

Aggregates Panel Members:- J Anderson, R N Copping (Chairman), R Sanderson, HM Saunders, WA Storey, G F Wenham

IDENTIFICATION OF SITES TO BE INCLUDE IN THE MINERALS LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek the advice of the Aggregates Panel regarding the proposed sites to be identified in the Minerals Local Plan Review.

2. Background

- 2.1 The current Minerals Local Plan was adopted in 1998. In his report following the 2nd Local Plan Inquiry, the Inspector recommended that the Plan include a commitment to an early evaluation of those resources from which further areas for future working will be identified, demonstrating that all the costs and benefits of working these resources have been evaluated and compared. This recommendation was adopted.
- 2.2 Work identifying sites to be included on the Review of the Plan has included:
- adopting a Framework for Site Selection Strategy (October 1998);
 - a desk top evaluation of the mineral resources in the county to identify economically viable resource blocks;
 - testing these blocks against an initial series of environmental and other constraints (known as "sieving") to identify areas suitable for further investigation as potential sites for mineral extraction;
 - a pre-deposit draft consultation exercise on Key Issues including the "least worst" 21 potential locations (of the original 35) for further investigation.
- 2.3 The next major stage of the Plan process is to publish a First Deposit Review of the Minerals Local Plan. This is the first of the statutory stages of the plan when it is placed on formal 'deposit' for a period of public consultation. It is the first statement of the Council's future draft policies for all minerals related development and the areas from which future provision should come from.
- 2.4 Information from the Key Issues consultation has been included in the final stages of assessing the potential locations. These have been the subject of comparative evaluation to identify possible sites for extraction which represent the most sustainable options. At the last Aggregates Panel meeting, Members gave advice on those factors which should be given consideration when comparing the sites.

2.5 The anticipated timetable for the next stages is as follows:

- 20 June: Aggregates Panel to advise on the first draft of the policies and sites that will go forward for the Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA) to be carried out by Land Use Consultants.
- July: Aggregates Panel to consider responses to the SEA and agree any necessary changes.
- Early September: Aggregates Panel make final recommendations on policies and sites.
- 16 September: Recommendations and 1st Deposit Draft Plan to Cabinet.
- 19 September: Recommendations and 1st Deposit Draft Plan to County Council for approval to consult.
- October: Publish, and consult for a minimum statutory 6 week period, the 1st Deposit Minerals Local Plan Review.

3. The proposed sites to be included in the Plan

3.1 At the last meeting, the Panel gave guidance on some of the strategic issues that needed to be taken into account in developing the Review of the Plan, some of which impacted on the site selection process. These matters have been incorporated in the final evaluation of the sites proposed for inclusion in the Review. In particular, the Panel considered the implications of potential changes to Government advice on how much land-won sand and gravel the Review should provide for. The Panel therefore advised that options based on three scenarios should be prepared for consideration. The scenarios were:

Scenario 1: *Necessary provision 2004 - 2016 (from the anticipated date of adoption with a minimum plan period of 10 years, but County Council has concluded it should be coincident with the Structure Plan) based on current apportionment.
(17.4 mt during plan period plus 16.8 mt)*

Scenario 2: *Necessary provision for 2004 – 2016 based on average of last 3 year’s production (1998-2000).
(8.2 mt during plan period plus 11.4 mt)*

Scenario 3: *Necessary provision for 2004 – 2016 based on allowance for imports.
(12.6 mt during plan period plus 14 mt)*

3.2 The final stage of the site selection process has included a sustainability appraisal and comparative evaluation. This has resulted in the remaining 21 potential locations (from the original list of 35) being categorised in four groupings, ranging from those sites with the more significant constraints; those with fewer constraints

but still having limiting factors on their potential; those that generally have more potential, including in some cases those sites with greater potential but it would not be desirable to work during the Plan period; and those offering the most sustainable options. The provisional groupings are listed in AFS/IS order at Appendix 1.

3.3 The analysis at Sieve 3A led, in some cases, to potential locations being reduced in size as absolute constraints eliminated parts of the areas (AFS 12 is an example where the removal of the section along the Mimram Valley meant the AFS became divided into north and south). The last stages of the selection process have also meant that some of the potential locations have had parts eliminated or have been divided or further subdivided (for example the northern part of AFS 12 identified after Sieve 3A is now further subdivided into east and west, while the southern part is subdivided into north and south).

3.4 The areas or part areas offering greatest potential, together with their potential tonneages, are:

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|------------------------|---|
| AFS 15 | - land at British Aerospace, Hatfield (12-15 mt) |
| AFS 11 (southern part) | - land north of Hertford, near Rickneys Quarry (5-6 mt) |
| AFS 13 | - south west of Welwyn Garden City (16-17 mt) |
| IS 3 and 4 | - Broad Green and Bunkers South, near Water Hall Quarry (1.75 mt) |

Still within this category, but of a more marginal nature are:

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|-----------------------------|---|
| AFS 27 | - Howe Green, near Water Hall Quarry (1.7 mt) |
| AFS 12 (most southern part) | - Panshanger South (3.6mt) |

Also included in this category is

- | | |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| AFS 18 | - land at Coursers Road (4.5mt). |
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Appendix 2 shows a map of these areas, together with the existing permitted reserves and the dates by which the reserves are estimated to be used up.

3.5 The land at AFS 18 has been included in this category as opposed to the next one as, although the plant at Tyttenhanger is committed with permitted reserves until 2020, which is beyond the end of the Plan period, the land between these two parcels of potential already has a planning permission and there may be scope to re-look at the working of the area as a whole during the plan period. Although identifying this land would not contribute any increase in potential reserves during the plan period it could enable better planning and represent a likely source of material beyond the end of the period. Of all of the potential locations (AsFS 16, 17 and 18) that could feasibly be worked through Tyttenhanger (rather than introduce a second plant in the area) this is considered the most favourable given its proximity to the existing consented area and that the infrastructure would already be in place to move material to the processing plant.

3.6 It should be emphasised that all of the potential locations have constraints and that the assessment has had to look at what represents the best (or “least worst”) overall

mix of factors in terms of its conclusions. All mineral extraction will involve disturbance and harm to the area in which it takes place. All of the potential locations involve working in the countryside, in areas with degrees of attractiveness and public accessibility and proximity to sensitive uses including residential. Many of the locations are in proximity to other existing workings (e.g. BAe to Hatfield Quarry, Rickneys to Westmill), so there remain concerns about cumulative impacts. As indicated in paragraph 3.2 above, there are sites with reasonable potential but which would ideally need to be worked through existing plant or to follow on when nearby sites are worked out – a number of these are in the vicinity of Tyttenhanger where permitted reserves will continue to be processed through the existing plant (with good access) beyond the end of the plan period.

- 3.7 In terms of the three scenarios, the Plan needs to identify potential new sources of supply yielding in the order of between 8 mt and 17.5 mt, during the Plan period, with an indication of where a further 11 – 17 million tonnes could come from at the end of the plan period.
- 3.8 Part of AFS 15, the Green Belt land at British Aerospace has emerged as the most sustainable location for extraction. When the site was identified in the adopted Minerals Local Plan, part of the justification related to the opportunity to phase mineral extraction from the Green Belt land with the redevelopment of the designated Future Development Land (FDL). In practice this has not happened and construction on the FDL is now well under way. None-the-less, the site still represents the most sustainable option and the planning permission granted for the BAe land as a whole includes proposals for a country park on the Green belt land, which has taken into account the potential for mineral extraction. The extraction would make a significant contribution towards achieving these proposals as enabling development.
- 3.9 The site could meet all or a significant proportion of the county's needs. However, irrespective of which supply scenario is preferred it is **not** recommended that only one site be identified. This would put too much reliance on a single source, bearing in mind that the permitted landbank is currently below 7 years; does not provide scope for flexibility in terms of the actual yields that might be realised and the timing of areas coming forward; and could be regarded as anti-competitive.
- 3.10 It is also not recommended that AFS 15 and AFS 13 both be identified at the same time, given their proximity and the potential resultant cumulative effects of two major operations in one area. Of the two, it is considered that AFS 15 offers the most sustainable location at this time. AFS 13 could, however, be a potential source for material beyond the end of the plan period.
- 3.11 Part of the land to north of Hertford, bounded by Sacombe Road, Dimmings Lane and the B158, as an extension to Rickneys Quarry, offers a sustainable location, although there are some issues around cumulative impact given its proximity to Westmill Quarry where reserves are likely to last through most of the Plan period. However, given the closure in recent years of the sites at Rye Meads and Amwell as well as the virtual closure of the existing site at Rickneys, this location would represent a more balanced dispersal of sites compared to some others.

- 3.12 The land at Rickneys has a long planning history and was promoted by a consortium of Redland and Pioneer as a preferred area during the development of the first Minerals Local Plan. The County Council resisted its allocation on the basis that land at BAe, land to the south of Napsbury Hospital (AFS19) and land at Coursers Road represented more sustainable options at the time and a fourth preferred area was not required. However, since then, the land at Napsbury has become less favourable. The south-western part of the land has now been eliminated as having potential because of its particular ecological interest, and the options for working the land either through Harper Lane or Radlett have diminished. Extraction at Radlett has ceased and the plant has been removed; similarly operations have scaled down at Harper Lane, reducing traffic levels on the B556 and the highway authority would not wish to see any increase, making access an issue. Planning permission was subsequently granted at Coursers Road.
- 3.13 There have been three planning applications proposing extensions to the existing Rickneys workings. The first application, submitted in 1988, included land to the north and south of Dimmings Lane and two processing plants (the existing plant and access onto the B158 and a second plant in the northern area accessing the A602). This application was withdrawn and was re-submitted in 1990 with various amendments including proposals for only utilising the existing processing plant. The County Council recommended that planning permission be refused and the subsequent appeal was decided by the Secretary of State. He concluded that he was minded to grant planning permission, subject to a S106 Agreement, for that part of the application area to the south of Dimmings Lane, but that planning permission be refused for the remaining part of the site. The S106 Agreement was never completed as the County Council, as landowner of High Trees Farm, declined to sign, and so the planning permission was never issued. The third application was submitted in 1995, for a similar area to that which the Secretary of State was minded to permit, but excluding the County Council's land. An appeal against non-determination was submitted, but was withdrawn once the Inspector's Report into the Minerals Local Plan was published, which did not recommend that the land be identified as preferred area in the Plan under consideration.
- 3.14 Three of the sites promoted by the industry as extensions to Water Hall could be acceptable, however, the two at Broad Green and Bunkers South are considered preferable to the location at Howe Green. Given all three sites are located on the southern side of the B158 any new workings would be required to utilise a relocated processing plant to avoid unnecessary road crossing movements and to bring operations at Water Hall north to an end. One of the reasons these areas fall into this category is that of timing – if the sites are not worked now as extensions then the resources would effectively be sterilised as they are unlikely to warrant the investment of re-introducing plant at some date in the future and the consented reserves at Water Hall are likely to be worked out by 2004. The site at Howe Green is more open and would entail crossing restored land at Pollards Quarry and is therefore borderline between this and the next category. All three sites collectively represent a very modest contribution to the landbank; their identification need not be critical to meeting any of the three scenarios and the issue is very much one of whether they should ever be worked or not.

- 3.15 The most southerly part of AFS 12 to the south of Panshanger represents the most sustainable option for the whole of this AFS, which is now divided into four parts. Even so, it is marginal between this category and the next and it would be ideally worked after the existing consent at Panshanger, which has sufficient permitted reserves to last until the end of the Plan period, to avoid cumulative impact.
- 3.16 It is therefore concluded that the most sustainable option is that the Green Belt land at British Aerospace and land near Rickney's Quarry be identified as preferred areas in the Plan Review. These sites could contribute between 17 and 21 million tonnes and would enable the Plan to meet its regional requirements during the Plan period, which ever scenario is followed (See Appendix 3). It is also recommended that land at Coursers Road be identified in terms of enabling a review of the area as a whole, including the existing consented area, although the reserves would not contribute to the supply figures during the Plan period. However, the reserves would help identify where the landbank at the end of the Plan period would come from.
- 3.17 At the time of writing the Government still has not published its draft interim guidance for regional supply. Also the regional guidance, once confirmed, will have to be apportioned between the Mineral Planning Authorities in the region. However it is very likely, given the trend of falling demand together with the Government's policies for promoting alternative supplies to primary aggregates that the county's regional contribution will decrease.
- 3.18 The above recommendations would certainly mean that the county could meet the overall requirements of Scenario 2 and go a long way to meeting the requirements of Scenario 3. The site selection process means that there is good evidence that there are other sites which could resource aggregates supply, if required, beyond the end of the Plan period, such as the land to the south west of Welwyn, but they do not need to be specifically identified at this time.
- 3.19 Although the working of preferred areas is very much a matter for the industry to bring forward applications at the appropriate time, by keeping the number of sites identified to a realistic minimum, it would be prudent for the County Council to consider the likelihood of the preferred areas coming forward. Given that the remaining permitted reserves at Rickneys are very small, together with the past history of the site (albeit under a different operator) there seems a reasonable certainty that proposals would come forward.
- 3.20 Although the land at BAe is already an identified site in the adopted Minerals Local Plan, no applications have yet come forward. However, Arlington has confirmed that they are happy for the site to retain its preferred area status. Much of the redevelopment on the non-green belt land is now occurring, which may have been a barrier to promoting extraction previously. The proposals for creating a Country Park on the Green Belt land which form part of the Masterplan for the site as a whole (either with or without extraction) will need to be implemented at some point and an incentive would be that extraction could provide enabling development. It is proposed that the plan includes policies for applications which come forward on

land outside of the preferred areas, which will set out the circumstances under which such applications would be considered favourably, including when the preferred areas are not actively contributing to the county's supply (i.e. when the landbank falls below the required level and there is little indication that an application from a preferred area is forthcoming).

- 3.21 An alternative would be to identify a site or sites specifically to meet any shortfall in the landbank if the preferred areas do not come forward either during or at the end of the Plan period and subject to any proposal meeting the requirements of other policies of the Plan. AFS 13, south west of Welwyn could meet this need, provided that any policy made it clear that it should not be worked until extraction at BAe is complete. This would provide a greater measure of certainty, rather than relying on applications from areas which, through the site selection process, have been identified as less sustainable options. Given the extent of the land and its resource then it would be appropriate to consider this area as one of search rather than a preferred area.
- 3.22 The only other issue is whether it would be appropriate to identify the two sites at Water Hall (Broad Green and Bunkers Hill). It is recommended that these sites are not given preferred area status as the balance between their contribution to minerals supply and their environmental impact is much finer given the relatively small contribution the sites would make to overall aggregates provision. Both the adopted Minerals Local Plan and the proposed draft policies for the review recognise that there may be instances where proposals outside of the identified areas come forward and give guidance as to how they should be considered.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 In order to meet the likely supply requirements for the county during the period 2004-2016, Green Belt land at British Aerospace (AFS 15) and land north of Hertford, adjacent to Rickneys Quarry (AFS 11 south) should be identified as preferred areas for mineral extraction in the Minerals Local Plan Review. Given the current supply position, any planning statements giving guidance on proposals for these areas should indicate that these sites should be worked at an early stage.
- 4.2 Additionally, to enable opportunities to be explored for looking at comprehensive proposals for the land at Coursers Road, including the land already permitted for extraction, and to provide an identified source for the end of the Plan period, AFS 18 should be identified as a preferred area.
- 4.3 To ensure a continuity of supply, in the event that there is an identified need for the mineral that is unlikely to be met in a timely way from the preferred areas then land south west of Welwyn (AFS 13) could be identified as an area of search. Any planning statement giving guidance on proposals for the area should indicate that working at AFS 13 should not be worked until extraction from the preferred area at BAe is complete.

Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan: Comparative Evaluation of Sites Provisional conclusions, 22 May 2002

Group 1 sites:

11 south	(Rickneys south)	5-6mt
12P south	(Panshanger south)	3.6mt
13	(SW of Welwyn GC)	16-17mt
15	(BAe, Hatfield)	12-15mt
18	(Coursers Road)	4.5mt
27	(Howe Green)	1mt
IS3	(Broad Green)	0.75mt
IS4	(Bunkers South)	1.7mt

Of these, the most marginal for inclusion in this category is 12P south

Group 2 sites:

12P north	(Panshanger north)	2.8mt
12B east	(West of Bramfield)	11.5mt
17	(NE of London Colney)	
19	(Napsbury)	2.5mt
23 northwest	(A414 finger)	1.3mt
23 southwest	(NW of Essendon)	9.25?mt
IS9	(Salisbury Hall)	1.2mt

Of these, the only significant drawback to 17 and to a lesser extent IS9 is whether there will be plant capacity to accommodate them within the plan/landbank period.

None of the others are marginal for inclusion in Group 1. Because of its impact on a number of nearby residents, 12P north is perhaps the most marginal between Groups 2 and 3; though 12B east would be a significant intrusion into an attractive rural area. If it cannot be worked in association with the redevelopment of Napsbury Hospital, AFS19 is considered marginal between Groups 2 and 3.

Group 3 sites:

11 north	(Rickneys north)	7.2mt
12B west	(East of Tewin)	
16	(Highfield/Hill End)	
IS6	(Sleapshyde)	1.3mt

Of these, IS6 is perhaps the most marginal between Groups 2 and 3.

Group 4 sites:

4	(SW of Sawbridgeworth)
7	(North of Stanstead Abbots)
8	(East of Ware)
10	(East of High Cross)
21	(Bucks Hill)
23 north east	(Letty Green)
23 south east	(NE of Essendon)
26	(Ware Park)
IS2	(Farm Fields)

Of these, 4, 7,8 and 10 would all be acceptable (Groups 1 or 2) if the highway objections could be overcome [in the case of AFS10 this would mean allowing access to the new A10), and AFS26 (Ware Park) - in whole or (more likely) in part - should only be added into the list of sites for the Plan period if the archaeological constraint is not 'proven' to affect the whole site and it can be clearly demonstrated that the material can be processed without incurring significant adverse effects (potentially a different operator to Rickneys, and Westmill, the nearest sites – Ware Quarry is worked out with no processing capability). The estimated yield of the total site is 0.45mt.

scenarios; the timing of extraction of AFS13 is immaterial, so long as it is not simultaneous with AFS15.

Less favoured alternatives to be substituted if any of the above sites is judged unsuitable:

11 north	N and W of Chapmore End	7.2 mt
12P north	Panshanger north	2.8 mt
12B east	Bramfield west	11.5 mt
19	Napsbury	2.5 mt
23SW	NW of Essendon	9.25 mt ?
23NW	A414 finger	1.3 mt