

THE FUTURE OF OXTED QUARRY

CONSULTATION SUMMARY REPORT JANUARY 2022



Introduction

Oxted Quarry located on Chalkpit Lane is a major industrial operation serving the dual purpose of extracting chalk and providing a waste landfall facility for the construction industry. The site is operated by Southern Gravel (SGL) and a recent appeal decision confirmed that the Quarry can operate up to 200 HGV lorry movements on weekdays (Monday to Friday) and up to 100 HGV lorry movements on Saturdays.

BECG is a very experienced communications consultancy specialising in public consultation work on projects throughout the UK and SGL commissioned BECG to hold a comprehensive consultation with the local Oxted community on the future of the site. We were set the brief of reaching as many Oxted residents as possible and obtaining a thorough understanding of local views on the Quarry. The consultation set out the history of the site, information on the current operations and presented the following two possible options for its future:

1. The continuation of operational activity resulting in up to 200 lorry movements per day based on the recent planning approval.
2. An alternative housing proposal which would result in the closure of the Quarry and could potentially offer significant additional benefits to the local community such as a new country park.

This report explains the public consultation work that was undertaken and a summary of the results.



Consultation Timeline



Thursday 11th November 2,300 leaflets delivered by individually addressed First Class post

Website went live and Introductory video about the Quarry was published



Saturday 13th November Door knocking to raise awareness of the consultation along the whole HGV route

Social media campaign launched



Tuesday 16th November Presentation and Q&A at Oxted Parish Council planning committee



Thursday 18th & Saturday 20th November Public Exhibitions held at Oxted School



Tuesday 23rd November Presentation to St Mary's School Head and two Governors



Thursday 2nd December Presentation to County Councillors

The Consultation Process

The Public Consultation was held for two weeks between Tuesday 16th November and Tuesday 30th November 2021. The public consultation included two public exhibitions at Oxted School alongside a two week online ('virtual') exhibition. The public consultation was publicised via the distribution of a leaflet to more than 2,300 households and businesses in the vicinity of the site, along with an advertisement in the local press.



Advertisement in local press

A website was set up and door-knocking undertaken to raise awareness. A film about the quarry was produced and meetings were held with the Parish Council, County Councillors and St Mary's School.

Quarry Video

An introductory video was produced to explain the reasons for the consultation. This was shown on the consultation website, posted on Facebook, and used at meetings and shown on big screens at the two exhibitions.

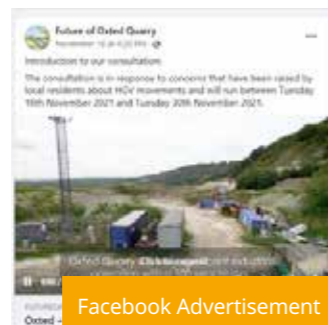
Social Media

Extensive social media outreach was also undertaken throughout the consultation period to engage with local residents and draw additional interest to the consultation website.

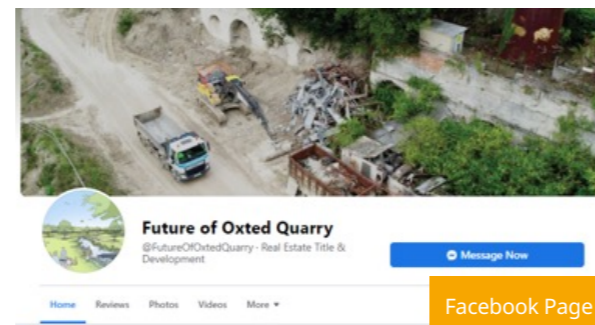
Feedback

During the consultation, residents and stakeholders were also given the opportunity to provide feedback and ask questions via a number of different channels. A freephone information line and project email address were made available for members of the public to provide their feedback to the project team and request further information if required. Where requests for printed copies of the consultation materials and feedback form were received, these were provided.

Details of the virtual and physical exhibitions can be found on the adjacent page.



Facebook Advertisement



Facebook Page

Individual Reach

10,129

View details



Post engagement

2,201

View details



Link clicks to website

668

View details



ThruPlays of Quarry Video

1,497

View details



Virtual and In-person exhibitions

Given the context of the public consultation period, falling within the coronavirus pandemic, we held both a virtual and physical exhibition, in order to give people who did not want to engage face-to-face alternative ways to get involved. The virtual exhibition ran from Tuesday 16 November until Tuesday 30 November 2021. The purpose of the virtual exhibition was to enable members of the community to easily view and comment on the emerging proposals at any time during the consultation period.

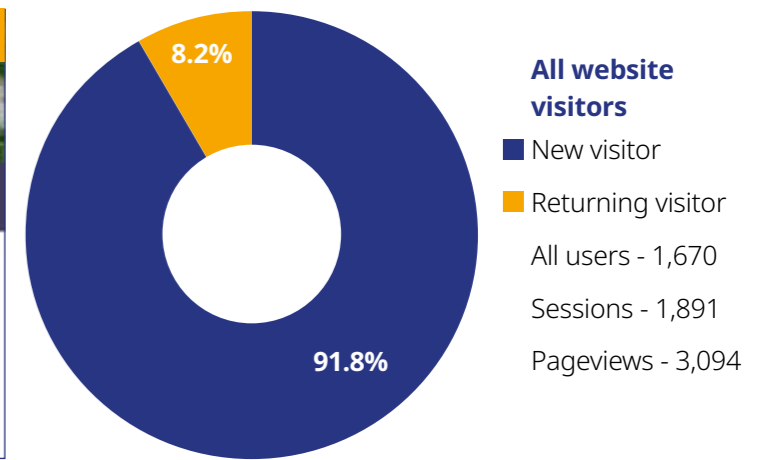
During the consultation period the website saw 1,670 visitors. There was an average of 150 visitors per day during the core of the two-week consultation period, which from our experiences of public consultation work is a very good response taking into account the size of the Oxted Community.



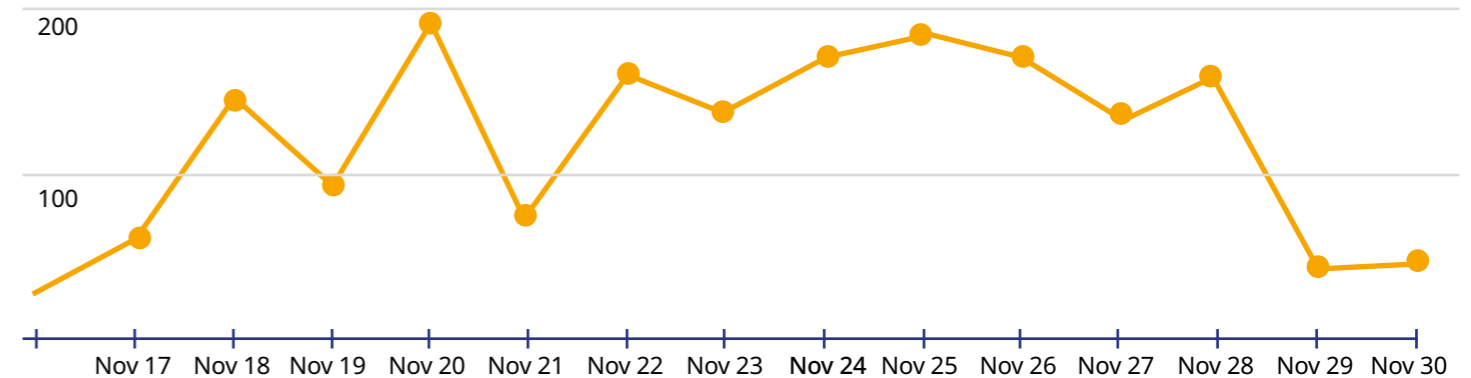
Map of distribution area



Newsletter sent to distribution area



Visits to the Oxted Quarry website during the public consultation



Virtual exhibition

Public Exhibitions

As well as consulting virtually, BECG held two public exhibition events during the public consultation period. These were held on Thursday 18 November from 6pm until 8pm, and Saturday 20 November from 11am to 3pm, at Oxted School in Bluehouse Lane. The events were well attended with visits from over 90 members of the public. A full set of exhibition boards were available to view and the introductory video about the Quarry was playing on a large screen. Members of staff were on hand to explain and discuss the issues and feedback forms were given to visitors that could be completed at the exhibition or sent back at a later date. The public exhibitions aimed to introduce the consultation, present a history of the site and the current operational activities and then offer two possible options for the future of the quarry: 1) Continuation of quarry activities at up to 200 lorry movements per day, or 2) a residential alternative which could offer additional benefits to the local community.

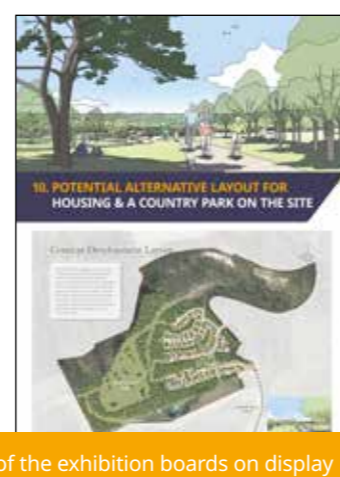
Due to the context of the exhibition events within the coronavirus pandemic, extra measures were put in place to ensure that safety was at the forefront. These measures included:

- Hand sanitiser and antibacterial wipes at each feedback form table
- A number of feedback form tables set up in order to enable social distancing
- Two sets of A1 boards set up on opposite sides of the room, giving visitors the ability to social distance while reading the information on display
- Covid-19 statement and social distancing posters set up to encourage social distancing within the venue
- Entrance to the venue kept open for ventilation

Each display featured 11 A1 exhibition boards with the following titles:

- Welcome and Introduction
- Oxted Quarry Today
- History of the Site
- HGV Movements
- Option 1: Continuation of Quarry Activity
- Option 2: The Residential Alternative
- Aiming for Net Zero Carbon
- Summary of Potential Benefits
- Country Park Proposals
- Potential Alternative Layout for Housing & Country Park on the Site
- Feedback and next steps

Images of the public exhibition events



Examples of some of the exhibition boards on display

Summary of feedback

Response Rate

The response rate was well above average for a typical pre-application consultation for a development of this scale, demonstrating the significant local interest in the future of the site. In summary:

- 135 responses received during the two-week consultation period
- 114 completed feedback forms returned (109 GDPR compliant)
- 55 on-line feedback responses submitted
- 60 paper feedback forms returned on the exhibition days or by post (5 feedback forms were not GDPR compliant and so could not be included)
- 11 emails with written comments and 5 telephone calls received
- Five comments on the facebook page

Summary of Results

Almost everyone (81%) opted for Yes and said they found the consultation clear and easy to understand. Only 5% opted for No, while the rest (14%) did not comment or answer the question.

Almost two-thirds (64%) are in favour of an alternative future for the quarry based on residential and a possible country park. Only 19% opted to favour a continuation of the quarry's operations.

Over two-thirds (69%) are favourable or very favourable to a country park on the site and over two-thirds (68%) are favourable or very favourable to a new kiln-side walk.

The majority (58%) are favourable or very favourable to ceasing operations at the quarry following planning permission for housing, a care home and a new country park. Only 20% are unfavourable or very unfavourable to this option. 16% are neutral or have no opinion.

The majority (64%) are unfavourable or very unfavourable to waiting until 2042 for operational activities to cease and the site be remediated with no public access.

Over two-thirds (68%) are unfavourable or very unfavourable to the continuation of HGVs to 2042.

Almost everyone (88%) said they are unfavourable or very unfavourable to the number of HGVs being increased above the current levels experienced to the permitted maximum of up to 200 per weekday.

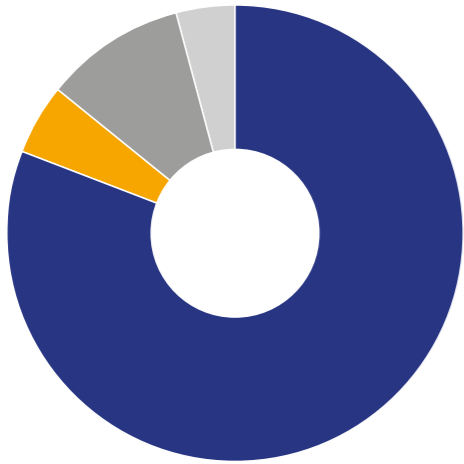
Over two-thirds (69%) are unfavourable or very unfavourable to the continued importation of inert construction waste. The majority (62%) are unfavourable or very unfavourable to the continued extraction of chalk.

The number of respondents stating that they were unfavourable or very unfavourable to the building of up to 100 homes are in the minority (36%). 38% of respondents are favourable or very favourable of building up to 100 homes and a further 18% are neutral or stated they had no opinion.

Only 29% of respondents are unfavourable or very unfavourable to the building of a care home. 42% of respondents are favourable or very favourable of building a care home on the site and a further 22% are neutral or have no opinion.

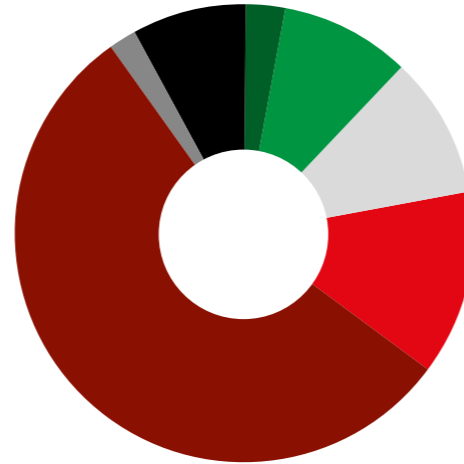
Detailed results

Have you found the information provided for this consultation clear and easy to understand?



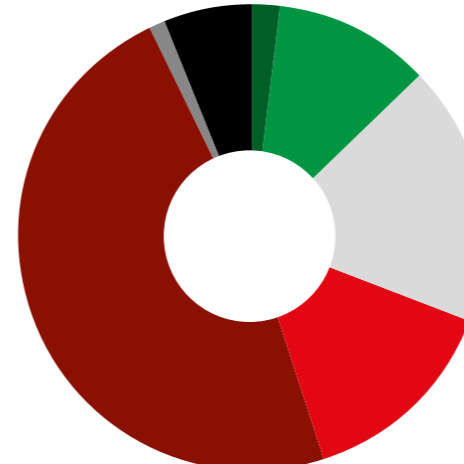
- Yes - **81%**
- No - **5%**
- No comment - **10%**
- No Answer - **4%**

Continuation of Quarry HGVs to 2042



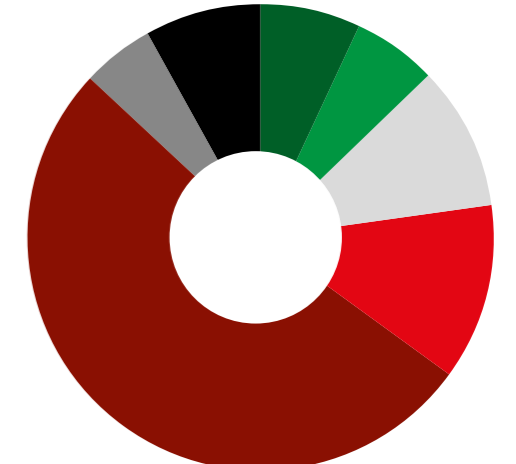
- Very Favourable - 3%
 - Favourable - 9%
 - Neutral - 10%
 - Unfavourable - 13%
 - Very Unfavourable - 55%
 - No Opinion - 2%
 - No Answer - 8%
- 12% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 68% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

The continued extraction of chalk until 2042



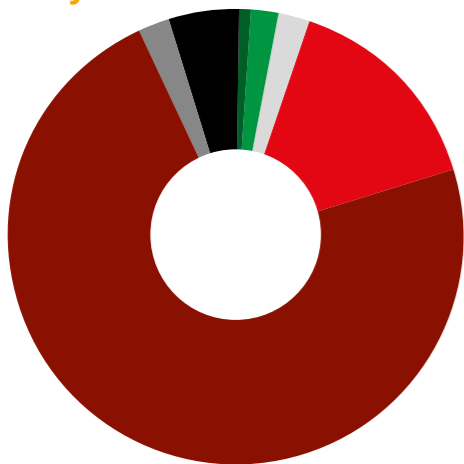
- Very Favourable - 2%
 - Favourable - 11%
 - Neutral - 18%
 - Unfavourable - 14%
 - Very Unfavourable - 48%
 - No Opinion - 1%
 - No Answer - 6%
- 13% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 62% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

Wait until 2042 for operational activities to cease on the site and be remediated with no public access



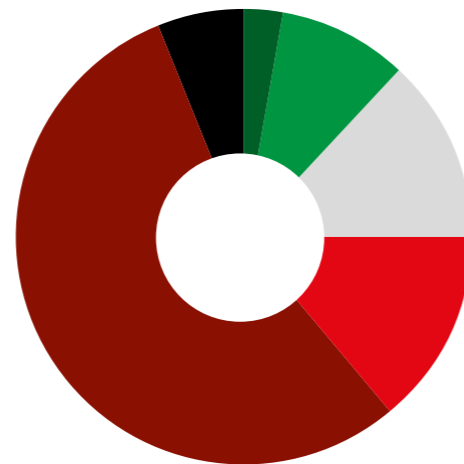
- Very Favourable - 7%
 - Favourable - 6%
 - Neutral - 10%
 - Unfavourable - 12%
 - Very Unfavourable - 52%
 - No Opinion - 5%
 - No Answer - 8%
- 13% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 64% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

Quarry HGV movements increased to the permitted maximum of up to 200 per weekday



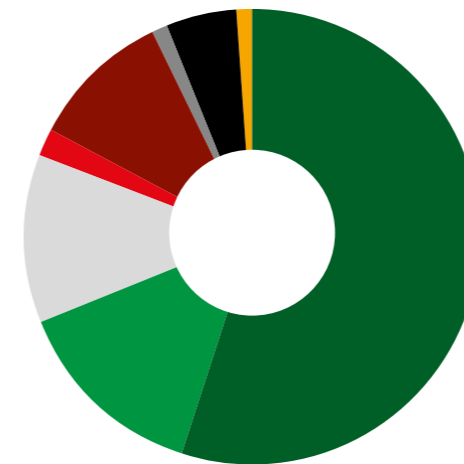
- Very Favourable - 1%
 - Favourable - 2%
 - Neutral - 2%
 - Unfavourable - 15%
 - Very Unfavourable - 73%
 - No Opinion - 2%
 - No Answer - 5%
- 3% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 88% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

The continued importation of inert construction waste until 2042



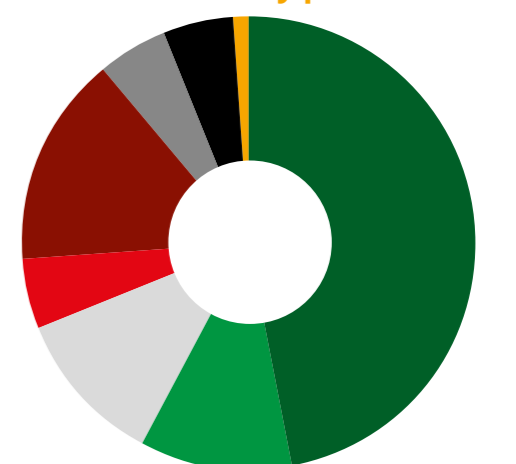
- Very Favourable - 3%
 - Favourable - 9%
 - Neutral - 13%
 - Unfavourable - 14%
 - Very Unfavourable - 55%
 - No Opinion - 0%
 - No Answer - 6%
- 12% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 69% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

Housing development with the majority of the site as a country park



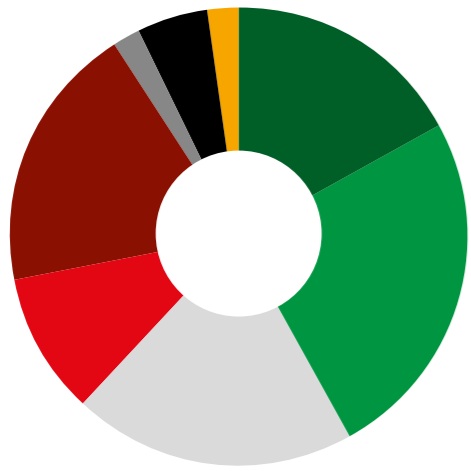
- Very Favourable - 55%
 - Favourable - 14%
 - Neutral - 12%
 - Unfavourable - 2%
 - Very Unfavourable - 10%
 - No Opinion - 1%
 - No Answer - 5%
 - More than one answer - 1%
- 69% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 12% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

Cease operations at the quarry following planning permission for housing, a care home and a new country park



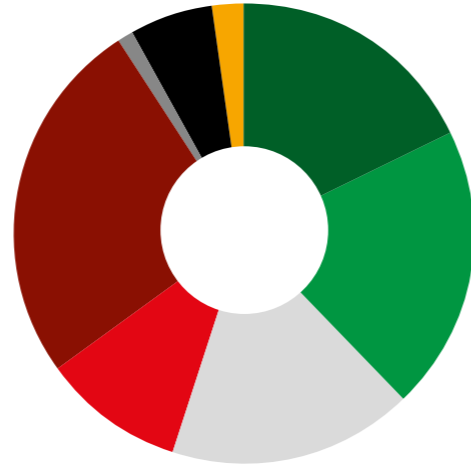
- Very Favourable - 47%
 - Favourable - 11%
 - Neutral - 11%
 - Unfavourable - 5%
 - Very Unfavourable - 15%
 - No Opinion - 5%
 - No Answer - 5%
 - More than one answer - 1%
- 58% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 20% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

Build a care home



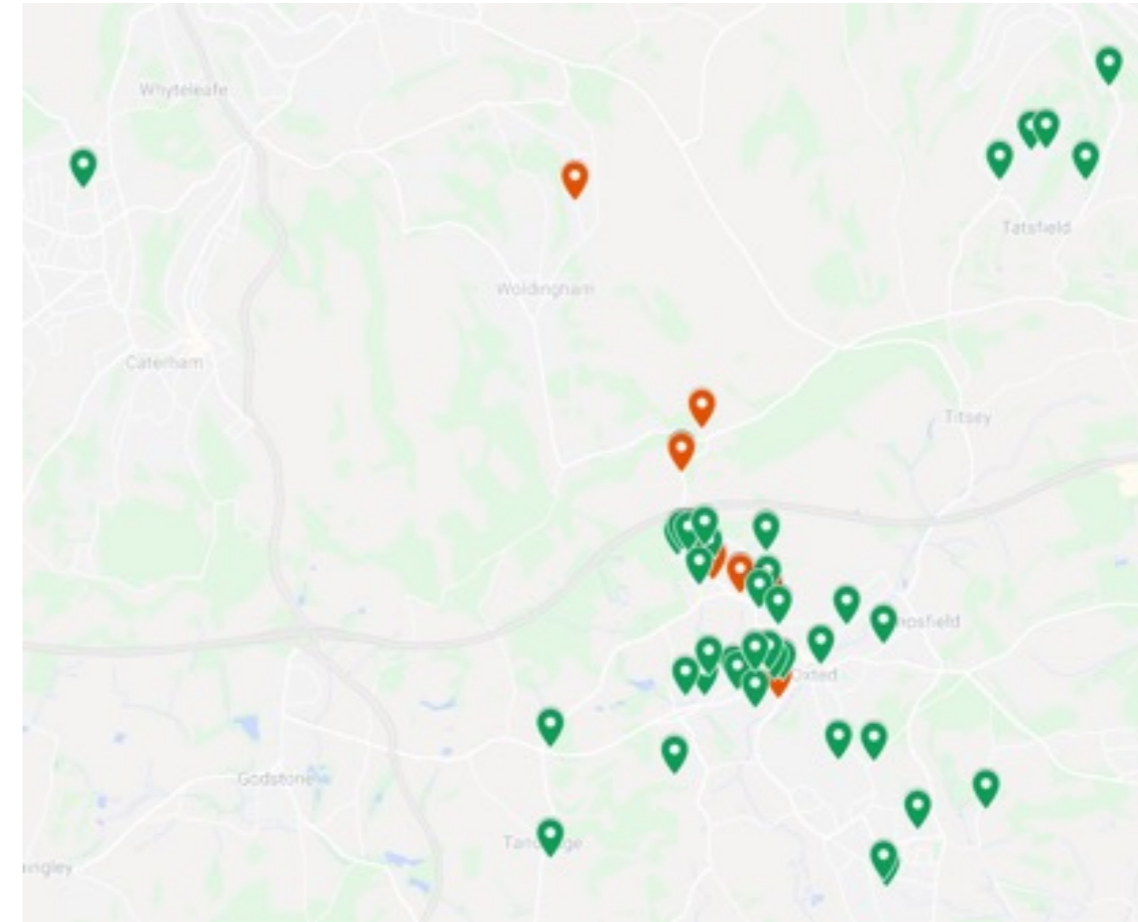
- Very Favourable - 17%
 - Favourable - 25%
 - Neutral - 20%
 - Unfavourable - 10%
 - Very Unfavourable - 19%
 - No Opinion - 2%
 - No Answer - 5%
 - More than one answer - 2%
- 42% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 29% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

Build up to 100 homes

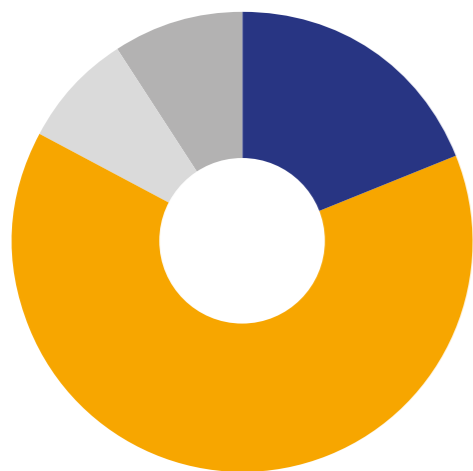


- Very Favourable - 18%
 - Favourable - 20%
 - Neutral - 17%
 - Unfavourable - 10%
 - Very Unfavourable - 26%
 - No Opinion - 1%
 - No Answer - 6%
 - More than one answer - 2%
- 38% (Very Favourable + Favourable)
- 36% (Unfavourable + Very Unfavourable)

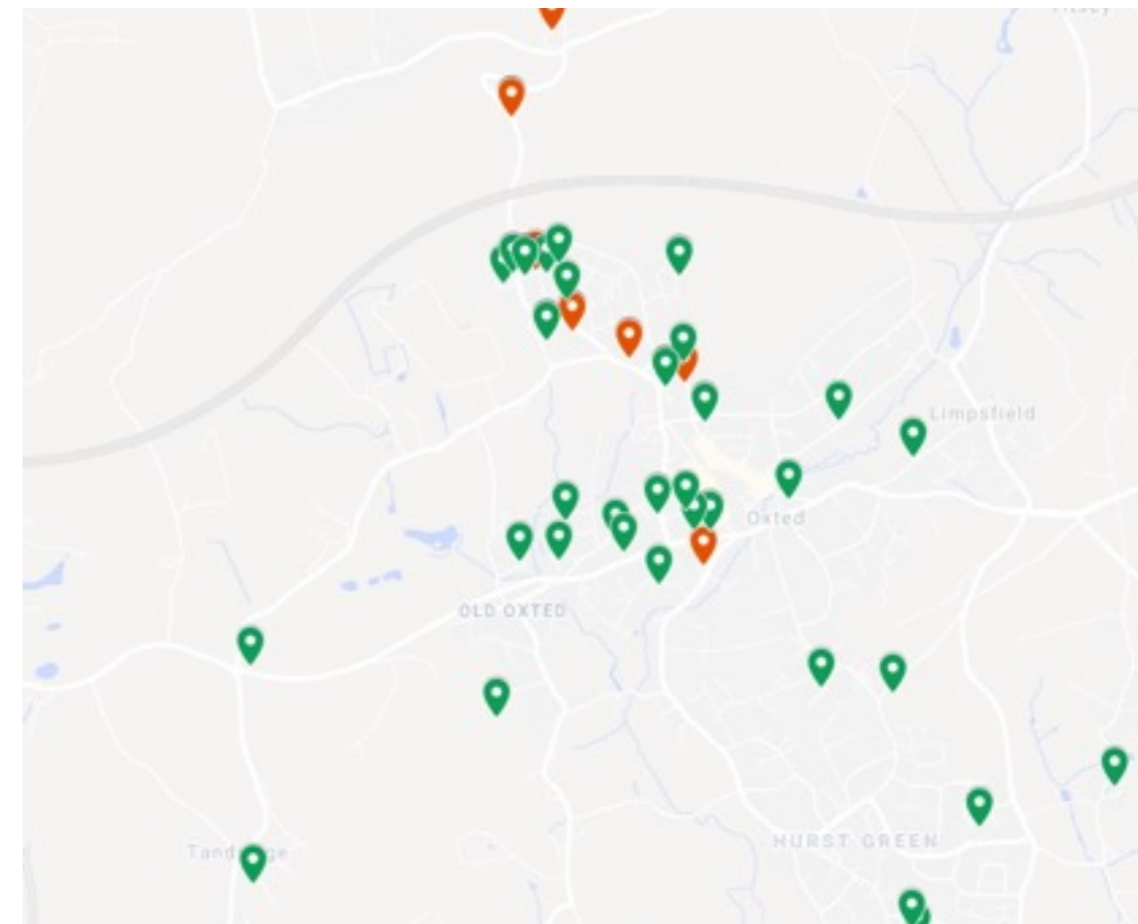
Location of respondents who would favour a continuation of the Quarry's commercial operations or the alternative redevelopment



Looking at the two options, would you favour a continuation of the quarry's commercial operations or the alternative redevelopment for housing, a care home and publicly accessible country park?



- Continuation of the Quarry - 19%
- Residential & Country Park - 64%
- Don't want to say - 8%
- No answer - 9%





Conclusion

A comprehensive public consultation exercise with Oxted residents on the future of Oxted Quarry was undertaken in November 2021.

This encompassed leaflets delivered to over 2,000 households, an introductory video film on the quarry operations, door-knocking, social media and a website. There was a two-week virtual exhibition on-line and two in-person exhibition sessions held at Oxted School, on a Thursday night and a Saturday.

The virtual and in-person exhibitions attracted high levels of attendance which reflected the very considerable local interest in the operation of the quarry. In addition, 81% of those providing written feedback via the questionnaire form said that the information provided was clear and easy to understand which gives confidence that the consultation was comprehensible.

The main conclusion to draw from the public consultation, both from discussions held at the in-person exhibitions and written responses received, was that the majority of respondents were, by a very clear margin, supportive of a residential-led alternative for the site.

The clear-cut view in favour of considering an alternative residential development is demonstrated by the answers received to the key question as to whether consultees had a preference for a continuation of the quarry activity or the residential option. Almost two-thirds opted for the residential option (64%) with only 19% opting for a continuation of the quarry activity when this straight choice was presented. There was also considerable support for the benefits that could come with a residential development such as providing public access to the remainder of the land (i.e. through the provision of a country park), refurbishment of the kilns and the provision of a care home.

It is worthwhile adding as context to this conclusion that in general discussions with residents at the exhibitions the majority of visitors expressed the view that whilst they may be supportive of the principle of a residential development in order to cease the quarry operations, it was important to know how many houses would be included in any new development within the proposed range of 'up to 100 homes' as set out in this initial consultation.

In response to this Southern Gravel are now working-up the detail of one or more potential schemes and will then undertake a further consultation with the local community.

