Flintshire Local Development Plan
February 2015

Minerals

Topic Paper No 6 – Summary

Introduction

The planning system has a significant role to play in ensuring that a sustainable supply of minerals is maintained. Maintaining an adequate supply of minerals is essential to the both the local and national economy.

There are potential conflicts with non-mineral land uses because minerals can only be worked where they occur. The development plan will need to balance the need to protect and provide minerals with the need for non mineral development.

Context

Flintshire is underlain by a variety of mineral types of economic importance such as high purity limestone, coal, sand and gravel, clay, sandstone, spar and metaliferrous minerals. As a result, Flintshire has a long history of mineral extraction and still has a number of operational sites, including sand and gravel and limestone quarries. This long history of mineral extraction has, in some cases, left problems of instability and/or contamination which may need to be resolved before non-mineral development takes place.

National energy policy recognises the potential for native onshore oil and gas production to help maintain UK energy security. There are a number of Petroleum Exploration and Development Licenses (PEDL) which have been issued in and around Flintshire for onshore oil and gas exploration.

Part of Flintshire is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). National policy seeks to direct mineral development away from the AONB which may place additional pressure on those areas which are located outside of the AONB. Flintshire also has a number of other environmental designations which may limit where mineral extraction can take place, though it is recognised that appropriate restoration can improve the biodiversity value of mineral sites during and after operations.

Flintshire is well located to serve both local markets and the wider markets of North Wales and North West England. However, the transport infrastructure is not consistent across the County and existing quarry sites are road dependant.

Since the recession began in 2008, the demand for minerals has declined, although early indications are that this trend is starting to reverse, particularly in relation to aggregates, driven by housing and infrastructure projects across North Wales and North West England. The need for coastal defences and beach replenishment is also likely to increase the demand for aggregate.

The industry has undergone consolidation with only a small number of companies operating in North East Wales.

The role of the Plan

A key objective of the plan will be to facilitate the provision of a sustainable supply of mineral. This will include safeguarding minerals of economic importance from non-mineral development

which would otherwise sterilise mineral resources, reducing the conflict between mineral development and sensitive land uses through the appropriate location of both mineral development and sensitive development, and the use of buffer zones.

Minerals Planning Policy Wales generally groups minerals into energy minerals, e.g. coal, oil and gas, and non-energy minerals, e.g. aggregates (sand and gravel, limestone etc) and non-aggregates (dimension stone, slate, silica sand etc). The supply of aggregates in North Wales is managed through the production of a Regional Technical Statement (RTS) which is published by the North Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party. The relevant parts of the RTS should be incorporated into development plans.

The first review of the Regional Technical Statement (RTS) has been undertaken on behalf of the North Wales Aggregate Working Party. The document has been the subject of consultation and is due to be discussed for endorsement in April 2014. The draft RTS first review identifies the need for an allocation of land for sand and gravel within Flintshire and an allocation for crushed rock to be identified in conjunction with Wrexham.

The need for other mineral types, including energy minerals, is not quantified, though the need to maintain a continuing supply is identified in national policy. National energy policy identifies a continuing need for fossil fuels including coal and gas.

National policy highlights the need to encourage the efficient use of resources, including minerals, as well as the use of alternative or recycled materials.

There are links between the minerals topic and other topics such as waste and employment. Whilst this paper considers mineral development, any land use implications will be considered alongside non-mineral development through the Local Development Plan process.

Key Waste Plans and Strategies

- Minerals Planning Policy Wales (2001)
- Minerals Technical Advice Note 1: Aggregates (March 2004)
- Minerals Technical Advice Note 2: Coal (January 2009)
- Planning Policy Wales (Edition 6, February 2014) (Welsh Government)
- Draft Regional Technical Statement for the North Wales Regional Aggregate Working Party 1st Review (2014)
- Aggregates Safeguarding Map of Wales (2012) report and associated maps
- Energy White Paper 2007: Meeting the energy challenge (2007) Department of Trade and Industry
- Electricity Market Reform White Paper (2011) Department of Energy and Climate Change
- Energy Wales: A Low Carbon Transition (2012) Welsh Government

Issues to be addressed by the Plan

- Balance the need to safeguard minerals of economic importance with the need for growth.
- Ensure a sustainable supply of minerals is maintained over the life of the LDP.
- Ensure legacies left by mining and issues of land instability are addressed where necessary.
- Minimise conflict between sensitive development and quarries.
- Protect areas of importance to the natural environment and built heritage from inappropriate mineral development.
- Ensure the inclusion of criteria-based policies to deal with unallocated sites and help respond to unexpected change.
- Ensure high standards of restoration and the identification of appropriate after uses for sites.

- Identify inactive sites and include a suitable strategy to explain future proposals for the land.
- Encourage the sustainable use of minerals and the use of recycled materials.
- Recognise there may be a need to co-locate operations, such as concrete batching plants, asphalt coating plants and other on site or off-site mineral processing operations which increase the value of mineral product.
- Clarify farm diversification with respect to waste management activities;
- Reduce conflict between waste bad neighbour uses and sensitive development.
- Identify any opportunities for co-location of facilities with the development of heat networks.
- Ensure risks posed by active or former landfill sites are minimised by directing sensitive development away from inappropriate sites.

Potential Land Use Policies / Proposals

The UDP contained 10 policies and proposals under the minerals chapter. Some of these policies contain criteria which are either contained within national policy and guidance, or which apply to a range of different land uses, not just specifically minerals and which could be amalgamated with policies elsewhere in the development plan.

Following an assessment of the UDP policies it is proposed that the key policies and proposals are broadly along the lines of:

- Safeguard minerals of economic importance.
- Allocating individual sites and/or preferred areas for aggregates, in line with the requirements of the Regional Technical Statement.
- Allocate suitable buffer zones around existing quarries.
- Identify those areas where mineral development will not be acceptable.
- Identification of a strategy to explain future proposals for inactive sites with planning permission which are considered unlikely to be reactivated for the foreseeable future.
- Identify acceptable restoration standards and future uses of land.
- Allocate or include criteria based policy to enable the delivery of construction and demolition recycling sites.