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SD.58

Maintaining Levels of Minerals Supply

Topic Paper

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1. The Local Plan

1.1. Sunderland City Council (the Council) is currently producing the Core Strategy and Development Plan (the Plan). The Plan sets out our long-term plan for development across the city to 2033. It will ensure that the right type of development is focused in the right places to meet the needs for local people and businesses.

1.2. This Topic Paper, along with a separate Topic Paper on Minerals Safeguarding has been prepared to support the Minerals chapter of the Plan. The Minerals Safeguarding paper incluPa55w0rddes the need to identify and safeguard existing minerals infrastructure (including active mineral producing sites) to protect them from encroachment by non-minerals development.

2. Which minerals are found in Sunderland?

2.1. Sunderland possesses a variety of valuable minerals resources including Permian yellow sand and crushed rock which play a part in meeting local, regional and national requirements. Sunderland currently has one operational quarry extracting aggregates which is located in Eppleton.

2.2. Aggregates – Aggregates are sand, gravel, crushed rock and other bulk materials used by the construction industry. Sand (basal Permian sand (yellow sand)) and the overlying magnesian limestone (the lower magnesian limestone (Raisby formation)) are currently extracted at Eppleton Quarry, Hetton-le-Hole. The limestone is crushed before sale for use as roadstone and fill. Magnesian limestone from the area is used for agricultural purposes.

2.3. Energy Minerals - Surface coal resources are present across roughly the western half of Sunderland although coal is no longer extracted.

3. National and Local Policy

3.1. National planning policy and guidance relating to mineral planning is set out within Chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Minerals section of National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). Essentially the key objective of NPPF and NPPG is to ensure that Minerals Planning Authorities (MPAs) plan for an adequate and steady supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings and goods that society, industry and the economy needs, and that this is done in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

3.2. The NPPG indicates that in preparing local plans MPAs should plan for the steady and adequate supply of minerals in one or more of the following ways (in order of priority):

Designating Specific Sites – where viable resources are known to exist, landowners are supportive of minerals development and the proposal is likely to be acceptable in planning terms. Such sites may also include essential operations associated with mineral extraction;

Designating Preferred Areas - which are areas of known resources where planning permission might reasonably be anticipated. Such areas may also include essential operations associated with mineral extraction; and/or

Designating Areas of Search – areas where knowledge of mineral resources may be less certain but within which planning permission may be granted, particularly if there is a potential shortfall in supply.

3.3. This requirement of NPPG will be addressed by the Council through the development of the Site Allocations and Designations document.

3.4. The NPPG also requires individual mineral planning authorities to prepare Local Aggregate Assessments (either on their own or jointly with other mineral planning authorities), although in those areas where apportionment of the land-won element has already taken place, those figures may be used as an indicator as to how much should be planned for.

4. Minerals Supply

4.1. In order to aid planning for an adequate aggregates supply, the government has historically set national and regional supply figures covering an extended 16 year period. These supply figures are based on aggregates sales over a period of 10 years.

4.2. The most recent were produced in 2009 (National and Regional Guidelines for Aggregates provision in England 2005 – 2020) and covered the 16 year period from 2005 to 2020 inclusive. The guidelines indicated that over the above period the North East Region should aim to produce 24 million tonnes of sand and gravel and 99 million tonnes of crushed rock.

4.3. Future apportionments and progress towards meeting them will be monitored through the NEAWP annual monitoring reports and annual updates of the County Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA), as well as through on-going 'duty to co-operate' discussions. The LAA is produced jointly by the eight Mineral Planning Authorities (MPAs) within the aforementioned areas (the LAA area). The LAA provides a forecast of demand for aggregates, an analysis of supply options and assesses the balance between supply and demand. It therefore provides a key evidence base on which to base decisions on the scale and geographical distribution of future aggregates supply in minerals plans.

4.4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that Minerals Planning Authorities (MPAs) ensure that they maintain landbanks of permitted reserves for aggregates. For sand and gravel the reserve is a minimum of 7 years and for crushed rock the reserve is at least 10 years.

4.5. It is important to note, however, that in the case of Sunderland this landbank applies to the Tyne and Wear sub-region and each of the 5 MPAs making up the sub-region (Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland) are not required to maintain their own landbanks.

4.6. The most recent LAA (2018), a copy of which can be found in the Local Plan evidence library section of the Council's planning policy web pages, indicates that, based on 2016 data, the Tyne and Wear landbank for sand and gravel is 27 years and 18 years for crushed rock.

4.7. Whilst the most recent LAA indicates that Tyne and Wear's landbank of permitted reserves for both sand and gravel and crushed rock is currently above the minimum thresholds stipulated in the NPPF, it must be remembered that these landbank periods are minimums not maximums and must be maintained during the whole of the plan period and beyond.

4.8. The key findings and statistics from the most recent LAA (2018) are provided below. It should be noted that sales and reserve figures have been estimated by the Council for confidentiality due to the small number of quarries in the sub-region.

Sand and gravel

- Sales in 2016 = 322,129 tonnes.
- Ten year sales average (2007 to 2016) = 225,500 tonnes.
- Three year sales average (2014 to 2016) = 284,666 tonnes.
- Permitted reserves at 31 December 2016 = 6,400,000 tonnes.
- Landbank = 26.7 years (based on annual demand forecast).
- Annual demand forecast = 230,000 tonnes.
- Demand forecast (2017 to 2032) = 3,680,000 tonnes.
- Balance between supply and demand (2017 to 2032) = +2,720,000 tonnes.

4.9. Tyne and Wear provides a regionally important contribution to the provision of land-won sand and gravel from the Joint LAA area, producing approximately 22.5% of land-won sand and gravel from the Joint LAA area over the period 2007 to 2016. The grant of the permission in October 2015 to extend Eppleton Quarry in Sunderland has transformed the sand and gravel supply position in Tyne and Wear. In quantitative terms this planning permission will allow Tyne and Wear to maintain a ten year sand and gravel landbank beyond 2032. However, following the closure of all other quarries producing sand and gravel in Tyne and Wear (Blaydon Quarry and Crawcrook Quarry in Gateshead) production of sand and gravel in Tyne and Wear will be entirely dependent upon production from Eppleton Quarry in Sunderland. This is important because Tyne and Wear as the Joint LAAs major conurbation is a major major source of demand for sand and gravel. In addition it is also understood that Eppleton Quarry alone would not be able to achieve the scale of sales which has been achieved prior to the 2008 economic downturn**.**

4.10. It is recommended that the Tyne and Wear authorities support additional areas for sand and gravel working through the preparation and review of their Local Plans and in decisions on planning applications, where environmentally acceptable, in order to avoid reliance upon only one sand and gravel quarry in Tyne and Wear and avoid limiting the scale of future production to that below the production capacity of Eppleton Quarry.

4.11. Ideally it is recommended that proposals for additional working should be considered which would allow a scale of sales to be achieved which is consistent with that which was achieved from Tyne and Wear prior to the recession. This is considered necessary in order to avoid the eventual cessation of sand and gravel extraction in Tyne and Wear and enable the possibility of further working close to the main area of demand within the Joint LAA area.

4.12. In making this recommendation it is recognised that if additional environmentally acceptable new or extended sand and gravel sites cannot be identified, future demand for sand and gravel from Tyne and Wear will need to be met by a combination of marine dredged aggregates and from sites outside of Tyne and Wear. However, until it can be demonstrated that there are no further environmentally acceptable sites remaining in Tyne and Wear further working must remain a prospect. It is important that the Tyne and Wear authorities give consideration to provision for the supply of crushed rock, given that markets in Tyne and Wear are a major source of demand for sand and gravel from North East quarries, including those in both County Durham and Northumberland.

4.13. Tyne and Wear is a net importer of sand and gravel from other parts of North East England. In order to reduce the extent of intra-regional imports of sand and gravel it is recommended that Tyne and Wear authorities (namely Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland as this is where the resource is found) seek to continue to make provision to ensure that an appropriate contribution is made to meet local and regional needs.

Crushed rock

- Sales in 2016 = 225,000 tonnes.
- Ten year sales average (2007 to 2016) = 275,000 tonnes.
- Three year sales average (2014 to 2016) = 256,667 tonnes.
- Permitted reserves at 31 December 2016 = 6,600,000 tonnes.
- Landbank = 18.2 years (based on annual demand forecast).
- Annual demand forecast = 361,000 tonnes.
- Demand forecast (2017 to 2032) = 5,776,000 tonnes.
- Balance between supply and demand (2017 to 2032) = +824,000 tonnes.

4.14. The LAA notes that, in the short-term, Tyne and Wear's two existing crushed rock aggregate quarries will have sufficient productive capacity to meet the annual provision. However, in the medium-term it is anticipated that the permitted reserves at Marsden Quarry will be exhausted and Eppleton Quarry alone does not have the productive capacity to meet the recommended level of provision for Tyne and Wear of 361,000 tonnes per annum. In addition Eppleton Quarry alone would not be able to achieve the scale of sales which has been achieved prior to the recession. It should be noted that, since the LAA was written, Marsden Quarry in South Tyneside has ceased operating as its owner went into administration in 2017. This will therefore be impacting upon production capacity already.

4.15. It is recommended that the Tyne and Wear authorities support additional areas for crushed rock working through the preparation and review of their Local Plans and in decisions on planning applications, where environmentally acceptable, in order to avoid a reliance on only one crushed rock aggregate quarry for the supply of crushed rock from Tyne and Wear following the exhaustion of permitted reserves at Marsden Quarry (if working ever recommences at the site) as well as ensuring that the Tyne and Wear authorities make an appropriate contribution to local and regional needs and in order to avoid limiting the scale of future production to that below the production capacity of Eppleton Quarry. This is considered necessary in order to avoid the eventual cessation of magnesian limestone extraction in Tyne and Wear and enable the possibility of further working close to the main area of demand within the Joint LAA area.

4.16. Ideally it is recommended that proposals for additional working should be considered which would allow a scale of sales to be achieved which is consistent with that which was achieved from Tyne and Wear prior to the recession. In making this recommendation it is recognised that if additional environmentally acceptable new or extended crushed rock sites cannot be identified, future demand for crushed rock aggregate from Tyne and Wear will need to be met by intra-regional imports of crushed rock aggregate from both Northumberland and County Durham. Until it can be demonstrated that there are no further environmentally acceptable sites remaining in Tyne and Wear further working should be considered.

4.17. It is important that the Tyne and Wear authorities give consideration to provision for the supply of crushed rock given that markets in Tyne and Wear are a major source of demand for crushed rock aggregate from North East quarries, including those in both County Durham and Northumberland.

Future Mineral Extraction

4.18. The identification of future areas for mineral extraction within Sunderland, whether this be through the identification of specific sites, preferred areas or Areas of Search, will take place through the Site Allocations and Designations Plan, rather than the Core Strategy.

5. Summary

5.1. Whilst the most recent LAA indicates that Tyne and Wear's landbank of permitted reserves for both sand and gravel and crushed rock is currently above the minimum thresholds stipulated in the NPPF, it must be remembered that these landbank periods are minimums and must be maintained during the whole of the plan period and beyond. This is particularly pertinent as sales trends identify a general increase in sales over recent years since the economic recession.

5.2. This paper shows both the importance of Eppleton Quarry in Sunderland to sand and gravel supply for the Tyne and Wear sub-region and also the need for additional reserves to come forward from new sites across the LAA area for both sand and gravel and crushed rock. Particularly as there are no saved allocations for minerals working in any of the existing Development Plan documents of the Tyne and Wear authorities.