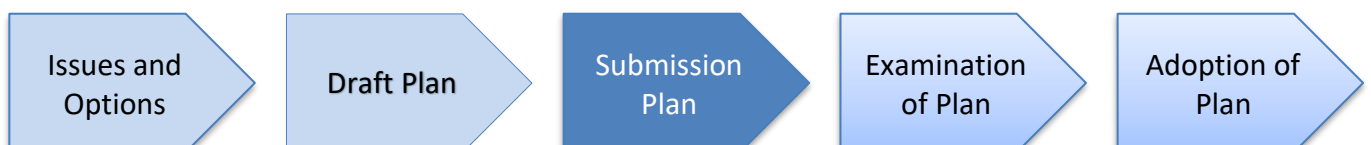


Reviewing the Plan for **Solihull's Future**

Solihull Local Plan Review

Minerals

October 2020



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1. Introduction

1. This topic paper is one in a series of papers supporting the Council's Draft Submission Plan which has been published for consultation. The topic papers look at the relevant national and local guidance that impact on the emerging plan, together with how the Draft Submission Plan has been developed and the representations made previously. They also provide a summary of the evidence base and how it has been used to shape the local plan. The topic papers do not contain any policies, proposals or site allocations and should be seen as explanatory supporting documents.
2. The main issues covered by this topic paper are:
 - Safeguarding of Minerals in the Borough;
 - The need for primary sand and gravel aggregate extraction in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area and the implications for the Borough;
 - The supply of sand and gravel aggregate in the Borough for the Plan period including the maintenance of a landbank.

2. Background

3. Minerals policy in Solihull is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Solihull Local Plan 2013 (SLP).
4. National policy requires mineral planning authorities to plan for a steady supply of minerals by preparing an annual Local Aggregates Assessment and make provision for extraction via specific sites, preferred areas, or areas of search, including a minimum 7 year landbank for sand and gravel. Minerals plans should take account of the contribution of secondary and recycled aggregates, safeguard mineral resources and infrastructure, encourage prior extraction, set out criteria for mineral operations and ensure reclamation and restoration.
5. The SLP was informed by the National and Local Guidelines for Aggregates Provision and the apportionment to the West Midlands Metropolitan Area sub-region, which provided the requirement for sand and gravel provision. Minerals Safeguarding in Solihull provided evidence of the areas of the Borough where minerals resources should be safeguarded.
6. The SLP recognises the challenge of providing for sand and gravel production to meet National and Regional targets, in the context of the limited resources elsewhere in the sub-region. A key element of the spatial strategy sought the extraction of minerals in the Borough to meet local and strategic needs, whilst promoting the use of alternative materials.
7. Policy P13 defined mineral safeguarding areas, promoted the use of alternative materials, and made provision for extraction of sand and gravel from existing sites, preferred areas and within an area of search for minerals. The policy also sets out the criteria for considering the suitability of minerals proposals.

3. Local Plan Review

8. The Local Plan Review Scope, Issues & Options was published for consultation during December 2015 and January 2016. The document indicated that the Council considered that Challenge I relating to waste management and minerals remained relevant, and that Policy P13 should be carried forward with minor amendments only. There were no relevant representations relating to the mineral elements of the document.
9. The Draft Local Plan was published for consultation from December 2016 to February 2017. Challenge I and Policy P13 were maintained with minor updating. The sustainability appraisal was mostly neutral, with two moderate positives for reducing transport and resource efficiency and one minor adverse effect relating to the historic environment. A number of representations were received relating to minerals. These highlighted;
 - the lack of detail on existing quarries, lifespan and timing of new facilities;
 - failure to address cumulative impact of quarrying or provide mechanism or financial security for restoration;
 - extraction of coal bed methane resources would be very controversial and local communities will require earliest possible notice/consultation;
 - need for threshold for size of development that will be required to demonstrate that not sterilising mineral resources for development in defined settlements, as policy overly prescriptive;
 - need to recognise Meriden Quarry as important resource for Borough and wider region;
 - that proposals for extraction outside areas of search should not be prejudiced where proven workable reserves, to accord with NPPF; and
 - support for the recognition of sustainability benefits of recycling aggregates, need for aggregate minerals, identification of mineral safeguarding areas, preferred areas and associated infrastructure, encouragement for prior extraction.
10. A Supplementary Consultation was published in January 2019, but this related specifically to proposed housing allocations and did not reference minerals.
11. Policy P13 includes minor updating to make a major contribution towards the provision for 8.24 million tonnes of sand and gravel aggregates for the West Midlands Metropolitan Area for the Plan period. It maintains the Mineral Safeguarding Area for sand and gravel aggregates, but not the MSA for Coal, recognising that there is no realistic expectation that these deep coal resources will be mined in the future. The Sustainability Appraisal identifies two moderate benefits from the policy and only one minor adverse effect.

4. Summary of Evidence

National and Sub-National Guidelines

12. The latest National and Sub-National Guidelines covering the period 2005 to 2020 were published in 2009. These indicated that 165 million tonnes of sand and gravel aggregates were required for the West Midlands region. A review of the apportionment for sub-regions was commenced but overtaken by the abolition of the Regional Assembly. Indicative apportionments were produced by the Aggregates Working Party in 2009, including 0.55 million tonnes per annum for the West Midlands Metropolitan Area. This proposed apportionment informed the minerals policy in the SLP.
13. No update of the Guidelines has been published, and the NPPF indicates that Mineral Planning Authorities should undertake Local Aggregate Assessments to determine need for aggregates.

Local Aggregates Assessment

14. The NPPF indicates that a Local Aggregates Assessment (LAA) should be used to forecast future demand for aggregates and an assessment of supply options. Forecasts should be based on a rolling average of 10 years sales data, together with other relevant information. The NPPG highlights levels of planned construction as an example of other relevant information.
15. A LAA for the West Midlands Metropolitan Area was prepared in 2015 and agreed by the Aggregates Working Party the following year. This was based on information up to the end of 2013. The LAA indicates that the average annual sales figure for 2004-2013 was 0.494 million tonnes, and that there was no other relevant information that would cause a need to adjust this figure. Reference was made to the apportionment based on the National and Sub-National Guidelines as well as the average sales data as a basis for future demand.
16. An updated LAA is being prepared but has yet to be finalised and published.

Annual Monitoring Reports

17. The WM Aggregates Working Party produces an Annual Report on aggregates. The latest published version is the 2017 Report covering the period up to the end of December 2017, although a later version with 2018 data is being prepared. The average 10 year sales figure for the West Midlands Metropolitan Area for 2008-2017 was 0.48 million tonnes.
18. The Annual Report also provides data on sand and gravel aggregate reserves. In the West Midlands Metropolitan Area there were 3.99 million tonnes at the end of 2017, equating to a landbank of 8.31 years, based on the average annual sales figure of 0.48 million tonnes. The landbank for the whole of the West Midlands was just over 14 years.
19. Data submitted for inclusion in the 2018 report indicates that sales from the West Midlands Metropolitan Area in 2018 were 0.359 million tonnes, slightly lower than the 10 year average figure, and that reserves had fallen to 3.26 million tonnes, which would be marginally below the 7 year landbank requirement.
20. The SLP Annual Monitoring Report for 2018-2019 was published in January 2020. The report uses the data in the Aggregates Working Party Annual Report for 2017.

Provision within the West Midlands Metropolitan Area

21. Within the West Midlands Metropolitan Area, only Solihull and Walsall have reserves of primary sand and gravel aggregates and are able to contribute to annual sales. The vast

majority of primary sand and gravel is sourced in Solihull, and in recent years it has been responsible for 100% of sales.

22. The Black Country Core Strategy, which covers Walsall, aims to produce a minimum of 50,000 tonnes of primary sand and gravel per annum to 2026. The remainder of the requirement identified in the Local Aggregate Assessment needs to be provided for in Solihull through the Local Plan Review. The Black Country Core Strategy Review has commenced and a Draft is expected in late 2020. Evidence from the Black Country suggests that maintaining the level of production from the Core Strategy may be difficult.

Mineral Safeguarding

23. Mineral Safeguarding in Solihull was published in 2012 to provide evidence for the definition of Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSA) in the SLP. The report recommended the maintenance of the MSA covering the areas of Berkswell and Meriden Quarries, together with an area east of the NEC. These areas were included in the SLP.
24. During the preparation of the Local Plan Review, a number of Calls for Sites have been held and a significant number of submissions made, mainly for housing purposes. A small number of submissions relate to mineral working, but these fall within the existing MSA. No evidence has been provided to indicate that any other areas of the Borough are viable for sand and gravel aggregate extraction.
25. The Daw Mill colliery from which coal within the Borough was being extracted was closed following an underground fire, and there are no plans for working of the coal resource. Indeed, alternative sources of energy will be provided to meet energy needs and the country's Climate Change targets. The Council has liaised with Warwickshire County Council on this matter, and the MSA is no longer included in the Warwickshire Minerals Plan.

5. How the Evidence has been used

Apportionment within the West Midlands Metropolitan Area

26. The West Midlands Metropolitan Area Local Aggregates Assessment identifies an average annual sales figure for 2004-2013 of 0.494 million tonnes and that there is no other relevant information that would cause a need to adjust this figure. An update to the Local Aggregates Assessment is being prepared which may vary this figure, as the average annual sales figure for 2008-2017 is 0.48 million tonnes.
27. The Black Country Core Strategy provides for 0.05 million tonnes per annum to 2026. A review of the Core Strategy is in progress but a draft plan has yet to be published. Assuming this provision is maintained, the Solihull Local Plan Review will need to make provision for 0.45 million tonnes per annum, or 0.43 million tonnes per annum based on the more up to date sales figures.
28. The Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation covered the period 2018 to 2035. For the 17 year period a minimum total of 7.31 million tonnes would need to be provided for in Solihull, based on the annual requirement of 0.43 million tonnes. The Draft Submission Plan 2020 covers the Plan period 2020-2036. For the 16 year period a minimum total of 6.88 million tonnes is required in Solihull, based on the same requirement.
29. The NPPF requires the provision of a minimum landbank for sand and gravel of 7 years. This will require an additional 3.01 million tonnes, assuming the same apportionment between Solihull and Walsall. In total, therefore, 9.89 million tonnes will need to be provided for in the Local Plan Review.
30. However, the latest evidence from the Black Country Core Strategy Review suggests that maintaining the supply of 0.05 million tonnes beyond 2026 may be difficult. If the whole of the apportionment for the West Midlands Metropolitan Area has to be provided from sites within Solihull, this would increase the figures to 8 million tonnes plus a landbank of 3.5 million tonnes or 11.5 million tonnes in total.
31. The latest figure for reserves in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area is 3.26 million tonnes as at the end of 2018. This would leave a requirement 8.24 million tonnes, based on the annual requirement of 0.5 million tonnes and the 7 year landbank. It is this figure that has been used in the Draft Submission Plan.

Supply of Sand and Gravel

32. The WM Aggregates Working Party Annual Report indicates that there were 3.99 million tonnes of sand and gravel aggregate reserves in the West Midlands Metropolitan Area at the end of 2017. As indicated above, the latest figure for reserves has declined to 3.26 million tonnes. This reflects sales for 2018 and the potential impact of HS2.
33. Planning permission was granted in December 2018 for an extension to Meriden Quarry, on the part of the Preferred Area at Hornbrook Farm north of Cornets End Lane, as identified in the SLP2013. This site is estimated to contain around 0.4 million tonnes of sand and gravel.
34. The adopted SLP2013 identifies three preferred areas for sand and gravel extraction, including land at Marsh House Farm and West of Berkswell Quarry, as well as Hornbrook Farm. The SLP2013 estimated that the three areas could provide around 2.5 million tonnes, though this will include the 0.4 million tonnes for which planning permission has been granted. Parts of the Marsh House Farm and West of Berkswell Quarry preferred areas will

be sterilised by the line of HS2, and information on the up to date tonnage was requested from the operator, Cemex.

35. Cemex has provided advice on the potential reserves at Marsh House Farm, Berkswell Quarry West and Hornbrook Farm as at May 2020. Whilst these reserves exclude any resource directly affected by HS2, they do not include indirect affects, and the whole of Marsh House Farm could potentially be sterilised by conditions imposed by HS2. For this reason, any reserves at Marsh House Farm have been discounted from the figure of approximately 2 million tonnes.
36. During the course of the Local Plan Review, a number of Calls for Sites have been made inviting submissions from operators and landowners. Two submissions have been received for sand and gravel extraction for land east of Meriden Quarry and land east of Park Farm, Berkswell Quarry. The evidence supporting the submissions suggests that there is a total of around 2.1 million tonnes available. As both sites are within the Area for Search for sand and gravel extraction in the SLP2013, these sites should be acceptable in principle.
37. The total supply from planning permissions, preferred areas in SLP2013 and the proposed specific sites in the Draft Submission Plan 2020 is estimated to be 4.5 million tonnes.
38. This leaves some 3.74 million tonnes to be found elsewhere for the Plan period and landbank. It is anticipated that the remainder of the requirement for Solihull will be sourced from presently unknown sites within the Area of Search for sand and gravel extraction.

Mineral Safeguarding

39. The Mineral Safeguarding Area for Coal is not included in the Draft Submission Plan 2020. This approach is consistent with that being taken for the resource to the north and south of the Borough by Warwickshire County Council.
40. No changes have been proposed to the Mineral Safeguarding Areas for Sand and Gravel Aggregates in the Draft Submission Plan 2020.

6. Conclusion

41. This Paper sets out how the Local Plan Review will address the need for minerals in the Borough for the Plan period. It provides a summary of the review process, as it relates to minerals. It also summarises the evidence that has been used to develop the minerals policy of the Draft Submission Plan.
42. The need for sand and gravel aggregates is set out based on the apportionment derived from the West Midlands Metropolitan Area Local Aggregates Assessment, along with the potential supply within the Borough, based on existing permissions, preferred areas for sand and gravel extraction in the SLP2013, proposed specific sites and the Area of Search for sand and gravel extraction.

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