

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Mineral Sites Plan

Proposed Puddletown Road Area Policy – Background Paper

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Introduction

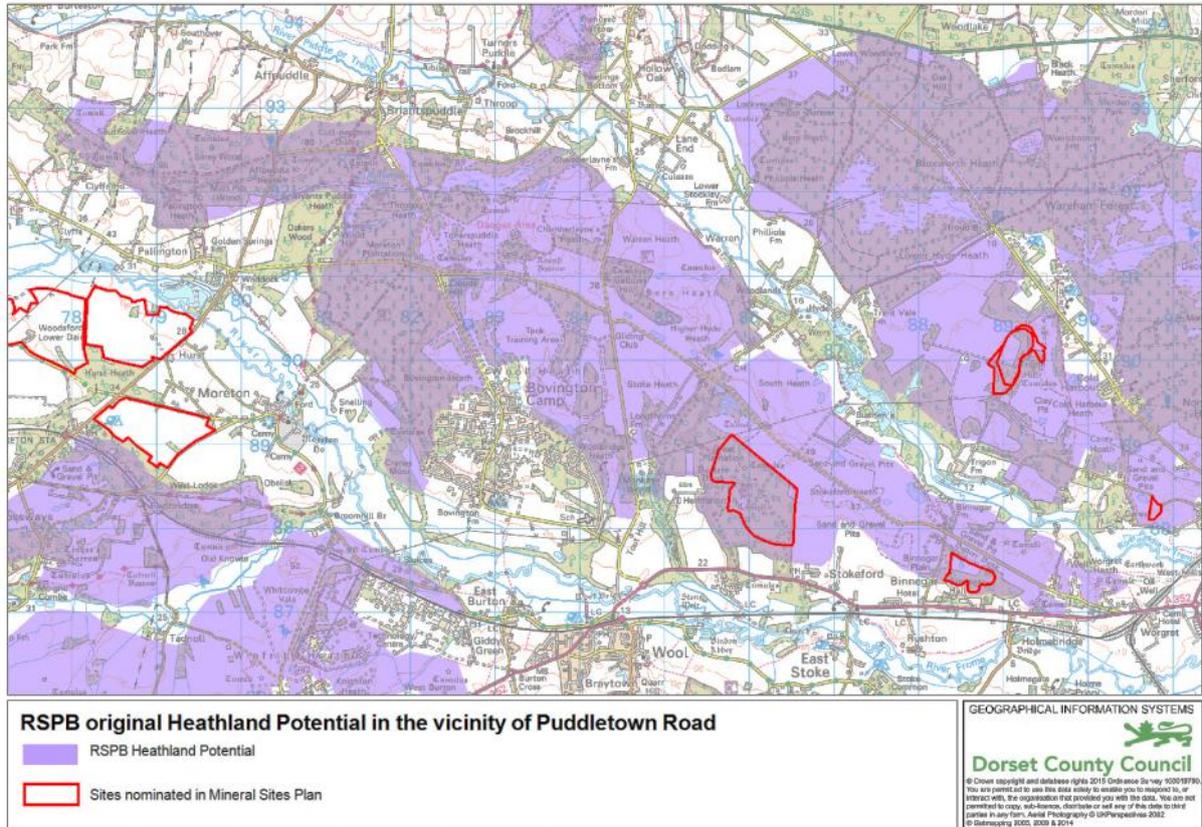
1. The Puddletown Road and surrounding areas comprise primarily a ridge of free-draining, acidic sands and gravels, capable of supporting heathland and acid grassland. Open heathland is an important habitat, both nationally and internationally, and significant amounts have been lost for various reasons. Remaining heathland is often protected, both for its rarity as a habitat and for the species it supports.
2. However the geology that supports the heathland is also in demand for extraction and use as construction aggregate and the Puddletown Road area contains a concentration of mineral workings within an area where there is identified potential for heathland restoration.
3. An area-based policy for the Puddletown Road area is proposed for inclusion in the emerging Mineral Sites Plan, encouraging heathland restoration and extension through seeking to achieve long-term and coordinated management, including minerals development, of the land within the proposed policy area.

Heathland - the RSPB's Heathland Extent and Potential (HEaP) maps¹

4. Lowland heathland is a scarce but hugely important wildlife habitat and cultural landscape. The area that survives today is a small fraction of what existed even a hundred years ago, and is fragmented into thousands of small patches, putting immense pressure on the rare and highly specialised wildlife that rely on it. There is potential to return it where it has been lost relatively recently, making heathland areas bigger and reconnecting them, in turn making dependent wildlife more resilient to the pressures of a changing environment and helping people and wildlife to co-exist by reducing disturbance pressures.
5. The RSPB has developed maps, known as Heathland Extent and Potential (HEaP) maps, that show the potential to rebuild some of the lost heathland heritage. These can assist in planning heathland conservation, including targeting of financial and grant support for habitat re-creation initiatives and allowing planners to review the location of future developments to ensure the areas of best potential for heathland re-creation are not lost or compromised, and can help with designing heathland for the future that provides for both wildlife and people.
6. Puddletown Road and surrounding areas are shown to have potential for heathland restoration, and the HEaP map for the Puddletown Road area is shown in Figure 1 below.

¹ Taken from the RSPB website at: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/advice/heap.aspx>

Figure 1: Heathland Restoration Potential

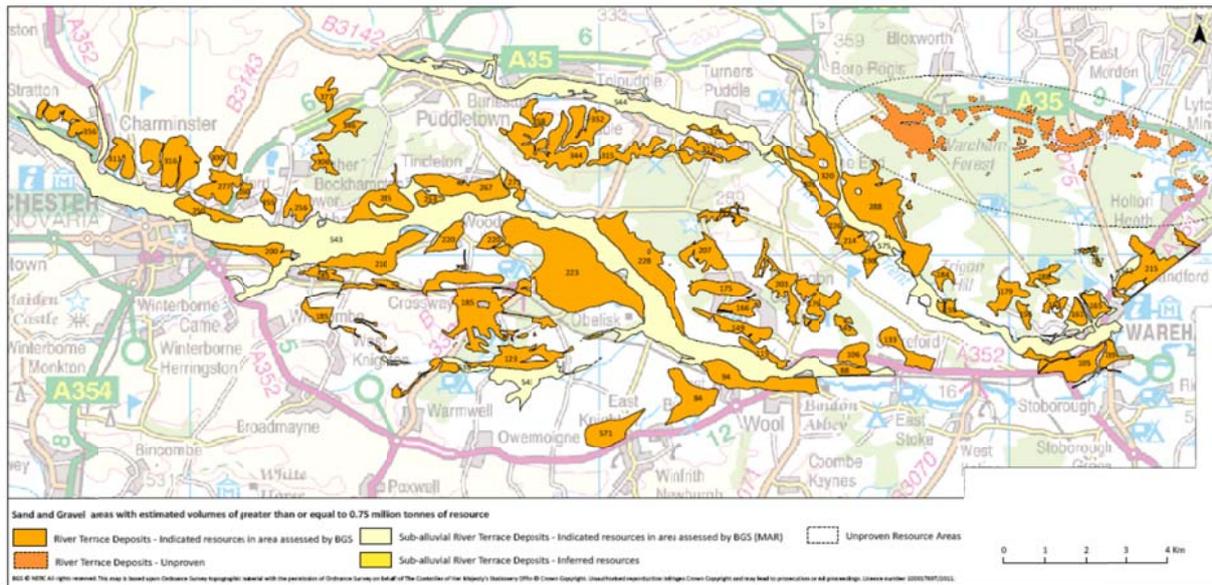


Economically Viable Mineral

7. The British Geological Survey have assessed the area² to identify the presence of mineral which is potentially economically viable. Figure 2 below identifies the economically viable mineral reserve in the area of the Puddletown Road. The existence of mineral reserves does not necessarily mean they will be developed.

² Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole - Sand and Gravel Assessment - Minerals and Waste Programme External Report CR/11/049 (See Document MSDCC – 01 at <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/mcs/examination-library>)

Figure 2: The Mineral Reserve



The 1999 Dorset Minerals and Waste Local Plan

8. The 1999 Minerals and Waste Plan identified an area based policy covering the Puddletown Road area. That Area Policy was intended to support and deliver the *comprehensive strategy for the operation, landscaping and restoration for the whole area*, including achieving the retention of existing heathland habitats together with the re-establishment of heathland and other appropriate nature conservation habitats.
9. Policy 59 of the Plan was the primary policy, intended to *achieve the coherent operation and restoration of all mineral and waste disposal sites in the Puddletown Road Area* through retaining heathland where possible and *facilitating the re-establishment of heathland as a priority nature conservation habitat*. There were other policies intended to minimise impacts due to quarrying and support/achieve the vision for the Area. None of the policies are valid now.

The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy 2014

10. The Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy did not establish a similar area policy at Puddletown Road, or elsewhere. Policy RS 1 of the Minerals Strategy requires high quality and appropriate restoration followed by appropriate after-use and the long-term maintenance and enhancement of the environment throughout the Strategy area. The maintenance period cannot be required to extend beyond 5 years, although longer periods may be agreed with developers in some cases.
11. The Minerals Strategy also seeks to deliver a coherent approach to restoration over a wider area. As explained in paragraphs 15.5 and 15.6 of the Strategy, the overall approach to restoration is based on the landscape types of the county. These are distinct types of landscape across the county that are relatively uniform in character, sharing broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use and settlement pattern. The Puddletown Road Area falls within the Heath Forest Mosaic Landscape Type³.

³ pp. 24-28 of Background Paper 16: Restoration – Landscape Management Guidelines, prepared in support of the 2014 Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Minerals Strategy (MSDCC-16 at <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/mcs/examination-library>)

12. Specific land management guidelines relevant to each landscape type have been prepared and provide a broad framework for managing change. The guidelines establish specific principles for mineral site restoration within each landscape type, which are appropriate to that landscape type. They provide practical and locally relevant advice to developers, landowners, local authorities and the general public as to what will be expected through restoration of the land following mineral working.
13. Through Policy RS 1 any mineral sites in the Heath Forest Mosaic Landscape Type area, which covers the Puddletown Road, should be restored in a consistent and locally appropriate way. The restoration process is intended to ensure that the finished site will integrate easily into the landscape in which it sits. The guidelines also ensure that the restoration process creates or enhances any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats (such as heathland) which might be typical of the relevant landscape type as well as delivering geodiversity benefits, particularly those that are in line with the Local Geodiversity Action Plan (LGAP).

The Emerging Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Mineral Sites Plan

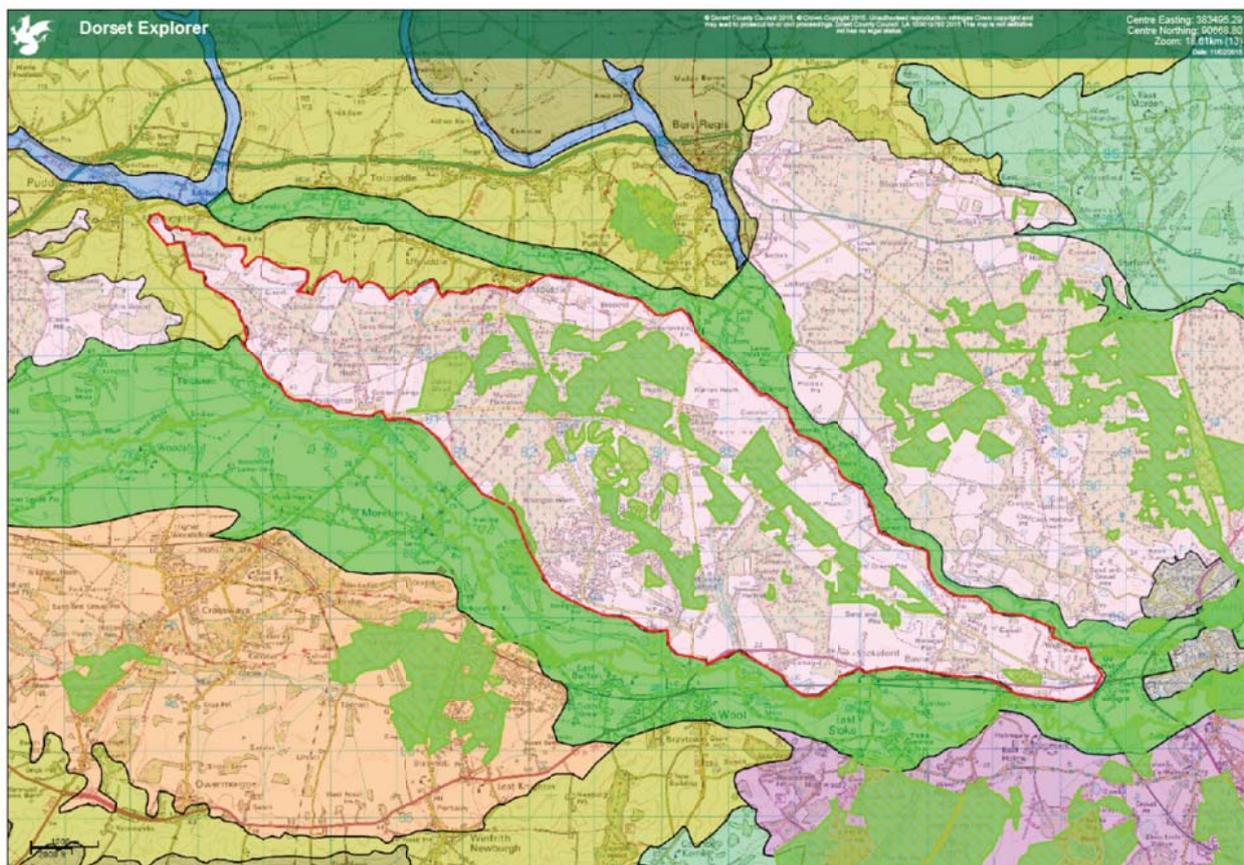
14. The Minerals Strategy provides a strategic policy basis for the co-ordinated management of the landscape, both during development and afterwards during restoration and aftercare. However, in certain circumstances there is merit in considering opportunities for further management or maintenance beyond the statutory 5 years, when a mineral site has been finished and restored and the aftercare period if any has been completed. This is particularly true if there is a risk that the benefits that have been delivered through restoration and aftercare might be lost. For example, heathland habitats are only a stage in ecological succession and need to be continuously managed or they may progress to woodland within 2-3 decades.
15. Such an approach is relevant to the Puddletown Road area where a concentration of mineral workings together with aspirations for heathland restoration present a strong argument for a long term and comprehensive approach to restoration. This ties in with the HEaP maps prepared by the RSPB, shown in Figure 1 and demonstrating potential for heathland restoration in this area.
16. In addition there is merit in treating the wider Puddletown Road area as a coherent whole when planning for the development of new sites or the working of existing sites. For example, in seeking to control the amount of land under development at any one time or in carrying out operations such as relocating reptiles from one land ownership to another in preparation for working, it would be helpful to be able to consider a wider area in making decisions.
17. The preparation of the Mineral Sites Plan provides an opportunity to address this issue of planning at a larger scale and seeking to secure longer term management. The Sites Plan proposes, around the Puddletown Road area, to combine the coordinated management of land within a spatially defined policy area with seeking to achieve longer-term (longer than 5 years) management, for example by encouraging developers who benefit from new permissions within the policy area to contribute to the longer term management of the area.
18. Benefits of such an area policy could include the following:
 - Landscape and ecological benefits of achieving long-term management of the Puddletown Road area
 - Positive benefits to the various minerals operators through demonstrating that they can provide for long term management
 - Giving the Minerals Planning Authority increased confidence in issuing new permissions

- Coordination and co-operation between operators/landowners in developing and working the land in a way that minimises impacts

Spatial Extent of the Policy Area

19. The spatial extent of the proposed policy area is justified as follows. As noted earlier, the site restoration strategy of the Minerals Strategy is based on the Landscape Types of the county. The Heath-Forest Mosaic Landscape Type area, coloured pink, is set out in Figure 3 below. The relevant section under consideration is the area lying between the Piddle and the Frome, is **outlined in red**.
20. Other areas of the Landscape Type, although also shown below, would not be included in the proposed policy area. There are a high proportion of national and international ecological designations in the area (coloured green) and these are also shown in Figure 3 below. One option would be to base the spatial extent of this policy on the Heath-Forest Mosaic boundary, or some part of it.

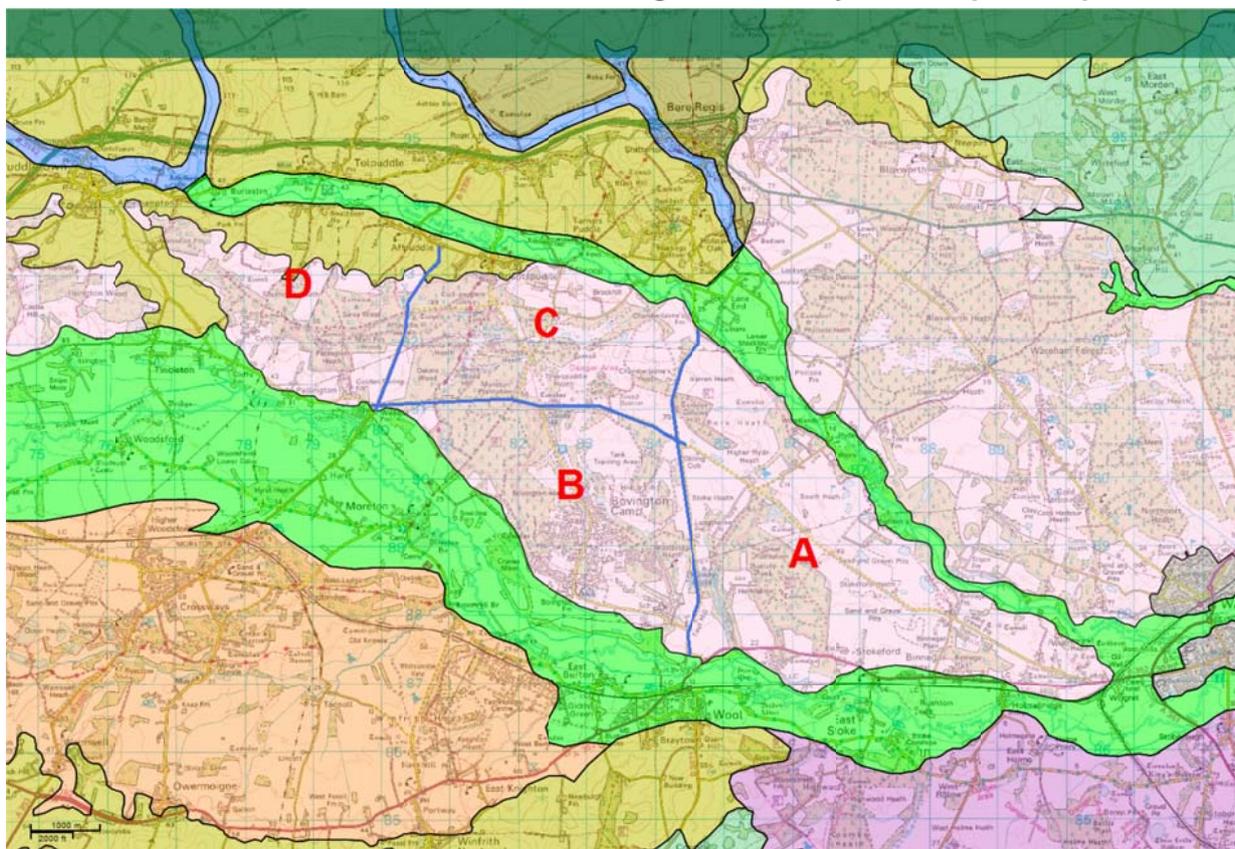
Figure 3: Heath-Forest Mosaic with Designations



21. The area of the Heath-Forest Mosaic Landscape Type in/around the Puddletown Road area is large and although it incorporates areas of viable mineral reserve (Figure 2) and the RSPB identified areas (Figure 1) with potential for heathland restoration, it also includes constraints such as national and international ecological designations, land ownerships and areas with potentially difficult access. It may therefore be appropriate to reduce/refine the proposed policy area.

22. The area has been divided into 4 sections (Figure 4 below), to assist in the assessment process.

Figure 4: Policy Area - Spatial Options



Spatial Options

23. The following options are considered to be potentially suitable.

- i. **Option 1** – area A on Figure 4 - the area east of the C6 Wool/Bere Regis road.
 - This Option covers the bulk of the current mineral workings and most closely approximates to the 1999 Plan policy area.
 - It includes the heathland restoration potential (HEaP) area and mineral reserves, with access directly to Puddletown Road.
- ii. **Option 2** – areas A and D on Figure 4 - east of the C6 and west of the B3390 Crossways/Affpuddle road.
 - This Option comprises the least constrained areas
 - However, due primarily to access issues, it is questionable whether mineral development will/could occur in Area D during the lifetime of the Plan.
- iii. **Option 3** – areas A, B and D on Figure 4 - east of the C6 and west of the B3390 Crossways/Affpuddle road and south of the C80
 - This option excludes Area C, the most constrained of the four component sections.

- Area B is also constrained by ecological designations and land ownership issues.

iv. **Option 4** – Areas A, B, C and D.

- Including the whole area, for maximum flexibility and benefits.
- However, the problems with Areas B, C and D have already been mentioned.

Recommended Policy Area

24. It is considered that Option 1, Area A on Figure 4 above, is the most defensible and logical, given that areas B and C of Figure 4 are unlikely to see mineral development due to high levels of constraint and it is uncertain whether area D will see mineral development during the lifetime of the plan.
25. Another option would be to consider limiting the policy area to just the heathland potential area as shown on the RSPB HEaP maps (Figure 1). However, given that the Landscape Type boundary is drawn wider and includes the heathland restoration areas and is the basis of the restoration strategy of the Minerals Strategy, it is considered more appropriate to use this boundary or some part of it.
26. Therefore, the eastern section of the Heath-Forest Mosaic Landscape Type, that is the area to the east of the C6 Wool/Bere Regis road or Area A as shown on Figure 4, is proposed as the spatial extent for the Puddletown Road Area Policy.