

## INTRODUCTION

- 4.1 In the Plan area, clay has long been exploited for brick and tile manufacture both within the High Weald and on the open clay vale of the Low Weald.
- 4.2 At present, clay working and associated manufacturing takes place on five sites in the county. The largest operation is at Ashdown Brickworks, Bexhill. This is a very long established site where the former brick and tile works was replaced by a modern plant, with a capacity of 50 million stock bricks per annum, in 1978. Two types of clay are required for the various product lines. The Crowborough clay is dug from a large pit west of the works which has remaining reserves sufficient for 10-15 years at anticipated rates of extraction. The Pevensey clay is extracted from a smaller pit north of the works, although permission has been granted for the working of similar clay at Little Standard Hill Farm, Ninfield; this site has resources likely to last for over 50 years and some extraction has already taken place. However, this estimate is currently being re-evaluated in the light of changing techniques employed at the factory.
- 4.3 Chailey Brickworks is an older plant which uses the 'clamp' method of firing bricks but which has otherwise been modernised in recent years. It has a capacity of about 13 million bricks per year and is served by an adjoining clay pit with some 15 years reserves remaining. This plant also produces stock bricks.
- 4.4 Hastings Brickworks, at Guestling, was established in 1896 and is a small, but important producer of hand-made bricks. Until recently, it was producing some 2 million bricks per annum serving an extensive, but specialised, market. The works has now re-opened following a short period of closure. Permission was granted in 1988 for an extension to the existing clay workings to give reserves for about another 25 years.
- 4.5 Finally, a small site operates at Aldershaw Farm, near Battle, where specialised hand-made tiles are produced.
- 4.6 There have been recent proposals for changes in the local brick industry:-
- (a) a new brick works and clay pit at Horam has a planning permission not yet implemented. This replaces, on a different but adjoining site, a former works closed in the mid-1970s;
  - (b) there were proposals for the use of the clay reserves at the closed Hamsey Brickworks to supply the nearby Chailey Brickworks, but no planning application has yet been made;
  - (c) an application for a new tile works and clay working at Southdown Tileries Polegate, a site which included another former brickworks which ceased production in the 1960s, was refused in 1993.

- 4.7 All the sites mentioned above are in rural areas except the Ashdown Brickworks which is in a semi-rural location on the edge of Bexhill. Two sites, Hastings Brickworks and Aldershaw Farm lie within the High Weald AONB. There are no clay reserves, or any recent history of brick and tile manufacture, in Brighton and Hove.

## GENERAL APPROACH

- 4.8 Clayworking and brick or tile manufacture at the commercial scale involves long term commitments and major investment in a particular site. In the Plan area, the main producers are few in number, and their sites are very long established with generally long term prospects. No entirely new workings with associated plant have been established in modern times. Developments in recent years have related to the modernisation or replacement of existing outdated or exhausted plant, or the provision of new clay workings, although an application for a new plant and associated clay extraction was refused in 1993. Nonetheless, the general pattern is not expected to change in the foreseeable future.
- 4.9 The primary focus of the Plan needs to be the future of existing operations and continuity in the supply of raw materials to sustain them. Where permitted reserves of clay are likely to last for the Plan period, no policy issue is likely to arise. But the Plan needs to address the issue of securing additional clay resources where existing resources may become exhausted during the next 10 years.
- 4.10 The identification in the Plan of 'areas of search' for clay resources suitable for brick or tile manufacturing is not considered appropriate. This is partly because suitable brick-making clay occurs widely in the Plan area; but largely because clay requirements, their occurrence and commercial viability are likely to be specific to the needs of particular companies. This places the onus on the industry to put forward specific proposals to the mineral planning authority identifying potential resources or opportunities which it would wish to develop. The aim of the Plan is to establish environmental and other planning criteria against which proposals should be judged.

## DEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING OPERATIONS AND SITES

- 4.11 All existing clay working and brick manufacture in the Plan area takes place in an acceptable way in environmental terms and the traffic generated is accommodated satisfactorily on the local road network. These enterprises make a valuable contribution to the local economy and to meeting the needs of the local and regional construction industry for high quality bricks. The availability of locally made stock bricks contributes to the quality of the built environment in the Plan area.
- 4.12 As a first priority, the mineral planning authority wishes to support these existing enterprises and facilitate continuity in the supply of clay from local sources and the modernisation or replacement of manufacturing plant.

**POLICY 15** The mineral planning authority will support the retention and development of existing clay working and clay product manufacturing activities. Where the environmental and traffic impacts are acceptable and proposals are consistent with other policies in this Plan, planning permission will normally be granted for :-

- a) the improvement or replacement of existing manufacturing plant;
- b) proposals to maintain appropriate clay supplies, through the expansion of existing clay workings, or the provision of replacement workings on adjacent sites. Proposals for new clay workings distant from the manufacturing unit they serve will only be supported where the need for such a location can be demonstrated.

## **NEW, REDEVELOPED AND PERMITTED SITES**

4.13 The mineral planning authorities consider it is appropriate for the Plan to take account of the possibility of proposals coming forward for entirely new clay working and manufacturing developments unrelated to existing activities or for the redevelopment of suitable former clay working sites for new enterprises. There are also two dormant sites where Interim Development Orders have been registered, at Horam Brickworks and Southdown Tileries, and where clay working could recommence, subject to approval of a scheme of new conditions.

**POLICY 16** The mineral planning authorities will give favourable consideration to proposals for clay working and manufacturing on new sites or on former unrestored clay workings as follows :-

- a) the justification for clay working at a particular location in the countryside would need to be demonstrated;
- b) new manufacturing plant should normally adjoin or be close to new clay working or redeveloped former clay working sites, provided that any countryside location can be justified. However in specific circumstances, consideration would be given to an urban industrial location where the need can be demonstrated;
- c) the environmental and traffic impacts of the proposals must be acceptable and the proposals consistent with other policies in this Plan.

**POLICY 17** In conjunction with the industry, the mineral planning authority will support the identification of future reserves of clay suitable for existing manufacturing operations which have only limited permitted reserves remaining.

4.14 The mineral planning authority accepts that development proposals might come forward for clay working or associated manufacturing activities within the High Weald AONB, linked to existing or new operations. The need for such development will have to be demonstrated in line with national policy for the protection of AONBs.

**POLICY 18** New clay working or clay product manufacturing activities within an AONB would only be permitted if the need for the development in the national or local economic interest and the lack of alternative appropriate sites outside an AONB can be demonstrated.

## **ASHDOWN BRICKWORKS, BEXHILL**

4.15 The 'North Bexhill Strategic Framework' prepared jointly by the County Council and Rother District Council includes the Ashdown Brickworks area and provides supplementary planning guidance for the control of development and the preparation of local plans. It safeguards the continued operation of Ashdown Brickworks, but also includes a new access into the site from the proposed A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass. This scheme, although still included in the national roads programme, is currently subject to the outcome of a separate "Access to Hastings Study". This study, to be carried out by consultants working for the Highways Agency, is due to start by the end of 1999 and is expected to report by the end of 2000. The new access road and related development adjoining the brickworks site is a matter for the forthcoming Rother District Local Plan.

4.16 The County Council's Waste Disposal Plan 1988-1998, prepared under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, identified the use of the clay workings at Ashdown Brickworks, when redundant, as a possible landfill site subject to achieving a new road access. The plan has a proposal that these workings should be safeguarded as an option for landfilling in the long term. This option will be considered further in the Waste Local Plan. The policy below sets out the position on mineral related activities at the Ashdown Brickworks site.

**POLICY 19** The mineral planning authority supports the continuation of brick manufacturing and clay working at Ashdown Brickworks within the existing permitted area north of Turkey Road. Support would be given to the replacement of the existing Crowborough clayworking pit at the Brickworks, when this becomes exhausted, by a new clayworking elsewhere. This would be subject to satisfactory arrangements being agreed for the transport of clay to the Ashdown Brickworks and the proposed replacement working being in accordance with other policies in this Plan. It is the mineral planning authority's objective that a new access road should be constructed from the proposed junction at The Highlands on the proposed Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass to serve as a primary access to the brickworks site.