

INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 The distinctive chalk downland landscape in the Plan area is characterised by steep north facing escarpments and long rolling hills on the dip slope to the south. The sensitive landscape and designation of the Sussex Downs AONB means that the working of chalk as a mineral raises significant environmental issues. In addition, chalk is a microporous limestone and an aquifer which is a major local water supply. It is therefore an important water source for the Plan area which needs to be maintained and protected from pollution.
- 5.2 In the past the major chalk workings in the Plan area served cement works at Rodmell (Beddingham) and Lewes. The cement industry declined in the 1960s and '70s in East Sussex and the last cement works at Rodmell closed in 1975. Current trends in the industry are of increasing competition from abroad, reduced consumption during the current recession, site rationalisation and closures. It is therefore considered unlikely that there will be any demand from the industry to re-establish in the Plan area. Existing plants in the UK operate on a very large scale, and market, transport and raw material considerations appear to dominate location requirements.

CURRENT PRODUCTION

- 5.3 Following the demise of the cement industry, most chalk worked in the Plan area is used for constructional fill and agricultural lime. In the Newhaven area, however, the excavated chalk is particularly pure and is largely used as an industrial raw material.
- 5.4 There are two operational chalk quarries in the Plan area. Balcombe Pit, at Glynde, has been operational since before the war and produces chalk for agricultural lime and as a constructional fill material. It is estimated that 1 years reserve remains. There may be some scope for a small scale extension of the pit on land outside the AONB.
- 5.5 Chalk extracted at Tarring Neville Quarry near Newhaven is of a high quality and in normal circumstances, is used solely for the manufacture of plaster and associated products at the Artex Works in Newhaven. There are approximately 20 years of reserves remaining at this site which gives a long term supply of suitable material for this high quality use and therefore no extensions are likely to be necessary during the Plan period. Some surface chalk unsuitable for manufacturing use is produced at this site, and is available for agricultural and constructional purposes.
- 5.6 At Beddingham Landfill Site, which was formerly the Rodmell Cement Works, planning consent was granted in 1992 for revised restoration arrangements. In the last few years this has resulted in chalk extracted as part of engineering works for the landfill operation becoming available for export for constructional and

agricultural use. There is potential for further significant quantities of chalk to become available, although this would require planning permission for stockpiling the material for future use.

- 5.7 Filching Quarry is a long established site, the extracted chalk having been used for lime in its early years, but, more recently the quarry has been worked intermittently, but intensively, to produce fill material. Following further extraction early in 1995 reserves at the quarry are almost exhausted. Access to the site via the C40 Jevington Road is sub-standard and the quarry floor is very close to an underlying aquifer which poses a potential contamination risk. The dangerous condition of the quarry faces is a continuing problem at this site.
- 5.8 Meeching Quarry, Newhaven, has been dormant for many years but was recently worked for fill intermittently and on a very small scale. An Interim Development Order (IDO) consent has been registered, and a scheme of conditions approved by the mineral planning authority. However, an appeal has been lodged against these conditions. Access to the site through an industrial estate now occupying the quarry floor is unsatisfactory and the quarry itself is located close to residential areas and the Tideway School.

FUTURE PROVISION

- 5.9 The majority of the chalk deposits in the Plan area are constrained by one or more designations of national importance. The most significant of these are the Sussex Downs AONB and the Heritage Coast which extends between Seaford and Eastbourne to the south of A259. Along the coastal strip west of Seaford, large areas of downland are built-up and this effectively sterilises the resource. In addition, potential pollution risk is a further constraint.
- 5.10 Where chalk extraction is undertaken it is often carried out on an intensive basis, particularly where it is required for the construction industry. Associated lorry movements can be detrimental to residential and rural amenities as well as creating traffic hazards. Traffic is therefore an issue which in certain situations can act as an environmental constraint. The mineral planning authorities will resist any proposal for future extraction which would result in unacceptable traffic conditions.
- 5.11 The mineral planning authorities have paid regard to Minerals Planning Guidance Note 1 (MPG1) "General Considerations and the Development Plan System" in respect of ensuring continuity of production, when preparing policies for future chalk provision. However, there are very few areas of chalk downland which remain unconstrained. These tend to be relatively small areas with poor access, often adjacent to settlements and near to the AONB boundary. Most are also subject to specific policies in the various borough/district local plans thus limiting their future use. There are therefore potentially very few areas which could be considered as new extraction sites because of the constraint imposed by the AONB designation.

- 5.12 The need for further chalk extraction in the Plan area will arise from demands from the construction industry and agriculture together with a specific need for specialised, industrial quality chalk at Newhaven. Assuming that current levels of chalk production in the Plan area are maintained, the general need can be met by supplies from the existing permitted reserves at Glynde, inferior quality resources at Tarring Neville, and exported chalk from Beddingham which should together provide sufficient supplies for at least one year. Subject to the various environmental and highway considerations, there may also be scope for limited further extraction at Glynde. The Plan does not preclude 'permitted development' rights for mineral working for agricultural purposes on agricultural land.
- 5.13 Having taken into account nationally important environmental constraints affecting chalk deposits, current levels of demand and permitted reserves, the mineral planning authorities consider that future needs can largely be met and would not support proposals for new extraction sites in the Plan area. In the event that there were major increases in demand for chalk in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove, it is possible that supplies for non-specialist purposes may not be available towards the end of the Plan period. However, there are fill materials available as an alternative to chalk, and policies also encourage the reuse of waste chalk for this purpose. Should a significant, unsatisfied demand become evident the situation will be reassessed when the Plan is reviewed.

POLICY 20 The continuing need for chalk for fill and agricultural purposes during the Plan period should be met from existing workings at Beddingham, Glynde, and Tarring Neville, and no new sites for chalk workings will be permitted. A proposal for an extension to Balcombe Pit, Glynde, will be supported where it is outside the AONB and has satisfactory access.

POLICY 21 The specialist requirements of the Artex works at Newhaven will be met by supplies safeguarded by the existing planning permission at the Tarring Neville Quarry.

- 5.14 Issues of traffic generation, possible pollution of water supplies and visual impact within the AONB led the mineral planning authority to conclude that there should be no further extensions at Filching Quarry. Appropriate restoration could alleviate existing problems at the site, but this will not be possible within its existing boundaries and may therefore involve battering back the present steep quarry faces. A restoration scheme for the site would be supported where these issues are addressed, and proposals conform to development plan policies. The mineral planning authority would encourage discussion with interested parties to secure this objective.

POLICY 22 The mineral planning authority will encourage the appropriate restoration of Filching Quarry, provided that no chalk is exported from the site and any scheme accords with other local plan policies. Extension of the quarry for further commercial extraction will not be permitted.

5.15 In the absence of proper controls and working arrangements, further extraction of chalk at Meeching Quarry, Newhaven, is likely to cause significant environmental damage because of the proximity to the site of housing, Tideway School and other sensitive land uses. Access is unsatisfactory and there could be a particular impact on businesses occupying the Quarry Industrial Estate. However, further extraction can take place in view of the registration of the IDO permission and it is accepted that an appropriate scheme of conditions should reduce the impact of quarrying.

POLICY 23 Further chalk extraction within the area covered by the Interim Development Order permission at Meeching Quarry, Newhaven, must accord with the scheme of conditions attached to that consent to ensure that there will be no unacceptable impact on the locality as a result of the extraction of chalk and its transport from the site.

5.16 It is most unlikely that chalk extraction associated with cement manufacture will be proposed in the Plan area. Because of the detrimental effect such development would have on the AONB due to its likely scale, it would be contrary to the Structure Plan, and the other policies in this Plan, and the mineral planning authorities will resist any proposals for new cement works and associated chalk workings.

POLICY 24 The mineral planning authorities would not support any proposals for the re-establishment of cement manufacturing and associated mineral extraction in the Plan area.

5.17 Chalk is a valuable fill material that has been used in parts of the Plan area to prepare sites for development, and for road construction. Excavation work can also release quantities of waste chalk which could replace quarried material but this positive use of waste can be inhibited by timing constraints and the lack of suitable sites to stockpile the material.

POLICY 25 The mineral planning authorities would support proposals for the use of waste chalk as constructional fill, and favourably consider applications to stockpile material at appropriate locations, subject to the other policies in this Plan.