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15th October 2020

Dear Central and Eastern Berkshire JMWP,

Thank you for consulting Oxfordshire County Council on the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Reg 19).

We note that the Central and Eastern Berkshire Authorities (Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and Wokingham Borough Council) are working in partnership to produce a Joint Minerals & Waste Plan which will guide minerals and waste decision making in the Plan area up until 2036.

We support many of the Policies contained within the Plan, such as Safeguarding of both Minerals and Waste Sites, Aggregates Wharfs and Depots and many of the Development Management Policies. We nevertheless, feel that as a neighbouring Minerals and Waste Planning Authority, it is necessary to make comments in relation to the soundness of the Central and Eastern Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

Having reviewed the Plan we, regrettably, have concerns which leads us to the view that the Plan in its current form is unsound. Specifically, we raise whether the Plan is effective and justified. This is in relation to your identified reliance on other Authorities, which is likely to include ours, to deliver both your Minerals and Waste Strategies.

Minerals

Your Minerals Background paper has an identified outstanding requirement of 3.5mt of sand and gravel, without a clear strategy of how this requirement will be met if no further sites are bought forward by operators.

We acknowledge that it is for minerals operators to promote mineral sites and in lack of these promotions, we support your Areas of Search approach. However, with such a considerable shortfall in supply, it is the lack of clarity on expectations of other Authorities and the method for identifying these Authorities, that we have specific concerns. Particularly if no further sites are proposed by industry within your Areas of Search over the Plan period.

The importance of other Authorities to deliver your Strategy is shown through this being the first principle of your Sustainable Minerals Development Strategy, Policy M1.

Policy M1 – Sustainable minerals development strategy

“The long term aims of the Plan are to provide and/or facilitate a steady and adequate supply of minerals to meet the needs of Central and Eastern Berkshire in accordance with all of the following principles:

a. Work with relevant minerals planning authorities to maintain the supply of aggregate not available within Central and Eastern Berkshire”

Clarity is sought on what you mean by “not available”. We acknowledge that minerals can only be dug where they are found and therefore appreciate your reliance on other Authorities for crushed rock and by imports of marine won aggregates due to the geology and location of your Authority. If when referring to “not available” you are referring solely to your crushed rock and marine won aggregate in M1a, then Policy M1 should be reworded as “....to *maintain the supply of crushed rock and sand and gravel that is currently marine won as these are not available within Central and Eastern Berkshire”*

However, the wording of this Policy could also be interpreted as working with relevant minerals planning Authorities in maintaining the supply of the 3.5million tonnes sand and gravel currently unidentified but required over the Plan period, if you mean “not available” to mean not promoted by operators.

Oxfordshire’s position remains as that set out in our responses to your draft Statements of Common Ground and accompanying Soft Sand Study, both for Soft Sand 25th June 2020 and Sharp Sand and Gravel on the 4th September 2020. We await a response to these.

Mineral Requirements for Sand and Gravel

As the identified sites within Policy M4 do not provide the full mineral requirement of the remaining 5.857mt required over the Plan Period, as mentioned above we support the inclusion of Areas of Search within the Policy.

From the Minerals Study, of the required 5.857mt, Central and Eastern Berkshire still currently have shortfalls of 2.5million tonnes for Sharp Sand and Gravel over the Plan Period and 1 million tonnes of Soft Sand.

The Minerals Study sets out that Central and Eastern Berkshire will be relying on other Authorities for sand and gravel over the Plan period, particularly Oxfordshire for soft sand from 2027 – 2036.

The 2014 Aggregates survey saw Oxfordshire as a source of sand and gravel consumed within Berkshire increase from 1 to 5% to 10 – 20% (not just Central and Eastern Berkshire), and until the recent MHCLG survey is released we have no further up to date evidence. In particular relation to soft sand, within your Mineral Background Study it is recognised that there is currently no evidence that Oxfordshire is supplying soft sand to Central and Eastern Berkshire.

It appears the reason we have been identified within your Mineral Background Paper as a potential source for soft sand is that we are a neighbouring Authority and due to constraints within other Authorities currently supplying Central and Eastern Berkshire. As set out in our response to the Draft Statement of Common Ground, we maintain that extraction will always have an impact and constraints and in certain cases, within

designated landscapes, but that on its own, should not be reason to shift the mineral requirement to a different authority without further supporting evidence. The NPPF and relevant guidance does not prohibit mineral extraction in these areas completely, and consequently West Sussex, NE Hampshire, West Berkshire, and Surrey should not be totally dismissed as a potential source to meet longer term provision. Appropriate sites may be found in these areas that could result in extraction taking place and we would expect to see other authorities fully exploring the possibility of working their own reserve before looking outside of their area for supply. Until this evidence is available a shift to reliance for Minerals from Oxfordshire is not justified and therefore the Mineral Strategy within the Plan is not justified.

We acknowledge that Oxfordshire does currently have reserves for both Sharp Sand and Gravel and Soft Sand, however these are to ensure we meet our own mineral requirements over our Plan period as set out in our Core Strategy 2017.

The Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy does acknowledge the need to make an appropriate contribution to wider aggregate supply needs other areas. However, our Core Strategy is based on the pattern of supply and demand at the time the evidence base for the Core Strategy was prepared (which would have included the 2009 and 2014 evidence).

Therefore, it does not include making increased provision to meet a shortfall created by a reduction in supply from Central and Eastern Berkshire since the Plans adoption. It should also be noted that our Core Strategy is until 2031 and not 2037 and so does also not take into account this longer timescale of movement to Central and Eastern Berkshire.

The Central and Eastern Berkshire Plan states that for future Mineral requirements Statements of Common Ground will be prepared with Authorities to address the issue. Statements of Common Ground are not a replacement for Policy and do not offer security for future mineral provision, especially if agreement between Authorities is unable to be reached. Therefore, without this clear Strategy for delivering mineral requirement, we must raise whether the Plan is effective and justified.

The future mineral requirements for the Plan period and how they will be met should be clearly identified within the Plan.

Policy M3 Sand and Gravel Supply

We support Policy M3 (1) "Provision will be made for the release of land to allow a steady and adequate supply of sand and gravel for aggregate purposes in Central and Eastern Berkshire at an average rate of 0.628 million tonnes a year to 2036, subject to the impact of local circumstances on demand."

However, clarity is sought on what "subject to the impact of local circumstances on demand" means. If this is referring to the Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA), it raises the issue that if the number of active permissions fall, as have been historically doing in Central and Eastern Berkshire, without other sites applying or receiving planning permission, the demand indicators (sales) will consequently fall within Central and Eastern Berkshire, and potentially have a knock on impact on subsequent LAA provision rates. What will appear to be a declining need for mineral will actually be a result of Central and

Eastern Berkshire's growing reliance on other Authorities for mineral provision. This would mean that the Plan was not effective.

Waste

The National Planning Policy for Waste sets out that planning authorities should prepare Local Plans which identify sufficient opportunities to meet the identified needs of their area for the management of waste streams.

Central and Eastern Berkshires Plan states that it will plan to "provide for new waste management facilities of the right type, in the right place and at the right time". However, it is felt that the plan currently does not achieve this and therefore we question whether the Plan is effective.

Oxfordshire's approach to managing waste from other areas is covered by Policy W6 and W3 of the adopted Minerals and Waste Core Strategy. We acknowledge that cross boundary movement of waste is inevitable, but within our Plan we aim for net self-sufficiency and expect other Authorities to do so as well. Oxfordshire's Minerals and Waste Local Plan has not provided for Central and Eastern Berkshires waste capacity gap within its Core Strategy.

We note the reference to net self-sufficiency within the Sustainable Waste Development Strategy and support its inclusion, yet there is a lack of commitment to net self-sufficiency in **Policy W1** Sustainable Waste Development Strategy. However, we do note that within Policy W1 it includes 1(f) "work with other waste planning authorities to provide the most sustainable option for waste management."

For an effective plan we would wish to see a commitment to net self-sufficiency within the Plan's Policy, rather than a reliance on other waste planning authorities.

Policy W3 – Waste Capacity Requirement

We support the inclusion of Policy W3 and the identification of waste requirements, however we feel that the Plan does not sufficiently address the capacity gap, and instead relies on movements of waste to other Authorities.

We are pleased to note that the Plan acknowledged that Sutton Courtenay will close in 2030 and that further provision for non-hazardous waste within Oxfordshire will not be made. However, it is unclear how you will address this loss of capacity for non-hazardous landfill after 2030.

Policy W4 - Locations and sites for Waste Management

We can see that a number of sites and areas for waste management facilities have been identified and location criteria for new waste management development has been included, which we support, but there is no clear indication on how these sites and areas address the capacity gap over the Plan Period. Therefore, we would question how the Plan is effective.

We feel that a Statement of Common Ground in relation to Waste is required, especially in relation to Ardley EfW facility, as we raised in our response to Central and Eastern Berkshires waste movement request in September 2019 and we await contact on this.

To conclude, in light of our comments above, we would be happy to meet and move forward with Statements of Common Ground for both Minerals and Waste.

Please get in contact if you have any questions.

Kind Regards

Charlotte

Charlotte Simms
Minerals and Waste Local Plan Principal Officer

[Redacted contact information]