



**Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy
Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Submission
Draft Document**

Non-Technical Summary

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



Non-Technical Summary

Background

This Non-Technical Summary accompanies the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report¹ of the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Development Framework Core Strategy, as required by planning legislation and Government guidance.

SA and SEA assist planning authorities by aiding integration of sustainability considerations into their plans. The purpose of the Core Strategy is to set out the long-term spatial vision for minerals activities in Wiltshire and Swindon and the strategic policies to deliver that vision. It also sets a framework for other development planning documents that will follow at a later date, including the Development Control Policies Document and Site Allocations Document.



During 2005 a scoping process was carried out to identify the key sustainability issues relevant to minerals development in Wiltshire and Swindon. Other plans and programmes were reviewed to develop an understanding of the issues and priorities for Wiltshire and Swindon. Information on the current and future social, environmental and economic characteristics of the County and Unitary Authority Areas was also compiled.

A Framework setting out Sustainability Objectives for the SA/SEA was developed. A Scoping Report, outlining all the information compiled through the scoping process, was sent to a wide range of organisations and also made available on the Wiltshire County Council website. Comments were invited and helping to enhance the Framework.

The Framework of objectives was used to test the sustainability at each stage during the preparation of the Core Strategy. This included a comparative appraisal of Core Strategy Options (as represented in the document Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy Issues and Options Report), and a detailed appraisal of the Core Strategy Preferred Options (June 2006) and the Revised Core Strategy Preferred Options (May 2007).

Where there were opportunities to enhance the sustainability of the emerging policies, recommendations were made. Continued discussions between the planning and sustainability teams led to other recommendations to improve the sustainability of the Core Strategy. Some of these recommendations have been integrated into the Core Strategy during its development, demonstrating the influence of the SA on the plan.

¹ Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council commissioned the Centre for Sustainability at TRL and Enfusion to progress the SA and SEA work in 2005

The emerging Core Strategy is judged to make a positive contribution to the progression of Sustainable Development Objectives for minerals planning in Wiltshire and Swindon.

The SA/SEA assessment process that has been undertaken is summarised in Figure NTS 1.

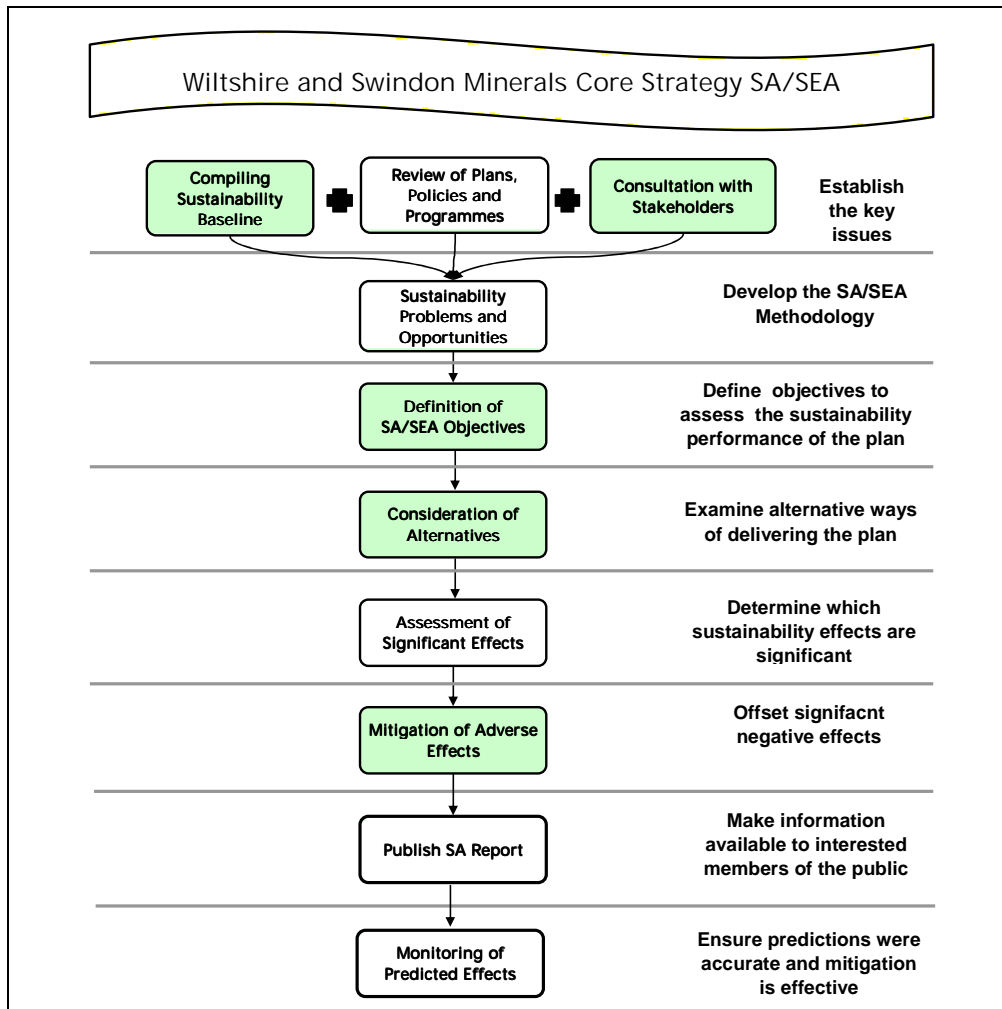


Figure NTS 1: Summary of the SA/SEA Process

Wiltshire & Swindon Minerals Core Strategy Development Plan Document – Submission Draft Document

The Minerals Core Strategy has been prepared jointly by officers from Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council. It sets out the strategy, vision and implementation programme for minerals developments in the plan area over the period 2006-2026. It has been produced in accordance with the most recent minerals planning guidance that requires plan-makers to focus on developing a sustainable plan that meets economic, social and environmental needs.

Development of the Minerals Core Strategy has been informed by a consultation process involving all key stakeholders and the general public. The final Minerals Core Strategy will be submitted to Government in March 2008.

The Minerals Core Strategy DPD Submission Draft contains a strategic vision and objectives and a series of policies covering the following themes:

- Meeting the need for minerals in Wiltshire and Swindon;
- Secondary and recycled aggregates;
- Non aggregate minerals;
- Collaborative working;
- Safeguarding minerals resources, rail-head facilities and minerals recycling facilities; and
- Managing the impacts of minerals development in Wiltshire and Swindon.



Environmental Issues

The SEA Regulations² require that the Environmental Report describes any existing environmental problems that are relevant to the plan. Examples of those identified for the area include:

- 8% of the areas of all Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Wiltshire are in unfavourable condition and are declining;
- Seven Air Quality Management Areas have been declared in Wiltshire due to high levels of pollutants;
- Overall Wiltshire has high levels of tranquillity, however loss of tranquillity and increased light pollution are areas of concern;
- Recycled highway materials are not currently being used 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; and
- Between 1993/2002 road traffic increased in the South West by 20% leading to slow journey times during peak periods.

² Statutory Instrument 2004 No.1633 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (HMSO 2004)

Sustainability Appraisal Framework

A Sustainability Appraisal Framework was compiled setting out sustainability objectives that aim to focus the assessment on key sustainability issues. The high level objectives are provided below:

- Help make suitable housing available and affordable for everyone;
- Promote stronger more vibrant communities;
- To foster a vibrant, varied economy, with particular emphasis on supporting regeneration projects in market towns;
- Encourage a switch from transporting freight by road to rail or water;
- Protect habitats and species;
- Promote the conservation and wise use of land;
- Protect and enhance landscape and townscape;
- Value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness including rural ways of life;
- Maintain and enhance cultural and historical assets;
- Reduce vulnerability to flooding;
- Keep water consumption within local carrying capacity limits (taking account of climate change);
- Reduce waste produced by mineral development;
- Minimise the use of non-renewable resources and where possible promote the use of renewable resources;
- Minimise land, water, air, light, noise, and generic pollution; and
- Minimise the impacts on climate change.

Minerals Core Strategy Alternatives

Alternative approaches to achieving the objectives of the plan have been assessed. Officers from the County and Borough Councils have considered a variety of different strategies and these have been subject to assessment to see how they fit against the sustainability 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 new plan were not to be implemented.

Options Considered

An iterative process was used to identify alternative options. Initial Options were assessed before a set of preferred options were developed in June 2006. These were assessed by C4S on behalf of Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council. Further work was then undertaken resulting in a revised set of preferred options being developed in April 2007 which were more focused on the specific needs and opportunities that related to the plan area. These revised preferred options were also assessed by C4S. These revised preferred options have since been amended and now make up the policies contained in the final Core Strategy.

Significant Effects Assessment

Each of the plan elements, including the vision, objectives and policies have been evaluated against the sustainability objectives. An assessment of whether the plan element would have a significant positive, a positive, a neutral, an uncertain, a negative or a significant negative effect on each sustainability objective has been made. The assessment also considered:

- Whether the impact will be in the short, medium or long term;
- How likely the effect is to occur i.e. a high, medium or low likelihood of the effect happening;
- At what scale the effect is likely to occur, i.e. within Wiltshire and Swindon, within the South-West region or within the UK and a wider global area; and
- Whether the effect will be temporary or permanent.

The findings of the assessment are as follows:

- **No significant negative** effects have been identified in the assessment of the Core Strategy Submission Draft.
- **Negative effects** (not considered significant) have been identified for the following policies:
 - MCS1 (Meeting the need for Primary Aggregate Minerals): negative effect on minerals resources;
 - MCS1 A B C (Strategic Approach to Identifying Future Supplies of Aggregate Minerals, Generic Criteria for Guiding the Location of Minerals Development, Creating a Link Between the Strategy, Site Allocation DPDs and Community Involvement): negative effects against land conservation, landscape, pollution and climate change objectives;
 - MCS3 (The Supply of Cement Raw Materials): negative effects against land conservation, landscape, rural ways of life, cultural assets, water consumption, minerals resources and climate change objectives; and
 - MCS4 (The Supply of Building Stones): negative effects on switching to freight transportation, land conservation, water consumption, waste, minerals resources and climate change objectives.
- **No significant positive** effects have been identified in the assessment of the Core Strategy Submission Draft.
- **Positive effects** (not considered significant) have been identified for the following policies:
 - Spatial Vision: positive effects on housing, communities, switching to freight transportation, habitats and species, land conservation, landscape, rural ways of life, cultural assets, flooding, water consumption, waste and minimising resource use;
 - Strategic Objectives: positive effects on housing, communities, economy, switching to freight transportation, habitats and species, land conservation, landscape, flooding, waste and minimising resource-use;
 - MCS1 (Meeting the need for Primary Aggregate Minerals): positive effects on: housing and pollution;

- MCS1 A B C (Strategic Approach to Identifying Future Supplies of Aggregate Minerals, Generic Criteria for Guiding the Location of Minerals Development, Creating a Link Between the Strategy, Site Allocation DPDs and Community Involvement): positive effects on communities, switching to freight transportation and habitats and species;
 - MCS2 (Maximising the Use of Secondary and Recycled Aggregates): positive effects on switching to freight transportation, land conservation, landscape, cultural assets, waste and minimising resource use;
 - MCS4 (Supply of Building Stones): positive effect on cultural assets;
 - MCS5 (Collaborative Working in the Upper Thames Valley): positive effects on communities, switching to freight transportation, habitats and species, landscape, land conservation, rural ways of life, cultural assets, flooding, water consumption, waste, minimising resource-use and pollution;
 - MCS6 (Safeguarding Minerals Resources, Rail Head Facilities and Minerals Recycling Facilities): positive effects on switching to freight transportation and landscape;
 - MCS7 (Protection and Enhancement of the Environment in Wiltshire and Swindon): positive effects on communities, habitats and species, landscape, rural ways of life, cultural assets, flooding and pollution;
 - MCS8 (Living with Minerals Developments – Protecting Residential Amenity): positive effects on communities, economy, land conservation, landscape and pollution;
 - MCS9 (Strategic Approach to Minerals Transportation): positive effects on switching to freight transportation, rural ways of life, waste, minimising resource-use, pollution and climate change;
 - MCS10 (Strategic Approach to Restoration and After-use of Minerals Developments): positive effects on communities, economy, habitats and species, landscape, land conservation, rural ways of life and water consumption; and
 - MCS11 (Strategy for the Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Review): positive effects on housing, communities, economy, habitats and species, landscape, water consumption and pollution.
- All but two of the Core Strategy Policies has been identified as having **uncertain effects** on one or more of the SA Objectives. MCS5 (Collaborative Working in the Upper Thames Valley) and MCS11 (Strategy for the Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Review) have been assessed as having no uncertain impacts upon the sustainability objectives.

Mitigation Measures

No **significant** negative effects have been identified in the plan but a range of mitigation measures have been identified to ensure that the plan maximises its positive effects. Some of these measures are appropriate at the strategic level of the Core Strategy, whereas others are more appropriate for lower level planning documents and for the mineral operations themselves.

Measures have also been identified to enhance some of the neutral and positive effects.

The measures include:

- Requiring best practice techniques to minimise greenhouse gas emissions;
- Encouraging a switch to more sustainable transport modes;
- Using natural vegetation for screening purposes;
- Restricting the hours of site operation;
- Monitor water consumption and implement measures to help limit water use; and
- Encouraging phased restoration.

Monitoring

There is a requirement in the SEA Regulations to monitor significant environmental effects from the implementation of plans and programmes. This should identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and the need for appropriate remedial action. No **significant** negative effects have been identified. Measures are being proposed to monitor uncertain and minor negative effects.

Monitoring will make use of existing monitoring arrangements and link with minerals management monitoring regimes where appropriate.

Next Steps

When the Core Strategy is adopted, it will be accompanied by an SEA Statement which will explain how the environmental assessment and consultation have influenced the plan making process. The monitoring programme will be also be presented at this stage.

Further Details

The main SA Report and technical appendices will be available along with the Minerals Development Framework documents on the Wiltshire County Council website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/.

The County Council, at County Hall, Trowbridge, Swindon Borough Unitary Authority Council Office, Libraries and District Councils will hold copies of the main report and non-technical summary along with the provisional Minerals Development Plan. Hard copies of any of the documents are available on request from Wiltshire County Council.