

DRAFT MINUTES

East of England Aggregate Working Party

Meeting on 10 February 2026 starting at 11am

Venue: Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

ATTENDEES

Authority Members	
Caroline Jeffery (CJ)	Norfolk County Council – EEAWP Chair
Phil Dash (PD)	Essex County Council
Jake Kelley (JK)	Bedfordshire Authorities
Matthew Breeze (MB)	Cambridgeshire County Council / Peterborough City Council
Ross Walker (RW)	Suffolk County Council
Claire Victory (CV)	Southend-on-Sea City Council
Freya Ward (FW)	Hertfordshire County Council
Industry Members	
David Payne (DP)	Mineral Products Association
Mike Phillips (MP)	British Aggregates Association
Lewis Williams (LW)	Breedon Group
Maria Cotton (MC)	
Others	
Julia Webberley (JW)	EEAWP Secretariat
Dave Pitt (DJP)	EEAWP Secretariat
Jim Davies (JD)	MHCLG
Apologies	
Natalie Chillcott	Bedfordshire Authorities
Mark Page	Heidelberg Materials UK
Sidonie Kenward	MMO

The meeting commenced at 11.00am.

Item No.	Subject	Owner
1.	Welcome, introductions and apologies	CJ
	CJ welcomed everyone to the meeting. MP explained that John Carlon had left the BAA so MP would be the EEAWP representative for the time being. JW ran through a list of apologies, as set out above.	
2.	Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising	CJ
	CJ ran through the minutes and the list of action points arising from the last meeting held on 14 October 2025. A number of these had been completed.	

	<p>Of the outstanding points, JD advised that points a, g, h and j would need to be rolled over to the next meeting as there were no current updates.</p> <p>With regards to point i, DP advised that there was not yet any update to the aggregate replenishment rate which was last established by the MPA in 2023; this would now be established biannually with the next report due for publication later in 2026.</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting were deemed agreed. A copy will be uploaded on to the David Jarvis Associates website, available here: https://davidjarvis.biz/east-of-england-awp/</p>	
3.	<p>Update from MHCLG to include update on AWP contract renewal</p>	JD
	<p>JD gave an update as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AWP contract re-tendering process is underway with replies having been received to a pre-market engagement exercise. The publication date of the tender notice had been expected to be 9 February but this has slipped. • Consultation on the NPPF reforms is underway with a deadline for responses of 10 March. • There was no update on the proposed revised national aggregate guidelines. • Consultation on a new National Planning Policy for Waste, including national decision-making policies was planned for later in 2026. • Local government reform in England is leading to the introduction of Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) which are expected to use maps to identify broad locations for growth, economic areas, and infrastructure. The maps of the geographic areas to be covered by each SDS are due for publication soon. [An MHCLG consultation opened on the 'Areas for producing spatial development strategies' on 12 February 2026: Areas for producing spatial development strategies - GOV.UK]. • An NACG meeting was scheduled for the afternoon of 10 February. <p>CJ commented that planning authorities were finding themselves in an invidious position where they were required to produce a new local plan in accordance with the LURA 2023 but the secondary legislation and guidance is still outstanding meaning that authorities were unable to commence the process.</p> <p>RW commented that there was a disparity in how minerals and waste plans were being treated by government bodies with some still viewing them as local plans (as they had traditionally been viewed) and some not. This had consequential impacts on the availability of government funding, amongst other things. PD echoed RW's concerns. MB added that the LURA 2023 does make a distinction between minerals and waste plans and other local plans.</p>	

	<p>An additional concern was raised relating to the current guidance on plan making regarding the requirement for a 4 month notice period if the plan process needs to be restarted at any point. It was questioned whether the reorganisation of local government would trigger this. RW explained that Suffolk was directly affected by this as it was caught by the requirement to formally give notice of the intention to commence plan-making under the new system by 31 December 2026 as its minerals and waste plan was more than 5 years old. However, Suffolk was in the process of local government reorganisation with proposed new administrative boundaries not yet known so there was every chance that the plan making process would be interrupted by this and may need to recommence with obvious implications for wasted time and resources.</p> <p>JW suggested that this was an important matter which would sensibly be brought to the attention of MHCLG at the NACG meeting scheduled for later in the day and it was agreed that RW would attend that meeting to raise this issue.</p>	
4.	<p>Discussion as to EEAWP response to NPPF consultation</p>	All
	<p>It had been proposed that an EEAWP response be prepared to the NPPF consultation and input was therefore sought from attendees as to whether this was appropriate and, if so, what should be included.</p> <p>DP commenced by saying that the MPA had had several meetings with MHCLG about the reforms with follow up meetings with industry colleagues. The MPA's concerns could be summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deletion of some key words and phrases is a concern and seems unnecessary – and weakens the messaging and links. These words are often cited in minerals plans, officer and inspectors' reports as the context for policy or decisions, and give meaning to the 'substantial weight' to be attached to the importance of extraction; • Deletion of reference to it being '<i>essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs</i>'. 'Essentiality' is important in messaging, particularly with regard to the importance of making provision and permitting reserves – minerals are essential for the economy and society, and the predominant indigenous supply should be supported; • Deletion of requirement to plan for a <i>steady & adequate</i> supply of aggregates and industrial minerals. 'Steady and adequate' has been an accepted principle for decades, and is cited in plans and decisions in terms of ensuring there is no shortage of materials that are needed for construction and industrial sectors, including considering how long it can take to secure site allocations and permission for reserves. Maintenance of minimum landbanks is a means of achieving this; • The positive policy 'facilitating exploration and extraction or processing' that applies to critical and growth minerals should apply to all minerals of national and local importance – including the 'essential' industrial minerals and construction aggregates; • The inclusion of the words '<i>where appropriate</i>' in SDSs was unwelcome as SDSs should not be given the option to opt out of making provision for mineral supply. 	

The meeting expressed some differences in opinion as to the merits of the existing against revised terminology with one view being that the word 'sufficient' was preferable to 'steady and adequate' as 'adequate' could equate to a minimal supply whereas 'sufficient' implies more, whilst the use of the word 'essential' has not historically assisted with supply. The use of the words 'where practical' in relation to prior extraction were considered too vague as it was not clear whether this just referred to financial considerations of practicality. Similarly, the word 'foreseeable' was unhelpful in connection with safeguarding as it was too open to interpretation (for example, would boreholes be required before it could be considered that a resource was foreseeably likely to be extracted?).

MB advised that Cambridgeshire County Council ('CCC') had prepared a draft response to the consultation which he would share with the EEAWP once it had been approved by committee. CCC had picked up on some contradictions (eg the relationship between policy DM7 and P3.3 where the former notes that other regulatory regimes should be assumed to operate effectively whilst the latter states that it should not be assumed that other regimes for the control of pollution will necessarily eliminate emissions completely; footnote 69 which seeks to prevent more than basic BNG requirements on windfall sites which directly contradicts CCC policies on site restoration and would result in an unfair advantage being applied to windfall as opposed to allocated sites; and 'prior extraction' only being applied to allocated sites).

MB noted that critical minerals were much more of a feature within the draft reformed NPPF and he wondered whether the AWP's would need to expand their remit in order to address this (as their current role is restricted to aggregates). DP commented that the AWP's had a distinct role dealing with aggregates and it would probably be better not to vary this; however, the MPA is in the process of setting up a UK Industry Minerals Group to draw together personnel from different mineral sectors to replace the CBI Minerals Group and will continue to organise the UK Minerals Forum and this may provide a useful forum to discuss wider minerals. He suggested that if need be, 'other minerals' could be discussed at the end of AWP meetings.

JK raised a concern about solar farms being viewed as temporary when they are permitted to be constructed on mineral safeguarding areas. They are clearly unlikely to be dismantled after 30 years resulting in the effective sterilisation of the mineral.

CJ highlighted that the text box at the start of Chapter 11 allowed the restriction of 'specific types of minerals development that could harm environmental objectives'. CJ was concerned that this phrase could be relied on by objectors to seek to prevent quarries being opened in their localities. MB added that the text box text could also be cited as a material consideration as the explanation at paragraph 10 in the introduction to the NPPF only provides that the text box text 'should not be applied as either plan-making or decision-making policy'.

CJ added that with regard to policy S5 which deals with the principle of development outside settlements, whilst the reference to mineral extraction

	<p>potentially being allowed outside such settlements was welcome, this should be expanded to include ancillary minerals development.</p> <p>The meeting concluded that there was scope for an EEAWP response to be prepared; JW asked that attendees send in their comments to her which she would collate. A draft response would then be circulated for editing / approval. Members are asked to send in their comments by Wednesday 25th February.</p>	
5.	Survey forms for 2025	MB/CJ
	<p>MB introduced this item which dealt with the proposed online survey forms which MB and CJ had been working on behind the scenes. These had been circulated to members for comment / approval for use prior to the meeting.</p> <p>It was agreed that the forms were now ready to be used to survey operators but some training on their use was requested by planning authorities. MB has agreed to provide some training and JW will circulate a meeting invitation to authority members for 24th February at 09.30.</p> <p>In the meantime, MB will forward the final version of the form to JW for circulation to the mineral planning authorities.</p>	
6.	LAA status	JW
	<p>JW noted that all LAAs for 2023 had now been completed. Essex's LAA for 2024 had already been circulated for comment and Suffolk's LAA for 2024 would be circulated shortly. Some queries had been raised by Breedon about Suffolk's LAA for 2023 and RW advised that most of these queries would be addressed in the 2024 LAA. One of the comments related to Sizewell C and RW said that it was worth noting that much of the aggregate required for construction of Sizewell C is not coming from Suffolk but is being imported from elsewhere owing to Sizewell's specific requirements.</p>	
7.	Mineral Products Association Update	DP
	<p>The MPA latest economic and market briefing update is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK ECONOMY <p>Momentum in the UK economy faded in the second half of 2025, with GDP growth stalling in Q3. This slowdown was exacerbated by uncertainty ahead of the late Autumn Budget, which weighed on confidence and delayed investment decisions. At the start of 2026, there is little sign of improvement and private sector demand remains weak. UK growth continues to be hampered by high economic and geopolitical uncertainty (President Trump's speech at Davos proved more destabilising than President Macron's sunglasses), subdued household and business confidence, persistent inflationary pressures, and new tax rises effective from April, all of which are weighing on jobs and investment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CONSTRUCTION <p>Construction is also likely to stay under sustained pressure this year, as persistent cost, planning and regulatory headwinds continue to weigh on the sector. With</p>	

	<p>investment decisions pushed back in the second half of 2025 due to the Budget, the first half of 2026 may prove especially challenging. New contract awards rose significantly at the end of 2025, but Barbour ABI warned of recurring delays to actual project starts. The CPA has downgraded its 2026 construction output projection from 2.8% to 1.7%, with key areas including new housing and large commercial tower projects expected to stay subdued until the end of the year. Brighter spots include energy-related and water infrastructure work, as well as work on data centres, gigafactories and public programmes in schools, hospitals, prisons and defence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MPA MINERAL PRODUCTS MARKETS FORECAST - 2025Q4 AND 2025 <p>The prolonged demand downturn in mineral products showed no sign of easing in Q4, with volumes in 2025 lower than in 2024. For ready-mixed concrete, aggregates and asphalt, it was a fourth consecutive year of decline after the post-pandemic rebound in 2021. The ready-mixed concrete market has been the most severely affected, with volumes falling to just 11 million cubic metres in 2025. London has been at the heart of this weakness, seeing an acute 27% drop on a year earlier. Aggregates sales saw a 1.6% decline, while asphalt sales fell by 1.1%. Mortar sales, which closely track housebuilding activity, rose by 5.2% in 2025, but momentum faded in the second half of the year, culminating in a 2% fall in volumes in the final quarter.</p>	
8.	British Aggregates Association Update	MP
	MP advised that there was no current update from the BAA but one would be provided for the next meeting.	
9.	Mineral Local Plans Update	MPAs / All
	<p>The Minerals Local Plan Update had been circulated prior to the meeting though only 2 updates had been supplied in time to be included. JW invited members to submit any additional updates and advised that she would recirculate the updated MLPU.</p> <p>JW drew to the meeting's attention the plea by Thurrock Council for any mineral planning officers kindly to review an updated draft of Thurrock's strategic minerals policy which was proposed to sit within its new Local Plan and which will be going out to consultation from May this year as Thurrock does not have the resources or experience in house to do this. If anyone can assist, they are asked to contact Sarah Wilson at Thurrock directly. PD advised that he had already supplied some comments.</p>	
10.	Any other business	All
	No other business was reported but the MMO had supplied an emailed update to JW to the effect that drafting continues on the replacement East Marine Plan and there will be further opportunity for stakeholder engagement during March. Communications will be sent out shortly on how to join online sessions. The MMO is also collating a response to the NPPF consultation and will be reviewing	

	AWP responses in order to align their response, where applicable, regarding aggregates.	
11.	Date of next meeting	CJ / JW All to note
	The next meeting would normally be due in around June. However, this cannot be scheduled at present given the pending re-tendering process for the EEAWP. JW advised that she would still be available to assist, where possible, during any hiatus period.	

The meeting finished at 12.55pm.

Action points

- a) JW to upload a copy of the last minutes on to the David Jarvis Associates website.
- b) RW to attend NACG meeting on 10 February pm to raise LGR issues affecting Suffolk.
- c) Members to send their comments on the NPPF reforms to JW by Wednesday 25th February. JW will then collate and recirculate for editing / approval prior to submission before 10th March.
- d) MB to forward the final version of the survey form to JW for circulation to the mineral planning authorities.
- e) MB to provide some training on the survey form. JW to circulate a meeting invitation to authority members for this training to take place on 24th February at 9.30am.
- f) Members to submit any additional updates for the MLPU which JW will then recirculate.
- g) Mineral planning authority members to contact Sarah Wilson at Thurrock if they can assist with reviewing an updated draft of Thurrock's strategic minerals policy.
- h) JW to await completion of the AWP re-tendering process and then, if appropriate, to liaise with CJ regarding a specific date for the next meeting in June.