**Both Sites – Soil and Land Use**

It would be reasonable to expect there will be less damage to the environment is the overall public interest resulting from extensions of existing workings rather that opening virgin sites.

Mention is made that all sites are temporary with them expected to be used in excess of 20 years. Allowing for site preparation and appropriate restoration within a reasonable (no time give for this aspect) It could well be in excess of 30 years before the land is restored to its former agricultural quality.

Currently there are no site-specific proposals for restoration post extraction. Therefore, there is a possibility that the sites may not be restored to their current status as Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land and could well be used for other purposes such as landfill or built development.

The land on all 3 sites is classified as Grade 2 agricultural land i.e. BMV

In the government’s “A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to improve the Environment”, it clearly states that the Plan is to, protect the best agricultural land, put a value on soils as part of our natural capital, and manage soils in a sustainable way.

**The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

The NPPF sets out how planning decisions are made about the natural environment to: protect and enhance landscapes, biodiversity, geology and soils, recognise soils a natural capital asset, consider the economic and other benefits of BMV agricultural land, and try and use areas of poorer quality land instead of higher quality land, prevent soil, air, water or noise pollution.

Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development.

The focus of planning policies and decisions should be on whether proposed development is an acceptable use of land

**Food Security**

Food security is rapidly becoming a hot topic with farmers, food producers and UK government. Shortages of various foodstuffs that are imported from major food producing countries are becoming more frequent due climate change having a major impact on weather patterns. The NFU national conference 20 and 21 February 2024 centred on improving UK food production and food security. It does seem very illogical to remove high quality agricultural land from food production during a looming crisis in the UK’s food security.