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# INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document comprises an Environmental Statement ('ES') and has been prepared by SLR Consulting Limited ('SLR') on behalf of Brett Aggregates Limited ('the applicant'). The ES forms part of a package of documents being formally submitted to Hertfordshire County Council (as Mineral Planning Authority, or 'MPA') in support of a re-submitted planning application in respect to land at Hatfield Aerodrome, near Hatfield.

1.2 The applicant is re-submitting a planning application for the establishment of a new quarry on land at the former Hatfield Aerodrome (referred to as the application site), being part of the allocated site referred to in the extant Minerals Local Plan[1] (refer to Chapter 4 below for further information on the policy framework for the area). The proposals would involve the winning and working, together with processing for sale, of sand and gravel over a period of around 32 years. In parallel with the extraction of minerals would be the importation of low permeability inert material to infill the mineral workings to facilitate the restoration of the site to a beneficial after use, combining recreation and nature conservation. The imported material would typically comprise excavation wastes from construction and engineering projects (soils, overburden, clays etc.) within the region. This is set out further in paragraph 1.10 below, and Chapter 3 of this ES.

1.3 This ES aims to provide an objective account of the possible significant environmental effects of the proposed development by setting out the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') which has been undertaken. It is intended to provide the MPA with sufficient information to determine the planning application having due regard to the protection of the local amenity and the environment as a whole. The ES has been prepared in line with the framework provided in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 with cognisance of the guidance set out in the online National Planning Practice Guidance and The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment's (IEMA) "*Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment*".

## Application Submission Package

1.4 This ES comprises the second of two volumes submitted to the MPA to accompany the planning submission. In addition to the formal planning application forms and certificates, the full submission comprises:

- Volume 1 - Planning Statement;
- Volume 2 - Environmental Statement (this document);
  - Volume 2A – ES Text;
  - Volume 2B – ES Technical Appendices; and
  - Volume 2C – A Non-Technical Summary of the ES.

[1] "Preferred Area 1", and illustrated on Inset Map 6 within the Mineral Local Plan

1.5 The Planning Statement supports the planning submission and considers the proposals in the context of relevant planning policies in the Development Plan, and other material considerations, such as national planning policy and 'need'.

1.6 The Non-Technical Summary (NTS) has been produced as a separate, standalone document in line with best practice prescribed by the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) to accompany the planning submission, being a mandatory part of the ES. The purpose of the NTS is to provide, in non-technical language, a brief summary of the likely significant effects that the proposed development would have on the environment.

## The Site

1.7 Land to which the planning application relates (referred to as '*the application site*') is located on the north-western edge of Hatfield and to the east of St Albans on land associated with the former Hatfield Aerodrome. It lies within an area bounded by the A1057 (Hatfield Road/St Albans Road) to the south, Oaklands Lane to the west, Coopers Green Lane to the north and the western fringe of Hatfield to the east.

1.8 The application site covers an area of around 87.1ha and comprises the southern part of the former aerodrome.

1.9 Chapter 2 within this Volume provides further information on the application site and its environs.

## The Proposed Development

1.10 A planning application was submitted in January 2016 (application reference 5/0394-16) for the extraction of 8 million tonnes (Mt) of sand and gravel along with the installation of ancillary buildings, plant and machinery (including a concrete batching plant) on land at the former Hatfield Aerodrome. The planning application was accompanied by a comprehensive ES (the '2016 ES') which identified the likely significant effect of the development. Despite an initial resolution to approve (in January 2017), the planning application was refused by the planning committee at its meeting on 24 September 2020, with the decision notice issued on 6 January 2021. The reasons cited for refusing the application are set out in the Planning Statement (Volume 1).

1.11 The applicant is re-submitting a planning application for the establishment of a new quarry. As before, the proposals would involve the winning and working, together with processing for sale, of some 8Mt of sand and gravel over a period of around 32 years (based on an annual output of around 250,000tpa).

1.12 The quarry would be worked in a phased basis and allow for progressive restoration through the importation of inert materials to backfill the void; this minimises the amount of land taken at any one time. Sand and gravel would be worked from two discrete horizons; the Upper Mineral Horizon ('*UMH'*), which lies predominantly above the water table, would be worked dry whilst the Lower Mineral Horizon ('*LMH'*) would be worked wet (i.e. no dewatering of the workings). The two mineral horizons are separated by a seam of boulder clay (referred to as '*interburden'*) which would be used as part of the restoration scheme for the workings.

1.13 Excavated material would be processed at the quarry using a combination of screening and washing plant to produce a range of graded aggregates and sands. Processed aggregates would be dispatched from the site in HGVs. Processed aggregates would be exported via a new access constructed onto the A1057 (Hatfield Road) on the southern side of the application site.

1.14 Other ancillary development would include a weighbridge, office accommodation, fresh water and silt lagoons.

1.15 In view of the recent refusal to grant planning permission, the applicant has amended the scheme as follows:

- the erection and operation of a concrete batching plant has been removed from the proposals;
- the standoff for mineral extraction operations in the Lower Mineral Horizon (LMH) to the bromate plume (also in the LMH) will be increased from 50m to 100m;
- there will be no dewatering (pumping) of the LMH; and
- The access road from the quarry entrance will be moved by 5m to the east to allow additional acoustic screening.

1.16 Further details of the proposed development are set out in Chapter 3 below.

## The Applicant

1.17 Brett Aggregates Limited (Brett) is the wholly owned subsidiary company of Robert Brett and Sons Limited (Brett Group), the Canterbury based aggregates, building materials and concrete products independent business which was established over a century ago. It is the largest independent producer of sand and gravel in the UK.

1.18 Brett manages all of its quarry, marine dredged aggregate, recycled aggregates and coated stone operations and serves Kent, East Sussex, Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk and London.

1.19 Brett has an enviable record of operating and restoring its quarries of which it is justifiably proud. It has achieved far more awards for the quality of its work, than any other independent company in the industry. In all, it has won over 50 awards, not only made by quarry industry associations in this country but also by European bodies concerned with care for the environment.

1.20 Brett operates an integrated management system, certified to: ISO 14001; BES 6001; and ISO 9001 at each of its sites and the proposed operations at Hatfield Aerodrome (should planning permission be granted) would be integrated into the system

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

1.21 Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') is an important procedure for ensuring that the likely effects of a new development on the environment are fully understood and taken into account before the development is allowed to proceed. The term EIA describes a procedure that must be followed for certain types of development before they are given "*development consent*", which in the UK includes the grant of a planning permission. The procedure is a means of drawing

together, in a systematic way, an assessment of a project's likely significant environmental effects.

1.22 An ES is a report of an EIA that is required to be submitted with a planning application for major and other developments that are likely to have significant impacts on the environment. It evaluates the likely environmental impacts of the development, together with an assessment of how the severity of the impacts could be reduced.

1.23 **Appendix 1/1** within this volume provides further information on the legislative requirements regarding EIA and in particular, how the scope of the EIA has been derived.

## PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT

1.24 The proposals for the importation of inert fill material would be governed by an Environmental Permit issued by the Environment Agency in addition to a planning permission. The Environmental Permit will contain a number of conditions intended to regulate the day to day management of the site with the aim of minimising the effect of the operation on the environment; it will also contain conditions regulating site management and monitoring.

1.25 Government advice on planning makes it clear that it is important to avoid unnecessary or confusing duplication. For example, National planning policy states that *"The focus of planning policies and decisions should be on whether proposed development is an acceptable use of land, rather than the control of processes or emissions (where these are subject to separate pollution control regimes). Planning decisions should assume that these regimes will operate effectively. Equally, where a planning decision has been made on a particular development, the planning issues should not be revisited through the permitting regimes operated by pollution control authorities*." (paragraph 188, National Planning Policy Framework).

## THE SUBMISSION AND ITS STRUCTURE

1.26 The first section of this ES provides an overview of the submission and the regulatory framework in which it sits. Subsequent sections of the ES provide a description of the application site; set out its planning history; describe the development proposals; set out the relevant planning policy considerations and alternatives; and then provide individual and cumulative analysis and evaluation of the likely significant effects of the development on the human and natural environment. Where potential environmental effects are identified, mitigation strategies are secured against the impact and residual effects are assessed. As such, the ES is intended to provide the MPA with sufficient information to determine the planning application having due regard to the protection of local amenity and the environment as a whole.

1.27 This document is organised and presented in the following way:

**Background Information (Chapters 1-5)** – This part of the ES is descriptive in nature. It provides the reader with an overview of the application site and its surrounding environs alongside a description of the development for which planning permission is being sought. It provides an overview of the legislative requirements relating to EIA. Finally, the relevant planning policies at both a local and national level are outlined and alternatives to the proposed development are considered.

**Environmental Assessments (Chapters 6-14)** – For each environmental topic, a package of relevant background information and data is provided and the potential effects are considered. Where appropriate, mitigation measures are suggested and any residual effects are considered. Taking into consideration the results of the scoping exercise, the following environmental assessments have been undertaken:

- Chapter 6 Water Environment (Hydrology and Hydrogeology)
- Chapter 7 Transport
- Chapter 8 Landscape and Visual Impact
- Chapter 9 Air Quality
- Chapter 10 Noise
- Chapter 11 Ecology
- Chapter 12 Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 13 Health
- Chapter 14 Cumulative Impacts

## Project Team

1.28 SLR is a multi-disciplinary environmental consultancy to *inter alia* the minerals, energy and waste management industries, and also provides advice to local authorities and the Environment Agency on strategic issues. SLR is a registered Environmental Impact Assessor Member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) and has secured the EIA Quality Mark awarded by IEMA.

1.29 In preparing this submission package, SLR has drawn upon the expertise of an in-house team of specialists comprising planners, landscape architects and environmental scientists for the majority of the technical assessments. SLR has also worked with Andrew Josephs (of Andrew Josephs Associates) who produced the original cultural heritage assessment in the 2016 ES. SLR has also worked closely with the management teams and technical staff of Brett Aggregates Limited, as part of an iterative process, to ensure that the proposed development is practical, feasible and optimises environmental protection.

## Publication

1.30 Paper copies of the ES can be obtained from SLR Consulting Ltd at the following address:

15 Middle Pavement
Nottingham
NG1 7DX

1.31 The ES, along with the other Volumes to the submission, is available in both paper and CD-ROM format, for which a charge of £250 and £25 is applicable respectively. A copy of the NTS is available free of charge on request. In addition, the application documents will also be available to download from the Hertfordshire County Council website.

## STATEMENT OF COMPETENCE

1.32 The EIA Regulations introduces a new requirement for the "*developer to ensure that the environmental statement is prepared by competent experts*", with the environmental statement to be "*accompanied by a statement from the developer outlining the relevant experience and qualifications of such experts*" [refer to Regulation 5 (5) (a) and (b)].

1.33 The EIA Report has been prepared by SLR Consulting Ltd which has a specialist capability in mineral and waste planning. SLR is a member of the 'Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment' (IEMA) with an awarded EIA 'Quality Mark'. The EIA Quality Mark is a voluntary scheme, operated by IEMA through which EIA activity is independently reviewed, on an annual basis, to ensure it delivers excellence in the following areas:

- EIA Management
- EIA Team Capabilities
- EIA Regulatory Compliance
- EIA Context & Influence
- EIA Content
- EIA Presentation
- Improving EIA practice

1.34 The EIA Report has been prepared by professional consultants with appropriate skills and experience to be considered to be 'competent experts' as defined by the EIA regulations.