



Warwickshire County Council Minerals Plan update

November 2013

Warwickshire County Council will be restarting work shortly on its new Minerals Plan (previously called the 'Minerals Core Strategy'). The Council is required to produce a new plan to replace the 1995 Minerals Local Plan. The new plan will identify where new minerals sites should be located, and set out the policies to assess new minerals development proposals over the next 15 years. This newsletter will set out where we are now, what we will be working on over the coming months and how some of the key mineral planning issues are likely to be addressed.

Where did we get to?

At the last 'Minerals Core Strategy – Revised Spatial Options' stage, the Council consulted on three strategy options for locating new minerals development, a number of potential minerals sites and draft policies for guiding all minerals development in the County. 27 minerals sites in total were submitted by landowners and operators covering a variety of mineral types including sand and gravel, cement clay/limestone, shallow coal, Etruria marl brick clay and building stone. Views were sought on all submissions before detailed analysis of the sites was undertaken. However, the sites were assessed prior to the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and there is now a need to reassess the policies and proposals in light of the latest Government policy and guidance.



Where are we now?

Government guidance requires that Mineral Planning Authorities (MPAs) should plan for a steady and adequate supply of minerals including the provision of certain amounts of 'aggregates' i.e. sand and gravel and crushed rock. The National Planning Policy Framework requires that MPAs should prepare a Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA) based on a rolling average of 10 years past sales and other relevant local information. As a result, the Council must now produce an LAA to determine how much sand and gravel and crushed rock is required over the plan period. The LAA will influence the emerging Minerals Plan, so a number of potential options will need to be assessed and consulted on to determine the best way forward.

What are the likely impacts for sand and gravel provision?

Warwickshire is required to provide for a sand and gravel landbank of at least 7 years of permitted reserves. Based on the latest 2011 West Midlands Aggregate Working Party Report, Warwickshire's landbank is well below this figure at 4.33 years. A number of sites have closed since 2008 and only two have been approved. The Council needs to ensure that there is enough sand and gravel to meet the county's construction and infrastructure needs for the whole plan period of 15 years. As there may not be enough sites currently available to sustain the county's economic growth, the County Council will be contacting operators and land owners to request further sites for consideration for sand and gravel extraction, as well confirmation that previously submitted sites are still to be considered. It is intended that the next Minerals Plan consultation document will only include sand and gravel sites as Preferred Options so there will not be site allocations for any other minerals.



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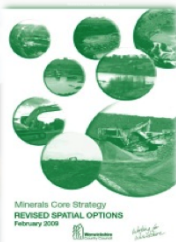
What are the likely impacts for crushed rock provision?

The National Planning Policy Framework requires that MPAs should maintain a crushed rock landbank of at least 10 years. According to the latest figures as at 31.12.11, Warwickshire's crushed rock landbank remains healthy at 23.86 years. However, there is only one quarry producing crushed rock with limited reserves remaining and much of the county's main landbank is provided by other permitted, but not operational, sites. As part of the LAA consultation process, the Council will need to assess the potential deliverability of these sites as this may impact on the County's landbank and crushed rock provision over the plan period.



What about all other minerals?

All other minerals (including crushed rock, coal, Etruria marl, brick clay, cement raw materials etc.) will be addressed through specific planning policies rather than site allocations. The Council will be drafting these policies over the coming months and they will form part of the 'Preferred Options and Policies' document, due for consultation in 2014.



How will the issue of unconventional hydrocarbons such as shale gas 'fracking' be dealt with?

The Department for Communities and Local Government has recently issued planning practice guidance for onshore oil and gas and this includes shale gas hydraulic fracturing and coal bed methane. The guidance states that it is likely that Warwickshire County Council would be responsible for assessing planning applications in Warwickshire where planning permission is required. Although no proposals have come forward to date, there will need to be policies in the plan to deal with these development types if any proposals come forward over the plan period. The policies are yet to be drafted but they will need to accord with national planning policy guidance for the plan to be found 'sound'. The draft policies will be included in the 'Preferred Option and Policies' consultation document, due for consultation in 2014.

How will the issue of underground coal gasification (UCG) be dealt with?

UCG is a separate process to fracking and involves the burning of coal seams underground and using the resulting gas to produce energy. The Coal Authority is responsible for issuing licences granting the right to work the coal, but no UCG operations can take place until the applicant has secured all other necessary rights and permissions. This would include securing the necessary permission from Warwickshire County Council as the Mineral Planning Authority, as well as approval from the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive. The Minerals Plan will need to contain a policy to ensure that UCG proposals can be adequately assessed and this will have to accord with national planning policy guidance for the plan to be found 'sound'. Again, a draft policy will be produced and the public will be invited to comment on the policy at the next consultation stage.

Where can I find out further information about the Minerals Plan?

Further updates and consultation information will be available on the Council's webpage at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/mineralsplan. Alternatively, please contact the Planning Policy team on 01926 41 2391 or email planningstrategy@warwickshire.gov.uk.



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