1. Introduction

Hertfordshire County Council is the Minerals Planning Authority (MPA) for Hertfordshire. As the MPA, the county council has a statutory responsibility to prepare a Minerals Local Plan (MLP) in line with national policy and regulations.

National policy requires that the MPA identify/allocate sites for future mineral extraction within the MLP to ensure there is a steady and adequate supply of minerals for Hertfordshire.

This topic paper sets out the processes undertaken to determine the group of sand and gravel sites that have been included within the draft version of the MLP.

This paper explains the development and implementation of the site selection method which has been used to assess the potential sites and/or areas put forward for inclusion in the MLP. It also details the findings from this process and sets out the final group of sites included in the draft MLP for public consultation.

2. Background and National Planning Policy

The council has to work within a national framework of legislation, policies and guidance.

Paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that MPAs should plan for a steady and adequate supply of minerals by:

“…making provision for the land-won and other elements of their Local Aggregate Assessment in their mineral plans taking account of the advice of the Aggregate Working Parties and the National Aggregate Coordinating Group as appropriate. Such provision should take the form of specific sites, preferred areas and/or areas of search and locational criteria as appropriate;”

In order to achieve this requirement, the council appointed Land Use Consultants (LUC), an external consultancy, to help develop a site selection method and undertake a site assessment exercise once the method was agreed.

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1 National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 145
The purpose of the site selection method was to ensure that the sites and/or areas identified within the MLP are likely to be deliverable in practice and are suitable for future development having been assessed with consideration given to a range of planning and environmental constraints.

3. Preparing the Site Selection Methodology

LUC were appointed by the county council to assist in the preparation of the site selection method and to undertake the site assessment (see Part 5 for more detail).

A draft site selection method was developed with input from consultees including regulatory bodies, other planning authorities, community groups and members of industry at a stakeholder event in spring 2015. The method was published for comments in summer 2015 as part of the Initial Consultation. This was the first formal stage of consultation as part of the review.

The method was updated by LUC, taking account of the feedback received during the Initial Consultation. The final version of the methodology was presented to a Member Panel in February 2016 and approved by Cabinet for use in the review of the MLP.

The site selection method forms a key part of the review of the adopted MLP and has been used to assess and identify sites/and or areas which may form part of the revised MLP.

Content of the Site Selection Method

The site selection method consists of three stages which are referred to as ‘sieves.’ The purpose of a sieving process is to discard sites that do not meet the criteria of a specific sieve to enable only those that did meet the criteria to pass through to the next sieve.

The sieves were finalised as follows:

**Sieve 1-Major Constraints**

Sites falling within the major constraints outlined below would be identified and removed from the process either in part or in full (depending on how much of the proposed site was within the major constraint).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sieve 1 – Major Constraints</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Urban areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sites with extant planning permission for other development (for the identification of preferred areas or areas of search, these will be limited to those sites whose area is greater than 5ha due to difficulties associated with collection of data for smaller planning permissions such as house extensions etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Previously worked sites</td>
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</table>
Sieve 2 – Resource and Economic Viability
Sieve 2 assessed the overall viability and deliverability of the potential sites. This was based on a combination of estimates of mineral reserves, the willingness of landowners and operators, and other issues including existing infrastructure in the nearby area.

Sieve 3- Detailed Site Assessments
Sieve 3 included an assessment of the sites and/or areas that passed through Sieves 1 and 2 against more detailed environmental planning constraints. Each site was assigned a red, amber or green ‘score’ for each individual environmental criterion, based on a scoring mechanism finalised as part of the Initial Consultation.

Sieve 3 – Detailed Site Assessments
Criteria for:
- Airport Safeguarding Zones
- Ancient Woodland
- Aquifers
- BAP priority species or habitats
- Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land
- Cumulative effects
- Ecological status of water bodies
- Flood Risk
- Geodiversity
- Green Belt
- Groundwater vulnerability
- Heritage designations
- International and national ecological designations
- Land ownership
- Landscape designations
- Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites
- Proximity of allocated residential or built development
- Recreation
- Restoration
- Sensitive land uses
- Sustainable transport
- Sustainable transport and pollution to the environment (dust, air and water)

It is important to note that the detailed criteria that the potential sites were assessed against do not replace the requirement for detailed assessment if a planning application is submitted for minerals extraction at any of the sites in the future.

4. Call for Sites
Once the method for assessing sites was established, the next stage in the process was to undertake a Call for Sites exercise. As part of this exercise, the council invited operators, landowners and other interested parties to
submit sites within Hertfordshire that contain mineral resources (primarily sand and gravel) that may be suitable for inclusion in the emerging MLP. This took place between February and April 2016.

The council received 20 submissions during the Call for Sites process, 18 of which were for sand and gravel extraction and two for brick clay extraction.

5. Site Assessment Study

LUC assessed the sites put forward through the Call for Sites and the three existing Preferred Areas included in the adopted MLP (2007) against the site selection method outlined above. The existing Minerals Local Plan contains three Preferred Areas for mineral extraction. These sites were identified through a similar process of site selection, assessing local circumstances and issues at the time (2001). In order to determine their continued suitability or otherwise, the three existing Preferred Areas were also assessed against the site selection criteria.

As Part 2 of this paper explains, it is a national policy requirement for MPAs to identify locations as Specific Sites, Preferred Areas or Areas of Search within their Local Plans. As part of the site assessment, LUC considered the suitability of each site to be identified as a Specific Site, Preferred Area or Area of Search. Definitions for each are given below:

| **Specific Sites** | are designated 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; |
| **Preferred Areas** | are areas of known resources where planning permission might reasonably be anticipated. Such areas may also include essential operations associated with mineral extraction; and/or |
| **Areas of Search** | are 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. |

The results of the site assessment study can be found in the Hertfordshire MLP Site Selection Report March 2017. This report summarises the conclusions of the site assessment study and sets out which of the sites and/or areas are considered most appropriate for inclusion in the Minerals Local Plan.

6. Sites included in the Draft Plan

Using the findings of the site assessment, four groups of sites and/or areas were developed for potential inclusion in the draft MLP. The four options were
presented to a Member Panel in September 2017\(^2\) and Option 4 was approved by Cabinet for inclusion in the Draft MLP. The following sites and areas are included in the Draft Plan for public consultation:

- **Specific Site 1**: Furze Field (a site adjoining Hatfield Quarry with a resolution to grant permission, subject to the completion of a legal agreement)
- **Specific Site 2**: Hatfield Aerodrome – part of an existing preferred area with a resolution to grant permission, subject to the completion of a legal agreement
- **Specific Site 3**: Land Adjoining Coopers Green Lane – an area known to have mineral resources and identified in the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan for a strategic housing allocation, and
- **Preferred Area 1**: Briggens Estate as a proposed new Preferred Area for future mineral extraction.

The three proposed specific sites and one preferred area would be supported by the following policy:

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Policy 4: Working of Specific Sites or Preferred Areas

Provision for Hertfordshire’s apportionment contribution will be met by the identification of specific sites and preferred areas.

Specific sites for sand and gravel extraction are identified on Inset maps 1-3 and the policies map. These sites are:

- Proposed Specific Site 1 - Hatfield Aerodrome
- Proposed Specific Site 2 - Hatfield – Furze Field
- Proposed Specific Site 3 - Hatfield Quarry - Land adjoining Coopers Green Lane

A Preferred Area to meet the agreed apportionment is identified on Inset Map 4 and the Policies Map. This site is:

- Proposed Preferred Area 1 – The Briggens Estate

Proposals for mineral extraction within the specific sites or preferred areas will be considered against the policies within the plan, with specific reference given to Policy 3: Aggregate Supply.

Proposals must fulfil the requirements as set out within the planning briefs.
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\(^2\) Item 7 found at: http://cmis.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hertfordshire/Calendarofcouncilmeetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/729/Committee/52/Default.aspx
The supporting text to this policy sets out the steps undertaken by the county council in identifying the most suitable locations for future mineral extraction and includes an estimated amount of sand and gravel that each of these sites could contribute over the revised MLP period (2016-2031).

Each of the proposed Specific Sites and Proposed Preferred Area are further supported in the draft MLP by their own individual site brief.

The site briefs provide an overview of site-specific information that potential mineral operators, that may have an interest in working any of the sites and/or area, should take account of when preparing a planning application for extraction. A site brief includes the following information:

- a map identifying the sites location
- general site details (name/address/District it falls within/size of the site)
- the sites current planning status and use
- the material at the site (i.e. sand and gravel)
- the workable mineral reserves (i.e. the amount of mineral available for extraction)
- the anticipated annual output of material from the site and over how many years this is expected to take place
- site-specific planning issues

7. Draft Plan Consultation

The consultation period for the Draft MLP will take place over an eight week period, starting on 04 December 2017 and finishing on 09 February 2018. The views and opinions expressed throughout the consultation period will be taken into consideration by the MPA and will help to shape the pre-submission version of the MLP at a later stage.

An additional document, the Minerals Local Plan Omission Sites Consultation (December 2017), is also being published for consultation at the same time as the Draft MLP. This document provides a summary of the assessment’s findings for the sites and areas that are not included in the Draft MLP.