

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

27 July 2010

Subject: Consultation on Initial Site Options for the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD

Cabinet member: John Brady
Economic Development, Planning and Housing

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council (the councils) have recently adopted the Minerals Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) and Minerals Development Control Policies DPD. The next step in forming the minerals element of the Local Development Framework is the production of the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD.

The consultation document on initial site options (the subject of this report) represents the first opportunity for communities and stakeholders to comment on the suitability of sites put forward for consideration for sand and gravel extraction by landowners and the minerals industry.

It is important to stress that the plan is at a very early stage of production and no sites have been afforded 'preferred' status.

Although there are uncertainties relating to the future of the long-standing 'managed aggregates supply system' at the national, regional and local level, any changes made by central government to the status of Regional Spatial Strategies will not impact upon the content of the consultation document.

The recommendation of this report is that Cabinet approve the draft document for the purposes of consultation on the initial list of Site Options (**Appendix 1 of this report**).

Further detailed assessments of all potential sites will be undertaken before those sites considered suitable in social, environmental and economic terms are carried forward into a draft Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD to be published for consultation in spring 2011.

Swindon Borough Council approved the document for publication and consultation on 10th June 2010.

Proposals

That Cabinet:

- a) notes the need to identify sites for sand and gravel extraction in order to address long-term supply issues and the short-term shortfall in permitted reserves (the landbank);
- b) approves that public consultation is undertaken on initial site options as shown in Appendix 1 to inform the development of the draft Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations Development Plan Document;
- c) authorise the service Director for Economy and Enterprise, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Housing, to make detailed arrangements for the consultation and finalise the document in Appendix 1.

Reason for Proposal

To raise Cabinet awareness of the proposed consultation on the initial site options for the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD and ensure that progress continues to be made on the preparation of an up to date mineral planning policy framework for Wiltshire in line with the Council's statutory requirements.

Alistair Cunningham
Service Director Economy and Enterprise

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. To seek Cabinet's approval to proceed with consultation on initial site options for the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD. The consultation document is concerned with the identification of potential sites for future sand and gravel extraction only. This report also highlights the implications of the proposed abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) from the perspective of aggregates provision.
2. The responses to the consultation will be used to inform the development of the draft Wiltshire and Swindon Aggregate Minerals document to be published in spring 2011.

Background

3. Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council plan jointly for minerals. Since the adoption of the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy and Minerals Development Control Policies DPDs in 2009, we have made progress towards identifying potential sites for inclusion in the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD. The process for identifying areas of land for aggregates extraction is broadly prescribed in national policy (Minerals Policy Statement 1 and accompanying practice guide) and is set out in more detail in the Councils' published site identification methodology (www.wiltshire.gov.uk/aggregate_minerals_site_allocations_dpd_methodology_august_2009.pdf). Officers have undertaken initial appraisals of the sites proposed by landowners and developers in order to identify potential environmental issues.

Main Considerations for the Council

The content of the consultation document

4. The consultation document contains a list of sites that have been put forward by landowners and / or the minerals industry for consideration by the councils

through the process of plan making. Details of potential constraints to development and opportunities are set out for each area. The publication of this information at this early stage of plan preparation provides an opportunity for communities and other stakeholders to have their say, before a formal draft DPD is produced.

5. The consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the councils' Statements of Community Involvement and commence in early August. In light of the consultation commencing in August, it will last for an extended period of 8 weeks.
6. The information and comments submitted in response to the consultation will be used to inform further detailed assessments of the potential sites. This will inform the selection of the proposed sites that should be carried forward into the Councils' draft Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD. The sites put forward for consideration are distributed throughout the Wiltshire/Swindon area as follows:

Area *	Number of potential sites	Total estimated yield (million tonnes)	Total hectares
Upper Thames Valley	23	29.4	878
Calne Area	18	25.7	394
South East of Salisbury (near Whiteparish)	3	3.0	33.4
Salisbury Avon	2	2.2	67.1
Bristol Avon	16	6.7	464

* Figure 1.1 of **Appendix 1** indicates the location of these areas within Wiltshire and more detailed maps are shown in the draft consultation document.

7. Local Members for each of the above areas will continue to be kept up to date throughout the process of selecting which sites will be carried forward into the draft DPD. This will be achieved through briefing notes and email updates as the process of plan making develops.

The need to identify additional sites

8. The adopted Minerals Core Strategy commits Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council to aim to make provision of land in Wiltshire and Swindon sufficient to meet demand for sand and gravel to 2026.
9. The councils' stock of permitted reserves (or landbank) will last approximately 6.5 years at current rates of production¹. The remaining ('saved') preferred areas from the old Minerals Local Plan (approximately 2.5 - 3 million tonnes)

¹ Based on average of most recent 3 years production. If the RSS forecast provision rate of 1.85 million tonnes per annum is applied, our joint landbank would last approximately 4 years.

are insufficient to provide a steady and adequate supply of sand and gravel to 2026. It is therefore necessary to augment our existing sites through the process of identifying an appropriate number of sites, in appropriate locations that are considered to be acceptable in social, environmental and economic terms. This consultation will form an essential part of that process.

The implications of the abolition of the RSS

10. The adopted Minerals Core Strategy outlines the need to identify sufficient land to make provision for approximately 32 million tonnes of sand and gravel. This figure was based on the provision rate set out in the Draft RSS of 1.85 million tonnes per annum².
11. Recent announcements by central government stipulate the intention to abolish the RSS. At this stage it is not clear whether the existing 'managed aggregates supply system' will be replaced with an alternative at the national, regional or local level. However, the consultation on Initial Site Options for the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD represents an early, informal stage of plan preparation and for this reason does not make a commitment to a provision requirement, and therefore should not be affected by changes at the regional level.
12. Additionally, the evidence gathered through the proposed consultation exercise and further detailed assessment should place Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council in a strong position to prepare a local forecast provision requirement, if required. This work will also feed into any necessary review of the adopted Minerals Core Strategy as a result of the abolition of the RSS.

Environmental and climate change considerations

13. The consultation document contains a list of potential sites for sand and gravel extraction within Wiltshire and Swindon, for the period to 2026. The potential environmental impact of developing each site has been initially assessed in line with the councils' Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. Further detailed assessments for each site will be undertaken, building on the comments received from stakeholders during the consultation.
14. The purpose of the consultation document is to raise awareness of land put forward for consideration in terms of its suitability and environmental acceptability for sand and gravel extraction. At this stage, none of the sites have any preference or planning status and therefore the consultation document will not lead to notable changes in energy consumption or risks to the environment.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

² The process of planning for aggregate minerals is established in national policy. Essentially, mineral planning authorities are ascribed, or apportioned an element of the overall forecast regional supply figure to work with. This 'sub-regional apportionment' figure provides an indication of future provision rates and helps determine the level of landbank requirement for an any given area,

15. There are considered to be no equality impacts arising as a result of the consultation. The consultation will involve communication with a wide range of representatives of communities and groups throughout Wiltshire and Swindon and surrounding areas. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required at this stage of the plan making process, but will be completed once the final document is submitted to government.

Risk Assessment

16. The risks of not proceeding with the consultation are that progress on preparation of the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD will be delayed. Without the results of this consultation the Councils will be in a weaker position, in terms of an evidence base, to develop a case for a local provision rate in anticipation of a need for an alternative to the RSS figures. In the meantime planning applications for sand and gravel extraction may still be submitted by developers, which the Councils will be legally bound to determine without the benefit of guidance from an adopted Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD.

Financial Implications

17. The costs of publishing the draft document are to be met from planned budget commitments. There are no significant financial implications at this stage in the documents production. In addition, under the joint working arrangements set out between the two councils, a financial contribution will be made by Swindon Borough Council on an annual basis to offset production costs.

Legal Implications

18. There are not considered to be any legal implications of the consultation as this is not a formal stage of DPD preparation. Officers will be monitoring the status of the existing statutory framework as the process of abolishing the RSS becomes clear. Any amendments to the current statutory framework will be addressed before any future iterations of this plan are made.

Options Considered

19. The consultation document presents the initial options for sand and gravel extraction and as such no preferences for specific options or sites have been established at this stage.

Conclusions

20. Notwithstanding the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy, there is an acute need to identify additional land for sand and gravel extraction in order to provide a sufficient landbank³ to meet national policy. In accordance with national policy, Local Authorities should test the capacity of their areas to meet future demand for aggregates. It is therefore necessary to proceed with

³ A 'landbank' is a stock of permitted reserves.

consultation on the initial site options in order to inform the preparation of the Wiltshire and Swindon Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD.

Alistair Cunningham
Service Director, Economy and Enterprise

Background Papers

None

Appendix

Appendix 1: Initial Site Options Draft Report for the Aggregate Minerals Site Allocations DPD

Due to the size of this document, it is being circulated in hard copy to Cabinet members and appropriate officers only. However, it is available from our website on the following link or by contacting Democratic Services on 01225 718024.

<http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=415&Ver=4>
