



Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Development Control Document Sustainability Appraisal Report

Non-Technical Summary

**Centre for Sustainability (C4S) in association with
Enfusion**



Non Technical Summary

Background

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been carried out on the Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council Minerals Development Control Policy to meet new regulations¹, as the plan has the potential for significant environmental effects, and as it sets the framework for Minerals development projects.

The main purpose of SEA is to see whether the plan is likely to have any significant environmental effects (both positive and negative). Recommendations are then made as to how adverse effects can be avoided, offset or reduced. A programme to monitor significant effects (if identified) is also needed (Figure NTS1).

The Environmental Report (ER) documents the findings of the assessment of the provisional Minerals Development Control Policy in order to give stakeholders and the public an opportunity to comment on the findings, at the same time as making any comments on the Minerals Development Control Policy. The results of the consultation on the Environmental Report will be documented in an 'SEA Statement', which will accompany the adopted Minerals Development Plan in December 2006 (precise dates for consultation to be confirmed with the Planning Inspectorate).

This document forms the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the Environmental Report and provides a summary, in non-technical language of the principal findings of the SEA. The SEA has been undertaken on behalf of Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council by the Centre for Sustainability at TRL.

The Assessment

After examining the environmental characteristics of the area, and identifying any trends (i.e. is the situation getting better or worse?), the policy context of the Minerals Development Control Policy Document was reviewed.

This initial work was then used to identify the key environmental issues and opportunities that relate to the County of Wiltshire and the Borough of Swindon, and on which the assessment should focus. A series of SEA Objectives were developed to concentrate the subsequent assessment process on these key issues. The objectives for this assessment are shown in Table NTS1.

Consultations with the Countryside Agency, English Heritage, English Nature, and the Environment Agency were undertaken to confirm that they were in agreement with the findings of the initial stages, and to provide them with an opportunity to suggest changes to the assessment. Consultation with these bodies is a statutory requirement. In addition a wider group of local stakeholders were also included in the consultation exercises.

An assessment of the Minerals Development Control Policy components was carried out using the objectives to help focus this process. Both direct and indirect impacts that may result from implementing the plan were investigated. Where potentially significant adverse effects have been identified, methods to reduce the potential impact are proposed. Monitoring measures are also proposed, and these will be confirmed once the plan is adopted, and presented in the SEA Statement to be issued in December 2006 (precise dates for consultation to be confirmed with the Planning Inspectorate).

¹ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004).

NTS Figure 1: Summary of the SEA Process

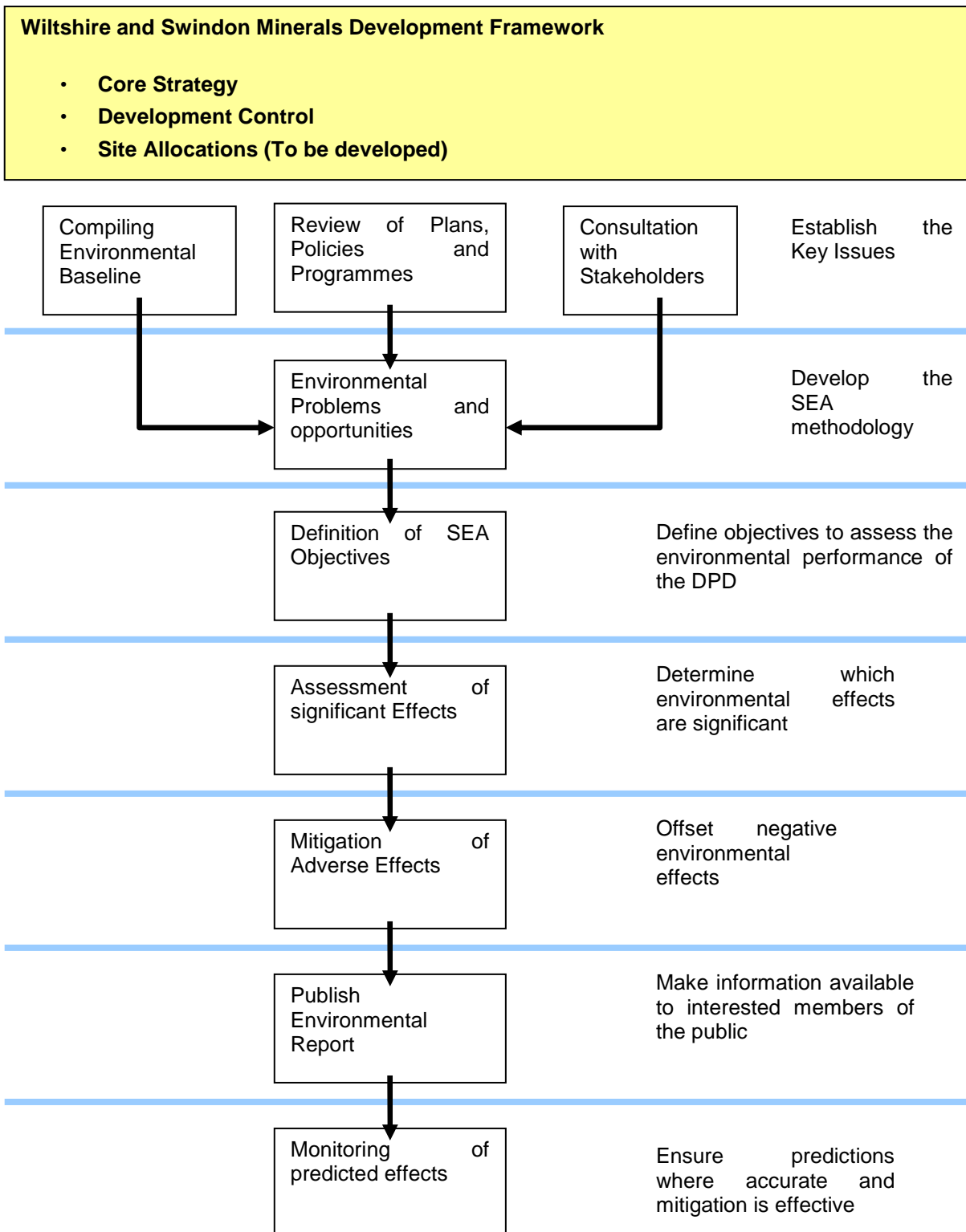


Table NTS1: SEA Objectives

	Does the policy...	SA / SEA Objectives
1	Help make suitable housing available and affordable for everyone	Make a positive sustainable contribution by minimising negative impacts to meet Wiltshire and Swindon's sub-regional apportionment
2	Promote stronger more vibrant communities	<p>Maintain or where possible enhance the quality of life for people affected by mineral working and / or ancillary development</p> <p>Ensure that both the positive and negative impacts are identified for the proximity of mineral workings and / or ancillary development to settlements and individual properties</p> <p>Minimise nuisance and health impacts (noise, dust, fumes and vibration) from mineral workings and HGV site traffic</p>
3	To foster a vibrant, varied economy, with particular emphasis on supporting regeneration projects in market towns	<p>Promote methods for protecting valuable mineral reserves</p> <p>Promote dialogue between all local authorities to ensure valuable mineral resources are not sterilised by non minerals development</p>
4	Encourage a switch from transporting freight by road to rail or water	<p>Encourage the best use of existing transport mode options for mineral supply</p> <p>Protect important distribution network nodes (e.g. rail facilities)</p> <p>Enhance and promote opportunities for sustainable transport options for mineral supply</p>
5	Protect habitats and species	<p>To enhance the biodiversity resource and if possible prevent damage to geodiversity. Consider avoidance of key biodiversity and geodiversity features, the wildlife friendly management of other biodiversity, the restoration and the creation of habitat and geoconservation of geodiversity features</p> <p>Avoid minerals development that would impact on designated sites</p> <p>Avoid the effects of development on identified sites of county / local importance, BAP habitats and other habitats of notable ecological value (e.g. brownfield sites)</p> <p>Avoid effects of development on populations of protected or notable species including UK BAP priority species</p> <p>Consider alternatives to mineral extraction in resource areas of high ecological value</p> <p>To explore, encourage and promote alternatives to mineral extraction in resource areas that fall within Strategic Nature Areas identified in the SW Regional Nature Map.</p> <p>Maximise the potential for habitat creation through positive restoration of mineral workings</p>

	Does the policy...	SA / SEA Objectives
		Ensure that the risk of bird-strike is kept to an absolute minimum through implementing appropriate mitigation and site management measures
6	Promote the conservation and wise use of land	<p>Minimise the area of land take per tonne of mineral (aggregate) produced if appropriate.</p> <p>Assess and evaluate early in the development phase the ability to restore the land use for mineral working and ancillary development to a high standard and ensure restored sites are properly managed in the long term future</p> <p>To minimise the loss of soil resources and to encourage the re-use of soils locally</p>
7	Protect and enhance landscape and townscape	<p>Protect designated and non designated areas of landscape or other amenity value</p> <p>Reduce visual intrusion from mineral workings and / or ancillary development</p> <p>Ensure all mineral sites and areas affected by mineral working are restored to a high standard</p> <p>Consider alternatives to mineral working in resource areas of high landscape value or areas of tranquillity</p> <p>Maintain and wherever possible enhance access and overall amenity of the countryside to residents and visitors</p> <p>(NB: Townscape objectives are covered under the community section.)</p>
8	Value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness including rural ways of life	<p>Minimise significant impacts on the countryside from all stages of mineral working and / or ancillary development</p> <p>Protect and improve the quality of countryside in proximity to mineral working and / or ancillary development</p> <p>Protect rights of way, open space and common land and maintain access to the countryside</p> <p>Protect the best and most versatile agricultural land</p>
9	Maintain and enhance cultural and historical assets	Preserve and enhance archaeological sites, historic building, Conservation Areas, historic parks and gardens and other locally important features and areas and their settings
10	Reduce vulnerability to flooding,	<p>Reduce risk of flooding.</p> <p>Minimise risk of flood pollution from minerals workings</p>
11	Keep water consumption within local carrying capacity limits (taking account of climate change)	<p>Minimise any adverse impacts on water resources at all stages of mineral working through effective site design and management</p> <p>Protect and where possible improve surface, groundwater and drinking water quality</p>

	Does the policy...	SA / SEA Objectives
12	Reduce waste produced by mineral development	Minimise the amount of waste produced per tonne of saleable mineral
13	Minimise the use of non-renewable resources and where possible promote the use of renewable resources	To reduce reliance upon primary, land-won minerals in favour of increasing the contribution made secondary and / or recycled materials?
14	Minimise land, water, air, light, noise, and generic pollution	Minimise the impact of mineral workings through implementing effective measures to control emissions to air (including particulates), dust, noise, groundwater, surface water and soils To protect and improve the quality of water resources

Wiltshire County Council Minerals Development Control Policy

The Minerals Development Control Policy has been prepared by the Minerals Strategy Team at Wiltshire County Council, and it sets out the strategy, vision and implementation programme for Minerals Developments in the County for the ten-year period 2006-2016. It has been produced in accordance with existing minerals planning guidance and the Draft MPS1 Consultation Paper on Minerals Policy Statement Planning and Minerals and associated Good Practice Guidance. This guidance requires the plan to focus on developing a sustainable plan that meets economic, social and environmental needs.

A final Minerals Development Control Policy will be published in December 2006 (precise dates for consultation to be confirmed with the Planning Inspectorate).

The development of the Minerals Development Control Policy has been informed by a consultation process involving all key stakeholders and the general public.

Minerals Development Control Policy Themes and Policies

Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council have developed five major policy themes for Minerals Development Control as summarised below:

Table NTS2: MDP Objectives

Theme 1 Key Criteria for Considering Minerals Development Proposals	
MDC1:	Key Criteria For Considering Minerals Development Proposals
Theme 2 Controlling the Impact of Minerals Development	
MDC2:	Controlling The Impact Of Minerals Development
MDC3:	Borrow Pits
MDC4:	Controlling The Impact Of Mineral Recycling Facilities
MDC5:	Safeguarding Mineral Resources, Rail-Head Facilities And Mineral Recycling Facilities
MDC2 Sub Policies	
MDC2A:	Controlling The Impact On Surface Water And Groundwater
MDC2B:	Controlling The Impact Of Noise, Dust And Vibration
MDC2C:	Protecting Residential Amenity

Theme 3 The Protection and Enhancement of Wiltshire and Swindon's Natural Assets	
MDC6:	Protection And Enhancement Of Landscape Character
MDC7:	Cultural Heritage
MDC8:	Sites Of Biodiversity And Geological Conservation Value
MDC9:	Ensuring The Protection And Enhancement Of Wiltshire And Swindon's Natural Assets Outside Designated Areas
Theme 4 Sustainable Minerals Transportation	
MDC10:	Sustainable Transportation Of Minerals
MDC11:	Proposals For New Rail Aggregate Depots
Theme 5 The Restoration, Aftercare and After-use of Mineral Workings	
MDC12:	Restoration, Aftercare And After-Use Of Mineral Workings
MDC13:	Restoration Within Airfield Safeguarding Areas

Environmental Issues

The SEA Regulations require that the Environmental Report describes any existing environmental problems that are relevant to the plan. Examples of those identified include:

- 7.8% of the areas of all SSSI in Wiltshire are in unfavourable condition and declining.
- Recycled highway materials are not currently being utilised due to lack of storage.
- The 2001 census shows a 10% increase in population compared with 1991 in Wiltshire leading to increased need for housing and infrastructure.
- Between 1993/2002 road traffic increased in the South West by 20% leading to slow travel times during peak periods.

Alternative Strategies of the MDP

One of the requirements of the SEA Regulations is to consider alternative approaches to achieving the objectives of the plan, so that the environmental effects of these alternatives can be assessed. Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Minerals strategy Teams have considered a variety of different MDP strategies and these have been subject to assessment to see how they fit against the SEA objectives. The assessment has also looked at an extra alternative (the 'without the plan option') which has been used as a comparison to show the effect on the SEA objectives that could result if the MDP were not to be implemented.

Options Considered

An iterative process was used to identify a number of alternative options. Initial Options were not assessed before a set of preferred options were developed as it was identified that the initial options were to "develop new policies" so a number of new policies and alternatives were developed for the preferred options stage. These were assessed by Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council.

Significant Effects Assessment and Improvements Proposal

Each of the plan elements in the preferred strategy, i.e. strategies, actions, schemes etc., has been evaluated against the assessment topics and objectives. The findings are as follows:

