

Preferred Area 2 - Eysey Manor Farm

Mineral: Sharp sand and gravel

Area: 156 hectares

Location: Eysey Manor Farm

Yield: 2.7 million tonnes of sharp sand and gravel

Proposal: Phased extraction of sharp sand and gravel with restoration to agriculture and nature conservation

Site Description

1. The Preferred Area lies between the A419(T) to the west, the C124 (proposed Eastern Spine Road) to the north and the River Thames and disused Thames and Severn Canal (which crosses part of the site and also forms part of the boundary) to the south. Preferred Area 3 "Alex Farm" adjoins the site to the east and Preferred Area 1 lies to the north of the C124. A small collection of buildings around Eysey Manor Farm are accessed via the minor road (UC2021) which joins the proposed Eastern Spine Road close to two occupied cottages which are located at the north of the Preferred Area. The Thames Path National Trail lies nearby on the south side of the River Thames.
2. The site is some 400m east of Cricklade, beyond the sewage works and A419(T), which is elevated on an embankment along much of its boundary with the site, minimising potential impacts on the town.
3. Land in the southern part of the Preferred Area close to the River Thames consists of flat open "improved" agricultural fields divided by ditches with mostly low hedges. Although the site has no landscape designation several of the ditches and hedges have been found to be species rich. The northern boundary of the site contains a watercourse, though the Ampney Brook, which crosses the site in a northsouth direction and the line of the drained canal, passing westeast across the site, which contains numerous mature trees providing a significant landscape feature and screen, are of greater importance.
4. The whole site lies within the floodplain of the Thames. North Meadow (SSSI, National Nature Reserve and cSAC) is approximately 200m to the west, beyond the A419(T).
5. Almost half of the site is high quality agricultural land (grade 3a), although the area closer to the Thames largely comprises Grade 4 land. The Preferred Area is within an Area of Special Archaeological Significance as defined in the North Wiltshire Local Plan, and is acknowledged to have a high archaeological potential with a number of features scattered across the site, including two areas believed to be of archaeological importance.