

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Delegated Officer Decision – Simon Moss, Assistant Director, Planning
Regeneration and Transport

Report Title

Update to the series of Regionally Important Geological Sites in Rotherham

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Assistant Director Approving Submission of the Report

Name of Strategic Director

Simon Moss, Assistant Director, Planning, Regeneration & Transport

Report Author(s)

Rachel Overfield, Planning Officer, Planning Regeneration and Transport
01709 254746

Ward(s) Affected

Maltby Ward
Silverwood Ward
Wales Ward

Report Summary

This report seeks approval of an update to the series of Regionally Important Geological Sites in Rotherham, to include three new sites at Hooton Roberts, Thorpe Salvin, and Maltby. This information will form part of the environmental evidence for the Local Plan and be used in the determination of relevant planning applications.

Recommendations

1. That the update to the Rotherham Regionally Important Geological Sites series, including the addition of three new sites whose boundaries are shown in Appendix 2 of this report, be approved.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Equalities Screening.

Appendix 2 The boundaries of the proposed RIGS 2020 (as endorsed by the Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel).

Appendix 3 Rotherham Regionally Important Geological Sites – Sites List (Update 2020).

Background Papers

Regionally Important Geological Sites Schedule – R8 Hooton Cliff (Hooton Roberts).

Regionally Important Geological Sites Schedule – R78 Hawks Wood Quarry (Thorpe Salvin).

Regionally Important Geological Sites Schedule – R95 Mill Farm railway cutting (Maltby).

Information on Rotherham Regionally Important Geological Sites (2010)

<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/402/regionally-important-geological-site-methodology-selection-and-boundary-update-2010-document>

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Name of Committee – Click here to enter a date.

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Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Update to the series of Regionally Important Geological Sites in Rotherham

1.	Background
1.1	Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) are a local planning designation that recognises the geological conservation interest of a site. Rotherham's RIGS were endorsed in a meeting of the Cabinet Member and Deputy Economic and Development Issues on the 8 November 1999. Along with Local Wildlife Sites, RIGS form part of Rotherham's 'Local Site system' and are included in the Non-Statutorily Protected Sites designation shown on the Local Plan Policies Map accompanying the Sites and Policies document (adopted June 2018).
1.2	The Local Site system is intended to be comprehensive and allows for the inclusion of new sites and changes to existing sites throughout the plan period. As a result of evidence and analysis, new information has become available on the geological conservation interest present on several sites, prompting an update to the existing series.
1.3	During 2019 (and earlier) additional candidate RIGS were proposed by the Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel following their assessment against documented criteria (Information on Rotherham Regionally Important Geological Sites (2010)). This assessment showed that these sites qualify for designation as RIGS.
1.4	It is proposed to add three new sites to Rotherham's RIGS series: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R8 Hooton Cliff (Hooton Roberts). • R95 Mill Farm railway cutting (Maltby). • R78 Hawks Wood Quarry (Thorpe Salvin). The boundaries of these sites are shown at Appendix 2.
1.5	The designating interest of these sites is shown in the schedules for each site (provided as background papers, available on request). The updated RIGS site series, including an indicative map of locations, is shown at Appendix 3.
2.	Key Issues
2.1	The expert Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel have endorsed three new sites as being of RIGS value. The approval of these sites as RIGS and integration of these boundaries into the Local Plan will ensure that relevant planning policies are considered in the determination of planning applications relating to these sites. It will assist the Council to comply with national planning policy provisions regarding the natural environment, including a requirement to ensure the use of up to date evidence, protecting sites of geological value, and establishing coherent ecological networks (to which geodiversity sites contribute).
3.	Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1	<p>Option 1: approve the inclusion of the three new RIGS into Rotherham's Local Site System</p> <p>The Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel is an expert geo conservation panel who have assessed these sites in accordance with agreed, externally verified methodology, using new knowledge obtained on these sites. The approval of these sites and their integration into planning policy would contribute towards the robustness of the Local Plan.</p>								
3.2	<p>Option 2: do not include the three new sites</p> <p>Not including the new RIGS would mean the Local Site System is not kept up to date. The three sites have been identified and agreed by the expert Local Geological Sites Panel as meriting inclusion. The Council would not be abiding by the relevant legislation and the requirements to maintain an up to date system.</p>								
4.	<p>Consultation on proposal</p>								
4.1	<p>Landowners of the three sites (indicated in the table below) have been contacted to notify them of the proposed designation and explain any implications. Comments were received only from Network Rail; who raised a query regarding Permitted Development Rights. The Council have advised Network Rail that Permitted Development Rights are unaffected by RIGS designation.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="308 1041 1385 1193"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="308 1041 826 1077">Site</th> <th data-bbox="826 1041 1385 1077">Landowner Contacted</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="308 1077 826 1113">R8 Hooton Cliff</td> <td data-bbox="826 1077 1385 1113">A Trustee Company Limited</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="308 1113 826 1149">R78 Hawks Wood Quarry</td> <td data-bbox="826 1113 1385 1149">RMBC Green Spaces</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="308 1149 826 1193">R95 Mill Farm railway cutting</td> <td data-bbox="826 1149 1385 1193">Network Rail</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Site	Landowner Contacted	R8 Hooton Cliff	A Trustee Company Limited	R78 Hawks Wood Quarry	RMBC Green Spaces	R95 Mill Farm railway cutting	Network Rail
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R8 Hooton Cliff	A Trustee Company Limited								
R78 Hawks Wood Quarry	RMBC Green Spaces								
R95 Mill Farm railway cutting	Network Rail								
5.	<p>Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision</p>								
5.1	<p>If approval is given, the additional RIGS sites will be integrated immediately into the planning system and will be considered when determining planning applications. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating the Council's website to provide information regarding the additional RIGS. • Updating the Council's online mapping system to include up to date information regarding RIGS. • Updating internal constraints information used by Planning Policy and Development Management teams when assessing planning applications. 								
6.	<p>Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)</p>								
6.1	<p>The costs associated with integrating the new sites into the Regionally Important Geological Sites plan have been covered from allocated budgeted provision.</p>								

6.2	There are no procurement implications.
7.	Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)
7.1	The approval of the sites helps make the Local Plan more robust and further demonstrates the Council's compliance with the biodiversity duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
8.	Human Resources Advice and Implications
8.1	There are no human resources implications arising from this report.
9.	Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults
9.1	RIGS add to the local character and distinctiveness of an area contributing to a sense of place. RIGS can be selected if they have high educational value for use by schools, higher education students (and researchers) and/or if the site highly valued by the community because of its amenity and/or beauty.
10.	Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications
10.1	An initial screening equality analysis has been completed (Appendix 1). There are no detrimental impacts on equalities or human rights identified, and the designation of the RIGS sites may encourage more positive management of the sites.
11.	Implications for Ward Priorities
11.1	None identified.
12.	Implications for Partners
12.1	One of the sites is managed by Green Spaces and the Green Spaces manager has been informed.
13.	Risks and Mitigation
13.1.	The operation of a Local Site System enables the Council to demonstrate compliance with current legislation and planning policy including the need to have a robust evidence base. Designation is based primarily on scientific reasoning and in accordance with national best practice (see Information on Rotherham Regionally Important Geological Sites (2010)). The system includes all sites that qualify. This can create a conflict of interest between Local Site status and potential for development, as Local Site status will be a designation within the Local Plan and will be a material consideration when determining planning applications. However, the additional proposed RIGS sites are all within the Green Belt where there are substantial planning policies which restrict development. Local and national planning

	policy clarifies that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
14.	Accountable Officers
	Simon Moss, Assistant Director, Planning Regeneration and Transport

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Named officer	Click here to enter a date.
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	Click here to enter a date.

Report Author: Rachel Overfield, Planning Officer, Planning Regeneration and Transport, rachel.overfield @rotherham.gov.uk Rachel Overfield, Planning Officer, Planning Regeneration and Transport
01709 254746

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