POETS

Planning Oxfordshire's Environment and Transport Sustainably

To Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet Members

11 July 2026

Dear Councillor,

Minerals and Waste Planning in Oxfordshire

POETS[1] have links with many local community and professional organisations and are aware that the effects of mineral and waste working on communities is a pressing planning issue. This is exemplified by the recent item on BBC Politics South on minerals and waste sites in Oxfordshire.

This particular issue arises from several inter-related causes: -

1. The statutory Minerals and Waste Local Plan 1996 is over 30 years old. It is therefore completely outdated in planning terms and cannot be relied on or given weight in any appeal or call-in case. Its Part 1 site distribution Proposals Map is equally outdated and local communities across the County have no idea whether, where or when new or continuing minerals and/or waste sites will appear.

2. The recent report of the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee (22 April 2026, Minutes 13/26 & 17/26) into the operation of Minerals and Waste Planning in Oxfordshire, highlighted an ongoing lack of staff resources, particularly specialist staff, in this important County Council planning function. This has led to existing staff being thinly spread in all areas, especially in monitoring and enforcement of planning conditions and undertakings, restoration and aftercare management and an absence of close oversight of local liaison committees on existing sites.

3. In addition, the limited availability of adequate staff resources has, inevitably, led to a culture of inaction in the use of robust enforcement of non-compliance with the terms of planning conditions and legal undertakings (S106 powers). This has resulted in a 'light touch' approach to enforcement so

[1] POETS are a voluntary think tank of planning, environment and transport professionals and academics, providing analysis, commentary and ideas on sustainable transport and planning for Oxfordshire.

that, for example, time limited permissions are allowed to continue for months, and in some cases for years, before action is taken to require compliance. This brings into disrepute the planning system itself and damages the planning authority's credibility.

4. The firsthand evidence of Sutton Courtenay and Appleford Parish Councils which was given to the Place Scrutiny Committee highlights these concerns. But POETS are aware that these are only two of many parishes where similar and other significant problems occur. For example, at Wicklesham Quarry, Faringdon, which is a geologically unique SSSI, permission is to be granted, subject only to the completion of a s106 legal agreement, for a flexible change of use from quarry to a range of outline uses - from Class B8 Storage and Distribution to offices and/or a Bioscience Park - occupying almost all of its 29.3 ha site. Nor has an Environmental Assessment been requested or submitted for this proposed change.

In the light of the above, POETS urge the Cabinet to accept all six recommendations of the Place & Overview Scrutiny Committee as set out in its report. In particular, Cabinet is urged to support recommendation 6, requiring the commissioning of an independent review of the Minerals and Waste planning processes, including a sample review of enforcement practice, the use of extensions and section 73 applications, and the adequacy of resources to discharge the Council's statutory responsibilities.

Yours sincerely

Richard Tamplin

(on behalf of POETS)