



# **Minerals and Waste Core Strategy**

## **Minerals and Waste Issues and Options**

### **Interim Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment)**

**June 2006**



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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The County Council is reviewing the planning policies covering mineral working and waste management in Oxfordshire. This will result in a new policy framework for minerals and waste development in the County – the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF).
- 1.2. The Council has published an Issues and Options paper for its Core Strategy Development Plan Document<sup>1</sup>. The paper sets out the Council's strategic aims and objectives for minerals and waste planning in Oxfordshire; what the County Council sees as the key issues that need to be addressed in preparing the documents; and possible options for addressing the issues identified.
- 1.3. When preparing the MWDF the Council is required to undertake and report on Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which incorporates the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of options considered in preparing the various development plan documents that will make up the MWDF.

## 2. Sustainability Appraisal incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

- 2.1. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning authorities when preparing plans to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. All policies and proposals in development plan documents must be subject to SA, and government guidance is that SA should also meet the requirements of the SEA Directive (ECV/2001/42) for environmental assessment of plans. These two processes are together referred to as SA/SEA in this document.
- 2.2. The purpose of SA/SEA is to promote sustainable development through better integration of sustainability considerations in the preparation and adoption of plans. SA/SEA is an iterative process that identifies and reports on the likely significant effects of the plan and the extent to which implementation of the plan will achieve the social, environmental and economic objectives by which sustainable development can be defined. For more information on the process please refer to the MWDF SA/SEA Scoping Report<sup>2</sup>.

**Note that since this interim SA/SEA was carried out the Scoping Report (August 2005) has been amended and updated to be in line with revised guidance, new information and consultation comments. The amended**

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<sup>1</sup> Minerals and Waste Development Framework; Core Strategy; Issues and Options Consultation Paper; Oxfordshire County Council; June 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Minerals and Waste Development Framework; SA/SEA Scoping Report, Oxfordshire County Council, August 2005 (updated June 2006)

**Scoping Report was published in June 2006. The results of this initial SA/SEA are based on the original Scoping Report (August 2005).**

### **3. The Interim Report**

- 3.1.** A key part of the process of preparing and consulting on the Core Strategy for the MWDF will be the preparation of a sustainability appraisal report to present information on the effects of the proposed strategy options. This document is part of the appraisal process. Although Government guidance on the Sustainability Appraisal of Local Development Documents<sup>3</sup> no longer requires the production of an initial SA report (as was required in the draft guidance), this report shows the SA/SEA work carried out so far in progressing the Core Strategy to its current stage.
- 3.2.** The appraisal process was undertaken through a workshop involving council officers and representatives of technical bodies and interest groups. Baseline information in the Scoping Report was used in the process to inform the assessments that were made of the effects of the objectives and options in terms of their social, environmental and economic impacts on key sustainability objectives, which had been developed through the scoping stage.
- 3.3.** The results of the appraisal of the objectives and options are set out in annexes 1 and 2 of this report. These will be taken into account by the Council when developing the preferred options for the Core Strategy, which are to be published for consultation at the end of this year. A further appraisal of the preferred options will be undertaken and the results will be published in the final SA report which will be available for comment alongside the Core Strategy preferred options document.

### **4. Summaries and Recommendations**

#### **4.1. Summary of Compatibility Assessment of MWDF Objectives against SA/SEA Objectives (Annex 1)**

- (i) The compatibility matrix highlights that most of the plan objectives have a positive or no relationship with the SA/SEA objectives. However there are areas of concern surrounding the following two key plan objectives:
- (B) To provide for the supply of minerals in accordance with national and regional policy; and
  - (D) To provide for sufficient capacity for the treatment and disposal of waste equivalent to the quantity produced in Oxfordshire plus a contribution to regional waste

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<sup>3</sup> Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, ODPM, November 2005.

management requirements, including waste from London, in accordance with national and regional policy.

- (ii) The matrix shows that these two objectives are in conflict with the majority of SA/SEA objectives. However these objectives represent the underlying purpose of the plan (i.e. to enable the minerals and waste development that is needed in Oxfordshire) and therefore cannot be removed. It should be noted, however, that the other plan objectives are positive towards or do not conflict with sustainable development. It is recommended that wherever possible appropriate mitigation measures are put in place to reduce the effects of the above two objectives in accordance with the other MWDF objectives.

**Please Note: As the result of this and other work the aims and objectives in the Issues and Options paper have been amended since this appraisal.**

#### **4.2. Appraisal of Key Options (Annex 2)**

- (i) The appraisal matrices in Annex 2 contain the comments made by appraisal group on the various issues and options. The issues and options that were appraised are slightly different from those that appear in the Minerals and Waste Issues and Options Consultation Paper<sup>4</sup>. Some of the wording was modified to enable the assessment to be more readily carried out, and some of the more similar issues were combined to make most effective use of people's time in the appraisal workshop. Nevertheless, the fundamental meaning of the issues and options was not changed and the assessment that has been carried out is entirely valid for the Issues and Options Paper. In the case of a few of the issues, meaningful appraisal was not considered to be possible and so was not carried out.
- (ii) A summary of the key issues and options discussed and the appraisal group's recommendations are set out at 4.3 below. Annex 2 contains more detailed assessments. These recommendations will be used in the Council's decision making process when developing the MWDF Core Strategy. It should be noted that the majority of the points raised relate to how the implementation of sites is addressed at the planning application and subsequent development stages.

**Please Note: These are the recommendations from the appraisal groups and the County Council has yet to consider them.**

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<sup>4</sup> Minerals and Waste Development Framework; Core Strategy; Issues and Options Consultation Paper; Oxfordshire County Council; June 2006.

### **4.3. Summary of the Minerals Recommendations**

- (i) The appraisal of how Oxfordshire should meet its sand and gravel apportionment suggests that there would be more certainty and greater control if site allocations were specified in the MWDF, although it was highlighted that the areas selected must be acceptable to the industry. Just having criteria based policies could lead to development in less sustainable locations as they will not be subject to SA/SEA.
- (ii) The appraisal recommends that Oxfordshire's apportionment should be subdivided between soft sand and sharp sand and gravel with a higher percentage of soft sand provision than in the existing Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The reasons for this are mainly to do with increased market demand for soft sand and the need for the MWDF to make provision to meet this, thereby avoiding ad-hoc development.
- (iii) The appraisal suggests a slightly broader spread of sand and gravel working than at present. It is argued this would help reduce the transport impacts associated with production and location of market areas. This strategy would also reduce the cumulative impact of developments. However, it was highlighted that this would be dependent on the existence of workable deposits and the economics of developing such sites.
- (iv) The appraisal also suggests that a slightly broader spread of workings for meeting the crushed rock apportionment would be preferred. However, this will again be dependent on availability of sites and economics.
- (v) Concerning the issue of whether new quarries or extensions to current quarries are preferred, the appraisal suggests each site should be assessed on its own merits. It was highlighted that extensions would not need new infrastructure but would add to cumulative impact locally. The economics of the size of extension or of new sites would also be a factor.
- (vi) The appraisal indicated that there are no negatives in providing either sufficient capacity or over-provision of capacity for recycling of aggregates. However, over-provision seemed to be more positive in developing a sustainable strategy bearing in mind the lack of accurate data.

### **4.4. Summary of the Waste Recommendations:**

- (i) The appraisal suggests that identification of site specific allocations in the MWDF would be the more sustainable option. However, the other two approaches – identification of broad areas and criteria based policies – would allow flexibility in the

MWDF. Therefore a combination of the three options (criteria, identification of broad areas and actual site selection) may be the most appropriate sustainable strategy.

- (ii) The appraisal was not clear on which was the overall best strategy on how to provide new waste management facilities. Flexibility of sites (not restricting types of technologies on a site) was favoured by the workshop but, as with the previous issue, the best solution may be a combination of the approaches (some sites to be specific for certain technologies and others for a more general range of technologies).
- (iii) When the appraisal assessed the merits of scale of sites (a few large sites or more numerous small sites) for waste management facilities, the recommendation was for a few large sites which could accommodate strategic and/or integrated management facilities. However, this option is heavily dependant on the transport effects being sustainable.
- (iv) The appraisal recommends locating waste facilities in or close to urban areas. The disadvantages of this (conflict with potential housing sites, noise and air pollution) are assessed to be relatively minor in relation to the benefits (less distance to travel, potential for combined heat and power and higher likelihood of development on brownfield land).
- (v) The appraisal did not recommend which type of site would be best suited to locating a waste treatment facility. It showed that the suitability of sites depends on factors such as the type of technology, size of facility, size of site and the density of surrounding human population. Each site must be assessed on its own merits. It was highlighted that for all options the impact upon the flood plain must be assessed.

## Annex 1: Testing of MWDF Objectives against Sustainability Objectives

- a) It is important for the objectives of the plan to be in accordance with sustainability principles. Government guidance<sup>5</sup> is that the MWDF objectives should be tested for compatibility with the SA/SEA objectives as this will identify and help mitigate potential future impacts as well as ensure accordance (where possible) with SA/SEA objectives.
- b) Table 1 shows the SA/SEA objectives which will form the basis of appraisal work for the MWDF. The topic requirements of the SEA Directive are in bold. Further information about the SA/SEA objectives and how they were created can be found in the Scoping Report.

**Table 1:SA/SEA Objectives**

Objective No	Objective
1	To ensure that everybody has the opportunity to live in a decent sustainably constructed and affordable home.
2	To reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public well-being, the economy and the environment.
3	<b>To improve the health and well-being of the population &amp; reduce inequalities in health.</b>
4	To improve accessibility to all services and facilities.
5	To improve efficiency in land use through the re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings.
6	<b>To reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve.</b>
7	<b>To address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases.</b>
8	<b>To conserve and enhance Oxfordshire's biodiversity.</b>
9	To protect and improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space.
10	<b>To protect and enhance and make accessible for enjoyment, Oxfordshire's countryside, landscape and historic environment including archaeological &amp; architectural importance.</b>
11	To make opportunities available for culture, leisure and recreation.
12	To reduce road congestion and pollution levels by improving travel choice and reducing the need for travel by car/lorry.
13	<b>To reduce development on the best and most versatile land and have regard to the quality and productiveness of soil.</b>
14	To ensure an adequate and steady supply of minerals to meet society's needs and economic growth.

<sup>5</sup> Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, ODPM, November 2005.



15	To reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources by using sustainably produced local products.
16	To reduce waste generation and disposal, and achieve the sustainable management of waste.
17	To ensure capacity for waste treatment to meet Oxfordshire's waste requirements.
18	<b>To maintain and improve the water quality of Oxfordshire's water courses and achieve sustainable water resource management.</b>
19	To increase energy efficiency and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources in Oxfordshire.
20	To ensure high stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region.
21	To sustain economic growth and competitiveness across Oxfordshire.

- c) Table 2 contains the spatial planning objectives for the MWDF. These objectives will underpin the strategy, policies and site proposals in the MWDF. Each one has been given a letter for reference in the compatibility test.

**Table 2: MWDF Objectives**

Objective Letter	MWDF Objectives
A	To conserve mineral resources by encouraging the most efficient use of materials and avoiding the sterilisation of mineral deposits by development
B	To provide for the supply of minerals in accordance with national and regional policy.
C	To encourage and provide for increased use of recycled and secondary materials in place of primary aggregates.
D	To provide for sufficient capacity for the treatment and disposal of waste equivalent to the quantity produced in Oxfordshire plus a contribution to regional waste management requirements, including waste from London, in accordance with national and regional policy
E	To promote reduced production of waste and increased recognition of waste as a resource, with an increase in recycling, composting and other recovery of resources from waste and a decrease in landfill of waste, to ensure that national and regional targets are at least met.
F	To provide for an integrated approach to waste management which does not exclude any particular method
G	To ensure waste management objectives and requirements are taken into account in the planning and design of other development, in particular to encourage provision for re-use, recycling and recovery of resources

	from waste in new development.
H	To minimise the impact of transportation of minerals and waste by seeking to minimise the distance materials need to be transported by road and the use of other modes of transport where practicable.
I	To ensure working and supply of minerals and the management of waste are carried out in an environmentally acceptable way by minimising impacts on local communities, the landscape and natural environment
J	To ensure high quality restoration and appropriate after-use of mineral workings and landfills
K	To secure enhancement of the environment through mineral working and waste management development, in particular through long-term benefits for nature conservation, landscape, recreation and local communities

- d) The Compatibility Test in Table 3 identifies the areas where there is accordance or conflict between the MWDF objectives and the SA/SEA objectives; and where the objectives of the MWDF need to be carefully balanced to ensure the outcomes are consistent and where possible achieve a positive situation. Where a balance is unachievable, the County Council will need to reach a decision on priorities.

**Table 3: Compatibility Assessment of MWDF Objectives against SA/SEA Objectives**

Plan Objectives	SA/SEA Objective																					Comments	Proposed Changes	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21			
A														+									No Conflict	
B	+	-				-	-	-	-	-	?	-	-	+					-		+	+	Key Objective	No Change
C	+	+			+			+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+							No Conflict	
D								-	-	-		-	-						-		+	+	Key Objective	No Change
E					+										+	+	+						No Conflict	
F																							No Relationship	Remove Objective
G				+	+										+		+						No Conflict	
H	+	+	+			+	+			+		+			+								No Conflict	
I		+	+		+	+		+		+					+				+				No Conflict	
J		+		+				+	+	+	+		+		+								No Conflict	
K		+		+	+			+	+	+	+				+								No Conflict	

Key: + Compatible  
 - Incompatible  
 ? Potential to be compatible/incompatible depending on application  
 Blank Indicates no relationship between objectives