

# Cassington Quarry

## Site Biodiversity Action Plan



**Prepared:** 2009

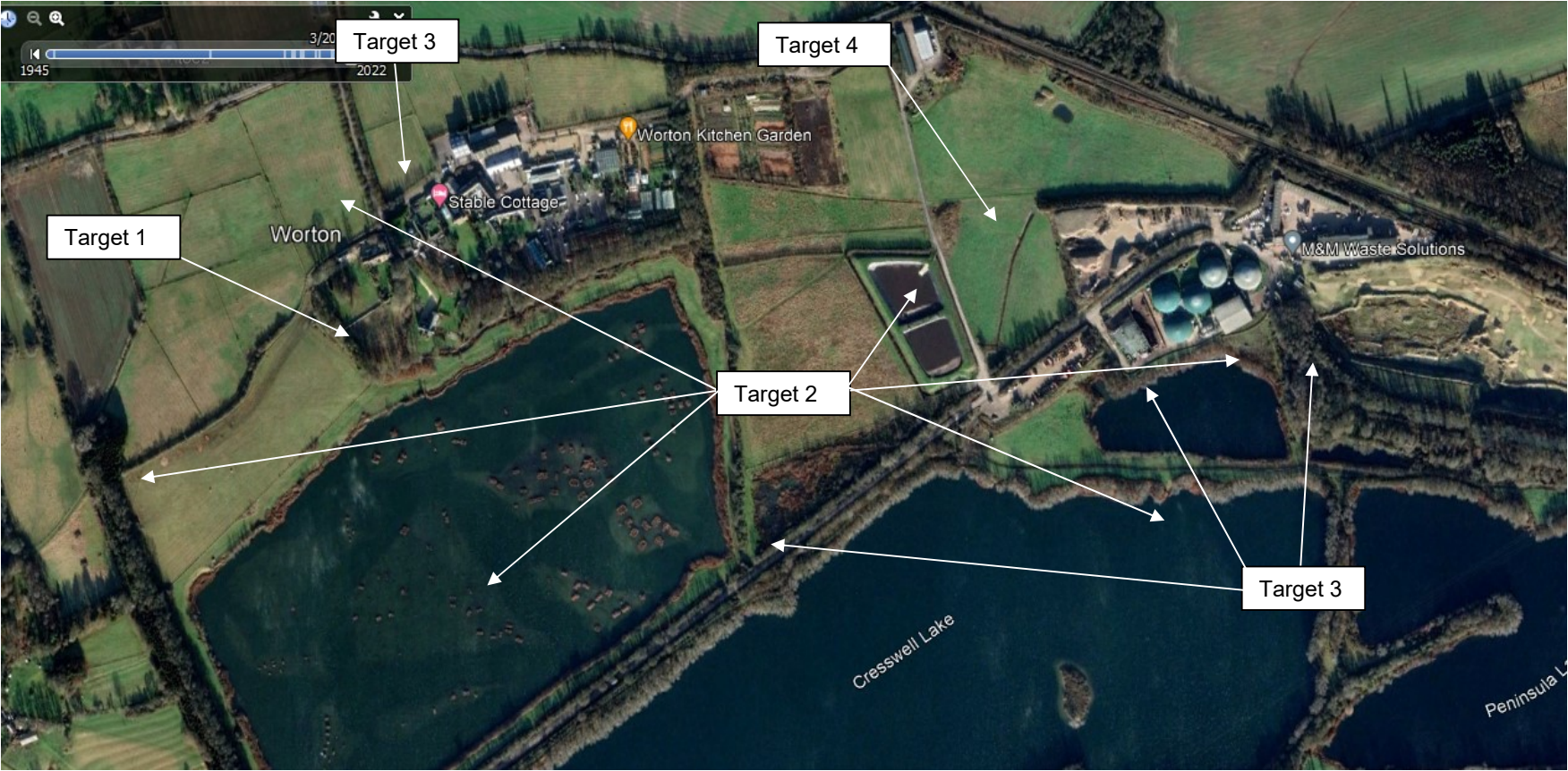
**Updated:** March 2014 and  
November 2023

### Site Information - Cassington

<b>Site Name and Location (incl. Grid Ref.)</b>	Cassington Quarry, Oxfordshire Grid Ref. SP 463 106 (Entrance)
<b>Heidelberg Company</b>	Heidelberg Materials UK, Aggregates business line
<b>BAP(s) that will be targeted</b>	Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan UK BAP
<b>Habitat(s) to be developed</b>	Reedbed Standing open water Wet woodland
<b>BAP species to be encouraged</b>	Water vole Bittern, bearded tit, lapwing, little ringed plover, redshank, sand martin, common tern,
<b>Designated Natural Area</b>	Thames and Avon Vales
<b>Background and site description</b>	121ha sand and gravel quarry excavated since 1989. Majority of the site comprised Thames floodplain 1 <sup>st</sup> terrace gravel excavated to approx. 4-5m depth with some areas on higher 2 <sup>nd</sup> terrace. Reserves exhausted in 2008 and backfilling operations completed in 2012 with the exception of former Plant Site. Original phases of restoration comprise large lakes with grassy margins and tree groups; more recent Stage 11 extension restored by partial backfilling with inert fill and overburden to extensive reedbeds to avoid creating a further large water body due to bird strike concerns; Stages 10 and 12 restored to agriculture following inert importation; Silt lagoons restored to native broadleaved woodland with combination of planting and natural regeneration.
<b>National Designations (SSSI, SAC, SPA) within 500m</b>	Oxey Mead SSSI within 50m immediately south of site, and Cassington Meadow SSSI to SW of site, all making up Oxford Meadows SAC designated mainly for MG4 inundation grassland
<b>Resource Requirements-comment on cost if appropriate</b>	Quarry restoration budget covers most aspects of the BAP. FC Woodland Grant Scheme has been claimed for larger areas of new planting on silt lagoons. Bird monitoring ongoing f.o.c. through local bird watchers from O.O.S.
<b>Contribution to biodiversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original phases of restoration designated SNCI in 2006 for wintering waterbirds and stonewort populations</li> <li>• During its operational life the site has supported an exceptional range of bird species with over 140 species recorded</li> <li>• Stage 11 reedbed restoration will create +20ha reedbed suitable for breeding bittern, and retain open faces for invertebrates and sand martins</li> <li>• Stage 10 design amended to show pond complex and wader scrapes to mitigate loss of islands when flooded</li> <li>• Plant site restoration amended 2019 to show increased dry land meadow and GCN pond complex</li> </ul>
<b>Partners and Local initiatives</b>	RSPB/NAM, Freshwater Habitats Trust Oxford Ornithological Society birdwatchers

	Surface landowner (Worton Farms)
<b>Other documents supporting the site BAP</b>	<p>Composite restoration scheme shown on plan W92m/113. Plant Site revised restoration scheme Corylus May 2019 ref C4-HAN-05-4C and sections ref C4-HAN-05-7;</p> <p>Stage 11 western extension outline Aftercare scheme, and table of annual aftercare records/proposals;</p> <p>S106 20-year Stage 11 reedbed Extended Aftercare Management Plan anticipated end 2023;</p> <p>2021 Great Crested Newt District Level Licence Naturespace Partnership NSP certificate dated 23/07/2021</p>

**Site Layout**





## Action Plan

Item No.	Objective	Biodiversity Feature	Targets	Tasks	Assessing Indicator	Responsible Person	Timescale (Completion)
1	20ha + reedbed restoration	Reedbed; Bittern; Bearded tit;	Create +20Ha reedbed in Stage 11 with appropriate features and topography to support breeding bittern in the future	<p>1. Establish dense <i>Phragmites</i> reed vegetation on shallow islands and shelves</p> <p>2. Maintain reed protection measures and adjust fencing until islands well established</p> <p>3. Draw up S106 Extended Aftercare Management Plan, to include monitoring proposals</p>	<p>No. of reeds planted</p> <p>Annual Aftercare records</p> <p>Bird monitoring to confirm presence of target species.</p>	<p>Landscape Manager,</p> <p>RSPB, OOS</p>	<p>Reedbed shelf planting undertaken in 2012 and 2013, substantial re-plant and re-guard 2016-18</p> <p>Maintenance and monitoring ongoing</p> <p>S106 plan in place by Q4 2023 (year 3 of 20-year extended Aftercare period)</p>
2	Improve habitat quality of existing woodland resource	Wet woodland and associated flora and fauna including bats	<p>Improve the structure and diversity of young and middle-aged plantations and lake-shore woodland areas.</p> <p>Introduce dead wood.</p> <p>Promote understorey and ground flora species</p>	<p>1. Secure Felling Licence for selective thinning of silt lagoon and screen plantations to favour long-lived native species.</p> <p>2. Thin and/or coppice sections of shoreline woodland around old phases.</p> <p>3. Create habitat piles with</p>	<p>Area of woodland thinned</p> <p>Varied canopy structure and age class distribution.</p>	<p>Landscape Manager; Worton Farms (surface landlord)</p>	<p>Felling Licence in place 2013, renewed 2018 and 2023</p> <p>Initial phase of pollarding March 2015, Thinning and A40 haz tree work</p>

				surplus timber and lop/top. 4. Erect bat boxes and monitor.	Presence of bat species using boxes/shoreline		completed 2021 and 22
3	Improve habitat quality of existing water bodies and ditches	Water voles; invertebrates; hydrology of SAC hay meadows to south of A40	Manage vegetation along ditches and watercourses.  Ensure appropriate ditch maintenance to allow water flows in re-charge and dis-charge ditches.	1. Implement programme of coppicing and thinning to reduce shading of ditches where water vole previously recorded, and lake shores, to enhance aquatic vegetation.  2. Monitor for presence of water voles.  3. Periodic de-silting of ditches as advised by EA/NE/hydrology consultants	No. of willow trees pollarded  Water vole records;  NE to be satisfied with water levels in Meads at S106 meetings.	Landscape Manager.  Ops Manager re ditch excavation/maintenance	Ongoing Willow pollarding undertaken in 2011/12/13 and 2021  Stage 2 discharge ditch de-silted late summer 2011
4	Re-design Plant Site restoration to increase dry land meadow/pasture area	Great-Crested newt; Lowland meadow	Re-design Plant Site proposals from angling lake to meadow and GCN ponds	1. Draw up and submit revised restoration plan 2. Complete final gravel excavation under appropriate GCN District Licence 3. Complete infilling and soil replacement by 31 Dec 2024 end date 4. Complete GCN pond complex at SE corner  5. Annual reporting as per Naturespace GCN DLL conditions	Revised restoration scheme approved and implemented.  No. of newt ponds created  Annual reports	Landscape Manager;  Quarry Manager  Landscape Manager	Scheme approved 2022. Awaiting EA Tip permit 2023 to be able to infill plant site void and restore by 2024 planning deadline  Annually

