnership with Key Stakeholders

5.1.2 CEMEX has in place a ‘sustainability wheel’ which provides more detailed UK strategic objectives:
5.1.3 The seven key areas ensure that CEMEX measures its impacts on the environment and local communities and takes action each month. Performance and actions are monitored monthly by the CEMEX’s UK board through key performance indicator evaluation and monitoring continual improvement objectives and targets relating to the priorities outlined above. CEMEX has management and improvement programmes in place for all areas identified in the sustainability wheel.

5.1.4 CEMEX has a number of other practices in place which demonstrate its commitment to sustainability, as detailed below.

5.2 ISO14001 Certification

5.2.1 CEMEX has attained ISO14001:2004 accreditation, which sets out the criteria for an environmental management system. This standard maps out a framework that the Company can follow to set up an effective environmental management system and provides assurance that environmental management is being measured and improved. CEMEX has attained this standard for a number of activities, including the production of aggregates, asphalt, ready mix concrete and mortar, and the production of building products and bagged aggregates.

5.3 Responsible Resourcing, BES 6001 Certification

5.3.1 CEMEX has one of the best portfolios of responsibly sourced construction products in the UK marketplace, certified to BRE’s BES6001 standard, which ensures ethical and responsible performance of products, including all elements of the supply chain. All of CEMEX’s main product lines are certified, including aggregates, cement, asphalt and ready mixed concrete. CEMEX’s score of ‘very good’ across all lines demonstrates the high levels of environmental, social, ethical and safety performance in its manufacturing sites and supply chains.

5.4 Biodiversity Management

5.4.1 CEMEX recognises that the nature of its extraction operations provides opportunity to significantly improve biodiversity and contribute towards UK and international biodiversity targets. As a result, CEMEX has entered into a partnership with the RSPB and is progressing an ambitious biodiversity strategy which contains biodiversity targets to 2020, which are reported on in its annual sustainability report.
5.5 Alternative Fuels

5.5.1 CEMEX is one of the sector leaders in the use of alternative fuels to replace fossil fuels in its cement kilns, which is the most energy intensive process in its organisation. These waste derived fuels range from Secondary Liquid Fuel, derived from difficult wastes from paint and solvent manufacturing, waste shredded tyres, and ‘Climafuel’ derived from the non-recyclable component of domestic and industrial waste. The use of these fuels saves hundreds of thousands of tonnes of landfill per annum, safely disposes of difficult wastes, while the biomass fraction reduces emissions and the carbon footprint of CEMEX’s cement and downstream products such as ready-mixed and precast concrete.

5.6 Carbon Emissions Reduction

5.6.1 CEMEX is able to concentrate its efforts on reducing carbon emissions through the whole supply chain and in particular in priority areas.

5.6.2 CEMEX is the first cement company in the world to carbon label its cement to the PAS 2050 carbon measurement standard. As production of cement accounts for the major source of carbon dioxide, CEMEX has primarily developed policies to reduce carbon emissions from its cement operations and has demonstrated transparent measurement and a commitment to reduce this footprint over a two year period. CEMEX has also achieved the Carbon Trust Standard certification, for all its Great Britain business units, again to demonstrate good management practices related to carbon and a commitment to reduce carbon emissions over a two year period across all business areas.

5.6.3 As referred to in earlier paragraphs, policies to reduce carbon emissions include replacing fossil fuels with alternative waste derived fuels containing biomass and marketing sustainable blended cements such as CEM II. Blended cements such as this contain higher proportions of certain materials such as limestone which reduce the embodied carbon of the final cement product.

5.6.4 Monitoring and reporting of carbon dioxide emissions are well established in the cement business, with systems meeting the strict requirements of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EUETS) and individual site Greenhouse Gas Permits as regulated by the Environment Agency. The EUETS systems are audited and verified on an annual basis by external accredited bodies.

5.6.5 CEMEX has monitoring and recording systems for the purpose of the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) to ensure systems are of a high standard that can withstand external auditing and verification.
5.6.6 CEMEX currently collects energy use from all its UK operations on a monthly basis by an internal monitoring system known as ‘Environmental Footprint Tracker’. This has enabled CEMEX to develop its own internal carbon modelling system, allowing for the provision of carbon data for specific projects and the assessment of alternative sources and transport scenarios.
6. BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSAL

6.1 High PSV Roadstone

6.1.1 Polished Stone Value (PSV) is a standard laboratory measurement of skid resistance. High PSV aggregates are vital to creating high skid resistant roads and are therefore sought after for roads which have a high accident rates and roads which involve regular braking, such as slip roads, approaches to junctions and roundabouts.

6.1.2 Most contracts specifying use of high PSV aggregate call for materials in the 58 to 65 PSV range, depending on the location. The UK Highways Agency defines the highest grade of high PSV aggregates as those with a value of 68 or more.

6.1.3 There are very few sources offering aggregates of 68+ PSV. Most of the quarries extracting sandstone aggregates with a PSV of more than 68 are located in South Wales, the west coast of England and Scotland.

6.1.4 Gilfach Quarry consistently records a PSV of 68+, and therefore represents one of the most important sources of high specification aggregate in the UK. As a result, stone from the quarry is distributed to markets not only in South Wales, but also extensively across England. As a result, the reserve of pennant sandstone at Gilfach is of national importance.

6.1.5 Whilst the Proposed Eastern Extension is relatively modest in scale, the mineral resource contained within the extension area is of national importance. The Proposed Eastern Extension will enable the extraction of this resource at a suitable stage in the quarry development, and will avoid its sterilisation.

6.2 Site Restoration and Enhancement

6.2.1 The approved restoration scheme (SS7599_CAW_D_200711_A_1) for Gilfach Quarry is contained within Appendix 2-4 of the ES, and involves the creation of a water body, species rich grassland, agricultural grassland with various quarry bench treatment, including bare rock, scree slopes and shrub regeneration.

6.2.2 The proposed restoration plan (Figure 2-14) takes forward the principles of the approved restoration plan but includes a number of additions. The proposed scheme involves the creation of two water bodies, instead of one, the southern water body being shallower with a gentle slope profile to create shallow margins to allow aquatic vegetation establishment. In addition, small ephemeral scrapes and hibernacula would be developed close to the main water bodies for nature conservation.
6.2.3 Woodland and shrub planting along the toe of the overburden slope would be developed to break up the landform, increasing the diversity of habitats within the restored quarry and compensating for the loss of trees within the Proposed Eastern Extension Area. Planting around the edge of the quarry would also be added to where necessary.

6.3 Direct & Indirect Employment

Direct Employment

6.3.1 There are currently 12 staff employed at the quarry. No change to the current levels of employment is anticipated as a result of the Proposal.

6.3.2 As a conservative estimate, the average salary of employees on site could be in the region of £25,000 per annum, with supervisors and project managers likely to earn over £35,000. Assuming 10 employees earn £25,000 and 2 employees earn £35,000; the operation of the quarry would lead to paid wages of £320,000 per annum. Over the circa 5 year life of the Proposed Eastern Extension Area, this could equate to £1,600,000 in wages.

Indirect and Induced Employment

6.3.3 The Proposal would maintain quarry output for a further 5 years which would prolong demand on suppliers and so on down the supply chain. This is described as an indirect employment.

6.3.4 In the case of the Proposal, indirect employment would include contract drivers who haul materials to and from the site, contractors associated with fitting, fabricating and repairs of machinery on site and contractors associated with restoration activities on site – fencing, landscaping etc.

6.3.5 Induced employment is another form of indirect employment which would be created during operational and restoration phases of the Proposal. Induced employment is sustained by wages and salaries received and spent by people directly employed by the site operator. This includes such categories as local garages supplying fuel and vehicle maintenance, food and drink outlets, supermarkets, schools etc.
Indirect Employment

6.3.6 The direct and indirect employment multiplier for mining and quarrying activities is 1.59. As explained above, the Proposal would prolong the employment of 12 on site staff, along with a further 7 full-time equivalent indirect jobs being maintained.

Induced Employment

6.3.7 The direct, indirect and induced employment multiplier for mining and quarrying activities is 1.85. The Proposal would prolong the direct employment of 12 on site staff, along with a further 7 full-time equivalent indirect jobs, and 3 full-time equivalent indirect jobs.

6.4 Business Rates

6.4.1 The Applicant currently pays business rates with regards to the various operations undertaken across Wales. The business rates would be calculated based on the rateable value of the property following the grant of planning permission. The business rates would be paid directly to Neath Port Talbot Borough Council and would be used to fund local services.

6.5 Aggregates Levy

6.5.1 In addition to business rates, the Applicant pays an aggregate levy of £2.00 for each tonne of aggregate extracted.

6.5.2 Based on previous and current extraction rates, it is estimated that the rate of extraction from the quarry would be around 300,000 tonnes per annum. This would therefore lead to the payment of approximately £600,000 in aggregate levy per annum to HM Revenue and Customs.

6.5.3 The Proposed Eastern Extension Area contains in the region of 1.5 million tonnes of aggregates. This would therefore lead to the payment of approximately £3,000,000 in aggregates levy during the working of this area.
7. THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This section of the Planning Statement identifies the Development Plan policies which are relevant to the Proposal. In accordance with Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, planning decisions are required to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Proposed development not in accordance with the relevant policies in the plan can be permitted where material considerations justify granting of planning permission.

7.1.2 This section therefore provides a review of the Development Plan policies that are relevant to the Proposal. National planning policy, which represents a material consideration, is considered in Section 8 below.

Statutory Development Plan

7.1.3 The statutory development plan currently comprises the adopted Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan 2016.

7.2 Adopted Neath Port Talbot LDP (2011 -2026) 2016

7.2.1 The Local Development Plan (LDP) contains a Vision for 2026, of how Neath Port Talbot is envisaged to change over the Plan period;

“The LDP Vision

The natural beauty and environmental importance of Neath Port Talbot’s waterfront and coastal corridor area will be protected and conserved while previously developed, underused and unsightly former industrial and commercial areas are redeveloped, transforming the function and appearance of the whole coastal belt.

Key sites at central Port Talbot, Baglan Bay, Coed Darcy and the Swansea University Science and Innovation Campus, coupled with the area’s good and improving transport and communication links will help deliver a competitive, knowledge-based economy. New and expanded settlements will provide sustainable housing and employment to meet the needs of local communities and the wider area.

The County Borough’s rural areas and valley communities will be supported and revitalised through encouragement of new and expanded economic activity through provision for sustainable small scale employment, including tourism initiatives
capitalising on existing successes such as the strategic tourism destinations at Margam Park and the Afan Valley.

Benefits from natural resources will be maximised and the cultural, historic and natural heritage will be supported and enhanced. Economic growth and community cohesion will be promoted by concentrating development in key areas to provide benefits to a wider hinterland.”

7.2.2 The LDP contains a four overarching strategic policies relating to Climate Change; Health; Sustainable Communities and Infrastructure. The LDP also contains Area and Topic based policies which seek to protect various environmental assets and resources, including the Countryside; Biodiversity and Geosecurity; the Built and Historic Environment; Transport and Access etc. Of particular relevance to the determination of mineral development proposals is Strategic Policy SP17: Minerals;

“Strategic Policy SP 17: Minerals

A proportionate contribution to meeting national, regional and local demand for a continuous supply of minerals will be made while balancing the impact of development on the environment and communities.

This will be achieved by:

1. Maintaining a minimum supply of aggregate throughout the Plan period;

2. Safeguarding identified resources of coal, hard rock and sand and gravel;

3. Promoting the efficient use of aggregates and encouraging the maximum use of alternative materials before the use of raw aggregate;

4. Ensuring that mineral development will not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and amenity of local residents;

5. Minimising the conflict between sensitive land uses and mineral operations by identifying buffer zones around mineral sites and protection zones around settlements”

7.2.3 Strategic Policy SP17 is supported by four subsidiary policies which relate to Mineral Safeguarding; Surface Coal Operations; Development in Mineral Buffer Zones and the Criteria for the Assessment of Mineral Development.

7.2.4 The Proposed Eastern Extension Area is covered by Policy M1 Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas. The supporting text to Policy M1 (Para 5.3.66) of the LDP states that “as mineral resources are finite, it is important that access to mineral deposits which society may need in the future is safeguarded”. Policy M1 relates to the
development of non-mineral related development within mineral safeguarding areas and states;

“Development proposals within mineral safeguarding areas will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

1. The mineral concerned is no longer of any value or potential value; or

2. The mineral can be extracted satisfactorily prior to the development taking place; or

3. In the case of temporary development, it can be implemented and the site restored within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed; or

4. There is an overriding need for the development; or

5. The scale and location of the development would have no significant impact on the possible working of the resource.”

7.2.5 Policy M3 relates to non-mineral development located within mineral buffer zones. The supporting text states that the primary aim of the buffer zone is to protect the permitted or proposed mineral working from new sensitive uses such as residential developments, hospitals and schools, by establishing a separation distance between these potentially conflicting land uses. Within the buffer zone, any new development that would prejudice the future extraction of permitted reserves or the operation of the site will be resisted. Policy M3 states;

“Development proposals within buffer zones will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

1. The mineral resource will not be sterilised; and

2. The proposals will not be adversely affected by mineral operations.”

7.2.6 Policy M4 sets out a number of criteria for consideration when determining mineral planning applications and states;

“Policy M4 Criteria for the Assessment of Mineral Development

Proposals for mineral extraction and associated development will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:

1. The existence of the mineral has been investigated and proven;

2. An assessment has been made that demonstrates that it would not be feasible to supply the mineral from secondary sources;
3. It is demonstrated that measures can be taken to reduce, and where possible avoid, damage or disturbance to the environment and the amenity of neighbouring land uses or individual properties to acceptable levels;

4. It can be demonstrated that the development would not compromise highway safety;

5. Appropriate, acceptable proposals are submitted for:

   (a) The effective and sustainable extraction of the mineral;

   (b) The duration, method and phasing of operations;

   (c) The management of mineral waste;

   (d) Restoration; and

   (e) Beneficial after-use and after care.”

7.2.7 In addition to the planning policy relating specifically to minerals development, the LDP contains a number of other policies which are relevant to the determination of the planning applications. These are listed below and summarised within Section 9.

- Strategic Policy SP1 – Climate Change
- Strategic Policy SP2 – Health
- Strategic Policy SP3 – Sustainable Communities
  - Policy SC1 – Settlement Limits
- Strategic Policy SP14 – The Countryside and the Undeveloped Coast
- Strategic Policy SP15 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
  - Policy EN6 Important Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites
  - Policy EN7 Important Natural Features
- Strategic Policy SP16 Environmental Protection
  - Policy EN8 – Pollution and Land Stability
- Strategic Policy SP17 – Minerals
  - Policy M1
  - Policy M3 Development in Mineral Buffer Zones
  - Policy M4 Criteria for the Assessment of Mineral Development
- Strategic Policy SP21 Built Environment and Historic Heritage
8. MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This section seeks to identify the National planning policy which are relevant to the Proposal together with any other policy and/or guidance documents which may be material to the consideration of the Proposal which do not form part of the Development Plan.

8.2 National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales – Edition 10, December 2018

8.2.1 PPW notes that the minerals sector essential to the economy. Construction related minerals and mineral products are particularly important in Wales and are essential for housing and infrastructure, such as schools, roads, railways, airports and flood defences and a steady and adequate supply of materials is necessary. PPW goes on to note that Mineral working is different from other forms of development in that:

- extraction can only take place where the mineral is found to occur;
- it is transitional and cannot be regarded as a permanent land use even though operations may occur over a long period of time; and
- when operations cease land needs to be reclaimed to a high standard and to a beneficial and sustainable after-use so as to avoid dereliction and to bring discernible benefits to communities and/or wildlife.

8.2.2 PPW states that collaboration is needed to strategically plant for minerals needs, and they raise ‘larger than local’ issues need to be addressed by planning authorities with the involvement of other agencies and communities to ensure sustainable outcomes are delivered across Wales.

8.2.3 PPW notes that development plans should set out clearly the criteria that will be applied to minerals proposals to ensure that they do not have an unacceptably adverse impact on the environment and the amenity of nearby residents. Issues that must be addressed include:

- access and traffic generation including the routes to be used for minerals transportation;
- noise, in terms of limits, type and locations;
- the control of air pollution namely dust, smoke and fumes;
• disposal of mineral waste;
• blasting controls;
• land drainage, impact on groundwater resources and the prevention of pollution of water supplies;
• visual intrusion and general landscaping;
• impact on sites of nature conservation, geodiversity and historic assets;
• land instability;
• promotion of the use and treatment of unstable, derelict or contaminated land;
• cumulative impact; and
• restoration, aftercare and after-use.

8.2.4 The presence of an existing quarry should be a material consideration when considering a proposal for an extension. There may be benefits to extending a site in terms of shared infrastructure, for instance, as opposed to working a new greenfield site.

8.2.5 PPW advocates the use to buffer zones to provide areas of protection around permitted and proposed mineral workings where new development which would be sensitive to adverse impact, including residential areas, hospitals and schools, should be resisted.

8.2.6 To avoid conflict between mineral workings and other land uses buffer zones should be identified in development plans around existing or proposed minerals sites. The maximum extent of the buffer zone would depend on a number of factors: the size, type and location of workings, the topography of the surrounding area, existing and anticipated levels of noise and dust, current and predicted vibration from blasting operations and availability of mitigation measures.

8.2.7 Further guidance on the factors that should be taken into account when defining buffer zones for particular minerals is provided in the MTANs. Whilst the primary purpose of buffer zones is to limit the impact of mineral working their wider beneficial role as part of green infrastructure provision and protecting and enhancing biodiversity should be explored.

8.2.8 PPW notes that LPA’s must refer applications to the Welsh Ministers for development consisting of or including the winning and working of minerals on new sites or extensions to existing sites which are not in accordance with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area.
Minerals Technical Advice Note 1: Aggregates (MTAN1)

8.2.9 MTAN1, issued in March 2004, adopts the following five principles for sustainable minerals planning;

a) To provide positively for the working of mineral resources to meet societies needs;

b) To protect areas of importance to the natural and built heritage from inappropriate mineral development;

c) To reduce the impact of mineral extraction;

d) To achieve a high standard of restoration;

e) To encourage the efficient use of minerals by promoting the appropriate use of high-quality materials.

8.2.10 Further requirements contained within MTAN1 are summarised within Section 9 below.
9. PLANNING POLICY ASSESSMENT

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Whilst the Development Plan always has to be read as a whole, it follows that the greatest weight should be attributed to bespoke sections and policies which are designed to address a specific development type. In this case, the dominant policies for consideration are:

- Strategic Policy SP 17: Minerals
- Policy M4 Criteria for the Assessment of Mineral Development

9.1.2 Table 9-1 arranges the planning policies which are relevant to the determination of the planning applications into a number of thematic policy topics, some of which link with the topics of the accompanying Environmental Statement.

Table 9-1 – Thematic Policy Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Topic</th>
<th>Neath Port Talbot LDP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need</td>
<td>Policy SP17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic &amp; Socio-Economic Benefit</td>
<td>Policy SP11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>Policy SP1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Sustainable Communities</td>
<td>Policy SP2, Policy SP3, Policy SC1, Policy SP17, Policy M4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Landscape &amp; Visual</td>
<td>Policy SP14, Policy SP17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecology &amp; Biodiversity</td>
<td>Policy SP15, Policy EN7, Policy SP17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Air Quality &amp; Dust</td>
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<td>Vibration</td>
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<td>Traffic &amp; Transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restoration, Afteruse and Aftercare</td>
<td>Policy M4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
9.1.3 The following sections assess the Proposal against the policy requirements under the thematic policy topics. Consideration of the specific requirements of Policy M4 is set out within Section 9.16 below.

9.2 Need

9.2.1 PPW notes that the economic contribution of minerals in the provision of economic infrastructure must be recognised. The minerals industry is recognised as being essential to the economy. Section 5.14 of PPW states that society needs, and will continue to need for the foreseeable future, a wide range of minerals. Minerals are the principal constituents of most construction products, many pharmaceutical, chemical, agricultural, automotive, metallurgical, electronics, aerospace, plastics ceramic and paper products. Construction related minerals and mineral products are particularly important in Wales and are essential for housing and infrastructure, such as schools, roads, railways, airports and flood defences and a steady and adequate supply of materials is necessary.

9.2.2 A land-bank is a stock of planning permissions for aggregate minerals and provides for continuity of production in spite of fluctuations in demand. For the purposes of commercial stability, the aggregates industry requires a proven and viable landbank. A minimum ten-year landbank of crushed rock should be maintained during the entire plan period of each development plan. MTAN1 states that where sufficient landbanks already exist, further extensions to existing sites or new extraction sites may be justified where, for example, supply of an aggregate of a particular specification is clearly demonstrated.

9.2.3 Paragraph 42 of MTAN goes on to state that certain aggregates have limited availability geologically, such as high-quality aggregates for road construction that have the ability to provide particular levels of surface skidding resistance and durability. These are relatively plentiful in Wales but unavailable in some parts of the UK. The Pennant Sandstone outcrop in South Wales has been identified as one of the main prospects for development and the UK importance of the resource should be recognised by relevant planning authorities. Such material is a special case that may well justify transportation over long distances because of the national need for the provision of the specific type of material with limited availability.
9.2.4 Policy SP17 of the NPT LDP states that a minimum supply of aggregate shall be maintained throughout the plan period. The supporting text notes that minerals are a natural and finite resource and are fundamental to ensuring the nation’s prosperity and quality of life. The LDP strategy seeks to regulate the exploitation of mineral resources in order to make a proportionate contribution to meeting the national, regional and local demand for minerals.

9.2.5 The LDP notes that in regard to maintaining a supply of crushed rock throughout the Plan period, this is met through the two existing quarries at Gilfach (Neath) and Cwm Nant Lleici (Pontardawe), both of which are identified on the Proposals Map. At present, the LDP states that the total landbank figure for Neath Port Talbot is more than sufficient to satisfy the Authority’s own requirements in accordance with the Regional Technical Statement (RTS).

9.2.6 The national and local planning policy for the Application Site identifies the essential importance of minerals to society and the local economy. As discussed above, Gilfach Quarry works a deposit of aggregate with a very high polished stone value (PSV) which is resistant to skidding and is used in road construction projects which will involve a large amount of braking in order to reduce skidding and therefore accidents. For this reason, the mineral is highly sought after within road construction projects. Mineral extracted from Gilfach Quarry is used across Wales and southern England and is therefore a resource of National importance.

9.2.7 It is acknowledged that quarry benefits from a reasonable consented reserve of mineral which will allow quarrying to progress for a number of years. However, economically and environmentally viable deposits of very high PSV aggregate within the UK are relatively scarce and are geographically limited to small areas of the country, in South Wales, the north west coast of England and areas of Scotland.

9.2.8 The currently approved working scheme for Gilfach Quarry, as contained on Drawing 11-0085-R-SLH-001, involves the removal of large quantities of overburden and interburden in order to access the permitted mineral reserve contained within the Approved Northern Extension Area. The approved scheme currently involves the placement of this material into the quarry void, against the eastern quarry face to achieve the approved restoration levels. Eventually, as workings progress through the Approved Northern Extension, the quantities of overburden placed against the eastern quarry face could affect the financial viability of the Proposed Eastern Extension.

9.2.9 The placement of overburden against the eastern quarry face has commenced as workings have progressed through Phase 1 of the Approved Northern Extension Area.
The quantities of overburden are not yet sufficient to affect the economic viability of the Approved Eastern Extension. The reserve contained within the Proposed Eastern Extension Area could however be effectively sterilised by the cost associated with the removal of overburden against the eastern face of the quarry if these operations continue.

9.2.10 In the interests of proper planning of the quarry, and in order to avoid the eventual sterilisation of the mineral deposit within the Proposed Eastern Extension Area, permission is therefore sought for its extraction. The accompanying Environmental Statement illustrates that the Proposed Eastern Extension would be environmentally acceptable, and could be undertaken within existing acceptable limits on noise, dust and vibration. As a result a justification, as required by MTAN1, therefore exists.

9.3 Economic and Socio-Economic

9.3.1 PPW notes that it is essential to the economic health of the country that the construction industry is provided with an adequate supply of minerals it needs. The importance to the UK of aggregates should be taken into account when planning applications are being considered together with other policies in this guidance and relevant Minerals Technical Advice Notes (MTANs) and Technical Advice Notes (TANs).

9.3.2 The NPT LDP notes that the proportion of people in Neath Port Talbot who are economically inactive is higher than the average across Wales and the population over 16 have lower qualifications than the Welsh average. Significantly more people travel out of the County Borough to access work than those who travel inwards. Employment in the County Borough has a relatively high proportion of jobs in the manufacturing and public sectors and a relatively low proportion in the service sector. The employment base is predominantly located along the coastal corridor where Tata Steel and the Council are the largest employers.

9.3.3 There are a number of Economic Strategies for the area. The NPT LDP refers to the Swansea Bay City Region Economic Regeneration Strategy (2013-2030) and the Economic Growth Strategy for South West Wales (2013 - 2030). These strategies aim to improve job creation and inward investment in order to grow the region's economy. Strategic Policy 11 states that existing employment uses will be supported and safeguarded and new and expanding employment developments will be encouraged.

9.3.4 Section 6 of this Planning Statement summarises the economic and socio-economic benefits of the Proposal, including the job retention that this Proposal offers. These
benefits are considered to significantly outweigh any potential impact on the environment and local communities.

9.4 Climate Change

9.4.1 PPW identifies climate change is a global challenge, with impacts felt at the local level presenting a significant risk to people, property, infrastructure and natural resources. PPW states that there is a need to plan for these impacts, reducing the vulnerability of our natural resources and build an environment which can adapt to climate change. The planning system plays a significant role in managing this risk.

9.4.2 Policy SP1 of the NPT LDP identifies a number of measures to be implemented to address the causes and consequences of climate change. These measures include the encouragement of freight (sea and rail) use, instead of haulage by road. Policy SP1 also states that the likely increased flood risk will require to be taken into account and addressed by ensuring that there is greater resilience by avoiding development on land that is at risk from flooding in the first instance in accordance with the sequential approach set out in national guidance or in locations that could increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. In addition, the fragmentation of habitats will require to be minimised and opportunities made for habitat and species change and migration where possible.

9.4.3 Section 5 of this Planning Statement sets out a number of initiatives CEMEX implement to ensure that the business is maximises sustainability and minimises green house gas emissions and contribution to climate change.

9.4.4 Gilfach Quarry currently utilises local railway infrastructure for the haulage of mineral, and this would continue as the Proposed Eastern Extension Area is worked. Approximately 35,000 tonnes per annum of mineral is transported from the quarry to the Neath Abbey Depot railhead, located 5 km to the south of the Quarry. From here, the mineral is transported by rail to various market areas within England and Wales, reducing ‘mineral miles’ on the local road network.

9.4.5 The quarry is not located within an area which is at risk of flooding. Chapter 8 of the ES concludes that there will be no increased flood risk from the Application Site, during operation or following restoration, to neighbouring receptors and a drainage strategy has (Appendix 8-3 of the ES) been developed to ensure that there is no increased risk to or from the Application Site.
9.5 Health & Sustainable Communities

9.5.1 NPT LDP notes that there are some significant health issues affecting the local population. The LDP identifies the link between Health and a range of other policy topics covered by the LDP including housing allocations, accessibility, employment and the environment. Policy SP2 identifies a number of measures to be taken in relation to the high levels of poor long-term health and sickness in the area, including the encouragement of active travel and the provision of new employment opportunities. Linked to this, Policy SP3 states that delivery of sustainable, healthy and cohesive communities and the conservation of the countryside will be promoted by defining sustainable communities and locations for development, defining settlement limits and resisting inappropriate development outside settlement limits.

9.5.2 Policy SC1 states that outside settlement limits, development will only be permitted under certain circumstances, one of which is when the development is associated with minerals development. Policy SP17 notes that conflict between sensitive land uses and mineral operations will be minimised by identifying buffer zones around mineral sites and protection zones around settlements. Policy M4 states that it must be demonstrated that measures can be taken to reduce, and where possible avoid, damage or disturbance to the amenity of neighbouring landuses or individual properties to acceptable levels.

9.5.3 The accompanying ES provides a detailed assessment of the Proposals potential impact on local amenity through the generation of noise, dust and vibration, and all assesses the potential impact on air quality and water quality. The ES identifies no significant adverse impacts in this regard and it is therefore concluded that the Proposal would not therefore lead to adverse effect on health.

9.5.4 Furthermore, the Proposal will maintain local employment and provide a significant contribution to the local and regional economy for the reasons set out in Section 6 above, which has been linked by the LDP to health and sustainable communities.

9.6 Landscape & Visual

9.6.1 PPW states that the character and special qualities of all our places and landscapes, both urban and rural, can provide a strong sense of place, inspiration and belonging, and contribute to the distinctive cultural identity of Wales. PPW identifies LANDMAP as an important resource which provides a methodology and monitoring baseline for the landscapes in Wales.
Policy SP14 of the NPT LDP aims to conserve the County Borough's countryside, landscapes and undeveloped coast, support rural enterprise including tourism and leisure activities and concentrate development in sustainable locations. Policy SP17 notes that minerals development should not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and the amenity of local residents.

Chapter 6 of the accompanying ES assesses the Proposals potential landscape and visual impacts. In summary, the visibility of the Application Site is well contained within the well wooded valley landscape and primarily comprises to the upper most parts of the eastern quarry faces. Visibility is more open from the immediate northern and eastern vicinity of the Application Site and high ground to the west of the Application Site on the upper slopes of Mynydd Drumau.

Permanent mitigation tree planting would be established along the Proposed Eastern Extension Area boundary during the initial operations, assimilating the site better within the surrounding landscape.

In comparison to the Approved Northern Extension scheme, operational landscape effects as a result of the Proposal would be limited in both scale and extent. No significant operational effects on landscape fabric or landscape character are predicted.

On completion of the works the Application Site would be restored in line with the proposed restoration scheme. The proposed restoration scheme (Figure 2-14) also includes supplementary oak woodland shrub and tree planting and nature conservation enhancements, bringing permanent beneficial landscape impacts. The Proposal would assimilate well with the surrounding landscape, and as a result no significant residual effects on landscape fabric or landscape character are predicted.

The composition and character of views during the operations and on restoration would be substantially unaltered from the approved scheme. Accounting for the slight increase in operational duration in the short to medium term, there would be no significant visual effects arising from the proposed operations or restoration.

Having regard to the findings of the LVIA it is considered that that the Proposal complies with the Development Plan policy which seeks to protect and enhance the landscape and visual amenity of the area.

**Ecology & Biodiversity**

PPW notes that the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (Section 6 Duty). This duty applies to public authorities in the exercise of their functions in relation to Wales and will help
maximise contributions to achieving the well-being goals. The Nature Recovery Action Plan supports this legislative requirement to reverse the decline in biodiversity, address the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by putting nature at the heart of decision-making and increasing the resilience of ecosystems by taking specific action focused around the 6 objectives for habitats and species. The planning system has a key role to play in helping to reverse the decline in biodiversity and increasing the resilience of ecosystems, at various scales, by ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to both protect against loss and to secure enhancement.

9.7.2 PPW explains the protection hierarchy for international, national and locally protected habitats and identifies potential impacts on protected species as a material planning consideration.

9.7.3 Policy SP15 states that important habitats, species and sites of geological importance will be protected, conserved, enhanced and managed. Policy EN6 seeks to conserve and where possible enhance important biodiversity and geodiversity sites, and support the local Biodiversity Action Plan. Policy EN7 states that proposals that would adversely affect ecologically or visually important natural features such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows / field boundaries, watercourses or ponds will only be permitted where; 1) Full account has been taken of the relevant features in the design of the development, with measures put in place to ensure that they are retained and protected wherever possible; or 2) The biodiversity value and role of the relevant feature has been taken into account and where removal is unavoidable, mitigation measures are agreed. Policy SP17 notes that minerals development should not have an unacceptable impact on the environment.

9.7.4 A comprehensive programme of ecological survey work has been undertaken of the Application Site, and Proposed Eastern Extension Area, the scope of which was agreed in consultation with the County Ecologist. The findings of these surveys and an assessment of the Proposals impact on ecological receptors is contained within Chapter 7 and its associated appendices of the accompanying ES.

9.7.5 In terms of species surveys, these involved an Ecological Appraisal (including badger survey); Bat Roost Assessment and Survey of Trees; Reptile Survey; and Peregrine Falcon survey. In addition, impact on nearby designated sites and local habitats is assessed.

9.7.6 A likely significant effect on habitats identified within the ES involves the removal of 0.6ha of upland oak woodland, which is assessed as being of local value. This is the only significant adverse effect identified on ecological receptors, and would be a
medium term, reversible effect. The ES notes that the woodland to be lost is in a poor condition and extensive high-quality foraging habitat for bat and bird species exists to the east and south of the woodland to be lost. Furthermore, the removal of woodland will not result in the fragmentation of any habitats due to the retention of a strip of woodland along the eastern boundary and the lack of any woodland connective to the north of the Application Site.

9.7.7 Upon restoration there would be creation of areas of new semi-natural habitats including broadleaf oak woodland, wetland, reed bed, ephemeral scrapes and species rich grassland, as shown on the proposed restoration plan (Figure 2-14). The scale of planting proposed within the restoration plan (1.7ha) is approximately 3 times the scale of planting to be lost as a result of the Proposal, and the impact is assessed by the ES as a long term significant beneficial effect.

9.7.8 No other significant adverse impacts are predicted as a result of the Proposal on any habitat or species.

9.7.9 The restoration of the quarry offers an excellent opportunity to enhance the nature conservation interest of the quarry site. Significant beneficial effects are predicted as a result of the proposed restoration scheme on breeding birds, with other non-significant beneficial effects predicted on bats and peregrine falcon.

9.7.10 Having regard to the findings of the ES, it is therefore considered that the restoration and enhancement proposals will offset any adverse impacts on the natural environment and that the Proposal complies with the aforementioned ecology and biodiversity policies contained within the Development Plan and National Planning Policy.

9.8 **Water Environment**

9.8.1 PPW notes that development which is poorly designed or badly located can exacerbate problems associated with resource depletion, exposure to surface water flooding and diffuse pollution. The planning system should; protect and improve water resources by promoting and encouraging increased efficiency and demand management of water as part of new developments, particularly in those areas where water resources may be under pressure or may not be available; ensure that the infrastructure on which communities and businesses depend is adequate to accommodate proposed development so as to minimise risk to human health and the environment and prevent pollution at source; ensure sustainable drainage systems are an integral part of design approaches for new development; and ensure the protection of the quantity and quality
of surface and ground water supplies is taken into account as part of development proposals.

9.8.2 MTAN1 states that all surface mineral workings have the potential to affect the water environment and exacerbate flooding in one way or another. Sometimes working laterally rather than increasing depth may be a more acceptable alternative than deepening the quarry and should be considered if appropriate to the circumstances.

9.8.3 Policy SP16 of the NPT LDP states that water quality, and the environment generally, will be protected and where feasible improved by ensuring proposals have no significant adverse effects on water and do not significantly increase pollution, giving preference to brownfield sites over greenfield sites where appropriate and ensuring the number of people exposed to significant levels of pollution. Policy EN8 states that proposals which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and/or local amenity or would expose people to unacceptable risk due to a number of issues including water (including ground water) pollution will not be permitted. Policy SP17 notes that minerals development should not have an unacceptable impact on the environment.

9.8.4 Chapter 8 of the accompanying ES assesses the potential hydrogeological and hydrological impacts associated with the Proposal. It also includes an assessment of flood risk both to and from the Application Site.

9.8.5 The only potentially significant impact on the water environment as a result of the Proposal is on water quality as a result of fuel or chemical spillage. However, a fuel or chemical spill is considered unlikely and mitigation is set out in the ES, should one occur. This mitigation would involve standard water quality control measures, including:

- the retention of the spillage within the active quarry void for a sufficient length of time to allow it to be collected using oil-absorbent materials.
- pumping of any contaminated water from the quarry void would cease during this time.
- facilities for the storage of soils, fuels or chemicals will be sited on an impervious base and surrounded by impervious bund walls.
- for fuels or chemicals, the volume of the bunded compound will be greater than the tank capacity.

9.8.6 There is no fluvial flood risk to the Application Site. However, parts of the Application Site are in locations with a medium to high risk of pluvial flooding (events that are caused by extreme rainfall) and there is also a risk of groundwater flooding. A drainage
strategy for the Application Site is presented in Appendix 8-3 of the ES, which will ensure that there will be no increased flood risk from the Application Site, during operation or following restoration, to neighbouring receptors.

9.8.7 Having regard to the assessment and conclusions of Chapter 8 of the ES, it is therefore considered that the Proposal complies with the aforementioned water environment policies contained within the Development Plan and National Planning Policy.

9.9 Noise

9.9.1 MTAN1 states that where aggregates extraction and related operations occur close to areas that are sensitive to noise, particularly residential areas, noise impact must be minimised to acceptable levels. The effects of noise should be fully considered in formulating future proposals for aggregates extraction and noise emissions should be monitored throughout the permitted mineral activity. Paragraph 88 of MTAN1 states that;

“noise limits should relate to the background noise levels subject to a maximum daytime noise limit of 55 dB(A) where background noise levels exceed 45 dB(A). 55 dB(A) is the lower limit of the daytime noise levels where serious annoyance is caused. Where background noise is less than 45 dB(A), noise limits should be defined as background noise levels plus 10 dB(A).”

9.9.2 Policy EN8 states that proposals which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and/or local amenity or would expose people to unacceptable risk due to a number of issues including noise pollution will not be permitted. Policy SP17 notes that minerals development should not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and the amenity of local residents. Policy M4 states that proposals for mineral extraction and associated development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that measures can be taken to reduce, and where possible avoid, damage or disturbance to the environment and the amenity of neighbouring land uses or individual properties to acceptable levels.

9.9.3 Chapter 9 of the ES assesses the potential noise impact of the Proposal on the closest sensitive receptors, all of which are residential dwellings.

9.9.4 Cadna ‘A’ environmental noise prediction software was used to model the noise emanating from the Proposal. These predicted noise levels have been assessed against the Approved Noise Action Plan which is currently in place for the quarry (Appendix 9-1 of ES). A summary of this assessment is contained within Table 9-2 below;
### Table 9-2: Summary of Worst-case Predicted Noise Levels during Normal Operations within Proposed Eastern Extension Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Calculated Worst-Case Site Noise Level $L_{A_{eq},1h}$ free-field dB</th>
<th>Noise Action Plan Limit $L_{A_{eq},1h}$ free-field dB</th>
<th>Difference between Site Noise and NAP Limits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gilfach House</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilfach Farm</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaen Honddan Farm</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cefnfaes Farm</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cefn Faes Uchaf Farm</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leiros</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.9.5 The noise assessment has concluded that the Proposed Eastern Extension Area can be worked within the currently approved noise limits applied to the quarry through the approved Noise Action Plan, with no need to amend the approved limits. The predicted worst-case levels are also compliant with the recommendations contained within MTAN1.

9.9.6 Having regards to the assessment contained within Chapter 9 of the ES, and the predicted levels generated by the Proposal, no significant adverse noise impacts have therefore been identified. The Proposal therefore adheres to the Development Plan policies which protect noise sensitive properties.

### 9.10 Air Quality & Dust

9.10.1 MTAN1 states that research has indicated that people living close to mineral workings consider dust to be the main impact of mineral extraction and any processing operations, followed by traffic, and noise and vibration from blasting. Dust is a generic term used to describe particulate matter which may be found resting on the ground or other surfaces, but is capable of becoming airborne to disperse in the atmosphere before returning to the surface.

9.10.2 Policy EN8 states that proposals which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and/or local amenity or would expose people to unacceptable risk due to a number of issues including air pollution will not be permitted. Policy SP17 notes that minerals development should not have an unacceptable impact
on the environment and the amenity of local residents. Policy M4 states that proposals for mineral extraction and associated development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that measures can be taken to reduce, and where possible avoid, damage or disturbance to the environment and the amenity of neighbouring land uses or individual properties to acceptable levels.

9.10.3 Chapter 10 of the ES contains an assessment of the Proposals potential impact on air quality and through the generation of dust. The assessment notes that an adverse dust event will only occur if the necessary conditions are present. It is necessary to have a fine material available that can be picked up, carried and then deposited by the wind. Such materials are more readily available if dry and physically disturbed. Thus not all site operations are dusty because of the lack of physical disturbance.

9.10.4 In consideration of dust disamenity, the assessment concludes that potentially moderate adverse effects could occur at Cefnfaes Farm and Gilfach Farm, with impacts at the remaining properties being either slight or negligible.

9.10.5 With regards to Gilfach Farm, the Proposed Eastern Extension Area is located 500m from the property, and as a result of this separation distance the proposed Eastern Extension alone would therefore give rise to a low risk of dust effects. The potentially moderate adverse effects identified above are therefore attributable to the approved, ongoing operations largely associated with the processing and transportation of mineral.

9.10.6 With regards to Cefnfaes Farm, past quarrying operations at Gilfach Quarry have extended to approximately 150m from the property. The Proposed Eastern Extension is located at least 150m from the farm, with the majority of the Proposed Eastern Extension Area being 200m+ from the farm. The potentially moderate adverse effect would therefore be over a short duration whilst the closest extraction operations are taking place.

9.10.7 Chapter 10 also assesses the impact on PM$_{10}$ and PM$_{2.5}$ dust levels from the site. The assessment concludes that Air Quality Objectives would not be exceeded.

9.10.8 Therefore, through the implementation of industry standard mitigation measures it is considered that the Proposal would not create levels of dust which would unacceptably affect the amenity of the closest residential receptors. The Proposal therefore adheres to the policies of the Development Plan.
9.11 Vibration

9.11.1 MTAN1 notes that the vibration levels at which complaints are made varies significantly and that long established sites with a good relationship with neighbouring communities are far less likely to attract complaints from local residents. Vibration levels from production blasting measured at residential properties rarely, if ever, approach the levels necessary to cause even cosmetic damage but have the potential to have an impact on the amenity of the surrounding area.

9.11.2 MTAN1 recommends the following vibration limits;

“ground vibration as a result of blasting operations should not exceed a peak particle velocity of 6 mms-1ppv in 95% of all blasts measured over any 6 month period, and no individual blast should exceed a peak particle velocity of 10 mms-1ppv”

9.11.3 Policy SP17 notes that minerals development should not have an unacceptable impact on the environment and the amenity of local residents. Policy M4 states that proposals for mineral extraction and associated development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that measures can be taken to reduce, and where possible avoid, damage or disturbance to the environment and the amenity of neighbouring land uses or individual properties to acceptable levels.

9.11.4 The maximum permitted blast induced vibration levels for Gilfach Quarry are more stringent than the MTAN1 recommended limits, and are contained within planning conditions 34 and 33 of planning permissions P2010/0655 and P2010/0658, respectively, which state that;

“Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority blasting shall be designed so that the ground vibration measured as peak particle velocity in any one of three orthogonal planes shall not exceed 8mm per second at any residential or similar vibration sensitive property. However, within the design limit, every effort shall be made to ensure that the ground vibration for at least 95% of all blasts in any 20 week period shall not exceed a ppv of 6mm per second.”

9.11.5 The vibration assessment contained within Chapter 11 of the ES concludes that mitigation will require to be employed for blasting within the Proposed Eastern Extension to ensure blast vibration does not exceed the current vibration limits at Cefnfaes Farm. Blast induced vibration levels as a result of the Proposed Eastern Extension at all other vibration sensitive properties would be compliant with the approved limits, and those recommended by MTAN1.
9.11.6 It is the instantaneous explosive charge that has the greatest effect in reducing received vibration levels. Therefore, if the explosive charge is reduced there will be a corresponding lowering of received vibration level.

9.11.7 One method of achieving such an explosive charge reduction is to deck the explosives within a borehole. This technique splits the explosive column into two, or more, discrete charges, with inert stemming material between the explosives. Each of the charges within any particular borehole is initiated at a different time and these times are different from the initiation times of charges in the remainder of the boreholes in the blast panel.

9.11.8 Based on the regression line (Appendix 11-1 of the ES), blasting within 150m of a property (the closest approach of the Proposed Eastern Extension to Cefnfaes Farm) can be undertaken to comply with $6\text{mms}^{-1}$ at a 95% confidence level by limiting the maximum instantaneous charge (MIC) to 49kg or below (see Table 11-5b of the ES). As the separation distance increases, the MIC can increase whilst still complying with the vibration limits. At 200m, the MIC can increase to 87kg at this confidence level.

9.11.9 However, taking the more conservative limit as currently contained within the extant planning permissions for the quarry, in order to comply with $8\text{mms}^{-1}$ at a 99.9% confidence level, the MIC for blasting within 150m of Cefnfaes Farm would require to be reduced to 29kg or below (see Table 11-5a of the ES). This could be increased to 52kg at a separation distance of 200m.

9.11.10 Without the need for to mitigate blast induced vibration, the quarry would generally utilise an MIC of 164kg. Blasting within the Proposed Eastern Extension Area can however be designed to ensure vibration levels at the closest residential properties are within the planning condition limits, through the use of double and triple decking to reduce the MIC.

9.11.11 However, the planning condition limits currently applied to the extant planning permissions for the quarry are not consistent with current national planning policy advice contained within MTAN1, and as it stands require the use of a greater level of mitigation than that necessary to comply with the MTAN1 recommended limits.

9.11.12 It is therefore considered that the planning authority should, when determining the planning applications, seek to bring the conditions used to limit blast vibration into line with national planning guidance contained within MTAN1, as quoted in paragraph 9.11.2 above.

9.11.13 Notwithstanding this, it has been demonstrated within the accompanying ES that blasting can be controlled through appropriate blast design in order to comply with MTAN1 limits, or the more stringent limits currently applied to operations at Gilfach
Quarry. As a result, the Proposal is considered to comply with the Development Plan policy relating to blast vibration, and the protection of residential amenity.

9.12 Traffic & Transport

9.12.1 PPW states that whilst rail and waterway are the preferred options for transporting bulky minerals, if road transport is the only means available to serve new mineral development, the capacity of the road network to deal safely with the movement of minerals and related products is a relevant consideration. MTAN1 supports the ‘proximity principle’ for minerals to minimise road transportation of aggregates. This can only be achieved either by shifting transportation from road to rail or water, or by reducing distance to markets through providing local sources of supply. For most quarries in Wales, road transport is the only option, and therefore long-distance movements of aggregates must be reduced if this objective is to be achieved.

9.12.2 Policy M4 of the LDP states that mineral development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the development would not compromise highway safety.

9.12.3 As discussed above, Gilfach Quarry currently utilises local railway infrastructure for the haulage of mineral, and this would continue as the Proposed Eastern Extension Area is worked. Approximately 35,000 tonnes per annum of mineral is transported from the quarry to the Neath Abbey depot, to the south of the site. From here, the mineral is transported by rail to various market areas within England and Wales, reducing ‘mineral miles’ on the local road network.

9.12.4 The traffic movements and distribution patterns are well established at Gilfach Quarry, and the proposed extension development will simply result in a continuation of those movements and distributions for a longer period. It would not result in additional highway movements over and above the current level, and there will not be an increase in output above the currently imposed limit of 500,000 tonnes per annum.

9.12.5 The potential impact of the continued quarrying operation at a rate of up to 500,000 tonnes per annum was assessed within the 2010 ES. The assessment found that the proposal to extend the physical area of extraction will result in prolonging the life of this quarry. Nevertheless, the extension would result in extraction at the same rate as is currently carried out, which means that the predicted traffic flows and traffic distribution will remain unchanged from the present-day patterns. The levels of maximum average daily flow, including HGVs and staff was found to be negligible in terms of the total flows on the A474, A465 and the M4 and the development would not lead to any adverse impact on highway capacity or highway safety.
9.12.6 The findings of the 2010 ES assessment relating to Traffic and Transportation remain valid and Neath port Talbot Council confirmed that further assessment of impacts in this regard could be scoped out of the EIA.

9.12.7 As a result, it is considered that the Proposal meets the requirements of the aforementioned traffic and transportation policies.

9.13 Historic Environment

9.13.1 PPW states that the historic environment comprises all the surviving physical elements of previous human activity and illustrates how past generations have shaped the world around us. It is central to Wales’s culture and its character, whilst contributing to our sense of place and identity. It enhances our quality of life, adds to regional and local distinctiveness and is an important economic and social asset.

9.13.2 The planning system must take into account the Welsh Government's objectives to protect, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations. The historic environment is a finite, non-renewable and shared resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales. It is important that the planning system looks to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of historic assets. This will include consideration of the setting of an historic asset which might extend beyond its curtilage. Any change that impacts on an historic asset or its setting should be managed in a sensitive and sustainable way.

9.13.3 Policy SP21 states that the built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced by 1) encouraging high quality design standards in all development proposals; 2) Protecting arterial gateways from intrusive and inappropriate development; 3) Safeguarding features of historic and cultural importance; 4) The identification of the following designated sites to enable their protection and where appropriate enhancement: (a) Landscapes of Historic Interest; (b) Historic Parks and Gardens; (c) Conservation Areas; (d) Scheduled Ancient Monuments; and (e) Listed Buildings and their curtilage.

9.13.4 The 2010 ES (Appendix 2-1 of the ES) provides a detailed assessment of the potential impact of the northern extension on historic environment and designated and non-designated cultural heritage assets.

9.13.5 The baseline survey carried out in 2010 found that there were no International (World Heritage Sites), National (Scheduled Monuments, Grade I or II* Listed buildings. Registered Parks, Gardens of Registered Landscapes) or Local (Grade II Listed...
Buildings, Registered Parks of Gardens or Conservation Areas) designated sites within or in the vicinity of the Application Site. Furthermore, there have been no prehistoric, Roman or medieval finds within or in the vicinity of the Application Site.

9.13.6 The baseline reported within Section 2.5 of the 2010 ES demonstrates that that there is a generally low potential for currently unrecorded archaeological remains within the site.

9.13.7 Having regard to this baseline information and the relatively small scale of the proposed easterly extension to Gilfach Quarry, it was agreed with CADW and the local Archaeological Trust to scope out further assessment on the potential impact of the Proposal on the Historic Environment on the basis that the Proposal would not lead to significant effects. As a result, it is considered that the Proposal meets the requirements of the aforementioned planning policies which seek to protect the historic environment.

9.14 Restoration, Afteruse and Aftercare

9.14.1 PPW states that unless new mineral extraction provides for satisfactory and suitable restoration, planning permission should be refused. Planning conditions should ensure that land affected by mineral extraction is restored to a high standard suitable. Afteruses may include agriculture, forestry/woodland, nature conservation, heritage, public open space, recreation or other development.

9.14.2 Policy M4 states that appropriate, acceptable proposals should be submitted for restoration, a beneficial afteruse and after care of the site. Restoration proposals should be phased to commence as early as possible and where appropriate, the Council will encourage progressive restoration.

9.14.3 The opportunities for progressive restoration are restricted by the physical nature of the quarry and the order and direction of working. This is the case with and without the Proposed Eastern Extension. Limited access to existing benches along the south, south-west and south-east boundary of the quarry further define and limit the restoration approach which can be taken in those locations.

9.14.4 A restoration strategy has been prepared to guide the long-term restoration of the quarry, and to establish the restoration principles and restoration treatments. The strategy has been based upon the sequential completion of the works according to the phases of work. The finer details of the actual restoration works will evolve as the quarry develops, however Figure 2-14 and Appendix 2-7 of the ES provide detailed restoration proposals which involves restoration to agriculture, nature conservation with woodland.
9.15 Buffer Zones

9.15.1 MTAN1 states that the Welsh Assembly Government takes the view that a minimum distance of 200m from Hard Rock quarries to the closest receptors should be adopted unless there are clear and justifiable reasons for reducing the distance. An example may be that, because of other means of control, there is very limited impact from the mineral extraction site.

9.15.2 Policy M1 states that proposals for non-mineral related development within mineral safeguarding areas will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: 1) The mineral concerned is no longer of any value or potential value; or 2) The mineral can be extracted satisfactorily prior to the development taking place; or 3) In the case of temporary development, it can be implemented and the site restored within the timescale that the mineral is likely to be needed; or 4) There is an overriding need for the development; or 5) The scale and location of the development would have no significant impact on the possible working of the resource.

9.15.3 Policy M3 of the LDP states that Development proposals within buffer zones will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that 1) The mineral resource will not be sterilised; and 2) The proposals will not be adversely affected by mineral operations. A mineral buffer zone extends to 200m from the boundary of the existing Gilfach quarry.

9.15.4 Policy M1 safeguards land containing known mineral deposits from being sterilised by non-mineral development. Policy M3 relates to buffer zones, as identified in the LDP’s Proposals Map, which extend to 200m from the current quarry boundary. Paragraph 5.3.76 notes that the “primary aim of the buffer zone is to protect the permitted or proposed mineral working from new sensitive uses such as residential developments, hospitals and schools, by establishing a separation distance between these potentially conflicting land uses.” Within the buffer zone, any new development that would prejudice the future extraction of permitted reserves or the operation of the site will be resisted.

9.15.5 Both polices M1 and M3 relate to the development of non-mineral development within proximity of operational quarries and other mineral operations, and seek to protect the operations and avoid sterilisation of mineral reserves. Neither policy states that a particular sized buffer must be maintained between existing sensitive receptors and proposed mineral development.

9.15.6 MTAN1 supports a 200m buffer between Hard Rock quarries and sensitive receptors, but notes that there may be justifiable reasons for reducing the 200m distance.
As set out above, the Proposed Eastern Extension is located, at its closest approach, 150m from one sensitive receptor, Cefnfaes Farm, although the majority of the proposed extension is located over 200m from the property.

Potential impact, through the generation of noise, dust and vibration, on the residential amenity Cefnfaes Farm have all been assessed within the accompanying Environmental Statement and the findings of these assessments are summarised within Sections 9.9 to 9.11 above. As discussed, through the implementation of mitigation measures, the Proposed Eastern Extension would be operated in accordance with the current consented limits with regards to noise and vibration levels, which are in accordance with the levels recommended within MTAN1.

Having regard to the findings of the ES, the current conditions attached to the extant planning permissions for the quarry (P2010/0655 and P2010/0658) and the recommended limits contained within MTAN1, it is therefore considered that there are clear and justifiable reasons for reducing the buffer distance to 150m in this case.

**LDP Mineral Policy - Policy M4**

Policies M1 and M3 are discussed within Section 9.15. This sections provides an assessment of the Proposal again Policy M4, which sets out a number of criteria for the assessment of mineral development.

**Policy M4 – Minerals Assessment Criteria**

The Proposed Eastern Extension Area is located immediately to the east of the Gilfach Quarry, and would be worked as a continuation of the permitted Phase 1 quarry face. The quarry face illustrates the presence of the mineral.

2. An assessment has been made that demonstrates that it would not be feasible to supply the mineral from secondary sources;

The mineral extracted from Gilfach Quarry is a highly sought after roadstone with a very high Polished Stone Value (PSV), consistently of +68. The material is of national importance and is transported across England and Wales to projects which require a high specification roadstone. The material cannot be replaced from secondary sources.
3. *It is demonstrated that measures can be taken to reduce, and where possible avoid, damage or disturbance to the environment and the amenity of neighbouring land uses or individual properties to acceptable levels;*

9.16.5 This Planning Statement is accompanied by an Environmental Statement which provides a comprehensive assessment of the potentially significant environmental impacts of the Proposal, including potential impacts on amenity from the generation of noise, dust and vibration. The Es demonstrates that there are no significant adverse environmental effects which would merit the refusal of the planning application.

4. *It can be demonstrated that the development would not compromise highway safety;*

9.16.6 The quarry has been operational for many years and is permitted to export up to 500,000 tonnes per annum. The quarry currently operates at a rate of approximately 300,000 tpa and the Proposal would not increase the rate of extraction, or the number of HGV travelling to and from the quarry. It was agreed with the Council during the EIA Scoping exercise that the potential Traffic and Transportation impact would not be significant, and as a result was scoped out of the EIA, and it is therefore considered that the Proposal would not compromise highway safety.

5. *Appropriate, acceptable proposals are submitted for:*

   (a) *The effective and sustainable extraction of the mineral;*

9.16.7 The working scheme for the quarry (Figures 2-6 to 2-13) has been updated to reflect the Proposed Eastern Extension Area (Phase 1b). It is proposed to commence the extraction of the Proposed Eastern Extraction Area following the completion of Phase 2, prior to progressing further north into Phase 3 and 4.

   (b) *The duration, method and phasing of operations;*

9.16.8 It is proposed to extend into the Proposed Eastern Extension upon completion of Phase 2. The duration of operations within the Proposed Eastern Extension would last for an estimated 5 years. The extension would be worked in accordance with current working practices at the quarry. The ES has identified a number of mitigation measures to minimise the environmental impact.

9.16.9 Following completion of the extraction operations within the Proposed Eastern Extension, operations would resume within the Approved Northern Extension Area (Phase 3) as currently approved.

   (c) *The management of mineral waste;*
9.16.10 Mineral waste within the quarry would be managed in accordance with the current arrangements. The quarry void would be re-profiled with quarry waste in the central and western areas to provide a shallow margin to the surface water bodies which is anticipated to form in the south eastern area of the quarry.

(d) Restoration; and

9.16.11 As discussed above, restoration proposals for the Application Site are described within Figure 2-14 and Appendix 2-7.

(e) Beneficial after-use and after care

9.16.12 The proposed afteruse for the site would be a mixture of agriculture, woodland and nature conservation uses.

9.17 Planning Policy Conclusion

9.17.1 This section of the Planning Statement has considered the suite of policies within the Development Plan relevant to the Proposal.

9.17.2 Generally, the aim of the Development Plan is to conserve and enhance the environment, communities and natural resources of the local area and encourage sustainable economic growth.

9.17.3 MTAN1 seeks the provision of a 200m buffer between hard rock quarries and sensitive receptors, unless there are clear and justifiable reasons for reducing the distance. Policy M3 sets a presumption against non-mineral development within buffers around quarry sites, including Gilfach Quarry, principally to protect the permitted or proposed mineral working from new sensitive uses.

9.17.4 The accompanying ES provides a detailed assessment of potential impact on the closest residential properties to the Proposal, including Cefnfaes Farm which is located, at its closest point, 150m from the Proposed Eastern Extension. These assessments conclude that noise and vibration levels will all be within MTAN1 recommended levels and within the approved Noise and Vibration Action Plan levels which already apply to the site. Predicted dust levels at Cefnfaes Farm would also be comparable with levels experienced by other properties located within proximity to other areas of the quarry.

9.17.5 As a result, it is considered that the Proposal complies with the requirements of the adopted Development Plan and that clear and justifiable reasons for reducing the 200m buffer distance recommended by MTAN1 exist.
10. FINDING THE PLANNING BALANCE

10.1.1 There a number of key points in favour of the Proposal which require to be considered when reaching a decision on this planning application;

- The Proposed Eastern Extension is a relatively modest extension to a well-established hard rock quarry which does not generate complaints;
- The Proposal will release in the region of 1,500,000 tonnes of very high PSV roadstone, a nationally important resource in high demand;
- The Proposal would extend the life of the quarry by approximately 5 years, leading to the maintenance of jobs, both directly and indirectly attributable to the site operations and other economic benefits, as detailed within Section 6;
- The Proposal incorporates a number of green infrastructure improvements around the periphery of the Application Site;
- The resultant restoration of the Application Site would lead to biodiversity and landscape and visual enhancement within the local area;
- The Proposal would not increase flood risk nor would it lead to a detrimental impact on water quality and quantity at the quarry discharge;
- Mitigation measures proposed will ensure no significant adverse effects on local communities in terms of noise, dust and vibration;
- The Proposal complies with policies contained within the Development Plan;
- No material considerations have been identified which indicate that the Proposal should not proceed.

10.1.2 These key points in favour of the Proposal must be considered in the context of the potential effects of the Proposal. The Proposal has been the subject of an EIA process which has assessed the potentially significant environmental effects, which are set out in detail within the ES and summarised above.

10.1.3 Having regard to the beneficial and adverse effects which the Proposal could create in the context of national and local planning policy, it is considered that the Proposal is in accord with the relevant provisions of National Planning Policy and the Development Plan, and that there are no material considerations which indicate that the Proposal should not proceed. Therefore, in these circumstances there should be a firm presumption in favour of planning permission being granted.