

Executive Summary

Scott Wilson has been commissioned to prepare a Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). The SFRA report will be used by the Council to assess flood risk posed to potential minerals and waste site allocations and inform the council's application of the Sequential Test to these sites.

This report incorporates all relevant information from the Cherwell and West Oxfordshire SFRA finalised in April 2009 including associated minerals and waste maps and should now be used as the sole point of reference for minerals and waste allocations and flood risk in Oxfordshire.

The study area is largely rural and has the lowest population density in the South East with almost 40% of the County designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or an Area of High Landscape Value.

The County includes a number of large main rivers and associated tributaries including the River Thames, The River Windrush, River Evenlode, River Cherwell, River Ock and River Thame.

In 2007 severe flooding was experienced across the County which was attributed to a mixture of fluvial, surface water and groundwater flooding.

The main minerals worked in Oxfordshire are sharp sand and gravel, soft sand, limestone and ironstone, all mainly for aggregate use. Chalk, clay and fullers earth have also been worked in the area. These minerals are worked predominantly to supply local markets, except for fuller's earth which is a nationally scarce mineral.

Oxfordshire currently relies heavily on landfill for disposing of its waste, although the Joint Municipal Waste Partnership (comprising the County Council and the 5 District Councils) has been able to record increasing success in the rate at which waste is recycled and composted. The main landfill sites are at Alkerton, Finmere, Stanton Harcourt, Ardley and Sutton Courtenay.

In accordance with the Practice Guide Companion to Planning Policy Statement 25 Development and Flood Risk (PPS25) recommendations, the SFRA has been structured in a two level approach. This report forms the Level 1 SFRA providing an overview of flood risk issues in relation to possible minerals and waste development across all five Districts within the study area being Cherwell (CDC), West Oxfordshire (WODC), Vale of White Horse (VWHDC), South Oxfordshire (SODC) and Oxford City Council (the City).

Information collated as part of the Cherwell and West Oxfordshire SFRA and Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire SFRA have been used in this study. In addition, data has been obtained from the Environment Agency, Thames Water and British Waterways where updates to original data sets are available.

The primary objective of the study is to enable OCC to undertake sequential testing in line with the Government's flood risk and planning policy statement (PPS25) to inform development of OCC's emerging LDF documents.

PPS25 requires that all development is steered to areas of lowest risk. Development is only permissible in areas at risk of flooding in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that there are no reasonable available sites in areas of lower risk and the benefits of that development outweigh the risks from flooding. It must be demonstrated that such development will

be 'safe'. In order to ensure a development is 'safe', mitigation/management measures to minimise risk to life and property should flooding occur will be required.

The SFRA forms an essential reference tool providing the building blocks for future strategic planning.

The core output of this study is a series of maps (included in Appendices A to E) which include a narrative of flood risk issues and a presentation of key facts for four key data groups lying with the Flood Zones being:

- Crushed Rock Resource Areas
- Sand and Gravel Resource Areas
- Individual Minerals Sites
- Individual Waste Sites

In addition to flood risk, planning issues and policies that are pertinent to the County and that may affect the potential minerals and Waste sites have also been examined and reported. Much of the mineral development taking place in Oxfordshire will comprise sand and gravel workings. In accordance with PPS25, these are mainly categorised as 'water compatible development'. However, the County will still need to ensure the Sequential Test is followed before any sites in the flood plain are identified as suitable for extraction.

Waste development (except landfill and hazardous waste facilities) is classified as 'less vulnerable development' and in accordance with PPS25 guidelines may take place in Flood Zone 1 to 3a if the Sequential Test is satisfactorily undertaken. However, landfill and sites used for hazardous waste management facilities will need to pass the Exception Test before being considered acceptable in Flood Zone 3a. No waste development is permitted in Flood Zone 3b.

The SFRA will be used for LDF strategic planning and to inform development control decisions. It is imperative that the SFRA be adopted as a 'living document' to be reviewed regularly in light of emerging policy directives and an improved understanding of flood risk within the Study Area, including any significant changes in flood risk information supplied by the Environment Agency (for example where the Flood Map covering Oxfordshire is updated or if there are any significant flood events). It is suggested that as monitoring and reporting of the LDF takes place every year any change in flood risk knowledge should be reviewed as part of this process to determine whether the SFRA needs to be updated.