

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR PLANNING AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY
TO THE EXECUTIVE
MARCH 2ND 2007

Minerals and Waste Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options

1 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, local plans are being replaced by a Local Development Framework. Responsibility for minerals and waste planning rests with the County Council. Under the new system the County Council has to produce Core Strategy and Site Allocations minerals and waste documents. The first stage in the production of the Minerals and Waste Framework was last year when there was consultation on issues and options for the Core Strategy document. The next stage is preferred options where the policies and proposals are defined for the first time. Following consultation and revisions a final document will then be submitted to the Secretary of State when formal objections can be made.
- 1.2 As the Minerals and Waste Development Framework will form part of the Development Plan for the Vale it must be considered by Council. However responsibility for making comments at this stage rests with the Executive. The closing date for responses is 23rd March 2007. The document has been passed to the political assistants as well as to the Deputy Director (Contracts & Procurement) but at the time of writing no comments have been received. This report considers the preferred options most likely to affect the Vale as prepared by the County Council and recommends comments to form the basis of the Council's response.
- 1.3 The Contact Officer for this report is Peter Williams, Principal Planning Officer, (01235 520202)

2 Recommendations

- (a) *that the Executive approves the comments on the Minerals and Waste Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options document as contained in this report.*

3 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- (a) A, B, C and F.
- (b) this report principally relates to the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and to the Oxfordshire Joint Municipal Waste Strategy .

4 Background and Supporting Information

- 4.1 The document does not contain site specific proposals for minerals or waste development. Instead it indicates general areas where such allocations might be made. The County Council is currently reviewing all potential sites prior to consulting on a very broad range of possible sites in the near future. It should be remembered that minerals can only be extracted from where they can be found and that the County Council is under a duty to ensure that adequate quantities of minerals are available to support expected need. Waste treatment is expected to be located as close as possible to sources. Government planning guidance on minerals is provided in Minerals Policy Statement 1 – Planning and Minerals. In relation to waste government guidance is contained in Planning Policy Statement 10 – Planning for Sustainable Waste Management.

4.2 **Issue 1 – Minerals and Waste Framework Plan Period** - On minerals the first issue to be addressed is the period to be covered by the framework. Originally the two end dates suggested were 2018 (now 2019) to give 10 years coverage after adoption or 2026 to match the South East Plan. A longer period would require more allocations to be made but would ensure supply for the period covered by the South East Plan. Providing that development is carefully phased and regular monitoring ensures that provision matches supply there is no reason why a longer period should have more impact than a shorter period which, in any event would require an earlier policy review and a review of all allocations to ensure longer term supply. It would also match the period to be covered by the Vale's own Local Development Framework.

Comment – The Minerals and Waste Development Framework should cover the period to 2026 provided that careful phasing and regular monitoring is used to control the rate of development.

4.3 **Issue 2 – Minerals Supply** - The next minerals issue is the quantity of minerals to be extracted. The levels required by the Government under Regional Planning Guidance 9 (RPG9) have been incorporated into the South East Plan. Taking into account the levels of existing provision, Oxfordshire will be required to provide 29.3 million tonnes of sand and gravel and 6.8 million tonnes of crushed rock to 2026. The options for meeting this requirement are (i) to identify wholly new sites or areas of search, or (ii) identify extensions to existing quarries with new provision only in the long term, or (iii) identify provision only to 2019 supported by criteria policy. As the response recommended above is for the framework to cover the period up to 2026 supporting the third option would be inconsistent. Given the choice between seeking wholly new sites and identifying extensions to existing sites with new sites only later, it is considered that the impact of the second option would be less.

Comment – The framework should aim to secure extensions to existing sites in the shorter term with wholly new allocations in the longer term.

4.4 The framework has to provide separate figures for sharp sand and gravel and for soft sand. The options are to split on a historical basis at 10% soft and 90% sharp or to split on the basis of recent production at 17% soft and 83% sharp. It is considered that it is more logical to reflect recent production.

Comment – The split between sand and gravel should be 17% soft sand and 83% sharp sand/gravel.

4.5 **Issue 3 – Strategy for Location of Sand and Gravel Workings** - The overall location for sand and gravel workings is the next issue. Currently most sharp sand and gravel production is from the Lower Windrush Valley and Eynsham-Cassington-Yarnton areas. Soft sand is extracted in the main resource area between Faringdon, Oxford and Abingdon. The three potential locations for sharp sand and gravel located in the Vale out of 15 locations are: Radley, Marcham and Appleford/Little Wittenham . The only realistic option for soft sand extraction is in the main resource area. The options suggested are for any sharp sand and gravel allocations to be located at existing sites in West Oxfordshire and at new sites in southern Oxfordshire outside the AONB. For soft sand the preferred option is for new sites to be located in the main resource area. Although there is no realistic alternative to the location of new soft sand extraction it is not clear from the framework whether future sharp sand/gravel works will affect the Vale. The preferred option should therefore be accepted but a clearer definition than the phrase 'southern Oxfordshire' would be preferable.

Comment – The preferred options for the general location of new sand and gravel sites is accepted but there should greater clarity over the likely location of future workings.

4.6 **Issues 4&5 – Strategy for the Location of Crushed Rock Production (limestone and/or ironstone) and Recycled/Secondary Aggregates** - The provision for crushed rock will not affect the Vale. On recycled aggregates, which reduce the need to extract sand and gravel,

the issue is where should plants to process material to produce the aggregates be located. The South East Plan says that such sites should be close to sources of material and can be located in the Green Belt if there are no alternatives. This matches national planning guidance. The options are to locate on a sequential basis with the first option being in urban locations with green field sites as a last resort and then on brownfield land as a first option with green field sites again as a last resort. This approach would not exclude sites in the Green Belt. It is considered that this approach is broadly acceptable but Green Belt sites should only be considered when all other options have been examined and rejected.

Comment – The proposed overall approach to location is accepted but it should be made clear that Green Belt sites will only be considered when all other options have been examined and rejected.

- 4.7 **Issue 7 – Methodology for the Identification of Areas or Sites for Mineral Working -** Preferred option 7 sets out criteria for evaluating potential mineral working sites. As the criteria cover all the usual material planning considerations, which includes proximity to land uses which are sensitive to nuisance e.g. housing, the suggested option is considered to be acceptable. However, it is considered that specific mention of Green Belts should be made in accord with guidance in PPG2 Green Belts and MPS1 Planning and Minerals regarding the need to ensure high environmental standards during operation and a high standard of restoration.

Comment - The criteria in Option 7 are acceptable but specific reference should be made to the Green Belt.

- 4.8 **Issues 8 to 10 Restoration, Minimising Environmental Impacts and Safeguarding Minerals Resources -** It is considered that no comments are required in relation to the preferred options for restoration, minimising impact and safeguarding minerals as they reflect this Council's longstanding approach to these issues.

- 4.9 **Issue 11 Waste Management Facilities -** The overall approach proposed in relation to waste management is to reduce, recycle and re-use followed by treatment and then disposal, which includes landfill only as a final resort. The County Council needs to identify a range of sites which allow all of the required processes to take place. It cannot however be specific about what activity can occur on each site. This is dependant on the needs of the private companies who will carry out the processes. Sites can include locations in the Green Belt when other options are not available.

- 4.10 The first issue to be considered is what the overall approach should be to the site selection process. Options examined by the County include setting criteria, identifying broad locations, identifying specific sites, or using a combination of the options. The preferred options are: to identify specific sites for strategic facilities and broad locations for local sites, to be flexible over the activities which will be allowed at sites but to restrict uses in some locations and to provide for a range of small and large sites. Given the importance of securing adequate waste management facilities for the future these options are considered to be an appropriate way forward as they will provide for a wide variety of facilities, whilst respecting the constraints which might affect provision in particular locations

Comment – The preferred options 11a (i) to (iii) are considered to be an appropriate way forward.

- 4.11 The next issue addressed is where should sites be located. The main difficulty here is the potential conflict between the need to have such facilities close to where waste arises and the need to ensure that sensitive locations are protected. The preferred option suggested by the document is to take a sequential approach with urban areas as first choice and greenfield sites as a last resort together with using brownfield land first with greenfield sites again as a last resort. A concern is that Green Belt sites are included as potential locations. Your officers consider that the document should make it clear that Green Belt sites should be very much a last resort to meet the requirements of Government guidance.

Comment – The overall locational approach is acceptable but it should be made clear that Green belt locations should only be considered when all other options are unacceptable i.e. to protect Green Belts whilst taking into account other factors as set out in PPS10 - Planning for Sustainable Waste Management.

- 4.12 **Issue 12 - Ensuring Movement up the Waste Hierarchy** - The next waste issue is the need to ensure that all other options are utilised to ensure that as little waste as possible goes to landfill. The options are to ensure sufficient provision is made for recycling as a minimum and to limit provision for landfill. It is considered that this is a sensible approach which is consistent with this Council's views on waste management and the waste hierarchy.

Comment – the preferred options for discouraging landfill are considered to be a sensible approach.

- 4.13 **Issue 13 – Provision of Facilities and Capacity for Waste Management** - On the matter of the provision of sufficient waste facilities the main issue is whether the County should make provision just to meet its own need or should it accept a need to process waste from London. The need to make provision to accommodate a share of London's waste is set out in regional guidance alongside self sufficiency which is expected to be the basis for local provision in the same guidance. The County's preferred option is to follow the regional guidance and this is considered to be the appropriate approach. An alternative approach is unlikely to be successful when it would be contrary to the approved Regional Planning Guidance and emerging South East Plan

Comment – the preferred options for self sufficiency with acceptance of waste from London are considered to be a sensible approach.

- 4.14 **Issue 14 – Methodology for the Identification and Assessment of Sites for Waste Management Facilities** - For identifying and assessing sites for waste management facilities a range of criteria are suggested. In general these are considered to be acceptable but again no specific mention of the Green Belt is made.

Comment - The criteria in Option 14 are acceptable but specific reference should be made to the constraints imposed by Green Belt policy.

- 4.15 **Issue 15 – Landfill** - With regard to landfill some provision will still be needed for the residue remaining after all other processes have been implemented. The suggested approach is to increasingly limit landfill to encourage other processes and to direct inert waste to mineral site restoration. It is considered that this is an appropriate approach consistent with this Council's views on landfill.

Comment - The approach set out in Option 15 is acceptable.

- 4.16 **Issue 16 – Minimising the Environmental Impacts of Waste Management** - The final waste issue is to consider how to minimise the impacts of new waste facilities. The suggested approach is to examine the need for mitigation on a case by case basis at the planning application stage and require mitigation by condition as part of any planning permission.

Comment - The approach set out in Option 16 is considered to be appropriate.

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Background Papers:-

Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation Paper February 2007

Minerals Policy Statement 1 – Planning and Minerals

Planning Policy Statement 10 – Planning for Sustainable Waste Management

The South East Plan – Draft Plan for Submission to Government March 2006