

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Northstowe and New Communities Portfolio Holder 20 September 2011
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities)

MINERALS AND WASTE SITE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS PLAN - RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION BY CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY AND PETERBOROUGH CITY COUNCILS ON SUGGESTED CHANGES TO THE PLAN

Purpose

1. The purpose of the report is to respond to the consultation being carried out jointly by Cambridgeshire County and Peterborough City Councils on suggested changes to the Minerals and Waste Site Specific Proposals Plan.
2. The consultation is for six weeks from 8 August to 19 September 2011.
3. The full consultation can be seen on the County's website.
<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/planning/mineralswasteframework/mineralswasteplan/dpdexamination/sitespecific/>
4. This is a key decision because it is likely to affect many of the communities across the district. Some of the changes included in the consultation are significant and others minor so there will be different degrees of impact. Some relate to the allocated mineral sites, which may have an impact on their local communities such as at Cottenham and Barrington. Also there will be a significant impact on communities living or working in the wards in the District adjacent to the A14 because clay borrowpits are identified in the minerals plan – Fen Drayton; Swavesey; Longstanton; Bar Hill; Oakington; Girton; Lolworth; Boxworth; Dry Drayton; Conington. Some changes relate to the proposed waste sites to serve the whole of the district and so their locations will have a district wide impact.
5. It has not appeared in the Forward Plan because it is an unexpected additional consultation.

Recommendations

6. That the Northstowe and New Communities Portfolio Holder agree to the following recommendations:
 - 1) To support the changes relating to the updating of the information on the A14 improvements
 - 2) To question why the site allocations for borrowpits are 'areas of search' rather than remaining as site allocations
 - 3) To support the inclusion of borrowpits within the SSPP to provide for any future improvements to the A14 but that a hierarchy of these site should be included in the final SSPP to reflect which should be utilised first in the event that they are not all needed.
 - 4) To require that any future use of the identified borrowpits should be restricted to use on A14 improvements.

- 5) To support the changes proposed for the Cottenham Site Profile.
- 6) To agree the responses to the minor changes as set out in Appendix B.

Executive Summary

7. During the hearings into the Site Specific Proposals Plan DPD Cambridgeshire County and Peterborough City Councils have proposed a number of changes to their plan. Since these changes could affect the soundness of the plan there is now a further period of public consultation. Significant changes are listed in Appendix A and minor changes in Appendix B.
The main significant change that relates to minerals sites within South Cambridgeshire are the borrowpits allocations to serve the A14 improvements. The Plan has been updated to reflect the Government's decision to abandon the original scheme and to look for alternative proposals for the A14. The borrowpits are now areas of search rather than allocations, which could blight all the sites for an uncertain period of time. It is proposed that the borrowpits could be used for schemes other than the A14. South Cambs had objected to some of the allocations and would not wish these sites to be used for other schemes. South Cambs had suggested a hierarchy of borrowpits be introduced with those with the least environmental impact being used first in any A14 upgrade.
The other significant change relates to Cottenham to correct a factual error and to allow for inert infill to be allowed for future restoration works of the site.

Background

8. Cambridgeshire County and Peterborough City Councils have jointly prepared a Minerals and Waste Development Plan (MWDP). The Councils adopted the first part of this Plan, the Core Strategy, on 19 July 2011.
9. An Independent Planning Inspector is currently examining the second part of this Plan, the Site Specific Proposals Plan DPD (SSPP). South Cambridgeshire District Council submitted representations on the SSPP during the Pre-Submission consultation and these were considered by the Inspector during the examination. The Public Hearing sessions on the SSPP were completed on the 8 July 2011. During the course of the Hearings the Councils proposed a number of suggested changes. Some of these changes are significant and go to ensuring the soundness of the Plan; the majority of the changes are minor and go to securing consistency and factual accuracy in the Plan.
10. The Suggested Changes to the Site Specific Proposals Plan are being published for a six-week period of public consultation from 8 August to 19 September 2011.

Changes and how they impact South Cambridgeshire District

11. There are both significant and minor changes included in the current consultation that relate to mineral and waste sites within South Cambridgeshire. The significant changes are listed in Appendix A of this report and the minor ones in Appendix B.

Significant changes – Borrowpits

12. The majority of the significant changes relate to the borrowpits allocated in the SSPP to serve the works that were expected to take place to upgrade the A14. An extract from the report that considered the borrowpits in the Pre-Submission consultation is included as Appendix C.

13. The amended wording that has been added to the relevant section in the current consultation on the SSPP is as follows -

The Mineral Planning Authorities are aware of the **long standing plans for the proposed improvements of** to the A14 trunk road between, Ellington to the west of Huntingdon and Fen Ditton to the northeast of Cambridge, ~~that will require exceptionally large quantities of sand and gravel.~~ **However, the Government has confirmed that it can not fund this scheme principally because in its current form, it is unaffordable.** ~~Approximately 2 million tonnes of sand and gravel will be required.~~ **However, Government has recognised the economic importance of this route and that congestion is a serious problem and therefore remain committed to developing a solution. Work has now begun on the Strategic Corridor Study with the aim of identifying a viable way forward, including exploring alternative methods for managing traffic volumes, considering potential delivery mechanisms, and potential future improvements. A package of alternative proposals for improving the A14 are anticipated to be forthcoming during the lifetime of this Plan. Consequently Areas of Search for A14 borrowpits are proposed as it is still anticipated that mineral resources for some form of scheme will be needed within the lifetime of the Plan (up to 2026). The future release of mineral will be commensurate with the need for mineral for improvements to the A14 only.** ~~Borrowpit allocations have, therefore, been identified for this project only. Any proposals to extend the life of these borrowpits to serve the open market will be resisted~~ **will be considered in the context of Core Strategy Policy CS13 Additional Mineral Extraction**

14. It is recognised that since the SSPP was first published the upgrading of the A14 has been cancelled by the Government but that it is still anticipated that improvements will be made in the future on the A14 and that it would be hoped that these would occur before 2026. Therefore it is agreed that updated information is required in the SSPP to reflect these changes. However there are still some concerns relating to the borrowpits within this district particularly as these are no longer to be site allocations but will be 'Areas of Search'.
15. Uncertainty of timing - The representations made by South Cambs during the Pre-Submission consultation relating to borrowpits stated that the MWDP was not the appropriate vehicle to allocate borrowpits for the A14 improvements especially as the Highway Agency was still uncertain as to how many would be needed. At that time it was thought that works on the A14 would have begun before the MWDP was adopted and that having the borrowpit allocations in the plan could have delayed the start of the road scheme. At the present time there are no firm proposals for improvements to the A14 and the uncertainty is now increased.
16. Borrowpits use for alternative schemes? - It is of concern that the former wording restricting the borrowpits to only being used for A14 improvements has now been removed and replaced with a requirement that any future use be considered against Core Strategy Policy CS13 - Additional Mineral Extraction. This states that additional mineral extraction would only be permitted where there were overriding benefits, which could justify an exception. It is considered that the borrowpits are only suitable for A14 usage and not for other projects as their location is adjacent to the route of the A14 to serve this project. If they were to be utilised for another scheme this would result in the mineral having to be transported to this new location, which would be unacceptable. These borrowpits are conveniently located to be used for a future upgrade of the A14 and should therefore only be used for this project. Some have

been identified by South Cambs in previous representations to be environmentally unacceptable even if they were to be used for the A14 project – a project that the Council fully supports. It is therefore highly unlikely that an exceptional circumstance could be found to allow for their usage other than for the A14. Therefore the restriction to only being used for the A14 should remain in the SSPP.

17. Allocations V Areas of Search? - A significant change in the current consultation is that all the borrowpits will be considered as 'Areas of Search' (their boundaries will remain the same) because with the original scheme being cancelled, there is uncertainty about the quantity of mineral that will be required. - As the Department for Transport is exploring a lower cost upgrade for the A14, Cambridgeshire County and Peterborough City Councils as Mineral Planning Authority have felt that it is prudent to make some provision for borrowpits. It is considered appropriate to support provision being made in the SSPP but it is of concern that site allocations are not being made. 'Areas of search' could blight land unnecessarily and could result in proposals, which are not supported, and this could unnecessarily delay construction work. Even in the earlier version of the SSPP when the quantities of mineral required were uncertain site allocations were still made.
18. Hierarchy of borrowpits? - South Cambs had concerns over a number of the actual sites identified for borrowpits in the submission plan and had suggested in its representations that a hierarchy of suitability be introduced into the SSPP with some borrowpits being identified as being more suitable than others and therefore being utilised first before others which the Council considered to have greater impact if they were to be worked. Given the uncertainty over quantities of minerals that may be required in future it should be reaffirmed that this hierarchy should be included in the SSPP to recognise which sites would be used first in the event of the road scheme requiring minerals.

Table showing borrowpit hierarchy

Borrowpit (no in brackets refers to site ref. In Submission version of SSPP)	Place in hierarchy	Comments made on this site in Preferred Option 2 consultation 2009
New Barns Farm, Conington (16)	3	Supported with reservations concerning proximity to Conington; impact on wintering site for golden plovers.
Brickyard Farm, Boxworth (15)	1	Supported by South Cambs
Boxworth End Farm, North of Trinity Foot Junction (14)	1	Supported by South Cambs
South Trinity Foot Junction- East (21)	2	Supported with reservations concerning proximity to Lolworth
South Trinity Foot Junction - West (22)	1	Supported by South Cambs
North Bar Hill, Noon Folly Farm (17)	1	Supported by South Cambs
North Dry Drayton Junction, Slate Hall Farm (18)	4	Rejected by South Cambs
North Junction 14, Grange Farm (19)	3	Supported with reservations concerning impact on Beck Brook and site is in Green Belt

Borrowpit (no in brackets refers to site ref. In Submission version of SSPP)	Place in hierarchy	Comments made on this site in Preferred Option 2 consultation 2009
South Junction 14 /Girton/ Madingley (20)	2	Supported with reservations concerning site in Green Belt but potential for restoration of site for wetland reserve.

Significant change - Cottenham amendment

19. An additional significant change being proposed is that of correcting a factual error that occurred in the SSPP relating to the sand and gravel site allocation at Cottenham. The amended maps are included as Appendix D. The original map did not reflect the fact that existing planning permissions allow for minerals and waste activity in the area shown. This has now been corrected.
20. Also an additional area of search has been added to the northwest of the Cottenham area to reflect restoration proposals for this part of the site, which will require a limited amount of inert fill. This has resulted in a wider waste consultation area being included around this waste proposal. This is linked to minor changes - SSP M31 and SSP M156 where the following wording is to be added to the Cottenham site profile –

Description of Proposed Use:

North: Area of Search for inert landfill associated with the restoration of this area to a biodiversity afteruse complementary to the Great Ouse Wetland

South: Site-specific allocation for inert landfill with restoration back to agriculture

Estimated Volume

North: the volume of inert fill will be commensurate with that needed to secure restoration objectives

South: 680,000 – 720,000 m³

Implementation issues

Restoration of the northern area will be complementary to the biodiversity objectives of the Great Ouse Wetland, including enhanced public access. This may involve the use of a limited amount of inert fill. The southern part of the site will be restored to an agricultural afteruse at original levels through the deposit of inert fill

21. The consideration of the afteruse of this land to the north of the site is to be welcomed and that the restoration will be one where the biodiversity will be improved. Enhanced public access is also to be welcomed. The Environment Agency must be involved at an early stage in this work in order to assist in reducing the flood risk of the land adjacent to the River Ouse whilst encouraging a habitat that enhances biodiversity.

Minor Changes

22. Appendix B considers all the minor changes as they relate to sites within the District. Many of the changes relate to maintaining consistency between the site profiles, which is to be welcomed. Concerns raised in original representations should be re-stated that the each site does not have a site-specific policy and this should have formed part of this consultation. Having the implementation issues included in a policy rather than being within the supporting text would give them increased status and regard when planning applications are submitted and it is disappointing that this opportunity has not been taken to include such a policy for each site.

Implications

23. Financial	Nil
Legal	Nil
Staffing	Nil
Risk Management	Nil
Equality and Diversity	Nil
Equality Impact Assessment completed	An EIA was carried out on the SSPP and consideration given to each site included in the plan.
Climate Change	The MWDP promotes recycling of waste and the efficient use of mineral resources.

Consultations

24. Consultation has taken place with Environmental Health and the Conservation officer.

Consultation with Children and Young People

25. Not applicable.

Effect on Strategic Aims

26. AIM A – We are committed to being a listening Council, providing first class services accessible to all.

The Council is responding on behalf of the residents of the district to the consultation.

27. AIM B – We are committed to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for you and your family.

By responding to the consultation the Council will ensure that the needs of the local residents in South Cambridgeshire are considered.

28. AIM C – We are committed to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.

By responding to the consultation the Council will ensure that the needs of the residents of South Cambridgeshire are taken account of.

29. AIM D – We are committed to assisting provision of local jobs for you and your family.

The adopted SSPP will provide assurances for the mineral and waste industries within South Cambridgeshire and ensure that the future needs of the development industry will have sufficient minerals and that the residents of the district sufficient waste facilities. Waste and mineral activities within the district could provide for local jobs.

30. AIM E – We are committed to providing a voice for rural life.

The Council in responding to the consultation will ensure that the Inspector considers the needs of the rural communities in South Cambridgeshire.

Conclusions

31. Many of the changes included in the current consultation are supported but there are reservations about the inclusion of all the borrowpits to be used for any future A14 road scheme improvements.

Appendices

A – Schedule showing the significant changes proposed to the SSPP as they relate to South Cambridgeshire

B – Schedule showing the minor changes proposed to the SSPP as they relate to South Cambridgeshire and the response by the Council.

C – Extract from Report to Planning and New Communities Joint Portfolio Holders on 2 March 2010 responding to the Pre- submission consultation relating to borrowpits.

D – Revise maps for Cottenham SSP M1A

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Significant Changes Schedule to the Submission Plan August 2011 – Consultation document
- Minor Changes Schedule to the Submission Plan August 2011 – Consultation document
- Pre –Submission draft of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Site Specific Proposals Plan
- Report to Planning and New Communities Joint Portfolio Holders on 2 March 2010 responding to the Pre- submission consultation

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