**Ecology**

Within all three sites there are a number priority habitats, ancient hedgerows and, ancient trees.

Both A89 and A92 bound or, are in close proximity to, the Upper Blackwater Special Landscape Area. The working of both sites would impact negatively on the priority habitats and species found in the Blackwater River valley.

There is the proposed removal of an ancient hedgerow and prominent mature oak tree from the middle of A89. Clearly, but for mineral workings, there would be no need to remove this ancient hedgerow which such an attractive feature of the landscape. The same can be said for other hedgerows and trees on this site and on A92 &A93 that are a prominent site on the landscape.

All sites are very open and operate in harmony with both the flora and fauna that exists within them. By way of example, barn owls are seen frequently swooping across open fields and migratory birds flocking on the ground. Ground animals are frequently seen hunting and foraging on the fields. These include: hare, stoat, rabbit, fox, badger, and deer such as roe, fallow and, muntjac.

Extraction workings could well result in water table drawdown and the interception of ground water flows which in turn could impact on springs and streams. This would have impacts on neighbouring stretches of woodland, hedges and ponds resulting form inadequate water flow especially during the increasing drier and hotter summers we are forecasted to experience.

The management of hydrology must be called into question. We are experiencing warmer and wetter winters with increasing levels of rainfall and frequency of flooding only previously experienced as a rarity.

In respect of A92 & 93 surface water could well flow from the north of the sites through any workings picking up fine deposits, flowing down the valley into surface watercourses of even possibly, with nowhere else to go, onto the A120 creating road flooding. Road flooding is a common occurrence on the roads in and around Stisted, Bradwell and Pattiswick.

No mention has been made concerning water containment in any of the sites. With A92 & A93 located on a sloping valley and A89 on top of a ridge sloping north down into the River Blackwater valley. Any excess water can only flow downward into watercourses towards the river. The landscape cannot manage the current levels of water now being experienced during our wetter winters. One must question the ability of existing flood management measures in being able to manage the excess water generated by extraction workings and processing

Without these workings the ecology of all three sites would remain undisturbed in the natural state that has been formed over a considerable length of time. There is no guarantee that any disturbance to this can be remedied within an acceptable time frame.