

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Local Plan provides a planning policy framework for mineral working and waste disposal in Oxfordshire.
- 1.2 The most important minerals in the county, in terms of quantity, are aggregates. Large quantities of aggregate are used each year in building houses, roads, schools and in other construction work. The Government advises mineral planning authorities such as Oxfordshire County Council to ensure an adequate and steady supply of minerals to meet these needs. However, recently the Government has started to place more emphasis on trying to ensure that development is “sustainable”.



About 50 tonnes of aggregate is required for each new house.

- 1.3 These minerals, mainly sand and gravel in south east England, can only be worked where they occur naturally. Mineral workings inevitably have an environmental impact: for instance, extra lorries on local roads and changes in the landscape both during and after working.
- 1.4 Mineral planning authorities try to balance society’s need for minerals against social, environmental and economic costs, within the framework laid down by the Government¹. If adequate supplies are not provided through the local planning process the community will not have the aggregates it needs and supplies may have to be released from unsuitable sites. Over-provision within the Plan could lead to unnecessary environmental damage. However, it has been recognised that the South East region cannot supply all its own aggregate needs because of increasing conflict with environmental constraints. The County Council, with other counties in the South East, pressed the Government to revise its policies so as to reduce the

¹ *In Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), Minerals Policy Guidance notes (MPGs), circulars and ministerial statements.*

demand for aggregates, and to ensure that much more of the supply is met from recycled materials and other alternatives to sand and gravel. Minerals Policy Guidance Note 6 (MPG6)¹ published in April 1994 goes some way towards meeting these concerns.

- 1.5 The County Council supports the approach to waste suggested by the London and South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN)². This suggests that there should be greater emphasis on minimising waste at source, re-use and recycling, using waste for energy production and incineration, with landfill being used as the last resort. Nevertheless, landfill is likely to remain the main way of disposing of waste during the Plan period. Higher environmental standards will be required for landfill sites and this will have considerable planning implications.
- 1.6 This Local Plan examines these issues and sets out planning policies and proposals for waste disposal in Oxfordshire.

The context for this Local Plan

- 1.7 The Oxfordshire Structure Plan provides the policy context for the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The present Structure Plan was approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in January 1992. It contains minerals policies which were approved by him in October 1990³.
- 1.8 The Development Plan for Oxfordshire will eventually consist of:
- the Structure Plan: a strategic plan for the whole county which is not site-specific;
 - a single local plan for each of the five districts;
 - the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

The Government emphasises the importance of up-to-date development plans; where they are in place decisions should generally be in accordance with the Plan⁴.

- 1.9 The Local Plan must conform generally with the Structure Plan, which covers the period to 2001. Government guidance on the provision of aggregates (MPG6 April 1994) extends the forward planning period for aggregates to 2006 and says that plans should cover a minimum period of 10 years and be reviewed every 5 years. This Plan therefore covers the period to 2006 but also identifies some land which will, if required, provide a contingency to accommodate uncertainties in aggregate supply and, if not, will contribute to the maintenance of a landbank at the end of the Plan period (see paragraph 2.13). This does not affect the Plan's general conformity with the Structure Plan.

1 *MPG6 Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England, Department of the Environment, April 1994.*

2 *Waste – Its Reduction, Re-use and Disposal: Regional Waste Planning Guidelines, RPC2266, SERPLAN, October 1992.*

3 *The Structure Plan is currently being reviewed.*

4 *Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 54A.*

The overall strategy

- 1.10 The aims of this Local Plan are:
- to comply with Government guidance and Structure Plan policy to seek an acceptable and sustainable balance between society's need for minerals and the need to conserve resources and protect the environment;
 - to ensure that any proposals for mineral working are environmentally acceptable and are accompanied by satisfactory and achievable proposals for restoration and after-use;
 - to provide a planning framework which allows the safe and economic treatment and disposal of waste;
 - to encourage the re-use and recycling of materials so as to reduce the need both for mineral working and for landfill disposal of waste.
- 1.11 The County Council considers that mineral working is not acceptable without satisfactory restoration and after-use. This applies not only to the establishment of after-uses but to their long-term management and maintenance.
- 1.12 Mineral working is seen by many local residents and others as a threat. However it also provides opportunities through restoration for example, to create new wildlife habitats or to increase Oxfordshire's depleted woodlands.
- 1.13 The County Council's approach is that proper restoration and after-use, including the funding of it, should be secured at the time at which any planning permission is granted. It should be paid for by those who stand to benefit financially from the granting of permission – the mineral operators and landowners. This Plan seeks to make this approach explicit, providing a clear statement for its users. The Council also considers that this approach is equitable and “can enable the market to form and act on a consistent set of expectations”¹, in line with Government advice.

Interpretation of policies

- 1.14 Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states:
- “Where, in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the Development Plan, the determination shall be in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”
- 1.15 This means that decisions should normally be made in accordance with the Development Plan. Development which conforms with the Plan would normally be permitted; development which conflicts with the Plan would not normally be permitted.
- 1.16 However, material considerations may indicate that an exception should be made to the Development Plan, and a decision taken which would not be in accord with the Plan. Examples might be development being permitted which would destroy woodland because of overriding need for a nationally rare mineral; or of development being refused on an allocated site because of the discovery of overriding nature conservation interest. The policies of the Plan, and the Plan as a whole, should be read in this light.

¹ PPG12 *Development Plans and Regional Planning Guidance*, Department of the Environment, February 1992, paragraph 5.3.

The format of the Plan

- 1.17 Local Plan policies are **highlighted (like this)**. To set certain sections of the Local Plan in context, some policies from the approved Structure Plan are reproduced, in *italics (like this)*.
- 1.18 The Plan starts by looking at general issues, such as supply and demand for minerals, waste disposal and general measures of environmental protection. It then goes on to cover policies on transport, plant and buildings, followed by sections on individual geographical areas. It ends with a Code of Practice for mineral and waste sites.
- 1.19 The Proposals Map, which consists of a map of the whole county and insets for various areas, can be found separately in the plastic wallet.