Heidelberg Materials

Securing future supplies at Whatley quarry

We are developing plans to access additional mineral reserves within the existing boundary of Whatley quarry and extend the timeframe for extraction to 2055.

Construction materials are an essential part of everyday life. They are needed to build and maintain our homes, schools, hospitals and roads, as well as the low-carbon infrastructure required to support the UK's net zero ambitions.

Whatley quarry has been operating for nearly 100 years and the limestone it supplies is recognised as a nationally significant aggregate resource. However, accessing Whatley's mineral reserves is becoming increasingly challenging, risking continuity of supply.

People assume that permitted limestone reserves are plentiful, but this is just not the case. Every person in the UK uses the equivalent of four tonnes of aggregates a year – far outpacing the rate at which new quarrying permissions are granted. Between 2016-2025, only 32 per cent of crushed rock sold was replaced by new quarrying permissions. And, of course, quarries can only exist where minerals naturally occur.

Without new permissions being granted, limestone supplies would have to be brought in. This would add to construction costs, including for publicly funded infrastructure projects, increase carbon emissions and lead to more lorries on the roads as well as the loss of jobs.

Reopening our nearby Westdown quarry will help support future supplies, but Whatley's reserves are also needed to secure much needed limestone for the future.

- This handout sets out key aspects of our proposals to extend Whatley quarry.
- It's important to us that stakeholders and local residents can review our approach at an early stage in the process.
- We will consider all feedback, which will help to shape our final plans.
- The deadline for receiving feedback is 31 October 2026 (see back page for details).



The proposed operational boundary within Whatley quarry

Developing our proposals

Making the best use of limestone reserves at Whatley quarry

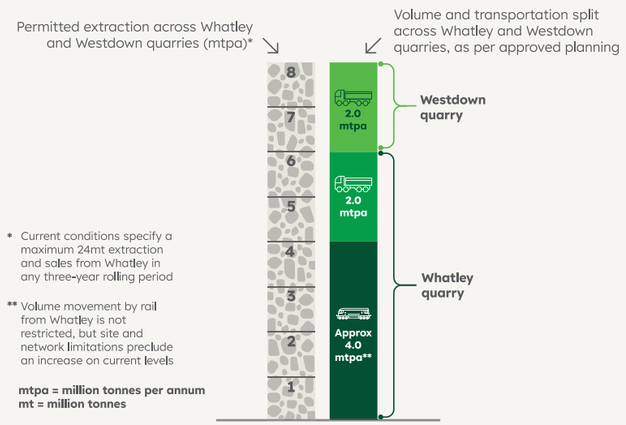
We want to secure Whatley's long-term future by making the best use of around 170 million tonnes (mt) of limestone reserves. Our proposals would allow us to access around 80mt of already consented reserves, which are becoming increasingly difficult to access, as well as around 90mt of additional reserves.

Business as usual

All activity would be within the existing site boundary and there are no amendments to our permitted operating hours or blasting so, outside the quarry gates, it would be business as usual.

Whatley is currently permitted to extract up to 24mt of aggregate in any three-year period; an average of 8mt a year (mtpa). Our approved plans to reopen Westdown quarry included a commitment to keep combined volumes from both sites at this level and this remains unchanged (see infographic below).

Annual volume and transport of materials at our Whatley and Westdown quarries



Combined aggregate volumes across both quarries would remain the same as the current permitted levels for Whatley alone with no increase in HGV levels.

Westdown, located close to local freight routes, will focus on supplying local markets, helping to keep HGVs away from local villages, with Whatley continuing to focus on supplying national demand by rail.

Our application

We first submitted proposals to Somerset County Council (now Somerset Council (SC)) in 2011 as part of the Review of Mineral Planning (ROMP) process. Despite our best efforts, the application has yet to be determined.

In 2020, SC asked us to update the environmental information supporting the ROMP, because the original surveys and studies were out of date.

In response, our 2022 (revised) Scoping Report proposed a single planning application, supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) covering both the outstanding ROMP and our proposals to deepen and extend the life of Whatley quarry.

As we look to secure Whatley's long-term future, and recognising that mineral planning applications can take several years to determine, we have decided to bring our proposals forward.

If approved, these proposals would secure Whatley's future for the next three decades, allowing us to continue the significant contribution we make to the economy, as well as retaining over 60 on site jobs, plus many more in the supply chain.

Proposed scheme of working

Our proposals would maintain quarry operations to 2055 by making the best use of already consented limestone reserves, which are becoming increasingly difficult to access, as well as additional reserves.

Quarry activity would include:

- Continued mineral extraction to sea level (0m AOD) of permitted but constrained reserves, including at the western part of the quarry and under the processing plant.
- Releasing additional reserves to 0m AOD within the existing quarry boundary by changing the profile of the western staggered benches and the northwest tip, as well as extending quarrying in the eastern end of the site to this level.
- Deepening the existing quarry floor as well as the western staggered benches, northern tip and the eastern end of the site by the equivalent of four additional quarry benches to -60m AOD.
- Extending the quarry's end date to 2055 to allow enough time for both existing and additional limestone reserves to be extracted.

Proposed extraction areas and volumes at Whatley quarry to 2055



Extraction of the reserves would take place in five phases:

- **In phases 1 and 2** quarrying would take place in the central and eastern parts of the quarry, first to the already-permitted level of 0m AOD, before then deepening to -60m AOD.
- **Phase 3** would see extraction move to the western staggered benches and the northern tip, deepening to -60m AOD.
- **In phases 4 and 5**, the area beneath the processing plant will be quarried, first to the already permitted level of 0m AOD and subsequently to -60m AOD.
- These final phases would see the fixed processing plant removed and a switch to mobile crushing. As the rail head would no longer be available to transport material by rail, output will reduce to around 2mtpa, to be transported by road.

"Extending the quarry's end date will mean that all identified limestone reserves can be extracted in the most efficient way, while also minimising impact on the environment and our near neighbours."



Mitigation

Our proposals have been shaped by the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which identifies possible impacts and how they can be mitigated. Topics covered include:

Noise

The noise regulation limits for our operations are set at, or below, 55dB during the day (equivalent to the level for a normal conversation, averaged over an hour) and 47dB at night.

Our proposals are not seeking to amend these and our studies have shown there will be no change to operational noise at our key noise receptor locations.

While operations would continue to comply with the regulations, last year we set up a working group on site to see what further mitigation steps we could implement in this area.

This best practice approach has resulted in some changes to operational practices and the rescheduling of some works to minimise impact, as well as leading to investment in additional plant to reduce noise. We will continue to seek continuous improvement in the years ahead.

Landscape and visual impact

Our approach throughout the extended life of the quarry would be to protect the surrounding area's landscape character by the retention and ongoing careful management of the existing vegetation around the quarry perimeter.

This will be shaped by the Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) for the overall site, which will build on the good work to date on supporting habitats and species across our landholding.

Interconnecting screen banks currently border Whatley quarry's perimeter, so the proposed extraction area would not be visible from outside of the site.





Our proposed extension areas would not be visible from outside the quarry site



Water management

Our plans have been developed to ensure that water abstraction is managed responsibly and sustainably to protect the water environment and avoid any adverse impacts on local water resources.

Extending Whatley quarry would see the deepening of parts of the quarry by the equivalent of four additional quarry benches. Extraction at this level already takes place safely at several UK quarries and independent studies commissioned by Heidelberg Materials highlight that this can be done at Whatley without impacting the local environment or any groundwater systems.

These detailed hydrological and hydrogeological reports have also shown that regional water systems are not connected, so going deeper at Whatley will not impact water supplies to the wider area.

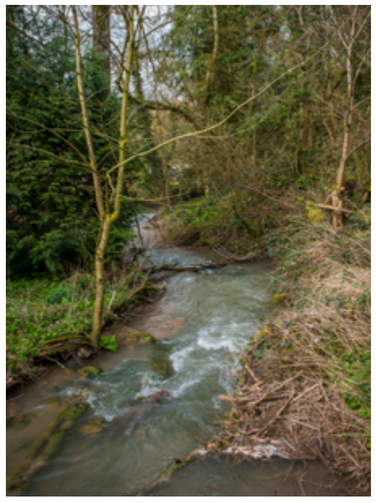
We have shared the findings of our East Mendips groundwater modelling with the Environment Agency (EA). Our understanding is that the EA is going to continue and update this work, with the support of all quarry operators within the Mendip Quarry Producers (MQP) group, including Heidelberg Materials. This will provide quarry operators with enhanced information to support future decision making.

At Whatley, our proposals would see little change to the day-to-day approach, with the continued use of pumps to move groundwater initially to a sump or lagoon.

The required discharge to the Mells River, Fordbury Water (also known as Nunney Brook) and Whatley Brook would continue.

Importantly, against a backdrop of hotter summers and more intense rainfall at other times of the year as a result of climate change, the ongoing EA monitoring of these watercourses would help to inform a flexible approach to mitigation and responding appropriately to climatic events.









Blasting

Independent research carried out by authorities around the world into vibration levels has helped to formulate safe blasting criteria, with the UK having some of the most stringent levels in place. These regulations have well-defined limits on ground and air vibration (air overpressure – AOP) and operating within these standards protects nearby homes and buildings from structural damage.

In recent years the Whatley team has worked closely with our blasting specialists to reduce blast vibration. This sees us, wherever possible, designing blasts to have a vibration level of 4.5mm/s Peak Particle Velocity (PPV) compared to the regulatory limit of 9mm/s PPV on this logarithmic scale. The average blast PPV so far this year at Whatley has been 2.73mm/s – so well below the regulatory limit.

Going forward, wherever possible, this voluntary commitment will remain in place and all blasts will be within the regulatory limit.

Quarries across the UK and around the world extract aggregate at levels below 0m AOD (sea level), including to -60m AOD and more. Specialist modelling indicates that excavating at deeper levels at Whatley will not impact on how blasts are experienced by our near neighbours.



Biodiversity Net Gain

Heidelberg Materials has committed to allocating at least 15 per cent of our quarry sites as Space for Nature by 2030 and we already exceed this at Whatley.

Our future plans will also align with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements which require developers to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was before. While these BNG assessments and future approach are in development, they will be shaped by our commitment to protect and enhance flora and fauna through the proposed extension and final restoration of the site.

This includes ensuring no impact on protected species such as dormice and bats while continuing to improve wildlife corridors and support local wildlife.

Progressive and final restoration

Heidelberg Materials is recognised for delivering exemplar and award-winning quarry restoration schemes and this will underpin our approach at Whatley quarry.

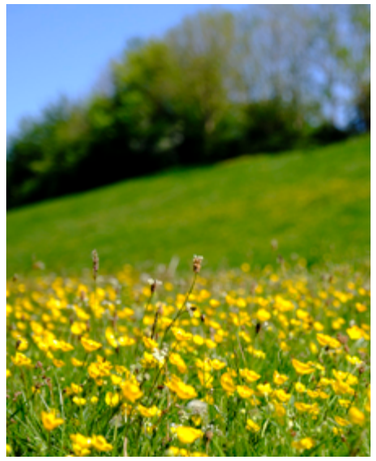
A progressive restoration approach means that as soon as extraction is completed in one phase, restoration can begin, helping to minimise environmental impact and accelerate the regeneration of flora and fauna.

At Whatley this will include the progressive restoration of quarry benches with the development of new areas of scrubland, woodland and species-rich grassland.

The focus will be on planting species that are found locally, such as oak, field mapel and hazel, helping the restored landscape to fit naturally into its surroundings and creating wildlife corridors to continue to support wildlife.

The final restoration would also introduce a range of landscape features, including exposed quarry faces, a water body and areas of additional planting. Retained and manged woodland, grassland and scrubland, together with the creation of additional wood pasture, wetland meadow, woodland and woodland scrub, will create a more varied landscape within the quarry site.

Once restoration is complete, the former quarry will have a mosaic of habitats that sit well within its setting, providing habitats suitable for dormice, bats, otters, wildfowl and invertebrates.





Our future

Our proposals within Whatley quarry's existing boundary would secure its future to 2055, helping to maintain supplies of vital limestone for use in construction projects both locally and across the UK. By making the best use of permitted reserves and accessing additional limestone within the existing quarry boundary, we can continue supplying a material that is essential for concrete, roads and major infrastructure projects.



It would also secure over 60 jobs on site and many more in the local supply chain and allow us to continue to contribute to the local and national economy, estimated to be worth more than £75 million per year (Gross Value Added).

And, as part of our commitment to being a good neighbour, we would go on supporting local charities, community groups and local initiatives, as well as developing a meaningful and lasting legacy for the local area as a result of our ongoing operations.





Next steps

Our pre-application consultation is about sharing our thinking and listening to feedback. This will help to shape our final proposals.

Residents and other stakeholders can have their say by completing our feedback form – available at our public events – or by submitting via our website:

heidelbergmaterials.co.uk/whatley/future

Scan here to complete the feedback form

After reviewing the feedback, we'll finalise our proposals ahead of submitting a full planning application to Somerset Council (SC). SC will then consult with statutory bodies and invite comments from local residents before making its decision. **The deadline for responses is 23:59 on 31 October 2026.**