

WORCESTERSHIRE MINERALS LOCAL PLAN SECOND CONSULTATION

RESPONSE OF THE COTSWOLDS CONSERVATION BOARD

The Cotswolds Conservation Board ('the Board') was established by Parliament in 2004. The Board has two statutory purposes¹:

- a) to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB; and
- b) To increase the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB.

In fulfilling these roles, the Board has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of people living in the AONB.

The Board wishes to respond to the WMLP as follows:

1. The Vision of the Plan is supported.

Crushed rock provision

2. The major concern of the Board is that the Plan is proposing to meet the supply of crushed rock from Bredon Hill within the Cotswolds AONB. This is proposed to be 3.61 million tonnes of crushed rock in the plan period, with 0.163 million tonnes in the period up to 2016, with beyond 2016 a rolling average of annual sales in the last 10 years,

3. In paragraph 6.10 it is stated:

"Crushed rock has been worked in the Abberley and Woodbury Hills, Malvern Hills and Fish Hill (near Broadway) over the last 50 years. However there are currently no workings or planning permissions for crushed rock in the county. Several private Acts of Parliament between 1884 and 1924 established the Malvern Hills Conservators and gave the body the responsibility to protect the beauty of the Malvern Hills from the 'threat' of quarrying. It is therefore unlikely that large scale mineral working will take place in the Malvern Hills in the future, although this is not specifically prevented by the Acts."

4. In paragraph 10.12 it is stated:

10.12. We propose to enable new mineral development in the broad areas identified in the Spatial Strategy (see Section 7) where it is demonstrated that all of the issues outlined in Table 5 relating to working practices have been adequately addressed.

Table 5 includes:

"bb. Landscape – the consideration of landscape character [and scenic beauty²] will be an important factor in this issue. Designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty will also have an influence on working practices and site design."

¹ Section 87, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, as amended by the NERC Act 2006.

² Board's suggested wording to be included, in accordance with NPPF 115.

5. For Aggregates (Sand, gravel and crushed rock) in paragraph 11.9 it is stated:

“11.9. We propose taking the approach that new aggregate development will be permitted in the areas of search identified in the Spatial Strategy where it is demonstrated that all of the locational criteria have been complied with. These are set out in Table 10”

Table 10 includes

“p. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – although national policy gives the highest status of protection to these areas, mineral working is not excluded from them. Policy criteria will need to be developed to ensure that the natural beauty of the Cotswolds AONB and Malvern Hills AONB is conserved and enhanced.”

6. Importantly footnote 51 related to this criteria states:

“51. In Worcestershire crushed rock resources are predominantly found in the AONBs. It is not likely to be possible to provide for the maintenance of the required landbank for crushed rock in Worcestershire from outside of the AONBs.”

7. Due to the protection afforded to the Malvern Hills by legislation referred to above, Bredon Hill in the Cotswolds AONB is the only area of search proposed for crushed rock in the draft Plan.

8. The Board notes that in paragraph 14.2 it is stated”

“We will continue to co-operate with neighbouring authorities and other bodies to ensure that we take into account developments in other areas or strategies emerging from other organisations, and to ensure that we meet the requirements of the “Duty to Cooperate”. Depending on the approach you prefer for driving the delivery of restoration priorities, we will seek commitment from partners to work together to develop policies or spatial masterplans for the areas of search.”

9. Whilst the cooperative approach to restoration would be welcomed, neighbouring Counties, particularly Gloucestershire, have considerable reserves of crushed rock, notably in the Forest of Dean. The Board would wish to be reassured that the “Duty to Cooperate” as required by the Localism Act has included discussions with neighbouring minerals authorities regarding the provision of crushed rock from less environmentally sensitive areas than Bredon Hill.

Additional points:

10. Objective 6 includes the following:

“6) Protect and enhance the natural and historic environment

- *Water quality and quantity*
- *Geodiversity*
- *Biodiversity*
- *Landscape character*
- *International, national and local heritage assets*
- *Archaeological features*

• *Green Belt*”

11. The Board would suggest that “scenic beauty” should be included with landscape character. It is not just the impact on landscape character which requires assessment, but also visual impacts.
12. Paragraph 10.5 should include reference to AONB Management Plans. The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan is referred to in paragraph 7.2.
13. The Board published a revised AONB Management Plan 2013-18 in April 2013³. Subsequently the Board has revised the Minerals and Waste Planning Position Statement, a copy of which is attached to this response.

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³ <http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/?page=managementplan>