

# Regionally Important Geological Sites

## The Geology of Rotherham

The bedrock that forms the foundations of Rotherham includes the Coal Measures of late Carboniferous age and the Magnesian Limestone of Permian age. These two rock sequences produce two contrasting landscapes of the Yorkshire Coalfield and the South Yorkshire Magnesian Limestone Ridge that forms the eastern part of Rotherham Borough.

The Coal Measures include alternating sandstones and mudstones with siltstones and coal seams. The contrasting resistance to erosion of the sandstones and mudstones produces the distinctive edges and variable slopes on the sides of the valleys. The Yorkshire Coalfield forms part of the East Pennine Basin, which forms the reference type area for the late Carboniferous of Europe. Most of the sandstones have been quarried for local building stone, including the distinctive Rotherham Red sandstone. The Carboniferous mudstones have historically been used for brick manufacture. Most of the thicker coal seams have been mined for bituminous coal for domestic use and coking, though most of the current production is used in coal fired power stations.

The Magnesian Limestone produces a dissected slightly undulating plateau to the east around Anston, Lindrick and Maltby, with valleys and steep sided gorges with crags cutting across the plateau. The Magnesian Limestone is a distinctive limestone rock type that in places has been eroded into a karst with caves, sinkholes and fissures as part of the landscape. Magnesian Limestone has been quarried locally as a building stone and for other purposes.

Superficial deposits are sparsely distributed, with limited spreads of alluvium associated with the floodplain of the River Don, and assorted mixture of sandstone blocks within mudstone that often forms the soils on the Coal Measures. Further information on the geology of South Yorkshire can be found on Sheffield Area Geology Trust website <https://www.sagt.org.uk/>

## What are Regionally Important Geological Sites?

This is a local planning designation that recognises the geological conservation interest of a site.

Regionally important geological sites benefits:

- Conserve areas with recognised geological interests:
- Contribute to local and national geodiversity and biodiversity targets
- Add to the local character and distinctiveness of an area
- Contribute to the quality of life

## Regionally Important Geological Sites in Rotherham

Regionally Important Geological Sites in Rotherham were first designated following a survey carried out by the South Yorkshire RIGS Group, which is now part of the Sheffield Area Geology Trust (SAGT). They are sites of substantive geological importance.

The first series of Regionally Important Geological Sites in Rotherham were endorsed in a meeting of Rotherham Metropolitan Council's Cabinet Member and Deputy Economic and Development Issues on the 8 November 1999. A proportion of Regionally Important Geological Sites are also Local Wildlife Sites.

## **Update to Regionally Important Geological Sites series in Rotherham**

The Council's Planning Policy Team commissioned geological survey work to provide updated information on areas of significant geological interest in the borough in 2010. This survey identified three new additional sites of Regionally Important Geological Sites quality. For many of the existing Regionally Important Geological Sites, boundary changes have been made to conform to good practices. Survey data was obtained from a variety of sources such as literature, maps and other records. Landowner permission was obtained for access to survey sites, or if this was not possible to be obtained, viewing of sites was made from rights of way public highways or remotely using aerial photographs. The updated series of Regionally Important Geological Sites were accepted by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Environment Services on 24 January 2011. The Regionally Important Geological Sites boundaries are included in the Non Statutorily Protected Sites designation on the Local Plan Policies Map.

## **Rotherham Regionally Important Geological Sites selection methodology**

Rotherham Regionally Important Geological Sites selection and boundary update work has gone through a process of external verification and is available as a download from the Council's web site.

## **Management of the Regionally Important Geological Sites system in Rotherham**

The Rotherham Regionally Important Geological Sites system for planning purposes is managed by the Council's Planning Policy Team.

## **Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel**

The Local Geological Sites Panel is a panel of local experts that meet at least twice a year to oversee the selection, deselection and evaluation of Local Geological Sites including Regionally Important Geological Sites as recommended by Defra guidance (2006). The Panel's recommendations on sites will be passed on to the Local Planning Authority for consideration within the Local Plan. The Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel is currently administrated by the Sheffield Area Geology Trust.

## **What happens if I want apply for planning permission to develop a Regionally Important Geological Sites, or Local Geological Site?**

The Regionally Important Geological Sites or Local Geological Site designation will be taken into account along with any other material considerations in any future planning decisions. In some cases the Panel may advise they have no objection to development proceeding on part of a Regionally Important Geological Sites particularly former large quarry areas, providing that overall the development enhances the geodiversity while conserving or enhancing any ecological interest.

## **Will I be legally constrained in how I manage the land?**

The designation does not bring extra legal requirements on how the land needs to be managed. Any existing legislation that applies to the site will remain in force. If planning permission were to be granted on the site in the future it is possible that planning conditions may be put in place regarding the Regionally Important Geological Sites interest, including management conditions.

## **Will the public have a right of access on Rotherham Local Geological Sites?**

No additional rights of public access are given to Regionally Important Geological Sites.

## **Where can I get advice on how to manage my land for conservation?**

It is hoped that landowners will manage their sites in a positive fashion, sensitive to the geological conservation interest or interests. The Local Geological Sites Panel members including the Sheffield Area Geology Trust (SAGT) can give basic advice on site management without charge. Please contact SAGT direct for further information at [sageologytrust@gmail.com](mailto:sageologytrust@gmail.com)

## **Regionally Important Geological Sites boundaries**

Requests for changes to approved Regionally Important Geological Sites would need to be made to the Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel (RLGSP). These would be considered at one of the RLGSP meetings (of which there are at least two a year).

If you think the qualifying interest on your site has changed please contact us. It would be necessary to confirm this by way of the collection of valid, scientific data and professional analysis. The Panel may also require an aerial photograph, and an annotated site map. If the evidence confirms the qualifying interest is no longer present and is not restorable the site will be considered for deselection. Each site will need to be considered on a site by site basis by the Panel. Requests from tenants, surrounding landowners etc, for boundary changes would be subject to landowner consents.

Landowners may need to understand that a review of the designation and resulting evidence gathering could lead to additional areas being designated and/or the area being assessed on other criteria (e.g. Local Wildlife Site - this is a local designation that recognises the wildlife nature conservation interest on a site). There may be some scope to revise boundaries as they reflect practical management boundaries, and not always the precise boundary of the geological, geodiversity and other nature conservation interests.

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## **Contact for further help and information**

Please contact Planning Policy using the details below. Your query will then be passed on to the most appropriate officer to respond. Please note technical queries (which may need to be supported by necessary technical information) will be passed on to members of the Rotherham Local Geological Sites Panel at one of their meetings.

Telephone: 01709 823869

Email: [planning.policy@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@rotherham.gov.uk)

Complete the form on the Council's website: <https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/xfp/form/535>

Post: Planning Policy, Planning, Regeneration and Transport, Regeneration & Environment Services, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Riverside House, Main Street, Rotherham, S60 1AE

[www.rotherham.gov.uk](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk)