

# **Single Issue Silica Sand Review of the Norfolk Minerals Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Document (11 December 2017)**

**Annex to the Adoption Statement (prepared under Regulations 17, 26 & 35 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)**

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** Norfolk County Council adopted the Single Issue Silica Sand Review of the Norfolk Minerals Site Specific Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) on 11 December 2017. In accordance with Regulations 17, 26 & 35 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the County Council has prepared this statement that sets out:

- How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Single Issue Silica Sand Review;
- How the sustainability appraisal (environmental report) and the options expressed in consultation on the appraisal and the Single Issue Silica Sand Review have been taken into account;
- The reasons for choosing the Single Issue Silica Sand Review as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives; and
- Measures that are to be taken to monitor the sustainability effects of the Single Issue Silica Sand Review.

## **2. How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Single Issue Silica Sand Review of the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD**

**2.1** An integral part of preparing the Single Issue Silica Sand Review has involved the iterative process of Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The overall purpose of the SA is to evaluate the likely implications for sustainable development of the proposed Single Issue Silica Sand Review and reasonable alternatives to it. The aim is to inform the plan making process and ensure the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the policies of the Single Issue Silica Sand Review. The SA is required under paragraph 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, paragraph 165 of the National Planning Policy Framework and also satisfies the requirements for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) arising from the authority's obligations under the European Directive on SEA and implementing regulations in England and Wales.

**2.2** The SA commenced during 2014 and 2015, with the compilation of evidence base information and a scoping consultation with the statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England) and other key stakeholders. At each stage in the preparation of the Single Issue Silica Sand Review (Initial Consultation, Preferred Options, Pre-submission, Pre-submission Addendum: Modifications), the SA has tested the Single Issue Silica Sand Review against the 13 objectives that reflect relevant sustainable development policy objectives. The Single Issue Silica Sand Review and a number of options were

tested to determine their potential to give rise to significant effects, ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects. As part of the iterative process of developing the DPD, recommendations and amendments have been made by the SA at various stages and incorporated into the DPD as it has developed.

**2.3** A schedule of Additional Modifications was provided at Submission and following the completion of the Hearing sessions in March 2017 there were further Additional Modifications and Main Modifications submitted as part of the examination process, or arose during the hearing sessions. A Supplement to the final SA was produced to assess the Modifications. The modifications were found to be not significant in terms of sustainability.

### **3. How the sustainability appraisal (environmental report) and the opinions expressed in consultation on the appraisal and the Single Issue Silica Sand Review have been taken into account**

**3.1** The SA process has contributed to the development and refinement of the Single Issue Silica Sand Review by providing a robust assessment of the sustainability of the proposed options and policies throughout the plan preparation process. Each SA Report demonstrates how sustainability objectives have been taken into account at each stage, and integrated into the development of the Single Issue Silica Sand Review.

**3.2** Only one site was proposed for silica sand extraction in response to the 'call for sites' in 2015. The specific site proposed has an estimated mineral resource of 1.2 million tonnes. This is less than the amount needed to meet the shortfall in allocated sites over the plan period (to 2026). Therefore, Norfolk County Council defined areas of search, within which planning permission may be granted for future silica sand extraction, to meet the shortfall. The specific site and areas of search were consulted on in 2015 and assessed through a process which included Habitats Regulations Assessment, planning appraisal, consideration of consultation responses and SA to ensure that the specific site and areas of search are suitable to be allocated to meet the requirements for silica sand extraction set out in Policy CS1 (Mineral extraction) of the Core Strategy.

**3.3** The initial assessment concluded that the specific site and six of the ten potential areas of search were assessed as suitable for allocation, as reported in the Preferred Options consultation document (2015). The Pre-submission document (2016) contained one site and six areas of search considered suitable for allocation, along with a specific site policy and an areas of search policy which have been informed by the SA and sets out development principles that should be complied with at the planning application stage. The Pre-Submission Addendum: Modifications subsequently removed one of the areas of search and amended the boundary of another area of search, in response to the Pre-Submission representations received. Therefore the submitted document allocated one specific site and five areas of search.

**3.4** Following independent examination the adopted document allocates one specific site and four areas of search for silica sand extraction. The allocated site and areas of search (together with the site already allocated for silica sand extraction in the adopted Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD) meet the requirements of policy CS1 of the Core Strategy in respect of silica sand.

**3.5** The two-part Pre-Submission Statement of Consultation (Part 1, February 2016; part 2, November 2016) set out the main issues raised in consultation responses during the preparation of the Single Issue Silica Sand Review and the County Council's responses to them. In addition, full "representations feedback reports" were prepared, in which every representation was summarised and responded to.

- At the Initial Consultation stage comments were received from the Broads Authority, South Norfolk District Council, Norwich City Council, Historic England, Natural England, Environment Agency and Sibelco regarding the SA Scoping Report. The comments received were taken into account in the final SA Scoping Report of October 2015.
- At the Preferred Options stage, Kent County Council, Natural England and Historic England commented on the SA and did not require any changes.
- At the Pre-Submission stage Natural England stated it was generally satisfied that the Sustainability Appraisal is thorough and has been assessed correctly in relation to the natural environment. No other representations were made regarding the SA.
- At the Pre-Submission Modifications stage, no further comments were made regarding the SA.

**3.6** Following the Hearing sessions, but before the receipt of the Inspector's Report, the Main Modifications and Additional Modifications with details of any associated changes to the Sustainability Appraisal were published and consulted on for six weeks. The modifications were proposed by the County Council:

- In response to 'soundness' representations made by respondents; or
- In response to questions raised by the Inspector prior to the Hearing; or
- In response to discussions at the Hearing.

**3.7** There are two categories of changes, those required in order for the Single Issue Silica Sand Review to be sound (Appendix – Main Modifications of the Inspector's Report), and those which simply correct/update the DPD (Additional Modifications). Most of the modifications do not affect the findings of the SA and would not result in the addition or removal of any significant effects from the existing SA. The SA findings were revised for Area of Search D to refer to the Open Access Area designated under the CROW Act and to correct the agricultural land classification. The modification to not allocate AOS D also affected the findings of the SA.

**3.8** The resulting Main Modifications required to the Single Issue Silica Sand Review can be summarised as follows:

- Amending the Specific Site Allocation Policy SIL01 requirements regarding archaeological assessments, and to clarify that planning applications would need to comply with Policy DM15 on cumulative impacts.
- The removal of Area of Search D from the Silica Sand Review.
- Amending the boundary of Area of Search E to exclude the site of Fairstead Medieval Market.
- Updating the supporting text for AOS E regarding: the historic environment, the need for a planning application within AOS E to have regard to the historic landscape character of the wider area, with specific regard to the medieval landscape and to note that there is a water main within AOS E.

- Amend the supporting text for Area of Search F to refer to the presence of a public water main.
- Amending the Areas of Search Policy requirements regarding archaeological assessments, and to clarify that planning applications would need to comply with Policy DM15 on cumulative impacts.

**3.9** The impact of the Main Modifications on the SA were assessed in the Main Modifications and Additional Modifications document (July 2017) and resulted in some factual changes to the SA. No comments were received regarding the SA in response to the consultations on the Main Modifications and Additional Modifications.

#### **4. The reasons for choosing the Single Issue Silica Sand Review of the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives**

**4.1** The Single Issue Silica Sand Review has been developed and is in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Core Strategy. It:

- Allocates a specific site which is available and acceptable for silica sand extraction and allocates four suitable areas of search for silica sand extraction to meet the need set out in Core Strategy Policy CS1;
- Introduces a policy in respect of the allocated specific site and a policy in respect of the allocated areas of search which ensure that development within these allocations is acceptable in planning terms;

**4.2** As part of the iterative SA process used to develop the DPD, the alternative options for areas of search were individually tested against the sustainability objectives and consulted upon widely. The SA was used at each stage in the plan preparation process to inform the decision on which of the options were taken forward as policies and which would require amendments or further mitigation measures. Each SA report demonstrates how sustainability objectives have been taken into account at each stage and integrated into the development of the Single Issue Silica Sand Review.

**4.3** The Single Issue Silica Sand Review (with its supporting documents) has been found sound following examination and represents a sustainable approach to the minerals planning issues in the County.

#### **5. Measures that are to be taken to monitor the sustainability effects of the Single Issue Silica Sand Review of the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD**

**5.1** Chapter 8 of the SA makes recommendations for monitoring.

Chapter 8 of the Core Strategy – Monitoring and Implementation – sets out the objectives to be monitored, and how monitoring will take place (against defined indicators, with the implementation mechanism and time-scale included). The Monitoring Reports will, each year, record progress on monitoring the significant environmental, economic and social effects of the implementation of the Core Strategy and the Minerals Site Specific Allocations DPD.