

**Committee:** Environment Committee

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 18 January 2011

**10**

**Title:** Minerals Development Document: Preferred Approach

**Author:** Melanie Jones, Principal Planning Officer, Ext 461      Item for decision

## Summary

1. This report advises Members of the content of the Minerals Development Document: Preferred Approach which is currently out on consultation and seeks members' views on it in order to make representations within the consultation period.

## Recommendations

2. That the Council supports the preferred approach to minerals planning as set out in the consultation document. No objections are raised to the sites in Uttlesford being included as preferred sites in the plan subject to adequate safeguards being in place to reduce impacts during extraction and subsequent restoration. These impacts are identified in the site specific extracts attached as an appendix to this report. Further assessments will also need to be carried out as part of the planning application process.

## Financial Implications

3. None – there are no costs associated with the recommendation.

## Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Minerals Development Document: Preferred Approach, Essex County Council, December 2010.

## Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	Consultation is being carried out in accordance with the adopted Statement of Community Involvement.
Community Safety	N/A

Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	The Minerals Development Document is subject to a sustainability appraisal to assess economic, social and environmental impacts.
Ward-specific impacts	Mineral extraction from identified sites may have implications for affected and/or neighbouring wards.
Workforce/Workplace	N/A

## Situation

6. The Minerals Development Document (MDD) will form part of the Minerals and Waste Development Framework. The plan will cover the period from 2009 to 2028 and once it has been adopted the MDD will be the policy basis for determining planning applications for mineral extraction in the County. The current consultation closes on 17 February 2011. The County will use the responses from this consultation to inform work on the submission WDD which will be published later in 2011 and submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in 2012 before final adoption in 2013.
7. Over the plan period growth is expected to occur in all districts within Essex. The growth agenda places demands on natural resources and construction aggregates are essential to deliver and maintain the houses, schools and other essential infrastructure which will be needed. The total requirement for sand and gravel in Essex is 86.2 million tonnes for the plan period. Approx 44 million tonnes already has planning permission so there is a need to find new extraction sites (including extensions to existing sites) to supply around 42 million tonnes of sand and gravel reserves to 2028.
8. The objectives for the plan are:
  - To encourage more efficient use of minerals, greater use of recycled aggregates and reduce waste;
  - To identify and safeguard minerals resources of economic or conservation value, railhead and wharf facilities and safeguard strategic minerals infrastructure;
  - To identify primary minerals sites for a steady and adequate supply of minerals to meet the agreed sub-regional figure;

- To protect designated sites of landscape, wildlife, geodiversity, cultural and heritage importance;
  - To secure the high quality restoration of extraction sites at the earliest opportunity
  - To secure sustainable enhancements for communities and mitigate adverse environmental impacts including that on local landscape character and biodiversity.
9. The plan identifies a number of preferred approaches arising from the above objectives. This includes the need to protect the potential use of mineral deposits, transshipment sites and secondary processing facilities; maintain a 7 year land bank for sand and gravel and addressing the after use of mineral extraction sites.
10. A framework for the development of Core Strategy and Development Management Policies is also included. The preferred approach is for a general presumption against the granting of windfall sites on the basis that sufficient provision is being made through allocated sites, except where pre-extraction is necessary to avoid sterilisation of a mineral resource when other development is to take place. The preferred approach expects aggregate transportation to make best use of the functional route hierarchy for highway access. The expectation within the preferred approach is for local amenity, landscape, archaeology, water, versatile soils and nature conservation to be protected.
11. The MDD Preferred Approach contains a list of preferred Mineral Extraction Sites. These are the Mineral Planning Authority's (MPA) preferred sites from all those suggested by the industry and local landowners etc for future mineral extraction. The MPA has assessed all the sites using information from a wide range of sources including statutory consultees like the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage. The site selection methodology was made up of six stages where sites were assessed and scored against a range of criteria including proximity to highway, rail or water connection, environmental impacts e.g. on habitats or species. All sites were then subject to a further range of criteria and were scored. Additional weighting was given to sites in the west of the County to reflect the shortage of sites in this area. The highest scoring sites were identified and then reviewed by the Historic Environment Landscape and Ecology specialists at Essex County Council to see if any unacceptable impacts would arise from the chosen sites operating in combination. The results were finally reviewed and confirmed by the Sustainability Appraisal team before the list of preferred sites was finalised.
12. Seven sites were assessed in Uttlesford. All the sites fall within the western area of the county and are therefore subject to the additional weighting. The sites are listed below:

13.

Ref No	Site
A22	Little Bullocks Farm, Gt and Lt Canfield Area A (extension to existing working)
A23	Little Bullocks Farm, Gt and Lt Canfield Area B (extension to existing working)
A24	Easton Park, Great Dunmow (new)
A25	Elsenham Quarry, Elsenham (extension to existing working)
A26	Frogs Hall Farm, Takeley (new)
A27	Land at Ugley, (new)
A33	Armigers Farm, Thaxted (new)

14. Of the sites above A22, A23 and A24 scored highest and are the only sites included in the preferred list in the plan. A25 and A27 are in the lower scoring band and are not included on the preferred list and A26 and A33 failed on the basis of unacceptable highway access.

15. This Council made representations on the above sites in 2006 at an early stage of the of the plan preparation. No objection was made to site A22, A23 was felt to be close to residential properties along Great Canfield Road and at Hope End Green. Easton Park (A24) is identified as a preferred site in the current Minerals Local Plan and a planning application is currently being determined (Ref: UTT/0887/08/CC). The Council did not raise objections to this site. The Council objected to the sites at Elsenham, Takeley and Ugley due to the impact on the countryside and landscape. Armigers Farm (A33) was included in the Issues and Options consultation stage in 2009 - this Council did not make any representations at this stage. Maps of the preferred sites in Uttlesford and the MPAs assessment of the issues associated with working them are attached as an appendix to this report.

16. In relation to the sites at Little Bullocks Farm work on the new sites should not begin until the existing site has been worked and the necessary restoration carried out but the costs associated with this may mean that it is not possible. Adequate screening should be provided to the residential properties off Canfield Drive with views of the site. All quarry traffic should access the main transport network via the A120.

17. In relation to Easton Park a new access from the B1256/A120 junction should be provided before extraction begins. The SSSI at High Wood needs to be

protected during the work following an ecological assessment to identify likely impacts.

18. In addition to the specific issues associated with each site the determination of any application would include consideration of the impacts and mitigation of any noise, dust, air quality and odour. The level of highway movements and highway and public safety would also need to be considered along with the visual and ecological implications on the countryside during the course of the works and after restoration. The implications for flood risk as a result of any scheme at Little Bullocks Farm and at Easton Park would also need to be assessed.

19. There are also sites in neighbouring districts which have been identified as preferred sites. Those which are closest and could have some impact within this district are Broadfield Farm to the west of Rayne (Ref A9), Gate Farm, Blackley Lane, Great Leighs (Ref A38&A39) and Land at Shellow Cross Farm, Elm Farm and Newland Hall Farm, Roxwell (Ref A40). The impacts from these sites are most likely to be traffic related. In relation to site A9 it has been demonstrated that a satisfactory junction arrangement could be provided to serve this site from the B1256. There are no HGV restrictions on the B1256 and westbound vehicles would access the A120 at Great Dunmow. Sites A38 & A39 are extensions to an existing site which currently has direct access onto the A131. Site A40 would be served by a new access created onto the A1060. In relation to these three sites the consultation document states that a Transport Assessment would be required with any application. HGV movements from the site at Blackley Lane are not expected to exceed current levels. The maps and details of these sites are also included in the Appendix.

## Risk Analysis

20.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That this Councils views are not properly taken into account	1. Material planning considerations being raised therefore views will be taken into account.	2. Unacceptable impacts arise from the working and restoration	Make representations at each stage of the process so that local views can be taken into account and impacts reduced.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

