

Agenda Item IMD20

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

REFERENCE IMD: 2017/20

TITLE	Wokingham Borough Council response to West Berkshire Council's consultation on the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Preferred Options document
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Executive Member for Environment, Sports, Environmental Health and Leisure and Libraries, Cllr Norman Jorgensen
ON	Friday 7 July 2017
TIME	9 am
WARD	Non-Specific
DIRECTOR	Interim Director for Environment, Josie Wragg

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

That development proposed through the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Preferred Options document has minimal negative impacts upon Wokingham Borough and that any positive benefits are maximised.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Member for Environment, Sports, Environmental Health and Leisure and Libraries agrees that Wokingham Borough Council:

- 1) Submit a holding objection to the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Preferred options document on the basis that: West Berkshire Council's site selection is reconsidered to ensure supply across the wider area of Berkshire and in particular given the potential delivery problems outlined in paragraph 4.17. Not ensuring supply would result in the Plan being found unsound at Examination;
- 2) West Berkshire Council provides clarification that it can meet its sand and gravel extraction quota;
- 3) West Berkshire re-names and amends the wording of Policy 3 (self-sufficiency in waste management) given that it will still rely on neighbouring authorities in Berkshire for some waste processing, and
- 4) West Berkshire Council continues to engage with its neighbours as work on the Minerals and Waste Local Plan progresses, through the Duty to Co-operate mechanism

SUMMARY OF REPORT

West Berkshire Council has published their Minerals and Waste Local Plan Preferred

Options document. This Preferred Options Document, pulls together information collected from previous consultations and sets out the Council's preferred approach for the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Background

The West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (WBMWLP) will provide the planning framework for minerals and waste development in West Berkshire. It will set out the long-term vision for mineral and waste development to 2036 and set out the policy context for assessing planning applications for minerals and waste development.

The West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan will replace the, now dated, Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire Incorporating the alternations adopted in 1997 and 2001 (RMLP) and the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire, adopted in 1998 (WLPB) for planning decisions in West Berkshire. It should be noted that The West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan and the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire will remain the development plan for the other Berkshire authorities, including Wokingham Borough Council, until it is superseded by a replacement plan. Work is progressing on a replacement plan at the time of writing on a joint between the four local authorities of Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham Borough Council.

The current consultation builds on the Issues and Options consultation that was undertaken by West Berkshire Council in January/February 2014 when operators and landowners were invited to submit proposals for potential sites for future minerals and waste development. In the summer of 2016 a public consultation took place on the sites submitted for consideration as part of the plan making process. A further Call for Sites took place between December 2016 and March 2017 providing a further opportunity to submit additional minerals and waste sites.

Analysis of Issues

Minerals

Policy 2 (Landbank and Need) of the Preferred Options document states that the West Berkshire Council will seek to maintain a combined landbank of permitted reserves of sharp sand and gravel and soft sand of at least 7 years, based on the latest Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA). The seven-year landbank is required under paragraph 145 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan will aim to deliver 4 million tonnes of construction aggregates from primary sources to meet the identified needs of West Berkshire over the plan period to 2036. The Policy states the level of need for primary construction aggregates and state of the landbank will be kept under review through the production of a LAA on an annual basis.

It should be noted that in August 2016, Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) was consulted on West Berkshire's Minerals and Waste Plan Sites Consultation. The document identified 22 sites that were received through the 2014 call for sites process. Of these 22, there were four sites located particularly close to Wokingham Borough, being roughly within 1km of the boundary as follows:

- Moores Farm, Burghfield;
- Hyde Crete Pit, Burghfield;
- Reading Quarry Energy Recovery, Burghfield, and
- Reading Quarry, Burghfield.

At the time of the consultation, WBC asked to be kept informed about these sites given their proximity and the lack of detail included in the document at that time. Following detailed assessment a total of seven of the 22 sites have been included within Policy 2 as preferred options. All four of the sites named above have been removed from the preferred options document. There are now no sites proposed as being safeguarded for minerals close to the administrative boundary with WBC.

In paragraph 4.15 of the document, West Berkshire Council states their minerals evidence confirms that as of 2015 there was slightly over 3 million tonnes of sand and gravel reserves permitted at sites in West Berkshire. Taking these permitted reserves into account means that the emerging Minerals and Waste Local Plan will need to meet a need for approximately 4 million tonnes of construction aggregates to 2036. West Berkshire Council have assessed that the sites proposed for allocation would provide a supply of around 4.75m tonnes of construction aggregates. West Berkshire Council conclude that the outcomes of the consultation and the results of further viability assessments, as well as any changes to the landbank requirement, may mean that not all sites are required to be allocated in the submission version of the plan.

Notwithstanding the above, in paragraph 4.17, West Berkshire Council states that there is some concern around whether all the permitted reserves in West Berkshire will ever be worked. For example one site with permitted reserves (circa 150,000 tonnes) has remained dormant for many years and it is possible that these reserves may never be worked. Another site with (circa 300,000 tonnes of reserves) was found to be the location of a late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age settlement and has yielded the evidence of the earliest ironworking known in Britain. This area of archaeological importance could impinge upon the extent of the mineral workings, resulting in a reduction in the level of minerals extracted.

In light of the potential delivery problems highlighted in paragraph 4.17, it is recommended that WBC submits a holding objection to the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan. WBC strongly requests that the preferred sites be reconsidered to ensure supply. Not ensuring supply would result in the Plan being found unsound at Examination. It is not clear why these sites have been chosen as preferred options out of the original 22 sites if there are likely to be delivery issues. It is not considered that the projected additional 0.75m tonnes of construction aggregates (above the 4m tonnes identified need) would provide a substantial enough buffer should these sites not be delivered or if aggregate demand increases in the future. It is also unclear whether West Berkshire would be under-delivering should these sites fail to come forward and WBC seeks further clarity on this issue.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance

(PPG) states that separate landbanks should be calculated and maintained for any aggregate materials of a specific type or quality, which have a distinct and separate market. In West Berkshire there are principally two types of construction aggregates that have been worked: sharp sand and gravel (primarily used in the manufacture of concrete) and soft sand (primarily used in the manufacture of mortar). There are also deposits of hoggin (a mix of gravel, sand, silt and clay used for the construction of driveways and paths) however in recent years these deposits have been processed and sold as sharp sand and gravel.

In paragraph 4.21 and 4.22, West Berkshire Council explain that due to commercial confidentiality agreements that exist between the authority and minerals industry, sales of sand and gravel and soft sand have always been combined in the LAAs produced by the authority. As a result, the need calculations for construction aggregates include both sharp sand and gravel and soft sand.

The confidentiality agreements mean that West Berkshire Council cannot publish sharp sand and gravel figures separately to soft sand. It is suggested that traditionally there has been limited demand for soft sand in the District and therefore, a separate landbank (supply) is not considered necessary, so no sites have been proposed for allocation for soft sand in this plan. Based in on the provided information this is considered to be reasonable.

There are no hard rock reserves in West Berkshire. As such all hard rock requirements are met through imports, mainly by rail. In paragraph 4.24 of the document, it is stated that a large proportion of the imported aggregate sold from three rail depots in West Berkshire is then exported from the District by road. The plan seeks to safeguard the rail head sites (Policy 8 – Minerals safeguarding) to ensure that this important mineral resource can be retained.

Paragraph 4.26 states there are no known sources of notable secondary aggregates within West Berkshire. While locally recycled aggregates have primarily been used in low grade construction, improvements in technology mean that there may be scope in the future for production of higher quality material which may be capable of replacing a proportion of primary minerals.

Waste

Policy 3 of the document (Self Sufficiency in Waste Management) looks to achieve net self-sufficiency in waste arisings, such that total waste management is greater than the total waste arisings within West Berkshire.

Paragraph 4.28 states West Berkshire is too small an area to plan effectively for all waste streams due to the level of waste arisings and economies of scale. Paragraph 4.29 goes on to say that planning for self-sufficiency should mean that the authority is able to minimise the level of waste movement. They state West Berkshire will always be reliant on other local authorities to manage some waste arising within the authority, as there is a distinct lack of non-hazardous landfill capacity within the authority meaning that such wastes have to be exported.

Paragraph 4.36 states the total annual capacity excluding 'transfer' of the existing waste management sites in West Berkshire is understood to be 958,628 tonnes. When compared to the worst case projected total annual waste arisings for 2036 of 837,923 tonnes, there is headroom of 120,705 tonnes.

Paragraph 4.37 states that it should be acknowledged that two of the sites providing recycling capacity operate under temporary consents and they cover 110,000 tonnes of capacity. When factoring this in, there is still headroom of 10,705 tonnes. It is concluded in paragraphs 4.37 and 4.38 that based on these projections, the current level of waste management capacity in West Berkshire can meet the needs of the authority to 2036 and based on the evidence supporting the plan, that there is no need to identify any new sites for the delivery of additional waste management capacity to meet the needs of the authority over the life of the plan.

WBC acknowledges that West Berkshire cannot be completely self-sufficient in terms of waste management. It is recognised that West Berkshire will aim to be as self-sufficient as possible, but will still rely on neighbouring authorities in Berkshire for some waste processing. Therefore, WBC would suggest it is appropriate to rename Policy 3 (Self-Sufficiency in Waste Management) and amend the references to being self-sufficient in Policy 3 as this is not considered to be accurate.

Conclusion

It is recommended that WBC submits a holding objection to the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan on the basis that the preferred Minerals sites are reconsidered to ensure supply. Not ensuring supply would result in the Plan being found unsound at Examination. It is not considered that the projected additional 0.75m tonnes of construction aggregates (above the 4m tonnes identified need) would provide a sufficient buffer to guard against deliver issues or if aggregate demand increases in the future. It is also unclear whether West Berkshire would be under-delivering should these sites fails to come forwards, so further clarity on this matter is required.

WBC acknowledges that West Berkshire cannot be completely self-sufficient in terms of waste management within the Plan area. It is recognised that West Berkshire Council propose the plan strategy to be as self-sufficient as possible, but it will still rely on neighbouring authorities in Berkshire for some waste processing. Therefore, WBC would suggest it is appropriate to rename Policy 3 (Self-Sufficiency in Waste Management) and amend the references to being self-sufficient in Policy 3 as this is not considered to be accurate.

Further engagement between the authorities is welcomed as the plan is progressed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Nil	Nil	Nil
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Nil	Nil	Nil

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None anticipated

Cross-Council Implications

Decisions in West Berkshire on Minerals and Waste could affect how the authority needs to plan for Minerals and Waste within the Borough.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Director of Corporate Services	No comment
Monitoring Officer	No comment
Leader of the Council	No comment

List of Background Papers

The Minerals and Waste Local Plan document can be found at the following link:
http://consult.westberks.gov.uk/portal/minerals_and_waste_local_plan_preferred_options_consultation?pointId=4395400

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