

MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN WORKING GROUP**Note of Meeting 27 September 2010**

Present: Members: Cllr Ian Hudspeth (Chair), Cllr Patrick Greene, Cllr Anne Purse. Cllr Charles Mathew (substitute), Cllr Lorraine Lindsey-Gale (substitute).
Observers: Cllr Melinda Tilley.
Officers: Martin Tugwell, Ian Walker, Peter Day, Lois Partridge.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Cllr Peter Jones, Cllr George Reynolds.
2. **Note of meeting on 28 June 2010 and matters arising**
 - 2.1 The note of the meeting on 28 June 2010 was agreed.
 - 2.2 **Matters Arising**
 - 2.3 Cllr Mathew thought it was unsatisfactory that the June meeting note referred to the intention to prepare a brief to commission consultants to carry out an assessment of need for aggregates in Oxfordshire and that this had not yet been actioned.
 - 2.4 Peter Day said that the brief would be completed by mid October and that tenders would be sought from at least 3 consultants. The successful consultant would be required to complete their report by December and that their findings on need would be reported to the Working Group in January 2011.
 - 2.5 The meeting agreed unanimously that this work needs to be completed as soon as possible, but that it is also important that it is a good quality piece of work that will provide an alternative figure of need that can be defended.
3. **Assessment of Mineral Spatial Strategy Options**
 - 3.1 Peter Day introduced paper MW1 on the assessment of minerals spatial strategy options. He outlined the need for a new minerals strategy for Oxfordshire and the context for the generation of strategy options. The Minerals and Waste Core Strategy will include a strategy and policies for a 15 – 20 year period. There will be separate documents for site allocations. Initial spatial strategy options and then revised options had been the subject of stakeholder consultation during 2010 and a technical assessment of the options and a sustainability appraisal had been carried out. A preferred minerals strategy could now be selected on the basis of policy and is not dependent on the amount of mineral required.

- 3.2 Three options for sand and gravel have been identified: to concentrate on existing working areas; to move to new working areas; or to disperse working across both existing and new areas. A preferred strategy could be chosen based on one of these options or on a hybrid which draws upon elements of these options. There are single options for soft sand and for crushed rock, both based on continuing working in existing areas.
- 3.3 Peter Day advised that there is limited scope for further working at Sutton Courtenay and that this area would not be able to continue to provide sand and gravel throughout the plan period. Consequently a strategy based solely on existing working areas may result in increased concentration of working in the Lower Windrush Valley and Eynsham / Cassington / Yarnton areas. Concerns about the transport implications of increased working in these areas and the resultant increase in minerals traffic on the A40, at the Wolvercote roundabout and at the Peartree interchange with the A34 have been raised by the Highways Agency and OCC transport officers.
- 3.4 Cllr Hudspeth asked about the implications of increasing working in these West Oxfordshire areas for traffic on the A40 and its intersection with the A34. Martin Tugwell noted that the Sutton Courtenay could continue to supply sand and gravel for some years, which would give time to consider this further and explore possible mitigation measures.
- 3.5 Cllr Lindsey-Gale noted that although land at Nuneham Courtenay lies within the Radley existing working area, it is essentially a new working area which would require the creation of a new access onto the A4074. Peter Day confirmed that access from this area would be to the A4074, on the straight stretch south of the dual carriageway section.
- 3.6 Cllr Mathew questioned whether extensions to sites which are linked by conveyor to neighbouring plant sites can be really defined as extensions. It was clarified that continued extraction within existing working areas is a different issue from extensions to existing sites; it could involve extensions and/or new sites.
- 3.7 Cllr Lindsey-Gale noted that Nuneham Courtenay Parish Council had stated that working had not taken place at Radley for 30 years. She asked officers to verify when working had last taken place in the Radley area.
- 3.8 In response to Cllr Purse, Peter Day noted that the minerals industry had indicated a maximum mileage for sand and gravel deliveries of about 30 miles, but that most journeys average 15-20 miles.
- 3.9 Cllr Mathew thought that the pattern of supply for Oxfordshire as a whole was important and that the preferred strategy should take proximity to markets into account.

- 3.10 Peter Day said there would be a significant need for supply of aggregates to the continuing planned development of the Didcot and Wantage and Grove areas, and that option areas to the south of Oxford are closer to this Science Vale growth area. He explained that the assessment of options pointed to the possibility of a hybrid strategy which could combine the best elements of the three options to minimise mineral mileage by providing a spread of supply, which would also spread the burden. An example was set out at paragraph 7.5 of paper MW1, involving continued working in the Lower Windrush Valley and Eynsham / Cassington / Yarnton areas, the Radley area (northern part) the Sutton Courtenay area in the short term, and also at Caversham, and phased development of new areas of working in southern Oxfordshire, such as Cholsey, Clifton Hampden and Warborough / Shillingford / Benson (northern part).
- 3.11 Cllr Purse noted that aggregates extracted at Caversham do not meet the needs of the Oxfordshire market because they are largely exported into Berkshire. Peter Day said working at Caversham supplies the south east part of Oxfordshire and the Reading area, as it is now the closest source of sand and gravel to Reading. The minerals strategy should take account of cross-boundary movements of aggregates, especially where this provides a local sustainable source for markets which would otherwise have to be supplied from much greater distances. Aggregates are also imported into Oxfordshire, particularly hard crushed rock, which is not available in Oxfordshire.
- 3.12 Cllr Lindsey-Gale thought a hybrid option should not be considered since there had been no consultation on it; this was the first time it had been put forward. Peter Day explained that the possibility of a hybrid had been mentioned during the July consultations and the results of the consultation process and the technical assessment now pointed to this type of approach.
- 3.18 Cllr Mathew expressed support for a hybrid option which involved a balance of working in west Oxfordshire and in south Oxfordshire, to meet the needs of markets and to minimise mineral miles. He pointed out that the Lower Windrush Valley was enclosed by the Thames, the A40 and the A 415 and that practically all sites in Oxfordshire were subject to the same constraints such as archaeology, highways, bridges, flood risk and the like, and therefore the final decision needs to be based on sustainability and market proximity as well as the acreage per tonne consideration. He said that this pointed to the hybrid option as the most equitable and sensible solution.
- 3.19 Cllr Purse also supported a hybrid option that would provide a better balance of supply to meet demand both in west and north Oxfordshire and in south Oxfordshire.
- 3.20 Cllr Lindsey-Gale expressed support for option 1, continuing working in existing areas. She said the gravel areas which constitute Option 1 are

well placed in relation to the markets and best located to provide access to the principal road network. Reserves at existing sites can take us through the plan period. Existing sites have gone through a planning process and their suitability has already been accepted. It seems perverse to expect the aggregates companies to take on the costs of opening new sites, with new processing plants and new transport arrangements without a good business case for doing so. Minerals extraction is a demand led industry, and companies will only move when they have exhausted supplies. They are operating at 40% below expected targets at the moment and the housing industry does not expect an upturn in their market for the next ten years. Now we have a national hold on infrastructure projects. It is unlikely that there will be an upturn in a demand for gravel in the foreseeable future, and therefore there is no logical reason to plan to open new areas for extraction. It also relied upon areas which have already been permitted through the planning process.

- 3.21 Cllr Greene also supported option1, subject to a caveat that would allow other sites to be identified if required to meet future levels of demand.
- 3.22 Martin Tugwell suggested that such a caveat might be more appropriate in a site allocations document, to enable the control of the release of sites as aggregates are needed.
- 3.23 Cllr Tilley, as an observer, indicated that she favoured the principle of a hybrid option.
- 3.24 Cllr Hudspeth supported option 1, and therefore the majority view of the Working Group was for a strategy based on continued concentration of sand and gravel extraction in existing working areas. It was agreed that this should include the Caversham area.
- 3.25 Martin Tugwell suggested that, given there are existing sites with permitted reserves which would enable an existing areas strategy to continue for some time and in the light of the work on determination of need which should be available in January, the Working Group's recommendation to Cabinet could be to support option 1 as the starting position for at least the short term but this position could be looked at again in January when the position on need has been established. The recommendation could include flexibility to review the possibility of new areas of working if the level of need for sand and gravel considered against the ability of existing areas to supply indicates this is necessary, taking into account proximity to markets.
- 3.26 Cllr Hudspeth thought that the recommendation to Cabinet should also include encouragement to increase secondary and recycled aggregates to reduce the need for primary aggregates. He noted that the County Council is asking the District Councils to provide better

information on the availability of recycled aggregates through the Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership.

- 3.27 Cllr Mathew asked whether the consultant's brief for the need study would include a requirement to review the need for both primary and secondary and recycled aggregates, and whether it would consider geographical differences of need within the county. Peter Day confirmed that the brief would cover need for both primary and secondary and recycled aggregates. In response to Cllr Tilley, Peter Day confirmed that the consultant's brief would be made available to the members of the Working Group.
- 3.28 Cllr Mathew asked Cllr Hudspeth to write to Government, asking that an increased proportion of the £2/tonne Aggregates Levy is returned to local projects and goes towards encouraging secondary and recycled aggregates. Cllr Hudspeth said that he has already written to the Government about this but was happy to do so again.
- 3.29 Martin Tugwell suggested that the proposed consultation on a preferred strategy approach should be deferred until the spring and combined with consultation on need for aggregates and other policy issues. This would reduce costs and enable work on the need study to be progressed as quickly as possible, but it would not affect the overall timetable for the Core Strategy. It was noted that it would also reduce consultation fatigue.
- 3.30 It was agreed that both paper MW1 and the note of this meeting should be included in the report to the Growth & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee meeting on 6 October.
- 3.31 It was agreed that the recommendation of the Working Group to the Cabinet meeting on 19 October is:
- for sand and gravel – a starting position spatial strategy for concentration of extraction in existing areas of working, at Lower Windrush Valley, Eynsham / Cassington / Yarnton, Radley, Sutton Courtenay and Caversham, but that this position be looked at again in January when the requirement for sand and gravel supply has been established, with flexibility to review the possibility of new areas of working if the need for sand and gravel considered against the ability of existing areas to supply indicates this is necessary, taking into account proximity to markets;
 - for soft sand – a spatial strategy for extraction in three areas, at south east of Faringdon, Tubney / Marcham / Hinton Waldrist and Duns Tew;
 - for crushed rock – a spatial strategy for extraction in three areas, at north of Bicester to the east of the River Cherwell, south of the A40 near Burford and south east of Faringdon (associated with soft sand extraction);
 - for consultation on a preferred strategy for mineral working to be combined with consultation on the need for aggregates supply and

other key minerals policy matters and carried out in Spring 2011, following consideration by the Working Group in January 2011 and by Cabinet in February 2011.

4. Date of Next Meeting

- 4.1 The next meeting will be held in late January 2011, the date to be confirmed once the timetable for the need assessment report is known.

LGP/PHD
28 September 2010