

17. Criteria for land to be defined as a Preferred Area or Area of Search

17.1 In the event that insufficient Specific Sites are proposed by landowners/minerals operators in response to the 'call for sites', the County Council considers that, in accordance with national policy and guidance, it will be necessary for the County Council to define Preferred Areas or Areas of Search. These areas are defined as follows:

- Preferred Areas are areas of known mineral resources where planning permission might reasonably be anticipated.
- 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 shortfall in supply.

17.2 It is proposed that only land that is within the inferred silica sand resource, as defined by the BGS, and which is **not** within the following areas will be included within the defined Preferred Area/Area of Search:

- Enhanced evidence areas or the designations to which they relate (SPAs, SACs, Ramsars, SSSIs, Ancient Woodland, heritage assets, sensitive receptors for amenity impacts, flood zones 2 & 3);
- Previous mineral workings;
- Existing silica sand extraction sites;
- Mineral site allocations;
- Agricultural land grades 1,2 and 3;
- Existing waste management facilities and waste site allocations; and
- Land where the owners are unwilling for silica sand extraction to take place.

These areas are to be excluded to maximise the likelihood of suitable applications coming forward and being granted permission from within Preferred Areas/Areas of Search.

17.3 As the demand for silica sand is specifically related to glass sand it is also proposed that there should be a preference for Preferred Areas or Areas of Search to be located within the Leziate beds, as this deposit has the highest probability of providing deposits of a suitable quality and grade for this use. It is likely that the site area required to provide sufficient Specific Sites for silica sand extraction, to address the allocated shortfall would be around 30 -40 hectares. The Preferred Areas/Areas of Search will cover a significantly greater area of land in order to allow for sites to come forward.

Question 17: Is the approach to land to be excluded from Preferred Areas and Areas of Search appropriate, if these areas need to be defined through the Silica Sand Review process, or should an alternative approach be used? Please provide evidence/information to support your view, including alternatives which would comply with national policy and guidance.

17.4 The maps on the following pages show how the Preferred Areas/Areas of Search for silica sand extraction would look on the basis of excluding all the areas of constraint listed in paragraph 17.2.

Question 18: Are there any other issues that should be taken into account in the assessment of proposals for Specific Sites and in the definition of Preferred Areas and/or Areas of Search for silica sand extraction? Please provide evidence/information to support your response.

