



Wiltshire & Swindon Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD

Pre-Submission

Sustainability Appraisal Report

NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

January 2012

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



Non Technical Summary

Background

This document is the summary of the Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Wiltshire and Swindon Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (Pre-submission Report 2011). It describes how the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process has been used to assist in planning for the development and the use of land for aggregate extraction, as required by planning legislation and Government guidance.

The SA supports the mineral planning process, with the aim of achieving sustainable mineral extraction through an ongoing dialogue and assessment process during the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPDs). The SA considers the social, economic and environmental implications of mineral extraction operations.

Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council are working jointly on the production of a Minerals and Waste Development Framework for the County and Borough and commissioned the Centre for Sustainability (C4S) at TRL and Enfusion to progress the SA work.

Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD

The purpose of the Site Allocations DPD is to provide detailed local expression to the adopted Minerals Core Strategy in terms of the identification of sites that the Councils consider will be required in order to deliver the demand for aggregate minerals.



Following on from community consultation activities in 2007 to help develop a site identification process, the Councils published and

consulted on a 'long-list' of potential aggregate sites in August 2010. Each site was assessed using a series of exclusionary and discretionary environmental and sustainability criteria to determine if the site was suitable for further, more detailed consideration. Some sites were removed at this stage due to sustainability constraints whilst some others were withdrawn by landowners. A total of 22 sites were taken forward for more detailed assessment with seven sites making it through this second round of assessment to now be included in the Pre-submission (Regulation 27) document and listed as the proposed sites in Wiltshire and Swindon to be considered for future aggregate extraction to 2026.

Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment

Planning legislation requires that DPDs are subject to a SA, a systematic process that is designed to evaluate the predicted social, economic and environmental effects of development planning. European and UK legislation require that the DPDs are also subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a process

that considers the effects of development planning on the environment. Where significant adverse effects are predicted, the SEA aims to identify means to avoid or mitigate such effects. Government guidance advises that these two processes should be carried out together and requires DPDs to be subject to a SA incorporating SEA. The Wiltshire and Swindon Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD has been prepared in accordance with these requirements for a SA/SEA.

The Stages of Sustainability Appraisal

Government guidance outlines stages of SA work that need to be carried out as the LDF is being prepared:

- Stage A: Setting Context & Scope
- Stage B: Developing Options & Assessing Effects
- Stage C: Preparing the SA Report
- Stage D: Consulting on the Plan & the SA
- Stage E: Monitoring Implementation of the Plan

The Character of Wiltshire and Swindon

Wiltshire and Swindon are located in the east of the region of South West England and cover an area of 3,486 square kilometres. The area is predominantly rural in character, with the majority of settlements being market towns. Swindon is the largest settlement, with other significant sized settlements including Salisbury, Trowbridge and Chippenham.

Wiltshire has a high quality environment, with over two thirds of the Plan area designated for its international, national and local environmental importance. This includes three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): the Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs, the North Wessex Downs and the Cotswolds. It includes a number of European sites designated for ecological importance and over 130 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are also approximately 14,000 listed buildings, 10 Historic Parks and Gardens and more than 250 Conservation Areas.



Issues for Sustainability

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.

Examples of issues identified in this scoping process include:

- 8% of the areas of all Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Wiltshire are in unfavourable condition and are declining;
- Six 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;
- 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.

Sustainability Appraisal Framework

The SA/SEA Scoping in 2005 covered all the Minerals Development Plan Documents which form part of the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals and Waste Development Framework. The SA Framework developed through this scoping process was sent to a wide range of organisations and also made available on the Councils' websites. The Scoping consultation took place from November 2005 to January 2006 and comments received were incorporated into the SA Framework.

For the Site Allocations DPD revisions to the SA Framework were made to reflect the locationally specific nature of the proposals and these changes were subject to consultation in May-June 2009. This resulted in the following SA Objectives being agreed for use for assessing each of the sites proposed in the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations Pre-submission DPD as well as the Plan as a whole:

Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations SA Objectives

1. Promote stronger more vibrant communities
2. Protect and improve the health and well-being of people living, working and visiting Wiltshire and Swindon and adjacent areas
3. Foster a vibrant, varied economy
4. Encourage more sustainable transportation of minerals and reduce the impacts of transport
5. Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity
6. Promote the conservation and wise use of land
7. Protect and enhance landscape and townscape
8. Maintain and enhance cultural and historical assets
9. Keep water consumption within local carrying capacity limits (taking account of climate change)
10. Minimise waste and the use of non-renewable minerals resources and where possible promote the use of renewable resources
11. Minimise land, water, air, light, noise, and genetic pollution
12. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
13. Ensure that adequate measures are in place to adapt to the impacts of climate change

C4S and their partners Enfusion worked closely with the Councils to ensure that the SA/SEA objectives were fully incorporated into the site selection and site appraisal methodology so that a single appraisal could be undertaken by Council officers, with C4S undertaking an independent quality assurance role. This method of working avoided unnecessary duplication of appraisal effort.

Aggregate Minerals Site Alternatives

Minerals can only be extracted where they exist and the Councils are therefore restricted in terms of the alternative sites that can be considered. The Plan area contains reserves of sharp sand & gravel and soft-sand with both types being needed to serve the local building market. There has therefore been a need to consider alternative sites for both resource types.

During the development of the DPD the Councils considered an option which would involve only including sites that have backing from the minerals industry. However this option has not been taken forward as the industry did not provide enough sites to meet local forecast demand and the option would therefore have resulted in uncertainty as to where future new sites should be taken forward once those sites currently with industry support have been worked out. This could mean that speculative applications are brought forward in areas outside of those considered to be the most suitable for development.

Appraisal of the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations Pre-Submission DPD

Each of the sites considered for inclusion in the Plan have been appraised against a series of sustainability and deliverability criteria. These criteria have incorporated the SA objectives developed and used for all the previous stages of developing the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Development Plan Documents.

An initial list of 62 potential sites was reduced down to 22 possible sites following initial appraisal and a consultation period with the public and key stakeholders. Sites were ruled out for reasons such as poor access; impacts on the local communities; and effects on the historic environment, with some being, simply withdrawn from further consideration by the landowners.

The 22 remaining sites were then subject to further detailed assessment in the areas of ecology; transport; landscape and visual impact; historic built environment; and archaeology. These detailed assessment resulted in a further 14 sites being removed from further consideration, leaving seven sites for inclusion in the Pre-Submission DPD (NB: from this stage onwards two sites adjacent to Brickworth Quarry were considered as a single site due to their similar constraints, restoration proposals, proximity, and the likelihood that they would be worked in a phased manner).

Further detailed assessments in relation to noise, air quality and the water environment were then undertaken on the remaining sites (where relevant) in order to obtain additional details on the potential impacts of minerals extraction operations at these sites.

As well as considering the individual sites in isolation, the sustainability appraisal also considered the cumulative effects that could result from developing the seven sites as a whole during the Plan period. This wider assessment process also considered the potential for cross-boundary effects that may be felt in neighbouring counties (e.g. in Gloucestershire and Hampshire).

Those sites which had major constraints in terms of sustainability were removed from consideration at the initial stage of assessment, with the next stage of assessment removing further sites due to constraints identified in the more detailed assessments.

The seven sites that are included in the Pre-Submission DPD are not without constraints, but the need for Wiltshire and Swindon to produce aggregates for local markets means that there is a requirement for the Councils to identify a certain number of sites to deliver against an agreed target.

Potential sustainability issues identified for the sites include:

Site U3 – Cox’s Farm (east of Marston Meysey)

- Site within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 1
- The site is considered to be in an area of high archaeological potential
- Issues relating to the suitability of the local road network
- Potential impacts on the setting of the village of Marston Meysey
- Noise issues for some neighbouring buildings
- Some potential for dust impacts
- Potential for restoration of site to wet woodland or return to agriculture
- The site is adjacent to RAF Fairford and stand-off distances to the base perimeter will need to be agreed

Site U4 - Blackburr Farm (north west of Castle Eaton)

- Potential impact on the setting of St Mary’s Church and Castle Eaton Conservation Area, impact on Second Chance Touring Park and local landscape impacts
- Area is considered to be an area of high archaeological potential
- Issues relating to the suitability of the local road network
- Noise issues for some neighbouring buildings
- Some potential for dust impacts
- Potential hydrogeological issues through proximity to the River Thames
- Potential for restoration of site to wet woodland / reedbed or to grazing pasture. Also potential to restore the canal.

Site U5 – North Farm (south west of Castle Eaton)

- Potential impact on the setting of Castle Eaton Conservation Area
- Potential impact on Second Chance Touring Park
- The site is considered to be in an area of high archaeological potential
- Issues with site access
- Noise issues for some neighbouring buildings
- Some potential for dust impacts
- Potential hydrogeological issues through proximity to the River Thames
- Potential for restoration of site to wet woodland or to grazing pasture.

Site U7 - Land East of Calcutt

- Listed buildings in proximity to site and the area is considered to be of medium archaeological potential
- Local Road/site access issues
- Proximity of the site to North Meadow Special Area of Conservation and the River Thames
- Noise issues for some neighbouring buildings
- Some potential for dust impacts
- Potential for restoration of site to wet woodland or to grazing pasture

Site U22 - Land at Cotswold Community

- Impacts on listed buildings
- The site is considered to be in an area of high archaeological potential
- Site is adjacent to a Scheduled Monument
- Access to the local road network is considered to be problematic
- Some potential for dust impacts
- Potential for restoration of site to open water with reedbeds

Site C3 - Land near Compton Bassett

- Potential access constraints
- Some potential for dust and air quality impacts
- Potential for restoration of site to agriculture with woodland planting

Site SE2/SE3 - Extension to Brickworth Quarry

- Area is classified as ancient woodland (based on the soils and seed bed)

- Some potential for dust impacts
- Potential for restoration of site to agriculture with woodland planting

The assessment of cumulative effects examined how the DPD as a whole might give rise to significant effects both within the Plan area and also in neighbouring counties. Given the proximity of the sites in the Upper Thames Valley to the Gloucestershire border there is the potential for cumulative effects relating to transportation of minerals from the combination of sites either side of the county boundary.

In addition, combined effects resulting from the cluster of proposed and existing sites around Marston Meysey and Castle Eaton and the two sites adjacent to Brickworth Quarry will need to be taken into account. These include effects on the environment, for example on the water environment in relation to hydrology from dewatering as well as changes to flood risk, and effects on local communities and amenity. Phasing of the extraction at these sites will limit the magnitude of impacts at any one point in time, however this will mean that the time over which effects will be felt will be prolonged.

Given the mitigation measures available none of the effects that have been predicted in relation to the individual sites, or the wider Plan as a whole, are considered to be significant. However there remain some issues which will need to be addressed through detailed planning application processes when the proposed sites are taken forward for mineral extraction operations.

Mitigation Measures

The policies that are included in the adopted Minerals Development Control Policies Development Plan Document will ensure that the impacts of extraction and transportation activities are minimised, whilst also seeking to provide environmental enhancements and community benefits through the restoration of sites post-extraction.

The overarching aim of the Minerals Development Control Policies DPD is to ensure that applications for minerals development received by Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council result in sites that are operated and managed to high standards with minimum impacts to local communities and the environment.

The mitigation measures for aggregate sites are more appropriately dealt with at the planning application stage when details regarding the extraction timing and processes will be known. Mitigation may include, for example, the phased restoration of the site; dust suppression measures; or transport management to minimise disruption to the local road network.

Monitoring

There is a requirement in the SEA Regulations to monitor significant environmental effects from the implementation of plans and programmes. This monitoring could also help to identify unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage along with the need for appropriate remedial action. No significant effects have been identified within the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD, however measures are being proposed to monitor uncertain and minor negative effects.

The Minerals and Waste Development Framework is being developed as an on-going, iterative process, in which stakeholders are kept up to date through a rolling process of public involvement, monitoring and, where necessary, adjustment of the Plan. The monitoring of the significant effects of any plan of this type is an essential part of the SEA process, and the Councils believe that all stakeholders should have an opportunity to be part of the process.

The Councils have developed one set of indicators to meet the monitoring requirements for both the Minerals and Waste Development Framework and SA processes. The key sustainability issues identified in the SA Scoping Report, including consultation, and the SA of the Core Strategy DPD and Development Control Policies DPD have assisted in developing appropriate indicators and targets for monitoring.

Next Steps

When the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD 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 also be presented at this stage.

How to Comment on the Report

The SA Report, Non-Technical Summary and technical appendices will be available along with the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations Pre-Submission DPD on the Wiltshire Council website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/. Comments can be made online.

The Councils (at County Hall, Trowbridge; Watt Tyler House, Swindon; and all libraries in the County and Borough) will hold copies of the main report and/or Non-Technical Summary along with the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations Pre-submission DPD. Hard copies of any of the documents are available on request from the address below. If you wish to make comments in writing, please direct them to:

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