

POLICY LINKAGES

The matrix below cross-refers Minerals Policies to other Structure Plan policies which are, or may be, of particular relevance. The Plan however should be read as a whole.

Structure Plan Policy	Links to other policies
M.1 Regional Production	M.2, M.3
M.2 Safeguarding of Deposits	M.1
M.3 Mineral Extraction	CTC.1, CTC.2, CTC.7, CTC.11, CTC.12, CTC.13, CTC.14, CTC.16, CTC.17, CTC.19
M.4 Restoration and Aftercare	CTC.1, CTC.15
M.5 Abberley and Malvern Hills	CTC.1
M.6 Recycled Materials	SD.1

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9. MINERALS

Introduction

9.1 Worcestershire is not a large producer of minerals. Construction aggregates make up most of the mineral output of the County (about 1 million tonnes per annum). Cut stone is produced at one hard rock quarry and some brick clay is also extracted.

9.2 The working of minerals is a temporary use of land but it can last a long time, and, whilst in progress, it can cause disruption to communities and the environment, and may permanently alter the landscape of the local area in which it occurs. Quarrying is however essential to support development and it does have its benefits. It creates jobs, and it helps diversify the local economy by generating markets for goods and services. This can benefit rural areas where jobs are scarce and may help to retain local facilities such as shops, post offices and schools. Furthermore mineral working can provide opportunities to create new wildlife habitats, open up sites of geological interest and provide new areas for recreation use.

9.3 The Government has issued guidance in MPG6 "Guidelines for Aggregate Provision in England" 1994, about the level of aggregate production for which provision should be made in Development Plans. For the West Midlands Region the levels are 180 million tonnes of sand and gravel and 150 million tonnes of crushed rock over the period 1992-2006. The West Midlands Regional Aggregates Working Party has apportioned this between the constituent authorities and Worcestershire's share is 15.3 million tonnes of sand and gravel (8.5% of Regional production) and 2.7 million tonnes of crushed rock (1.8% of Regional production) over this period, an average of 1.1 and 0.2 million tonnes per annum respectively. The approved Minerals Local Plan, inter alia, details preferred areas for extraction for the period up to 2003 to enable these requirements to be met. New guidelines will be produced by the Government during the currency of this Plan.

Provision for mineral working beyond 2003 will be reviewed when the new Local Plan is prepared.

9.4 The main sand and gravel resources in the County occur in solid deposits in north Worcestershire, terrace deposits along the Rivers Severn and Avon and fan deposits to the south and east of Bredon Hill, close to the County boundary with Gloucestershire. The Abberley/Suckley/Malvern Hills, the edge of the Cotswolds near Broadway, and Bredon Hill contain the hard rock resources of the County, whereas brick clay is found near Hartlebury.

9.5 There is a difficult balance to be maintained between meeting the need for minerals and ensuring no significant harm is caused to the environment. Aggregates and bricks are essential components of much new development and the proposals for new houses, shops, schools, offices, factories and roads during the Structure Plan period will help create a demand for construction materials and unless alternatives are available, brick clay and primary aggregates will continue to be won and worked to meet this need. If minerals extraction in Worcestershire is to be sustainable and in accordance with the objectives of the Structure Plan, it will be necessary to ensure that:

- land is not made available for mineral extraction in excess of identified need so as to conserve the resources for as long as possible whilst still ensuring an adequate supply for present day use;
- extraction and transportation of the mineral is carried out in an environmentally sustainable manner;
- used construction/demolition materials are recycled to produce alternatives to primary aggregates and then used wherever practicable;

- sensitive working, restoration and aftercare practices are utilised which conserve or enhance the overall quality of the environment creating Worcestershire BAP target habitats where appropriate;
- absolute protection is given to designated AONB, SSSI and designated sites of international importance, other than in exceptional circumstances; and
- mineral resources are not sterilised unnecessarily.

9.6 The following policies set out the overall parameters for the extraction of minerals in the County. They should be read in conjunction with the adopted Minerals Local Plan for Hereford and Worcester County which covers the period 1994-2003, which has been endorsed by Worcestershire County Council. A new Minerals Local Plan will be prepared during the currency of this Structure Plan.

Policies

Regional Production

Policy M.1

Worcestershire's share of the regional production of aggregates should be met through the allocation of sufficient land and the maintenance of a land bank of permitted reserves in accordance with current national policy guidance and regional guidelines, subject always to the taking into account of relevant development plan policies.

Explanatory Memorandum

9.7 The County Council accepts that a certain level of aggregates production is necessary to meet the development needs of the Region. Policy M.1 makes clear the Council's commitment to its role as a Mineral Planning Authority within the West Midlands Region and its intention to adhere to national and regional policy guidelines.

Safeguarding of Deposits

Policy M.2

Known mineral deposits will be safeguarded as far as possible. Proposals for development which would sterilise them or prevent them being worked will be resisted unless:

- (i) it can be demonstrated that no workable deposit exists; or**
- (ii) the mineral is extracted prior to the commencement of the proposed development; or**
- (iii) extraction is not possible without unacceptable effects on the environment.**

Explanatory Memorandum

9.8 All identified deposits could be required in the future and Policy M.2 seeks to avoid sterilising or prejudicing their future working. Ideally development should not take place over, or very close to, identified deposits to ensure that the potential to extract the underlying mineral is not lost.

9.9 As part of the Minerals Local Plan process, maps of Mineral Consultation Areas (MCAs) which correspond to the identified deposits, have been prepared. These enable the District Planning Authorities to consult the Mineral Planning Authority on development proposals in these areas which would be likely to affect, or be affected by, the winning and working of minerals and to have regard to the implications of this.

Mineral Extraction

Policy M.3

Mineral extraction, processing or associated development will normally only be allowed where it can be demonstrated that the best and most versatile agricultural land, local

amenities, landscape character or features of landscape, historic and nature conservation importance will not be unacceptably affected, and safe access can be provided. Proposals in AONB or affecting SSSI or designated sites of international importance will be subject to the most rigorous examination.

it is necessary to ensure that proper management of a restored site continues beyond the five-year aftercare period, the necessary provisions to cover this will need to be in place prior to planning permission being issued.

Explanatory Memorandum

9.10 The County Council places a high value on the conservation and enhancement where possible, of the natural environment and landscape assets and as a consequence will seek to avoid damage to them. In so doing, particular attention will be paid to proposals in AONB or those affecting SSSI or designated sites of international importance which will be subject to a most rigorous examination of the possible impacts of the proposal on these designated areas. This stance is compatible with the concept of sustainable development as expressed in national policy guidelines set out in MPG1 "General Considerations and the Development Plan System" July 1996. These environmental constraints are further elaborated in the Minerals Local Plan for the County and applications for minerals extraction will be considered against the policies in that Plan.

9.11 Where relevant, proposals will be subject to environmental assessment in accordance with the appropriate and prevailing legislation.

Restoration and Aftercare

Policy M.4

All mineral extraction operations shall be carried out in accordance with approved schemes for working, restoration and aftercare. The approved restoration and aftercare plan should provide for an after-use and landscape/landform acceptable to the Minerals Planning Authority, enhancing the landscape and ecological quality where appropriate. Where ecological quality is to be enhanced BAP target habitats should be created. Where

Explanatory Memorandum

9.12 Where permission for minerals extraction is granted, conditions will be imposed to ensure that long term benefit is achieved after the development has ceased. Land used for mineral working should be restored as soon as possible and not allowed to become derelict. One or more uses following extraction can represent a sustainable use, avoiding the need to develop on greenfield sites e.g. extraction followed by waste disposal followed by a recreational use.

9.13 In order to ensure that sites are reclaimed to as high a standard as is practicable, restoration and aftercare schemes will be required to be sufficiently detailed to demonstrate that the proposals can be achieved. In some cases (for example, proposals to restore nature conservation or water uses), legal agreements will be necessary to ensure that proposals are fully realised. Where the proposed afteruse is for amenity or nature conservation, specific management will usually be required for longer than the statutory five-year period. In such cases, the Mineral Planning Authority will ensure that the necessary binding agreements or other provisions are in place prior to granting planning permission.

9.14 The approved restoration and aftercare plan should provide for an afteruse and landscape/landform acceptable to the Mineral Planning Authority, enhancing the landscape and ecological quality where appropriate. Where ecological quality is to be enhanced Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan target habitats should be created in accordance with Policy CTC.15.

Abberley and Malvern Hills

Policy M.5

Unless it can be shown that the need for the mineral overrides environmental considerations, no further planning permissions will be granted for aggregates mineral working in the Abberley Hills area apart from the possible modification of working, subject to environmental considerations, within the existing lateral limits of Woodbury and Shavers End quarries. No further planning permissions will be granted for the extraction of granite from the Malvern Hills.

Explanatory Memorandum

9.15 The County Council is particularly concerned about the visual impact of further quarrying in the Abberley Hills area and has decided to limit any future hard rock quarrying there to the areas worked under the terms of existing consents. It considers that the range of hills (area defined in the Minerals Local Plan as Inset Proposals Map AH) from Martley northwards through Great Witley and Abberley towards Dunley, is a very attractive and prominent landscape feature. Consequently the County Council considers that the area is of such importance that the landscape should be protected, and that quarrying should not be allowed to continue, or to be extended indefinitely, or become more widespread.

9.16 The Malvern Hills are visually dominant over a wide area of the Severn Valley and form a landscape feature of national importance that has been given recognition as an AONB. Quarrying of the granite ceased in this area in the late 1960s and the County Council has concluded, that in its view there are no circumstances in which the environmental considerations could be overcome, such that further extraction, with its potential to damage the shape and character of the Hills, would be justified.

Recycled Materials

Policy M.6

The production, processing, treatment, storage and use of materials suitable for use as alternatives to primary aggregates will be encouraged. Preference will be given to proposals in the following general locations, provided they conform with other development plan policies:

- (i) existing or proposed industrial areas;
- (ii) derelict or despoiled areas;
- (iii) permanent facilities close to major sources of construction waste arisings and temporary facilities on or adjacent to demolition sites; or
- (iv) working or worked out mineral or landfill sites.

Explanatory Memorandum

9.17 As part of the implementation of a sustainable minerals strategy it is important that every effort is made to reduce the need for primary aggregate production. In particular, the County Council considers that demolition and construction wastes should be utilised to produce materials that can be used in place of primary aggregates in development projects. Policy M.6 is in line with the national guidelines for waste and those stated in the Minerals Planning Guidance Notes. Facilities should, wherever possible, be in the vicinity of urban areas, including the West Midlands Conurbation, close to sources of demolition and construction wastes, and potential markets for the product, in order to help reduce the need to transport materials over long distances. It is anticipated that in some circumstances mineral extraction sites could also provide suitable locations with the potential to utilise the same machinery, where there is sufficient land for the storage of materials.