

# West Berkshire

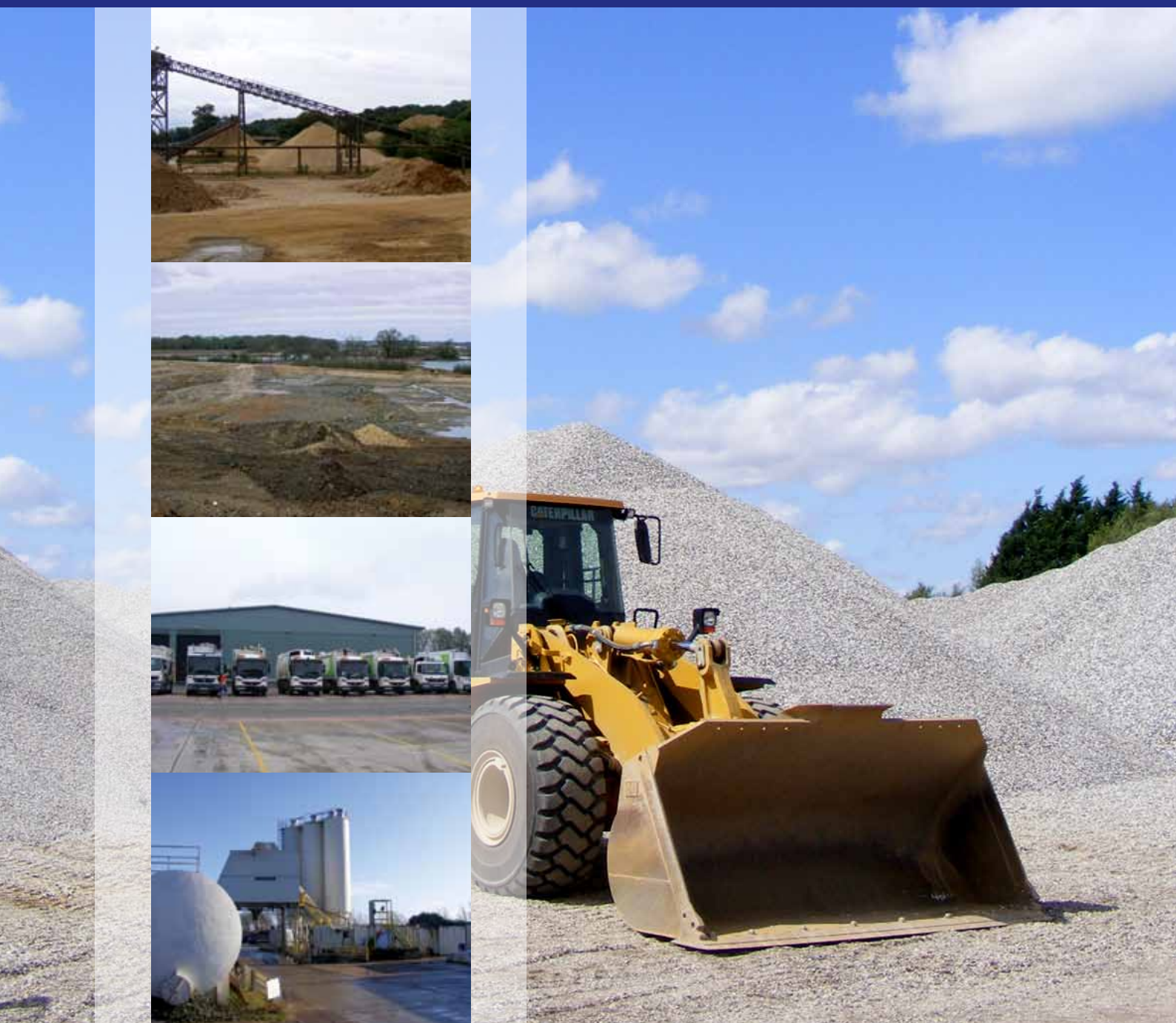
## Minerals and Waste Local Plan

Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA)

Non-Technical Summary

November 2020

### West Berkshire Local Plan



## **SA/SEA Non-technical summary**

### **1. Background**

The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report (“the SA/SEA”) is to ensure that sustainability issues are considered during the preparation and adoption of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP). The SA is an iterative process and it identifies the likely significant effects of the Local Plan and the extent to which implementation of the policies it contains will achieve social, environmental and economic sustainability objectives. This ensures that the SA results and consultation responses can feed into and influence the production of the Local Plan.

The Minerals and Waste Local Plan, when adopted will replace the existing saved minerals and waste planning policies as set out in the Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire (incorporating alterations) (2001) and the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (1998). The Minerals and Waste Local Plan will cover the period to 2037, setting out new policies to manage mineral and waste development in West Berkshire.

The SA/SEA has been produced by the Council for the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. A version of the SA/SEA was published alongside the Issues and Options Consultation (January 2014) and to accompany the Preferred Option consultation (May 2017). Comments received through the consultations have been taken into account, and where appropriate the SA/SEA has been updated to take these changes into account.

### **2. Purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal**

The Minerals and Waste Local Plan is subject to SA/SEA to ensure the environmental, social and environmental effects of the plan are in line with sustainable development objectives. The SA/SEA provides an integrated, ongoing assessment of the likely significant effects of the Local Plan as it is being prepared. It provides a means of translating sustainability objectives for the area into sustainable planning policies and should reflect global, national, regional and local sustainability problems and issues. The process involves a series of stages by which the content of the emerging plan is appraised against a series of sustainability objectives. The SA/SEA is fully integrated into the preparation of the Local Plan.

The SA/SEA must also incorporate the requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC on the ‘assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment’. This is commonly referred to as the Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA Directive.

### **3. Summary of the SA/SEA Process**

The first stage of the SA/SEA process is the production of the Scoping Report. This is where the scope and overall level of detail of the SA/SEA is set out. The Scoping Report sets out the sustainability objectives which are then used to assess the options of the Local Plan. The sustainability objectives are derived from the review of other plans and programmes, analysis of the baseline data and of the specific environmental issues and opportunities identified in West Berkshire.

The next stage of the SA/SEA process is where the options are developed and refined and the effects of the options are assessed. The options are tested against the SA/SEA objectives to predict and evaluate the effects of the policies/sites set out in the Local Plan. Mitigation measures are identified where necessary and recommendations to changes to the options are made. Any significant changes and revised options are then reassessed, and monitoring processes are set out in the Report.

As part of the process of selecting the proposed submission sites and policies, the likely significant effects of each option are evaluated. The effects of each of the options are then tested against the SA/SEA objectives and the results are set out in the SA/SEA report. The aim of the appraisal is to identify any significant conflicts or combined effects between the options and the SA/SEA objectives.

The SA/SEA report contains the following:

- Outline of contents, the methodology and description of the SA/SEA process and the specific SA/SEA tasks undertaken;
- A review of other plans and programmes and their relationship to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan;
- A description of the environmental and sustainability context (known as the baseline information);
- A summary of the key sustainability issues;
- The SA/SEA framework which sets out the SA/SEA objectives for assessing the Minerals and Waste Local Plan;
- A review of the site and policy options considered;
- A review of the Preferred Options Minerals and Waste Local Plan;

The SA/SEA report has been produced in tandem with the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

#### **4. Statement dealing with the difference which the SA process has made**

The SA/SEA Report and the preparation of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan have been carried out concurrently to ensure that the findings from the SA/SEA process have informed the emerging Local Plan.

In January 2014 the Council published its Issues and Options Minerals and Waste Local Plan for consultation. This set out the key issues the Council considered important for the Local Plan to cover and set out some options for dealing with these issues. The Issues and Options was accompanied by an SA/SEA report which reviewed each of the options considered. The SA/SEA and the comments received as part of the consultation were taken into account in the development of the Preferred Options Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

In May 2017 the Council published its Preferred Options Minerals and Waste Local Plan, setting out the policies and sites the council considered to be the most appropriate strategy to take forward. The SA/SEA process was used to help to identify the sites and policy options to be taken forward as preferred options and all proposed policies were also subject to SA/SEA. The Minerals and Waste Local Plan and the SA/SEA were updated following the Preferred Options consultation taking into account the comments received as part of the consultation. Where changes

were made to the Local Plan, the SA/SEA has been updated to reflect these changes. Modifications made to policies or sites since the preferred options have been reassessed.

The SA/SEA is an iterative process and so the comments received from the consultation on the Preferred Options have been taken into account and where changes have been made to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan the SA/SEA has been reviewed in light of these changes.

A summary of the SA/SEA can be found below.

## **5. Summary of likely significant effects of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan**

The summary of the SA/SEA findings have been divided up into three sections

- Strategic Policies
- Development Management Policies
- Site Allocations

Full details can be found in the SA/SEA Report (section 5), with the full site assessments and SA/SEA assessment forms in the appendices (Policies – Appendix 5, Site Assessments - Appendix 6).

### **5.1. Strategic Policies**

#### **Policy 1: Sustainable Development**

There will be an overall positive impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. The policy's aim is to ensure sustainable development is achieved in line with the direction of the NPPF. There is some potential for short/medium term impacts on any element of sustainability as a result of temporary development, such as mineral workings, but in the long term mitigation measures and restoration will result in natural or positive impacts on all elements of sustainability

#### **Policy 2: Landbank and Need**

Overall the policy will be likely to have a neutral impact on sustainability, however there are a number of potential positive impacts on economic sustainability as the policy will support the delivery of sites to meet the district's need for construction materials and provide employment as well as encouraging the use of recycled and secondary aggregates before virgin material.

The policy was updated following the Preferred Options to include reference to recycled and secondary aggregates and to update the figures included in the policy with the current LAA (2020). As a result the SA/SEA was updated to take into account these changes.

#### **Policy 3: Net Self-sufficiency in Waste Management**

Overall the inclusion of this policy in the local plan is likely to have a neutral impact on sustainability. There are a limited number of potential positive impacts resulting from the policy in relation to environmental and economic sustainability. In terms of environmental sustainability the policy seeks to move waste up the waste hierarchy, which promotes the reuse, recovery and recycling of waste over disposal. In terms of economic sustainability the policy will have a positive impact through the creation of jobs and the benefits to the economy that the waste industry can have, especially in

relation to the provision of reuse, recovery and recycling of materials which have an economic value. No potentially negative sustainability impacts have been identified.

#### **Policy 4: Location of Development – Construction Aggregates**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. While there are some potential negative environmental and social impacts as a result of this policy, especially in relation to the potential for soft Sand sites in the AONB to come forward where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. However, these are only likely to be short/medium term as mineral extraction is only temporary in nature and appropriate mitigation measures would be required. Following restoration of any site considered under the policy the overall impact should be neutral. There is a potential positive impact on economic sustainability as the policy sets out where there would be a presumption in favour of development for mineral extraction.

Following the Preferred Options this policy was updated to take into account the change in approach to soft sand sites and to include the allocation of specific sites. As a result the SA/SEA was reassessed. The changes to the policy did not result in any changes to the overall outcome of the SA/SEA assessment.

#### **Policy 5: Location of Development – General Waste Management Facilities**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There are a number of potential negative sustainability impacts identified, especially in relation to environmental sustainability. However, mitigation measures would be required and should reduce the impact, in many cases resulting in a neutral impact. There are also a number of potential positive impacts as a result of the policy on environmental and economic sustainability, through the use of previously developed land, and the impact on the economy of waste management facilities, especially those processing waste material for recycled/secondary materials.

#### **Policy 6: Location of Development – Specialist Waste Management Facilities**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There are some potential negative environmental and social sustainability impacts as a result of this policy; however, mitigation measures would be implemented to reduce this impact. There are potential positive economic and environmental sustainability impacts, economically in terms of employment and supporting the local economy.

Following the Preferred Options the policy wording was updated to provide clarification in relation to the types of specialist waste and facilities that would be considered under this policy. As a result the SA/SEA was reviewed, but no changes were considered necessary to the SA/SEA.

#### **Policy 7: Location of Development – Permanent Deposit of Waste to Land**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. While there are a number of potential negative environmental and social sustainability impacts associated with this policy, they are likely to be short/medium term impacts associated with the infilling process itself, but following completion of the works, there could be a potential positive impact on environmental sustainability as a result of the restoration of the site.

**Policy 8: Borrow Pits**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. While there are a number of potential negative environmental and social sustainability impacts associated with this policy, they are likely to be short/medium term impacts associated with the working of the site itself, following restoration of the site the overall impact should be neutral. There are potential positive impacts on economic sustainability through the supply of raw materials for construction projects.

**Policy 9: Minerals Safeguarding**

There is likely to be a significantly positive environmental and economic impact as a result of safeguarding primary aggregates. There is also a potential positive impact on environmental sustainability as the policy seeks to safeguard rail head sites, which will allow for material to be transported by rail, reducing reliance on road transport. There is a potential negative impact on environmental sustainability as a result of extraction on the local geology of an area. There is a possible positive impact on economic sustainability as a result of the policy as should sites within safeguarded areas come forward for mineral extraction this would provide primary aggregates for the construction industry.

**Policy 10: Waste Safeguarding**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. The policy seeks to safeguard existing waste sites, and therefore, there are likely to be positive environmental sustainability impacts in relation to waste management and reuse and recycling of waste materials and on the use of previously developed land. The policy is not predicted to have any negative impacts on sustainability.

**Policy 11: Chalk and Clay**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There are a number of potential negative impacts on environmental and social sustainability in the short/medium term. However, in the long term, due to the temporary nature of mineral extraction there should be an overall neutral impact on sustainability once the sites considered under this policy have been restored. There are potential positive impacts on environmental sustainability in terms of improved flood mitigation possibilities and economic sustainability through the creation of jobs and meeting local needs to material.

**Policy 12: Energy Minerals**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There are a number of potential negative impacts on environmental and social sustainability in the short/medium term. However, in the long term, due to the temporary nature of mineral extraction there should be an overall neutral impact on sustainability once the sites considered under this policy have been restored. There are potential positive impacts on economic sustainability through the creation of jobs and meeting the need for energy minerals.

**Policy 13: Radioactive Waste Treatment and Storage at AWE**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. The location of the site does not lend itself to use of rail or water transportation, which results in a potential negative impact on environmental sustainability, however,

material considered under this policy is likely to have been generated on the site and therefore, would not need to be transported, resulting in an overall neutral impact. There is a possible positive impact on environmental sustainability as the policy refers to development on an existing brownfield site.

#### **Policy 14: Reworking Old Inert Landfill Sites**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There are a number of potential negative impacts on environmental and social sustainability in the short/medium term as a result of the policy, however following the reworking and restoration of the site there should be no long term negative impacts. There are also a number of potential positive environmental impacts as reworking would only be considered where there would be net gains in landscape, biodiversity or amenity. These positive environmental impacts would be long term and permanent.

#### **Policy 15: Location of Permanent Construction Aggregates Infrastructure**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There are potential negative impacts on environmental and social sustainability without the implementation of adequate mitigation measures. There are potential positive impacts on economic sustainability through the production of material for the construction industry and environmental sustainability as the policy seeks for sites to be located on previously developed land, protecting agricultural land and soils.

#### **Policy 16: Temporary Minerals and Waste Infrastructure**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There are potential negative impacts on environmental and social sustainability in the short/medium term as a result of the policy, however following the completion of works and restoration of the site there should be no long term negative impacts. There are a number of potential positive environmental and economic impacts as the infrastructure considered under the policy would not result in additional traffic movements, and will result in material for the construction industry, diverting waste away from landfill for recycling or reuse therefore, providing benefits for the local and wider economy.

### **5.2. Development Management Policies**

#### **Policy 17: Restoration and After-use of Sites**

Overall there is likely to be a significantly positive impact on sustainability as a result of this policy as the policy seeks to deliver net gains for biodiversity. There are likely to be a number of positive impacts on environmental and social sustainability as a result of this policy, as the policy seeks a number of environmental or social benefits to be provided as part of site restoration.

The wording of the policy was significantly changed following the preferred options and as a result the SA/SEA was reviewed and updated.

#### **Policy 18: Landscape**

There is likely to be a significantly positive impact on environmental sustainability due to the focus of the policy on the protection of landscape character and townscape. There is also likely to be a positive impact on environmental

sustainability in terms of biodiversity and heritage assets as a result of the wording of the policy.

**Policy 19: Protected Landscapes**

There is likely to be a significantly positive impact on environmental sustainability due to the focus of the policy on the protection of landscape character of the AONB. There is potential for a positive impact on economic sustainability should a site be permitted in the exceptional circumstances set out in the policy.

**Policy 20: Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

There is likely to a significantly positive impact on environmental sustainability as a result of this policy, with potential positive impacts on social sustainability due to the focus of the policy being on protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity.

The wording of the policy was significantly changed following the preferred options and as a result the SA/SEA was reviewed and updated.

**Policy 21: Agricultural Land and Soils**

There will be a significant positive impact on environmental sustainability as the policy seeks to preserve the best and most versatile agricultural land and soils.

**Policy 22: Transport**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There is a potential positive environmental sustainability impact as a result of the policy's promotion of sustainable modes of transport. Sites considered under the policy could impact on traffic levels unless mitigation measures are implemented as required by the policy. There are no potentially negative impacts identified as a result of this policy.

**Policy 23: Public Rights of Way**

There will be a significant positive impact on environmental sustainability as the policy seeks to preserve the best and most versatile agricultural land and soils.

**Policy 24: Flooding**

There is likely to be a significantly positive impact on all elements of sustainability as a result of this policy as it specifically looks to reduce flood risk and take into account the impacts of climate change on flood risk.

**Policy 25: Climate Change**

There is likely to be a significantly positive impact on all elements of sustainability as a result of the policy's requirement to consider climate change and the risks associated with it. There are a number of other potential positive environmental impacts as a result of the policy specifically in relation to flood risk and sustainable transport.

**Policy 26: Public Health, Environment and Amenity**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. There is a potential positive environmental and social sustainability impact as a result of the policy's requirement to consider the impacts on the impacts on the local community and the natural, built and historic environment. Many of the predicted



impacts on the policy are neutral, as the policy requires consideration of public health and safety, amenity and quality of life are not detrimentally impacted. This does not necessarily mean that there would be a positive impact on sustainability, although mitigation measures could result in a positive impact.

### **Policy 27: Historic Environment**

Overall there is likely to be a potentially significant positive environmental effect as a result of the policy's focus on preserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Following the Preferred Options minor changes were made to the policy wording. The SA/SEA has been reviewed as a result but no changes were considered necessary.

### **Policy 28: Design**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. The policy requires consideration of a site's setting, which means that could be a positive impact on environmental and social sustainability in relation to the historic environment, townscape and landscape all of which can contribute to the setting of a site. There are no likely negative impacts as a result of this policy.

### **Policy 29: Cumulative Impacts**

Overall there is likely to be a neutral impact on sustainability as a result of this policy. As the policy seeks to ensure no cumulative impacts, the policy itself will not have any impact on sustainability, however, it will prevent potential negative impacts occurring if several sites were to come forward within close proximity to each other.

## **5.3. Site Allocations**

All sites considered to be realistic alternatives for development have been considered through the Site Assessment and SA/SEA process. All sites except those with permanent planning permission (which do not need to be allocated) were considered to be reasonable alternates for consideration for allocation. The site assessment process has been undertaken to inform the site selection work, and this has been used to identify the sites taken forward for consultation as preferred options and then proposed for allocation in the Proposed Submission plan. In some cases the SA/SEA outcomes are similar for a number of sites, where this is the case other factors in the site assessment are taken into account to help the decision making process.

The outcomes of the Preferred Options consultation, along with further technical work have been used to refine the site assessments and inform the recommendation of sites for allocation within the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Many of the sustainability impacts are likely to be short/medium term given the temporary nature of mineral workings, and therefore, in the long term the allocation of sites for mineral extraction should have a neutral, or even positive (especially in environmental terms), impact on sustainability through the restoration of the sites. There are positive economic impacts as a result of mineral extraction as mineral helps to support the local economy and provide material into local businesses, including housing building.

### **Sharp Sand and Gravel**

12 sites for sharp sand and gravel extraction were proposed to the Council for consideration in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Where a significantly negative impact on sustainability was predicted these sites have automatically be considered as unsuitable for allocation (MW001 Frouds Lane, MW009 Gravel Pit Farm, MW014 Padworth Park Farm). This is often in relation to environmental sustainability as a result of the impact on the landscape character of the area. A number of other sites have been reduced in site area, to take into account the landscape advice received, which in most cases means that the site would not be viable for extraction (MW003 Aldermaston Bridge, MW010 Spring Lane).

Seven sites were proposed as preferred options, from which choices would need to be made as to which sites to take forward for allocation in the final version of the plan. While all the sites were considered to be potentially suitable for allocation various factors, mainly affecting the deliverability of the sites within the plan period, have ruled a number of sites out for allocation in the plan (MW008 Firlands, MW012 Wasing Lower Farm, MW013 Manor Farm, MW016 Waterside Farm). Of the remaining sites, MW007 Cowpond Piece is considered to have a potentially significant impact on ecology and therefore, as there are other sites considered suitable for development this site is not proposed to be taken forward. One site is considered suitable for development and has been proposed for allocation in the plan (MW015 Tidney Bed).

Site policies have been developed for these sites, setting out what would be required on the sites and what documents/information would be required to support any planning applications coming forward on these sites.

### **Soft Sand**

Three soft sand sites were proposed to the Council for consideration in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The Preferred Options did not propose to allocate sites for soft sand, but following changes in circumstances and further information becoming available the LAA demonstrates that West Berkshire has a need for soft sand and therefore, the approach to soft sand has been reconsidered, with the proposal to allocate a site or sites to meet the need of West Berkshire.

Of the sites proposed to the Council, two (MW002 60 Acre Field MW005 Chieveley Services) are located within the AONB, and therefore, exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated for these sites to be considered for allocation.

The third site (MW011 Long Lane) is located outside of the AONB (although in the setting of the AONB), but there are considerable access constraints and therefore, the site is not considered to be deliverable. Therefore, the exceptional circumstances argument for the allocation of sites within the AONB need to be taken into account. This is not directly picked up by the SA/SEA.

Of the two sites in the AONB, MW005 Chieveley Services is considered to be acceptable in landscape terms, subject to mitigation measures, whereas MW002 60 Acre Field is not, and therefore the SA/SEA predicts a significantly negative impact

on environmental sustainability should the site be taken forward for allocation. As a result the Minerals and Waste Local Plan proposes to allocate MW005 Chieveley Services.

### **Waste Sites**

No waste sites have been proposed for allocation. Of the five sites submitted for consideration, four already benefit from permanent planning permission and therefore, do not need to be allocated. The fifth site was promoted for inert infill of a former mineral site, now a lake which is of ecological and recreational value. It is considered that inert waste from which no further value can be obtained should be used primarily in the restoration of permitted minerals sites to ensure that such sites can be restored to an acceptable landuse in a timely manner. In addition, the Local Waste Assessment (LWA) shows that there is no need for additional waste management capacity within the district, and the allocation of mineral sites would create void space for inert landfill material, therefore is not considered to be a reasonable alternative to consider this site further for allocation. As a result no waste sites are proposed for allocation.

### **The Sequential Test**

Although sand and gravel extraction is a water compatible activity the flood risk on each site has been taken into account through the site selection process through the Sequential Test.

While the proposed allocated sites at Tidney Bed and Chieveley Services are at risk from flooding (fluvial flooding at Tidney Bed and surface and ground water flooding at Chieveley Services) they are considered to be the most appropriate sites for allocation when considering all site selection factors.

## **6. Conclusion**

As a result of the SA/SEA work undertaken during the development of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan it most appropriate strategy has been taken forward into the Proposed Submission version of the Plan.

The Proposed Submission Minerals and Waste Local Plan is considered to represent the most suitable approach, from the options assessed, in order to achieve the sustainability objectives of the plan. Successful implementation of the Local Plan, and adequate mitigation of the potential negative effects identified will result in neutral, or in many cases positive sustainability impacts and sustainable development.

If you require this information in an alternative format or translation,  
please call 01635 42400 and ask for the Minerals and Waste  
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