

## CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

All building works and some manufacturing processes require minerals of one kind or another. Most minerals are extracted from the ground, and to do this land somewhere has to be excavated. The areas where suitable raw materials can be extracted are determined by two factors:

- a) the geological presence of suitable minerals;
- b) the commercial costs of extraction.

- 1.2 Nationally the mineral extraction industry is of considerable economic importance. At the local level, locally-won minerals reduce construction costs and increase the generation of wealth in terms of employment and spending power.
- 1.3 For the foreseeable future there will be a continuing need for the extraction of minerals both nationally and locally. Because of the extensive nature of mineral extraction, the potential for environmental damage is high, and the working itself, unless carefully planned and controlled, can lead to difficulties for those living in the area. Policies are required to balance the need for mineral extraction with the social, agricultural, environmental and other considerations arising from the extraction process. The County Council, which is the Minerals Planning Authority, believes the preparation and adoption of a Minerals Local Plan provides the best means of establishing those policies.

### SCOPE OF PLAN

- 1.4 There are many different minerals deposited throughout Britain. However, this County is relatively limited in the range of minerals found within its boundaries. Present knowledge reveals the existence of the following commercially exploitable minerals: sand, gravel, moulding sand, limestone, dolomite, igneous and metamorphic rock, clay, coal and salt. Of these, sand, gravel, clay, moulding sand and limestone are the major minerals being commercially exploited both for the present time and probably for the foreseeable future. Oil exploration licences have been granted by the Department of Energy covering various parts of the County but as yet there has been no evidence of commercial deposits.

The plan is intended to deal with policies for the extraction of any minerals in the County, but inevitably deals in the greatest detail with the extraction of aggregates ("aggregates" is a term loosely used to describe a variety of materials used in construction) as these are currently the most extensive of the minerals operations in the County.

It is the primary intention of this local plan to:

- a) elaborate on the Structure Plan Minerals policies;
- b) identify areas in the County where the extraction of aggregates would be least damaging; and,
- c) set out policies to guide the extraction and restoration of minerals sites and to safeguard aggregate resources.

This will assist in making decisions upon planning applications and at the same time give guidance to the minerals industry.

## LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

- 1.6 The comprehensive control of mineral working in England and Wales dates from 1st July 1948 when the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 introduced general planning control over the development of land. There were many subsequent amendments to the Act, all of which were consolidated in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, which itself has since been amended on several occasions. The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 has now superseded the 1971 Act for the purposes of controlling mineral working.
- 1.7 In recognition of the fact that the winning and working of minerals and associated activities inevitably had a greater impact on the environment than most other forms of development, the Government appointed in 1972 a Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Roger Stevens to review the operation of the planning system as it related to mineral workings. In response to some of the recommendations contained in the Committee's Report (published 1976) the Government introduced the Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981 amending the 1971 Act in respect of the winning and working of minerals.
- 1.8 The Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981 made County Councils the "Mineral Planning Authority" for their areas and conferred on them responsibility for all matters relating to the development and control of mineral operations. The County Council must consider applications to work land for minerals and reach a decision on whether to grant permission. In so doing it must judge applications against (inter alia) the general policies set out in the Structure Plan. The current set of Approved Structure Plan minerals policies are reproduced in Appendix 2.
- 1.9 During the course of preparation of this local plan, the County Council has taken into account the advice and guidance contained in the Department of the Environment's Minerals Planning Guidance (MPG) Notes 1 to 14 where this is appropriate.

## AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

- 1.10 In the early 1970's there was increasing concern as to how the longer term demand for aggregates could be met. Growing demand was putting increasing pressure on local authorities to release land, whilst at the same time the amount of mineral bearing land which was still unworked and was not agriculturally or environmentally precious was, and still is, declining steadily. An Advisory Committee on Aggregates under the Chairmanship of Sir Ralph Verney was appointed in 1972 (contemporaneously with the Stevens Committee) to review the problems and its report "Aggregates: The Way Ahead" was published in 1976.
- 1.11 Many of the Verney Committee recommendations were subsequently accepted by the Government. The Committee strongly recommended the establishment of Regional Aggregates Working Parties to include representatives from the aggregates industry, mineral planning authorities and Central Government, and the setting up of a National Co-ordinating Group to ensure consistency of approach between the Working Parties. Following on from the detailed studies and analysis carried out by Working Parties the Government produced National Guidelines for Aggregate Provision in England and Wales indicating levels of production initially under Circular 21/82 and latterly under MPG6. Mineral Planning Authorities were requested to take the national guidelines into account when preparing or reviewing development plans or other policies for mineral working, and when dealing with planning applications relating to aggregates.
- 1.12 In accordance with the national advice in MPG6, the Council will seek to maintain a seven year landbank throughout the Plan period and at its end. Therefore, the aim of the Plan is to identify a 17 year land supply from January 1994. This is shown in Appendix 3.

1.13 In April 1994, new National Guidelines were published in MPG6 which identified new production figures for the Region. The WMRAWP interpretation of the National Guidelines figures are reproduced below in Table 1 and form the basis of production figures used in this Plan. Applying the 12.7% sand and gravel figure to the guidance figure of 180mt over the 15 year period gives an annual production requirement of 1.524mt for this County. For crushed rock the position is somewhat different, with Hereford and Worcester County being a very small producer within the region. On the basis of this County having to produce 7.3% of the requirement, the average annual production is calculated as 0.73mt.

**TABLE 1 COUNTY SHARE OF REGIONAL PRODUCTION 1992 - 2006**

(Source WMRAWP July 1995)

County	Sand and Gravel	%	Crushed Rock	%
Hereford and Worcester	22.86	12.7	10.9	7.3
Shropshire	16.74	9.3	52.65	35.1
Staffordshire	120.06	66.7	46.65	31.1
Warwickshire	12.24	6.8	31.35	20.9
West Midlands	8.1	4.5	8.4	5.6
Regional Total	180.0		150.0	

All figures in million tonnes

#### **TIMESCALE AND CONTENT OF THE LOCAL PLAN**

1.14 The implementation period for this Local Plan is 1994-2003. The Plan:

- a) sets out a brief analysis of the broad range of minerals found in the County;
- b) examines existing reserves of aggregates with planning permission and ascertains quantity and type of material available;
- c) examines the location within the County of other known aggregate deposits;
- d) examines the future need for aggregate supply in terms of likely overall demand and, as far as possible, the nature of the demand within the County;
- e) analyses identified aggregate deposits against appropriate land-use and environmental protection criteria in order to identify locations with the least environmental objections to extraction;
- f) identifies other areas where there is a need to prevent aggregate reserves being unnecessarily sterilized by other forms of development;
- g) considers the positive contribution mineral workings can make to the creation of recreation, nature conservation and/or waste disposal facilities;
- h) sets out policies for the extraction of minerals.

## THE FORM OF THE PLAN AND PLAN-MAKING PROCESS

- 1.15 The Plan is a statutory local (subject) plan and, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Structure and Local Plans) Regulations 1982, will cover the whole of the County. The Plan will include a Written Statement and Proposals Maps.
- 1.16 The Local Plan has been prepared under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 following an extensive period of public consultation during which some 2,000 letters have been received by the County Council. These comments and objections have been taken into account by the Council in preparing the Plan.
- 1.17 Following this initial consultation period the Draft Plan was placed on formal deposit in September 1991 when some 974 representations were received. The Plan was the subject of a Public Local Inquiry in the Autumn of 1992. The Inspector's Report was received in December 1993 and the Authority then proposed modifications and following a public comment period proposed further changes to the modifications. The second Public Local Inquiry into these matters was held, commencing November 1995, with the Inspector's Report being received in July 1996.