

Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 1 – Core Strategy

Consideration of alternatives for the Oxfordshire Minerals Strategy

7th December 2016

Introduction

This document provides information on the alternatives that are being considered during the post-Examination process to undertake the further SEA/SA required and finalise the Main Modifications that Oxfordshire County Council will be proposing to publish for consultation.

Table 1 provides information on the alternatives that have been considered for each of the policies that make up the Minerals Strategy element of the Core Strategy, identifying those which will be taken forward for assessment in the ongoing SEA/SA process. That process will also be undertaking assessments for the Main Modifications for which alternatives are not being considered at this stage in the development of the Plan.

For information, this document also provides a summary of the methodology that will be used to assess the reasonable alternatives as well as a proposed structure and contents for the new SA Report that will be prepared.

Table 1: Minerals Strategy Alternatives

Minerals Strategy Policy	Reasonable alternatives to be assessed	Alternatives that are not considered to be reasonable
Policy M1: Recycled and Secondary Aggregate	The Inspector has concluded that the figure of 'at least' or 'a minimum of' 926,000 tonnes per annum should be incorporated in the revision of policy M1. The Council is therefore proposing to include the following text as part of the Main Modification for policy M1:	0.67 mtpa – the reasons for rejecting this option in 2011 remain valid (i.e. that it does not have the same level of sustainability benefits when compared to the higher figures). It is therefore not a reasonable alternative that needs to be reconsidered.
	<i>“Provision will be made for facilities to enable the production and/or supply of a minimum of 0.926 million tonnes of recycled and secondary aggregates per annum”.</i>	0.9 mtpa – the figure of 'at least 0.9 mtpa' was included in the withdrawn 2012 Core Strategy and assessed in the SEA/SA. The figure was based on the figure specified in the South East Plan and is therefore no longer current. In addition it is not sufficiently distinct from the level now being proposed (0.926 mtpa) to warrant consideration as a reasonable alternative.
	At this stage in the development of the Plan there are not considered to be any reasonable alternatives to consider in relation to the figure to be included in the policy (see column to the right for details on potential alternatives that are not considered to be reasonable alternatives for new assessment).	1.025 mtpa – this figure is the Council's assessment of the current operational capacity for production of recycled and secondary aggregates (Examination document M2/1). It is 10.7% higher than the figure currently being proposed for the Main Modification. However, given that the proposed Main Modification figure of 0.926 mtpa is 'a minimum', which would not preclude 1.025 mtpa being delivered, and given that the Inspector has concluded that a figure of 'at least' or 'a minimum of' 926,000 tonnes per annum should be incorporated in the revision of policy M1, the Council concludes that there is no requirement to consider 1.025 mtpa as a reasonable alternative.

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		<p>No target figure – the approach taken in the 2014 Draft Core Strategy and the 2015 Submitted Plan was to not include a target figure, but instead to seek to maximise the contribution to aggregate supply from recycled and secondary aggregates. This approach was assessed in the SA/SEA. Given the consensus during the Examination and the subsequent conclusions of the Inspector it has been decided that a figure should be provided in the policy. Therefore having no target is no longer considered to be a reasonable alternative.</p> <p>In relation to policy M1, an alternative has also been put forward through representations to rely on increased imports of secondary and recycled aggregates by rail. This is not considered to be a reasonable alternative for policy M1 as the policy allows for and does not preclude the increased import of such material by rail. In addition there is no indication of this material being imported by rail to Oxfordshire at least in the short term and this is a matter outside the control of the Council.</p>

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Policy M2: Provision for working aggregate minerals	<p>The LAA 2014 has been prepared in accordance with the NPPF and the provision figures in it are the objectively assessed need. The findings of the LAA have been confirmed in the Inspector's Interim Report as being soundly based and robust. The Inspector has concluded that provision for the plan period should be made in policy M2 based on the LAA figures. There are therefore no reasonable alternatives to consider at this stage in the development of the Plan.</p>	<p>An alternative has been put forward through representations that the provision figures should be based just on the 10 year sales average. This equates to an alternative of not making provision for the wider area as raised in the Inspector's Interim Report (paragraph 39) and the subsequent correspondence.</p> <p>The Interim Report refers to the consideration of alternative levels of provision that was undertaken for the withdrawn 2012 Plan. At the time that Plan was being prepared the national planning policy system for aggregate minerals was 'top down', with nationally produced regional guideline figures being apportioned in regional spatial strategies to set provision figures for individual mineral planning authorities (MPAs). However, in July 2010 the government stated that 'planning authorities can choose to use alternative figures for their planning purposes if they have new or different information and a robust evidence base' (letter dated 6 July 2010 from DCLG Chief Planner on Revocation of Regional Strategies). In the light of this, the Council commissioned consultants to produce a Local Assessment of Aggregate Supply Requirements in January 2011 (Atkins Report) and alternatives drawn from this report were assessed against the South East Plan apportionment for Oxfordshire.</p> <p>With the dismantling of the regional planning system and introduction of the NPPF in 2012, the national planning policy approach to aggregate mineral provision figures is now quite different. The NPPF (paragraph 145) requires MPAs to prepare an annual Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA) 'based on a rolling average of 10 years sales data and other relevant local information'; and to make provision for 'the land-won and other elements of their Local Aggregate Assessment in their mineral plans taking account of the advice of the Aggregate Working Parties and National Aggregate Co-ordinating Group as appropriate'. The LAA is a technical document providing the objectively assessed need for provision for aggregate supply. National policy does not allow for alternatives to the LAA provision figures to be used in mineral plans, except if any contrary advice is given by the Aggregate Working Parties and/or National Aggregate Co-ordinating Group.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire LAA 2014 is based on the 10 years sales average and other relevant local information, in accordance with the NPPF. The</p>

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		<p>LAA concludes that taking into account the other relevant local information an adjusted 10 year sales average figure should be used (to compensate for the mothballing of quarries and temporary replacement by supply from sources outside Oxfordshire that took place during the 10 year period, and thus reflect Oxfordshire's past proportions of national supply and thereby contribute to the needs of the wider area) and not the 10 year sales average alone. The South East England Aggregate Working Party has supported the LAA. The LAA has been considered as part of the examination of the Plan and the Interim Report concludes that 'the finding of the LAA is soundly based on the best available evidence at the time and is therefore robust'. This confirms that the provision figures in the LAA 2014 are the objectively assessed need figures that should be used in the Plan. As the Interim Report says, how that objectively assessed need can or should be delivered is a matter to be assessed in the consideration of the strategy to deliver the provision requirements that flow from the LAA; but in view of the requirements of the NPPF there is no reasonable alternative to the objectively assessed need figures themselves and therefore there is no reasonable alternative to the amounts of provision to be made in policy M2.</p> <p>Therefore provision based just on the 10 year sales average (or not making provision for the wider area) is not considered to be a reasonable alternative.</p> <p>An alternative has also been put forward through representations that the requirement for primary aggregate could be met by imported crushed rock and china clay waste transported by rail. This is not considered to be a reasonable alternative because there is no indication of china clay waste becoming available as a supply of aggregate to Oxfordshire and there is a lack of evidence that increased supply of crushed rock from sources outside Oxfordshire and increased capacity for transport and delivery of these materials by rail could become available, at least in the short term.</p>

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<p>Policy M3: Principal locations for working aggregate minerals</p>	<p>The following alternatives will be considered for this policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current approach to exclude the Bampton/Clanfield area from policy M3 • Include the Bampton/Clanfield area in policy M3 	<p>In relation to principal locations for working aggregate minerals, alternatives have been put forward as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclude SRA at Caversham to Shiplake; • Delete Western SRA; • Lower Evenlode Valley should be excluded; and • No new working from Kennington to Cholsey: <p>The Strategic Resource Areas have been broadly drawn to encompass the potentially workable mineral deposits within each area. It is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative to exclude any of these areas, or any parts of them, from policy M3.</p> <p>Exclude Green Belt from SRAs: mineral extraction is a form of development that is not inappropriate in the Green Belt providing it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt, which are matters that can only be determined when specific site detailed proposals are available. Excluding the Green Belt from the SRAs is therefore not considered to be a reasonable alternative.</p> <p>Consider having SRAs in AONBs: Government policy is that major minerals developments should only be permitted in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in exceptional circumstances. In view of the large extent of potentially workable mineral resources in Oxfordshire outside AONBs, it is not considered to be a reasonable alternative to include AONBs in the SRAs.</p> <p>Exclude Scheduled Monuments from SRAs: the SRAs are broad areas and it would not be appropriate to map them to a level of detail that would exclude scheduled monuments and other similar constraints but rather these constraints should be taken into account in the allocation of sites in accordance with the policies of the plan relating to protection of heritage assets.</p>

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<p>Policy M4: Sites for working aggregate minerals</p>	<p>In relation to the element of the policy “... to achieve a change over the course of the plan period in the balance of production capacity for sharp sand & gravel between the strategic resource areas in western & southern Oxfordshire to more closely reflect the distribution of demand within the county”, the following alternatives are to be considered. All the options are potentially deliverable and are therefore all considered to be reasonable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1: 0% south Oxon, 100% west Oxon (as proposed in representations); • Option 2: 35% south Oxon, 65% west Oxon (current situation); • Option 3: 75% south Oxon, 25% west Oxon (split required to achieve an approximate 50:50 split of production capacity to reflect the estimated 50:50 split in future demand between the north and south of the County). The percentage in the south is greater than that in the west as the existing permitted reserves are greater in the west (including a permission at Gill Mill which will continue right through the plan period and beyond); • Option 4: 100% south Oxon, 0% west Oxon (as proposed in representations); <p>The total requirement for the Plan period is 18.27 mt. The current permitted reserves available for working during the plan period total 11.85 mt. Taking into account sales in 2014 and 2015 of 1.41 mt leaves a remaining requirement of 5.01 mt. It is for this shortfall that the Plan needs to make provision and therefore the options presented above relate to this figure.</p>	<p>No strategic alternative have been put forward that are not covered by the scope of the four options that will be assessed.</p>

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Policy M5: Working of Aggregate Minerals	This is a procedural policy. No alternatives to be considered.	None
Policy M6: Aggregate rail depots	No alternatives to be considered.	None
Policy M7: Non- aggregate mineral working	No alternatives to be considered.	One representation suggested a more comprehensive approach to oil and gas. This is not considered to be a reasonable alternative as there are currently no oil and gas licences granted in Oxfordshire, and consequently no prospect of planning applications for oil and gas, and therefore no need for detailed policy.
Policy M8: Safeguarding mineral resources	No alternatives to be considered.	None
Policy M9: Safeguarding mineral infrastructure	No alternatives to be considered.	One representation suggested that the rail siding at Appleford should not be safeguarded beyond the end date of the landfill. This is not considered to be a reasonable alternative as the site has permanent planning permission.
Policy M10: Restoration of mineral workings	No alternatives to be considered.	None