

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

Minerals Planning Guidance Note 6
Revised guidance for the supply of aggregates
Sub-regional apportionment

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1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek the views of the Aggregates Panel regarding the options for apportioning the revised regional supply guidance across the counties of the East of England Region, once it is published.

2. Background

2.1 Members of the Panel in late October 2002 considered the draft Government guidance on revised provisions of land won aggregates (including sand and gravel) presently contained within the Government's Minerals Planning Guidance Note 6 – Guidelines for Aggregates Provision for England (MPG6).

2.2 An important principle of MPG6 is to ensure that there is a steady supply of aggregates for the building industry. Recognising that there is a long lead-time in securing planning permissions and then setting up an operating site, successive Governments' policy has been to require a land bank of planning permissions (currently seven years). In other words, at any one time there should be enough sand and gravel with planning permission to enable seven years of supply at an agreed level.

2.3 MPG6 takes this principle and translates it into quantitative guidelines for the supply of sand and gravel for each region of England. The current MPG6, published in 1994, provided guidance for the time when Hertfordshire was in the South East

region. In 1994, the Government predicted an average demand of 28 million tonnes per year for the South East Region.

- 2.4 Through the South East Regional Aggregates Working party (SERAWP), this regional figure was 'apportioned' to each of the member counties. The apportionment was based on a variety of factors, such as the availability of the raw material throughout each county, and the degree of constraint that might prevent extraction.
- 2.5 For Hertfordshire, it was agreed that we should plan to enable the supply of 2.4 million tonnes per annum (mtpa).
- 2.6 However, in practice demand and actual supply has fallen significantly short of this figure. For Hertfordshire, the latest estimates for 2001 show sales at 1.67 million tonnes and an average supply over the past three years of 1.7mtpa. This scale of decline in demand is reflected across England. The Government has recognised this and has therefore published draft revised figures. The consultation period has now closed and the Government's response is awaited.
- 2.7 Assuming a lower regional supply figure is adopted in the new MPG6 guidelines, an important task now being considered by the East of England RAWP is evaluating how this quantity would be apportioned between the counties of the new region. The draft apportionment Guidelines that emerge from the EoE RAWP will be considered in due course by the East of England Local Government Conference Regional Planning Panel
- 2.8 This report seeks Members views on the position that Hertfordshire County Council should take at the initial officer level discussions.
- 2.9 The RAWP has already considered the guidelines at its meeting in September of this year. It was acknowledged that the final regional figures may vary following the consultation exercise, in particular the Quarry Products Association has argued that the proposed figures are too low. However to speed up the adoption of the guidelines, it was considered useful to consider the best model for apportionment as soon as

possible so that the figures, when published, could be adopted for decision making at the earliest opportunity.

2.10 To arrive at a percentage each County should contribute to the regions production, three options were considered by the Mineral Planning Authority Technical Group:

1. Carrying forward the % split from the apportionment set in 1994;
2. Basing the % split on the last three years of production within each of the Counties of the region;
3. As option 2, but based on last 10 years of production.

2.11 Other options included apportionment based on a geographical area or population. However these were not considered to be realistic or proportionate. For example, using a geographical basis for apportionment would result in a sparsely populated area generating greater levels of exports and thus travel distances, contrary to a key sustainability indicator. Reverting to a simple population related apportionment would fail to take full account of the fact that minerals are where they are.

2.12 A further option would have been to try to predict future demand in individual counties. However this was considered to be difficult and unfeasible. As an example, a major infrastructure project could be within, but close to a county boundary. It is inevitable that developers would search adjoining counties for economic supplies. There are also many technical difficulties in predicting development patterns.

2.13 The Mineral Planning Authority Technical Group considered the three options in paragraph 2. It was considered that:-

Option one was out of date, providing a limited snap shot from before 1994 and reflected a different regional composition.

Option two provided some more recent trends, but nonetheless only over a limited period.

Option three, which is favoured, takes into account a longer period and thus a better option for gaining an insight into typical demand experienced in each county of the Region.

2.14 The attached table shows the breakdown in the figures for these three options. The table also shows how these percentages translate into annual tonnage rates. The three options result in slightly varying percentage contributions to meeting regional demand. Whichever option is settled upon, they are all within a narrow range and will not affect the site selection strategy for the present Minerals Local Plan review.

2.15 Although Option 3 is favoured based on currently available evidence, it should be noted that there will be monitoring and consequent reviews of the Guidelines during the period to 2016 to help ensure these are an accurate apportionment. Regular reviews will enable the incorporation of some flexibility should demand patterns significantly change.

3. Recommendation

3.1 That the panel endorse the choice of option 3 as a preferred methodology for apportionment and authorise officers, in agreement with the Executive Member for Environment, to negotiate with the other counties of the Region on that basis.