

## Norfolk Minerals and Waste Local Plan

Minerals Site Specific Allocations  
Development Plan Document (DPD) –  
Single Issue Silica Sand Review

### **Sustainability Appraisal Report – Non-technical summary**



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### **Sustainability Appraisal Report – Non-technical summary**

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**Acronyms and abbreviations** used in this report are listed below:

<b>AONB</b>	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
<b>DPD</b>	Development Plan Document
<b>NMWDF</b>	Norfolk Minerals and Waste Development Framework
<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
<b>SA</b>	Sustainability Appraisal
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment

## **Non-Technical Summary**

The principles of the planning system for England are set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Localism Act 2010), the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Policy for Waste and the National Planning Practice Guidance.

The adopted Norfolk Minerals and Waste Development Framework (NMWDF) consists of the Core Strategy and Minerals and Waste Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (DPD), the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD and the Waste Site Specific Allocations DPD which together contain the policies for the development and use of land for minerals extraction and associated development and waste management facilities in Norfolk. These documents form the Local Plan for minerals and waste planning in Norfolk up to the end of 2026.

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, there is a requirement for local planning authorities to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) on its Local Plan. Additionally, in June 2004, as assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, known as Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), became a requirement under European Directive 2001/42/EC. This Directive also applies to Local Plans.

In accordance with the Act, the Directive, and Government guidance, a combined SA/SEA was undertaken on the Development Plan Documents within Norfolk's adopted Minerals and Waste Development Framework.

There is a requirement within the NMWDF for a process of annual monitoring and a five yearly review of all the Development Plan Documents. There is also a requirement for a Silica Sand Single Issue Review of the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD to be undertaken. An SEA/SA will be undertaken of each review. The Scoping Report published in March 2015 was the first stage (Stage A) in this process.

The SA/SEA process follows the requirements of the SEA Directive and Regulations and the National Planning Practice Guidance. The SEA/SA Scoping Report built on the previous SEA/SA for the Minerals and Waste Site Specific Allocations and Minerals and Waste Core Strategy, to provide an up to date assessment for the Silica Sand Review and the review of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy in 2016.

**The Sustainability Appraisal Report has been published in two parts. Part A is the Scoping Report and Part B assesses the effects of alternative options for the Silica Sand Review.**

The Scoping Report (Part A) provides an outline of the baseline information, key issues, relevant plans and programmes and SA/SEA framework and includes the following information:

- Statutory context;
- Influences of other plans and programmes;
- Sustainability baseline information;
- Issues for sustainable development; and
- Sustainability Appraisal Framework.

### **Policy, Plans and Programmes Review**

A review of relevant European, national and local planning policy has been undertaken as part of the SA/SEA process. The review highlights how the Silica Sand Review of the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD can contribute to delivering wider national and local objectives, whilst ensuring that key environmental protection objectives (such as the EU Wild Birds Directive and EU Habitats Directive) are respected.

### **Sustainability Baseline**

The environmental, social and economic baseline for Norfolk was gathered in order to provide a base to predict future baseline evolution and assess the effects of the Silica Sand Review and the review of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy. Baseline information collection was based on specific indicators included in the monitoring and implementation framework of the adopted Norfolk Minerals and Waste Plans. Analysis of trends and targets was used to help predict how the baseline might evolve without the implementation of the Silica Sand Review and the review of the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy.

### **Sustainability Problems and Opportunities**

A number of problems and issues were identified from a review of the baseline information which could affect Norfolk and its sustainable development in the future. Key problems and issues of relevance to the Silica Sand Review included:

#### **Climate change**

- Norfolk is predicted to have warmer, drier, summers and wetter warmer winters. Sea level is predicted to rise.
- Carbon dioxide and methane emissions should be reduced from minerals extraction by reducing road transportation, encouraging energy efficient buildings and the provision of low carbon or renewable energy sources.

#### **Air quality**

- Air quality Management Areas are designated in King's Lynn due to traffic congestion.
- Minimise air pollution emissions from minerals extraction and associated transportation.

#### **Population**

- Need to ensure that minerals developments do not adversely affect the amenity of local communities, through their location and operations, including transport impacts and cumulative impacts.

#### **Historic Environment**

- Potential for minerals extraction to affect the setting of heritage assets.
- Need to protect and enhance heritage assets through appropriate location and design of minerals extraction and restoration schemes.

### **Biodiversity, flora and fauna**

- Problems of land take for development, water pollution affecting nature conservation designations and the loss of finite geodiversity resources.
- Need to protect and enhance habitats, species and geodiversity features as part of minerals extraction planning, including through restoration schemes.

### **Landscape**

- Gradual loss of countryside, landscape and tranquillity to development.
- The potential for minerals extraction to impact on the AONB and Heritage Coast as well as landscape character
- Need to protect and enhance the landscape through appropriate location and design of minerals extraction, including through restoration schemes.

### **Human health**

- Need to ensure that minerals extraction does not exacerbate health deprivation and take into account cumulative impacts.
- Provide enhancement to public open space, public rights of way and recreation through restoration schemes.

### **Water, soil**

- Only a small percentage of the rivers in Norfolk have been classified as good status or better status by the Environment Agency.
- Need to preserve Norfolk's best and most versatile (grades 1, 2, or 3a) agricultural land
- Need to ensure that minerals extraction does not negatively affect surface water quantity or quality or groundwater quantity or quality

### **Material Assets**

- Increasing production of silica sand
- Need to safeguard mineral resources, extraction sites and infrastructure from being sterilised or prejudiced by non-mineral development

### **SA/SEA Framework**

The SEA Directive does not specifically require the use of objectives or indicators, but they are a recognised way in which environmental, social and economic effects can be described, analysed and compared. Objectives and indicators were developed based on the development framework objectives; local planning and sustainability objectives, and review of the baseline and key issues for Norfolk.

The 13 sustainability objectives to be used in the assessment of the Silica Sand Review are:

1. To adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing contributions to climate change
2. To improve air quality in line with the National Air Quality Standards
3. To minimise noise, vibration and visual intrusion
4. To improve accessibility to jobs, services and facilities and reduce social exclusion
5. To maintain and enhance the character of the townscape and historic environment
6. To protect and enhance Norfolk's biodiversity and geodiversity
7. To promote innovative solutions for the restoration and after-use of minerals and waste sites

8. To protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the countryside and landscape
9. To contribute to improved health and amenity of local communities in Norfolk
10. To protect and enhance water and soil quality in Norfolk
11. To promote sustainable use of minerals and waste resources
12. To reduce the risk of current and future flooding at new and existing development
13. To encourage employment opportunities and promote economic growth

Factors, to be used in scoring each proposed site, area and policy against each SA Objective have been proposed for use in the Silica Sand Review and the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Review.

### **Alternatives**

Development of the Silica Sand Review has been through a number of stages, including an Initial Consultation, 'Call for Sites and Preferred Options. Following the publication of the Initial Consultation document in March 2015, the responses from the public consultation were assessed and a Call for Sites undertaken in June 2015. Sufficient suitable sites to meet the shortfall were not submitted. Therefore, as proposed in the Initial Consultation document, planning officers at Norfolk County Council have defined proposed Areas of Search for future silica sand extraction instead and these areas have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal. In deciding on the methodology used to define the areas of search, alternatives were considered regarding which land should be excluded from areas of search. The alternative options used to define the areas of search were consulted on in the Initial Consultation and have also been subject to Sustainability Appraisal.

The proposed specific site and the defined areas of search have been assessed by planning officers in consultation with relevant stakeholders and Norfolk County Council's relevant specialist officers (including landscape, ecology, highways and archaeology).

At the Preferred Options stage the initial assessments of the potential site and the Areas of Search were published for consultation. The initial assessments included a preliminary conclusion regarding the acceptability of the proposed Specific Site and Areas of Search for inclusion in the Silica Sand Review for future silica sand extraction.

The consultation responses from the Preferred Options stage were used to refine the conclusions on which sites/areas would be submitted to the Secretary of State as specific site allocations, or areas of search. The Pre-Submission version of the Silica Sand Review will be published for representations on soundness and legal compliance prior to its submission to the Secretary of State, for examination by an independent Planning Inspector. On adoption, the sites or areas of search included in the Silica Sand Review for future silica sand extraction will form part of the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD.

### **Consultation**

In accordance with the SEA Directive, Norfolk County Council carried out a Scoping consultation on the Silica Sand Review, and the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Review with statutory environmental bodies and other key stakeholders for a six week period in March and April 2015. Consultation comments have been addressed

as much as possible in the subsequent stages of the SA/SEA and the development of the Silica Sand Review. The consultation comments received have been published, along with Norfolk County Council's planning officer responses, in the Initial Consultation Feedback Report in June 2015. The Feedback Report is available to view on Norfolk County Council's website at: <http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/ncc166849>

The Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report Parts A and B accompanied the Preferred Options version of the Silica Sand Review for a six week period of consultation. The comments received in response to this consultation have been taken into account and addressed through the development of the Pre-Submission version of the Silica Sand Review, which will form part of the Mineral Site Specific Allocations DPD when adopted. The consultation comments received have been published, along with Norfolk County Council's planning officer responses, in the Preferred Options Feedback Report in January 2016. The Feedback Report is available to view on Norfolk County Council's website at: <http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCC169742>.

### **Silica Sand Review of the Minerals Site Specific Allocations Appraisal Developing Strategic Alternatives**

In deciding on the methodology used to define the areas of search, alternatives were considered regarding which land should be excluded from areas of search. The alternative options used to define the areas of search were consulted on in the Initial Consultation and have also been subject to Sustainability Appraisal. The sustainability impacts have been assessed in a comparative way for the alternative options to dealing with each planning constraint. Therefore the first option for each constraint is assessed as a baseline and scored as neutral against each sustainability appraisal objective whilst the alternative option was assessed as either having the same effect, or a more positive or more negative effect than the first option for each of the sustainability appraisal objectives. This assessment helped to determine how the areas of search would be defined.

### **Likely significant environmental effects**

The proposed specific site and all ten defined areas of search have been assessed against the 13 SA/SEA objectives to determine whether they would have positive, neutral or negative effects. During the extraction stages of working minerals sites, the main significant environmental effects that could occur within the areas of search are harm to the countryside and landscape, the historic environment and biodiversity. There are also potential climate change and air quality impacts from extraction locations that are at a greater distance from the existing processing plant at Leziate, due to increased HGV movements. The areas of search that scored the most negatively are AOS A, AOS B, and AOS C. Six areas of search are allocated in the Pre-Submission version of the Silica Sand Review (AOS A, AOS D, AOS E, AOS F, AOS I and AOS J) and one specific site (SIL 01) is allocated. It is considered that all potential adverse impacts from silica sand extraction within the specific site and allocated areas of search could be satisfactorily mitigated at the planning application stage.

### **Mitigation measures**

In accordance with SA guidance, measures to prevent, reduce or offset significant adverse effects of implementing the Silica Sand Review of the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD have been considered based on the findings of the site and area of search appraisals. Typical mitigation measures recommended include requiring specific HGV routing, restoration to specified biodiversity habitats and the need for advanced screen-planting of trees. Appropriate location of mineral extraction sites is the most significant way that potential impacts can be mitigated.

### **Monitoring of significant effects**

A draft monitoring regime has been established in order to monitor the effects implementation of the plan has on sustainability. To monitor effects on the 13 SA objectives, a total of 58 indicators will be monitored with the results published in the Monitoring Report.

### **Difference the process has made**

In the Initial Sustainability Appraisal in October 2015, likely SA impacts of the strategic options to be used to define the areas of search were assessed. The Initial Sustainability Appraisal helped to determine the methodology used to define the areas of search. After areas of search were defined, all of the potential areas of search and the proposed specific site were assessed against the 13 Sustainability Appraisal objectives. The Initial Sustainability Appraisal helped inform which of the areas of search and specific site were appropriate to be allocated, which required boundary amendments to reduce adverse effects and which were not appropriate to allocate for future silica sand extraction.

This Sustainability Appraisal has been updated to take into account the responses to the 2015 consultation and the amended area of search boundaries. This Sustainability Appraisal has helped inform the determination of which areas of search and specific site are suitable to allocate and which are not suitable to allocate for future silica sand extraction.

## Glossary

**Air Quality Management Areas:** Areas designated by local authorities because they are not likely to achieve national air quality objectives by the relevant deadlines.

**Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB):** designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 for the purposes of preserving and enhancing their natural beauty.

**Area of Search:** areas where knowledge of mineral resources may be less certain but within which planning permission may be granted, particularly if there is a potential shortfall in supply. If it is not possible to designate Specific Sites, or Preferred Areas, the alternative way to plan for the steady and adequate supply of minerals is to designate Areas of Search.

**Biodiversity:** The variety of all life on earth (mammals, birds, fish, invertebrates, plants etc)

**Conservation Area:** An area designated by the Local Planning Authority under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as possessing special architectural or historical interest.

**Core Strategy (for Minerals and Waste):** This planning policy document contains the vision, objectives and strategic planning policies for minerals and waste development in Norfolk until 2026. The Minerals and Waste Core Strategy also includes Development Management policies which are used in the determination of planning applications to ensure that minerals extraction and associated development and waste management facilities can happen in a sustainable way.

**Cumulative Impact:** The combined impacts of a number of developments on the environment, amenity, health, traffic etc.

**Development Management:** The process through which the Council determines whether a proposal for development should be granted planning permission, taking into account the development plan and any other material considerations.

**Development Plan:** This includes adopted Local Plans and neighbourhood plans and is defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) that set out the planning policies and proposals for the development and use of land. Decisions on planning applications must conform to the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

**Examination:** The Local Plan will be subject to an independent examination by an independent planning inspector. The recommendations in the Inspectors report will inform the final adopted version, but are no longer legally-binding.

**Geodiversity:** The variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and landforms, together with the natural processes which shape the landscape.

**Groundwater:** Water within soil, sediments or rocks below the ground surface. Water contained within underground strata is referred to as an aquifer.

**Heritage asset:** A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.

**Listed building:** A building or other structure officially designated as being of special architectural, historical or cultural significance using provisions under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A listed building may not be demolished, extended or altered without special permission being granted by the Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority must also consider if development nearby could cause adverse impacts to the listed building, and whether mitigation could address these impacts.

**Local Planning Authority:** An organisation with statutory planning powers, ie the relevant County, District, Borough or Unitary Council.

**Local Plan:** The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). Current core strategies or other planning policies, which under the regulations would be considered to be development plan documents, form part of the Local Plan. The term includes old policies which have been saved under the 2004 Act.

**Mitigation:** Measures to reduce, avoid or remedy any adverse impacts caused by development.

**National Planning Policy Framework:** This document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and was published on 27 March 2012. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of Local and neighbourhood Plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. It states that in order to be considered sound a Local Plan should be consistent with national planning policy.

**National Planning Practice Guidance:** A web-based resource published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on 6 March 2014 and updated as needed. It is available at:  
<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/>

**Preferred Areas:** If it is not possible to designate Specific Sites, the next way to plan for a steady and adequate supply of minerals is to designate preferred areas, which are areas of known resources where planning permission might reasonably be anticipated. Such areas may also include essential operations associated with mineral extraction.

**Restoration:** Operations designed to return an area to an acceptable environmental state, whether for the resumption of the former land use or for a new use following mineral working. Involves the reinstatement of land by contouring, the spreading of soils or soil making materials etc.

**Scheduled Monuments:** Nationally important monuments and archaeological areas protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act

**Setting of a heritage asset:** The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

**Site Specific Allocations: Also known as Specific Sites** - where viable resources are known to exist, landowners are supportive of minerals development and the proposal is likely to be acceptable in planning terms. Such sites may also include

essential operations associated with mineral extraction. This is the preferred way to plan for the steady and adequate supply of minerals as it provides the necessary certainty on when and where development may take place.

**Strategic Environmental Assessment:** A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

**Submission:** A stage of the Local Plan preparation process where the plan is 'submitted' to the Secretary of State for independent examination by a planning inspector.

**Sustainability Appraisal:** An evaluation process for assessing the environmental, social, economic and other sustainability effects of plans and programmes. This is a statutory requirement.

**Sustainable development:** Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.