



**Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste  
Development Framework**

**Report of the Draft Minerals Planning Strategy  
Consultation Meeting  
29<sup>th</sup> September 2011**

**By Proteus Public Relations**

**Final Report – 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011**

## 1. Introduction

The latest meeting of the Minerals Forum, which took place on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2011 at Oxford Town Hall, was held to discuss and review the proposals in the Draft Minerals Planning Strategy consultation document. Present at the meeting were:

### **Proteus Public Relations**

Paul Davison	Chairman
John Johnson	Recorder

### **Oxfordshire County Council**

Peter Day	Minerals and Waste Policy Team Leader
Lois Partridge	Minerals and Waste Planning Policy Officer
Trevor Brown	Minerals and Waste Planning Policy Officer
Rob Dance	Planning Implementation Group Manager

### **Forum Members**

Adrian Lynam	Vale of White Horse District Council
Alan Boyce	Longworth Parish Council
Alan Hannity	Lafarge Aggregates
Alan Mackenzie	Hills' Quarry Products
Arnold Grayson	CPRE
Cathy Harrison	Environment Agency
Charlotte Kinnear	RSPB
Henry Thornton	CAGE
John Bowler	AGGROW
John Taylor	PAGE
Julie Hankey	OUTRAGE
Martin Layer	Smiths Bletchington
Max Lehmann	BACHpoRT
Miles Thompson	South Oxfordshire District Council
Paul Slater	West Oxfordshire District Council
Paul Williams	Hanson
Steve Bowley	Earthline

### **Apologies**

Nick Marks	Eye and Dunsden Parish Council
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The agenda for the meeting is set out in Appendix A.

### **Meeting Format**

The meeting ran as follows:

- Presentation from Oxfordshire County Council on the development and content of the draft Minerals strategy
- Group discussions on aspects of the strategy, namely:
  - Vision and objectives
  - Strategy for mineral working
  - Minerals policies and core policies
  - Group's main issues
- Review of group discussion
- Summary and close.

## **2. OCC Minerals Presentation**

Lois Partridge of OCC opened the forum by delivering a brief summary of the development and current status of the draft strategy, outlining the vision and objectives, the strategy and policies for mineral working, core policies and next steps. Lois highlighted how previous consultation had influenced the strategy. The key points on the consultation are as follows:

- The draft Minerals Strategy is open to an eight week public consultation, running from 5 September to 31 October 2011. Documents are available on the Oxfordshire County Council website, in libraries and in County and District Council offices.
- Once the consultation period has ended, the need for amendments will be considered in response to the comments and the strategy will be progressed to the proposed submission document.
- If major changes to the strategy are needed, then further consultation may be required.
- Once finalised, the document will need to be agreed by a full meeting of the County Council. It will then be published for further representations and subsequently submitted to the government for independent examination by a planning inspector.

Forum members were then given an opportunity to give their views on the points covered in Lois' presentation. The following is a summary of the points raised:

- One forum member questioned whether consultation has taken place with neighbouring authorities in line with the government's 'duty-to-cooperate' policy. Further comment was made from another forum member on the fact that no mention had been made of aggregates imported from Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Lois Partridge responded that discussions of material movements took place 18 months ago and were recognised in the key diagram. No responses had yet been received from neighbouring authorities, although further discussion was expected. Peter Day added that under the duty to cooperate, the Council will also need to have



dialogue with councils further away which export aggregates to Oxfordshire, such as Leicestershire and Somerset.

- One forum member queried how much weight the draft strategy would be given from this point forward until it is introduced. Peter Day responded that the emerging plan is a material consideration but that at this consultation stage it can be given little weight. The policies in the approved development plan, which include the saved policies from the adopted Minerals and Waste Local Plan 1996, currently carry more weight. As preparation of the new plan develops, it can be given increasing weight.
- One forum member asked whether feedback had been received from the Government on the Atkins report. Concerns were raised as to whether a robust conclusion had been drawn. Lois Partridge responded that no response had been made by Government, but that challenging comment had been received from the Minerals Products Association and individual mineral companies.
- One forum member raised concerns over the balance of material sourcing across the county, stating that too much activity had taken place in West Oxfordshire. Questions were asked as to what percentage of the county's mineral supply was planned to be sourced from West Oxfordshire in comparison to the rest of the county, and what markets would be served in West Oxfordshire. Lois Partridge confirmed the figures depicted in the plan, that approximately 680,000 tonnes would be sourced from the area – 500,000 tonnes from the Lower Windrush Valley and 180,000 proposed from the Eynsham-Cassington-Yarnton area. The markets cannot be quantified at this time, and individual company figures are confidential.
- One forum member raised a question on the high demand for minerals in the Wantage and Grove area, and whether this could be supplied from minerals that were available in that area. Lois Partridge responded that the British Geological Survey (BGS) surface mapping shows extensive areas of sand and gravel in the Wantage/Grove area but these resources are not sufficiently deep nor of sufficiently good quality to be economically viable. No industry proposals had been received for working in this area.
- One forum member asked to see an accurate representation of minerals availability in the county, and raised questions over the viability of deposits shown on the map provided in the presentation. Peter Day said that information from the BGS published geological maps and Mineral Assessment Reports had been used to inform the development of the minerals strategy. However it would be difficult to produce a map of economically viable mineral deposits as information on depth and quality is not sufficiently detailed and there is no clear definition of a commercially viable deposit.

- One forum member asked for an explanation of the weighting system used in the site analysis. Lois Partridge responded that the potential deliverability of sites had been qualitatively assessed by considering a range of criteria and that quantitative assessment or weighting had not taken place.
- One forum member questioned the strategy's explanation of the use of recycled aggregates and the steps employed to encourage growth. Lois Partridge responded that the strategy should encourage increased production of recycled materials; the draft strategy included Oxfordshire's target for recycled aggregates in the South East Plan. A forum member noted that the industry has an economic interest in recycling as much aggregate as possible and that the policy in the strategy should provide the framework for future development.

### **3. Group exercise**

Following Lois' presentation and the group feedback, Paul Davison explained the objective of the group exercise was to identify the views of individuals, sectors of the group and the group as a whole on the proposals in the Draft Minerals Planning Strategy consultation document.

Forum members were split into small working groups and asked to discuss and comment on the following:

- Vision and objectives
- Strategy for mineral working
- Minerals policies and core policies
- Group's main issues

Having discussed the issues in small groups, a nominated representative then reported the group's comments back to the forum. The raised issues are detailed below.

#### **Vision and objectives**

##### **Group 1**

- The conflict between width/weight restrictions on HGV routes and the wider desire to minimise mineral lorry miles – on economic and environmental grounds – needs to be recognised.

##### **Group 2**

- Concern was expressed over the degree and extent of restoration that was outlined in the plan's vision and objectives. Felt that restoration needed to be in character with the local area and that a comprehensive and consistent, rather than piecemeal, approach was required.

- Asked for a more proactive approach to identifying potentially viable sites that were closer to the growth areas, in order to minimise travel distances.
- Asked for further clarification on markets outside of the county and their influence.

### Group 3

- Did not feel that the vision covered all issues, notably social aspects and Conservation Target Areas.
- Had concerns over the source of materials and their destination. Wanted further clarification on how much material was produced in West and South Oxfordshire, to where it would travel and how transport distances could be minimised.
- Concern was expressed over the degree and extent of restoration that was outlined in the plan's vision and objectives.

## **Strategy**

### Group 2

- It was felt that the impact upon the existing economy (e.g. tourism) should be given more weight.

## **Policy**

### Group 1

- Recycled aggregates (M1). Policy target of 900,000 tpa was aspirational, but not attainable, and should therefore not be used as an allocation figure in the overall balance of supply. Industry was already optimising aggregates production from C&D waste and present level of 350,000 t was probably near the maximum in present economic circumstances.
- Mineral working provision (M2). Proposed allocation figures for sand and gravel considered unsound due to:
  - o Reduction from SE Regional allocation not justified by evidence
  - o No evidence of serious consultation with neighbouring MPAs on proposed approach
  - o Cabinet consideration a compromise and not an objective approach
 The group felt that the figure for crushed rock was acceptable.
- Mineral working location (M3). Continuation of existing areas of working supported. The general objective of not increasing the scale of working in the West Oxon/Eynsham/Yarnton area is supported, but no limit should be applied. Provision of only one new quarrying area (at Cholsey) was considered too limited and reasons for its selection are not transparent. To ensure deliverability additional areas or additional flexibility needed to be included in the plan. Clarification was required that provision would be made for limestone/sand quarry extensions in the Sites Allocation Plan notwithstanding the crushed rock landbank position.
- Rail Depots (M4). It was uncertain if Shipton on Cherwell would be implemented so safeguarding policy should refer to existing sites.

### Group 2

- Mineral working provision (M2). Lower levels were welcomed.
- Mineral working location (M3). Concerns raised over the fact that only one potential site was mentioned as replacement for Sutton Courtenay.
- Rail Depots (M4). Would like to see reference to promotion of use of rail heads.
- Restoration (M6). Policy should acknowledge that sometimes a single type of restoration is the most effective, rather than the need to incorporate all different types of restoration. One group member raised the concern that impacts which permanently affect the character of the landscape could benefit from more explicit consideration in the core strategy. Requirements were made for a condition on the need for monitoring/restoration as part of the planning permission.
- Flooding (C1). Needs more emphasis on preventing post development flooding.
- Environmental and amenity protection (C3). Needs to much clearer on what are acceptable/unacceptable levels of impact.
- Transport (C7). Should not allocate sites ahead of having transport infrastructure in place.

### Group 3

- Recycled aggregates (M1). Agree with stretch targets and feel that other policies should facilitate this.
- Mineral working provision (M2). Concern that no confirmation had been received from Government on the rate of extraction figures.
- Mineral working location (M3). Whilst pleased that the extraction rate for mineral stressed areas had not increased, comment was also made that it had not decreased. Questions were raised on the distance to market and associated road usage. Other concerns were raised as to why no arbitrary cap had been set on extraction rates for areas that are already being worked. Evidence was required as to why certain, possibly suitable areas, such as Sutton and Stanton Harcourt, were not being explored.
- Restoration (M6). It was felt that restoration should take place with the support of the local community in order to gain maximum benefit. No mention has been made as to what is to happen to the site beyond its 25 year restoration lifetime – concerns were raised that the area would become abandoned.

## **4. Summary**

On completion of the group exercise, Paul Davison summarised the group's main issues. Of those main issues, Paul highlighted that a number of concerns had been raised regarding the proposed restoration strategy for minerals workings, and that further clarification was needed on the degree and extent of proposed restoration.

The use of recycled aggregates was also an area of concern. Whilst supported, questions were raised over the high value provided for the supply of secondary and recycled aggregates per year. Industry opinion was that the present level was approaching the maximum level in present economic circumstances.

## **5. Next steps**

Following on from the consultation meeting, the forum's responses will be logged and analysed, together with all other responses to the consultation, and reported to the County Council's Cabinet. The need for any amendments in response to the comments will be considered and the strategy will be progressed to the proposed submission document. If major changes to the strategy are needed then further consultation may be required. After agreement by a full meeting of the County Council, the finalised document will then be published for further representations and then submitted to the government for independent public examination by a planning inspector.



# **APPENDIX A – Agenda**

## **DRAFT Minerals Planning Strategy Consultation with Stakeholders Group**

**Date**            29 September 2011

**Time**            10.00am

**Location**      Town Hall, Oxford

### **Presentation BY OCC**

1. Current status of draft strategy and objectives and timetable of consultation
2. OCC responsibilities and obligations
3. Vision and objective
4. Previous consultation input
5. Draft strategy
6. Core policies
7. Implementation
8. Questions

### **Group discussions**

Vision and strategy  
Policies and implementation  
Group's main issues

9. Review group discussions
10. Summary and close

## Appendix B - Feedback form results summary

Feedback forms were issued to all forum members who attended the consultation workshops, in order to gather feedback on the format of the session. Three forms were returned from the minerals session and twelve from the waste session.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the feedback forms:

- When asked if the workshop was helpful in providing information on OCC's revised Minerals/Waste Strategy options;
  - o 17 respondents said yes
  - o 0 said no
  - o Comments included *'useful to hear other points of view'*, *'rather dry presentation but it was informative'* and *'very well structured with diverse and useful views expressed'*.
  
- When asked if the forum member felt that they had an opportunity to express their views in the workshop;
  - o 17 respondents said yes
  - o 0 said no
  - o Comments included *'time was limited'*, *'would have preferred to see debate with officers or open discussion with other attendees'* and *'still not sure if views are being heard and taken into account by wider audience'*.
  
- When asked if it was helpful to have independent facilitators to run the workshop on OCC's behalf;
  - o 14 respondents said yes
  - o 3 said no. Of those that so no, opinion was that it might not have been necessary for the numbers involved
  - o Comments included *'Not a huge amount of facilitation needed'*, *'Proteus has consistently performed well in these meetings and control them and encourage them in a positive manner'*, *'maybe not necessary'* and *'it avoided the risk of 'us and them' issues'*.
  
- Respondents were then asked to rate certain aspects of the workshop. The following responses were given:
  - o **Presentation**
    - 4 members thought that it was very good
    - 7 thought that it was good
    - 4 thought that it was neither good nor poor

- **Venue**
  - 1 member thought that the venue was very good
  - 10 thought that it was good
  - 5 thought that it was neither good nor poor.
  
- **Format of workshop**
  - 2 members thought that it was very good
  - 11 thought that it was good
  - 2 thought that it was neither good nor poor.
  
- **Information provided**
  - 4 members thought that it was very good
  - 12 thought that it was good
  - 1 thought that it was neither good nor poor.
  
- **Relevance to you**
  - 5 members thought that it was very good
  - 8 thought that it was good
  - 2 thought that it was neither good nor poor
  - 1 member thought that it was poor.
  
- **Group discussions**
  - 3 members thought that it was very good
  - 11 thought that it was good
  - 2 thought that it was neither good nor poor.