

Methodology for Selecting Preferred Areas  
and Areas of Search

1.0 Preferred Areas

1.1 Prior to the publication of the Draft Plan mineral operators and landowners were invited to submit areas of mineral bearing land for consideration and to support their submission with geological data to substantiate the existence of economically workable deposits.

1.2 The MPA applied an environmental analysis to all the submitted sites. While this was as objective as possible, by its nature involved an element of judgement. This was achieved in two stages. The first stage involved mapping statutory environmental constraints and areas of acknowledged importance within the terms of Structure Plan Policies E1, E4-E6, followed by a further judgement based on site examination. Proximity to the County's primary road network (Structure Plan Policy T11) and the planning history of each site were also considered at this first stage. The total list of Stage 1 constraints applied were:-

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Heritage Coast
- Special Protection Areas
- Ramsar Sites
- National Nature Reserves
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserves
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Listed Buildings and their settings
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Proximity to primary road network
- Local constraints - visual impact
- proximity to housing and settlements
- Archaeological importance of the site

1.3 The sites which 'satisfied' this first stage analysis were subject to further site examination and testing against additional environmental considerations:-

- Best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 or 3A)
- Areas of Great Landscape Value (or similar Designation)
- Access
- Operational Constraints
- Landscape Impact
- Restoration opportunities

The quality of the mineral resource was taken into account in this second stage

1.4 When both stages of the sieve mapping exercise had been completed it became apparent that all the sites at stage two were constrained, at least in part, by best and most versatile agricultural land quality and that some relaxation of this constraint would be required to enable Preferred Areas to be identified.

1.5 The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was, therefore, consulted on the Stage 2 sites. AS a result it was not anticipated that any agricultural objection would be raised where land had potential for restoration to agriculture without significant loss of quality. It was recognised that some of the sites identified in Stage 2 may have potential restoration problems but more detailed survey work would be required before it could be determined whether or not the agricultural land quality constraint at these sites should be relaxed or disregarded. This work was not undertaken until after the Draft Plan had been published.

- 1.6 For the Draft Plan it was possible to identify more potential Preferred Areas than would finally be required. The County Council considered that it would be appropriate to seek public comment on all those sites which could be potential Preferred Areas before determining which, if any, would be put forward as Preferred Areas in the Deposit Plan.
- 1.7 During the public consultation exercise a number of new submissions were put forward by landowners and operators. The County Council applied the Stage 1 constraints (and Stage 2 where applicable) to the sites and MAFF were again consulted on those sites which went forward to Stage 2.
- 1.8 From all the sites which have been submitted for consideration, the County Council is satisfied that, for sand and gravel, sufficient land can be identified as Preferred Areas to meet forecast requirements both during the Plan period and to maintain a landbank at the end of the Plan period. For crushed rock, sufficient sites can be identified as Preferred Areas, which, together with Areas of Search, meet the forecast requirements set out in the Plan.
- 2.0 Areas of Search
- 2.1 Areas of Search have been defined using the most detailed geological information available. The boundaries of these broad brush Areas have been drawn along easily definable features such as roads and rivers. In defining the Areas of Search for the Draft Plan only major environmental have been considered, eg avoidance of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Heritage Coasts and consideration of proximity to the primary road network. An historic park was excluded from one Area of Search since it fell adjacent to the boundary of the Area.
- 2.2 Following public consultation the County Council has reassessed the sand and gravel Areas of Search and made amendments both to exclude land which is significantly constrained and to more accurately relate to the geological information available.