

## **JOINT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

You'll remember that a list of minerals sites was published in July last year and there was a consultation which lasted till September. These sites, as I've mentioned, included the site at the Wickford Bridge, Pulborough, and the site at Horncroft. These, you'll remember, were notable not least because it was claimed they contained silica sand and were in the National Park.

Earlier this year the results of the consultation were published and the Sites Study document was updated last month. There is now more detail about the Wickford Bridge site but still no information about an operator and there is no comment from, or on behalf of, the landowner. However it is now proposed to remove and store the topsoil and for the site to revert to agricultural use when the operation is over.

What comes out most strongly from the consultation is the response of Southern Water which has major concerns not only about the protection of groundwater for the public drinking supply (the site is in an extreme SPZ3 area) and hence the aquifer, but also about air quality. SW further identifies that its infrastructure such as wastewater and other water pipes cross the site.

The Horncroft site has a long comment from the Minerals Planning Group which advises the landowner. According to MPG, a leading producer of silica sand (SIBELCO) has identified a significant resource of very high quality silica sand suitable for glass manufacture. The Barlavington estate would seek to develop this source independently if SIBELCO withdrew.

No more sites have been removed from the Plan as a result of the consultation but many, including these two, will now go through a series of studies (including a Soft and Silica Sand Study) to provide further technical evidence. There will be "exceptional circumstances" and "public interest" tests of all sites in the National Park or the AONB and based on the results of these a shortlist will be produced and this in turn will go forward for detailed technical assessments including Transport, Sustainability, Habitats, Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity, and Flood Risk.

I should stress that there is no consultation at this stage. The Joint Minerals Planning Authority has said that it may "engage ... with key stakeholders and communities close to possible mineral sites" this summer. But this would be an informal engagement. The WA will ask to be involved.

The next formal public consultation will be when a shortlisted Sites Study and Options Study are published with a draft Minerals Local Plan in January 2016.