

MINUTES

East of England Aggregates Working Party

Meeting on 8 Feb 2017 starting at 2pm

Venue: County Hall, Market Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH

ATTENDEES

Members	
Richard Greaves	Essex County Council (Chairman)
Roy Romans	Bedfordshire Authorities
Alethea Evans	Essex County Council
Trish Carter-Lyons	Hertfordshire County Council
Richard Drake	Norfolk County Council
Chris Stanek	Peterborough City Council
Graham Gunby	Suffolk County Council
Richard Hatter	Thurrock Borough Council
Others	
Chris Hemmingsley	Brett/MPA
Peter Dawes	Frimstone Ltd/BAA
Keith Bird	Hanson/MPA
Mark North	MPA
Mike Pendock	Tarmac/MPA
Apologies	
Ann Barnes	Cambridgeshire County Council
Eamon Mythen	DCLG
Richard Read	SEEAWP, LAWP
Kirsten Hannaford-Hill	Aggregate Industries/MPA
Phil Dash	Essex County Council

Item No.	Subject	Owner
1	Welcome, Introductions & Apologies	RG
	Apologies – as set out on previous sheet. Introductions were made.	
2	Minutes of the last meeting & matters arising	RG/SEM
	<p>In response to a question as to whether there had been any movement on funding for AWP's beyond end of 2016/17, SEM relayed comment provided by EM that work was being done to put in place funding of Tech Secs for AWP's for 2017/18 and seeking to secure funds for 2018/19 & 2019/20 beyond. Annual break clause could yet be activated but considered unlikely. Matter would be followed up in the new financial year.</p> <p>In response to a further question about a meeting of the National Coordinating Group, it was confirmed that this had not taken place and understanding was that there was little appetite for it from DCLG.</p> <p>Representatives from the respective mineral planning authorities confirmed that Local Aggregate Assessments were now available to view online.</p> <p>The Minutes of the last meeting held on 2 November 2016 were agreed as being an accurate record and a copy signed by the Chairman.</p>	
3	Update on latest Minerals Survey	All

	<p>JS confirmed that the forms had been sent to the mineral planning authorities on 2 Feb 2017 for onward distribution to operators with 22 Feb 2017 set as a date for return. Thereafter, authorities were requested to send collated returns to JS by 3 Mar 2017. Timescale was tight in order to meet contractual obligation for completion of AMR by end of June 2017.</p> <p>Noted that 1 or 2 authorities had yet to distribute the forms to operators and in response to a question put to operators as to what response period would be reasonable, two weeks was suggested.</p> <p>SEM noted that previously some issues have been raised regarding the content of the forms (e.g. asking for info which does not then appear on the collated returns). However, following earlier discussion with Chairman, it was agreed that the forms be sent out for the current survey but that any suggestions for improvements could be debated in parallel with a view to making any agreed changes to forms for subsequent surveys. SEM was sourcing copies of forms used by other AWP's to compare.</p> <p>RD noted that NCC had sent out a slightly different version of the form in January. Generally agreed it may be useful in future for the AWP's survey forms to also be circulated in early January.</p> <p>RG commented that industry was well placed to comment on what are the better formats. Suggested that mineral planning authorities give some initial thought to potential improvements for circulation ahead of the next mtg. MN kindly offered to assist if problems are experienced in receiving returns from operators.</p>	<p>JS</p> <p>All Mineral Planning Auths</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Mineral Safeguarding</p>	<p>TC-L</p>
	<p>TC-L commented that meetings were set up with Herts districts/boroughs to explain process & procedures for mineral safeguarding areas. TC-L explained that the approach had been to look at BGS data sets, remove areas from which mineral has been extracted and add a 100m buffer to the remaining area. Examples of MSAs for sand & gravel and brick clay were circulated.</p> <p>MP queried what assumptions were being made for overburden as in the past 1:1 ratios have been applied but now worse stripping ratios. TC-L would need to check that detail with the consultants although RD noted that BGS make overburden assumptions in producing the data set.</p> <p>RR commented that most LPAs use constraints based maps</p>	

but warned that by including built up areas, significant numbers of consultations would be generated which would need resources to respond. Bedfordshire Auths have therefore excluded Bedford & other built up areas notwithstanding BGS approach and similar advice from consultants to include.

RD advised that NCC has standing advice on safeguarding & referred to an example of a former golf course now proposed for housing which, if it had been excluded, NCC wouldn't have had the opportunity to consider extraction. KB commented that there's scope in how urban areas are defined i.e. open spaces such as golf courses could be excluded. RD reviews weekly lists to keep tabs on application sites.

RR confirmed that the Central Bedfordshire requires a Minerals Resource Assessment (MRA) and as little guidance is provided by BGS, some technical advice has been prepared to assist fellow planners dealing with housing devts within a MSA. This has been placed on the Council website.

It was questioned whether there was any scope for industry to reduce areas allowing parties to focus in on key areas, although others felt that this ran risk of effectively creating areas of search if refined further. Noted that the key aims of safeguarding are to preserve long term potential resources i.e. beyond the lifetime of several plans and avoiding sterilisation. Agreed that the issue is resource hungry & best way forward still needed refining.

RR suggested that focus should be on potential Local Plan allocations as it is the larger strategic sites on which proposals are more likely to be pursued and sterilisation is a risk if such sites are missed. AE referred to a ECC conducting a sieving exercise to see if sites are caught by MSA policy & then need a MRA, but RR felt the issue needed considering before allocation.

RD relayed experiences of proposing to attend district cttee mtgs to cite conflict with national policy which has led, for example, to pre-commencement conditions to secure a MRA and prior extraction for use on site so as to be mineral neutral. RG commented that he had been advised that conditions seeking a MRA were unreasonable as they could show the resource to be viable & go to the heart of the devt.

CBC's requirements apply before determination, hence why guidance has been produced covering the range of info sought e.g. borehole spacings etc. Recently argued at appeal on a travellers' site that a MRA was required being adjacent to the Plan's only silica sand quarry, so starting to feature in reasons

	<p>to refuse permission.</p> <p>GG explained that the experience of mineral safeguarding / MCAs within Suffolk has not been particularly helpful given they have not achieved what they aim to, although SCC proposes to update what it has in line with national guidance.</p> <p>ECC's approach has been to safeguard the operation which has permission rather than the resource, although RD noted a more special case applies to silica sand due to its national importance and scarcity. RR referred to examples when Beds was a two tier authority whereby Beds CC permitted extraction and the district permitted housing devt which could not have otherwise been undertaken.</p> <p>RG concluded that scope exists for the issue and its implementation to be refined at a national level. MN confirmed the matter is on the agenda for the MPA to raise with POS. MN noted that Cambs CC always required info pre-determination but agrees that issues arise where major housing is proposed adjacent existing operations and cases (e.g. Mount Sorrell, Leics) have been won on safeguarding arguments.</p> <p>RD raised point about MRA data then being before mineral planning authorities to help inform future decisions. Well records had to be provided to BGS but no requirement to do so for boreholes. Discussed how information from submitted borehole data could be used more fully - seen as no different to an applicant submitting other information for an application to be determined. RR advised that the point is made for a MRA at pre-app stage so no excuse for an application not to include.</p> <p>MN commented that case studies are being gathered where railheads or wharves are under threat as the MPA is keen to up the ante on the issue. RH referred to a piece of work being undertaken along the Thames estuary seeking to safeguard certain facilities. Key is making it work in practice. It is hoped the work can be updated annually e.g. data on wharf capacity. RG commented that the issue cropped up an appeal but ECC had insufficient evidence available to challenge. RR felt such work should extend to concrete plants and asphalt plants although RH confirmed at present the work was limited to major wharves, jetty sites and railheads. Aim was to safeguard existing sites but also those potential riverside sites to come forward in future Local Plan. RH noted that Govt has identified a need for safeguarding such sites as strategic sites and provide cross-boundary view e.g. reliance by authorities on wharves lying beyond their administrative areas. Importance of the work elevates it to a more strategic nature. RH working with James Cutting at SCC but agreed to email the Group to widen</p>	<p>RH</p>
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	the issue with the aim of bringing a spec back to the AWP's June mtg. Concrete batching plants could be included but RH feels wharves, jetties & railheads are the priority given they are more fixed from a locational perspective and v costly to set up.	
5	National Coordinating Group feedback	ALL
	<p>SEM confirmed that the suggestion of a mtg in March 2017 had been aired at the meeting of the AWP Secretaries in October 2016 but has not been progressed by DCLG as its focus is firmly on housing delivery. Frustration reported from across wider AWP's that nothing is happening. MN confirmed that the MPA will step up if the drive is not going to come from DCLG. Agreed that a way forward needs to be found through a debate. Current guidelines are out of date which the LAA should take account of. The Housing White Paper (HWP) is promoting further growth so issue is becoming more critical.</p> <p>Question arises as to how the MPA/POS fill the Govt vacuum. Fears were raised that the supply for infrastructure may not be there for all the additional growth which Govt wishes to see. Some 25Mt of aggregates has been estimated as being needed for HS2 alone.</p> <p>Question was asked as to whether the AWP should contact DCLG and press for a National Coordinating Group mtg. MN felt the question should be asked for an evidence base and RR emphasised that the HWP makes the situation more critical. MN notes that the HWP is silent as to supply chain. RG noted reference in NPPF to 'other relevant information' (e.g. %tage uplift for HS2) but general consensus was that mineral planning authorities were being placed in an unreasonable position which may only be resolved through emergence of Strategic Plans.</p> <p>MN highlighted 'productive capacity' as another issue i.e. even if reserves are present, they may not be able to be accessed quick enough. The logistical supply of aggregate for projects needs to be understood e.g. is the plant large enough; what are the costs of upscaling and the issue of commercial sensitivities.</p>	MN
6	National Planning Issues	EM
	<p>SEM shared an update provided by EM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EM has submitted a bid to secure funds for the AWP's Tech Secs for FY 2017/18 in the first instance and for FYs 2018/19 and 2019/20. The AWP's Tech Secs contracts run to the end of March 2018 so DCLG is contractually obliged to fund for 2017/18 unless the annual break clause is exercised but EM felt this very 	

	<p>unlikely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During FY 2017/18 DCLG will be taking forward the tendering process for the AWP's Tech Secs contracts which terminate on 30 March 2018 and the next Aggregate Mineral Survey. • The Housing White Paper (published 7 Feb 2017) has been the priority. Nothing explicit on minerals, waste or land stability planning policy issues but some tangential impacts e.g. through uplifts in planning application fees. An annex will contain the Govt's response to the LPEG report which covers a handful of mineral planning policy issues raised by MPA in response to the LPEG consultation. Nothing of significance arises as no will in DCLG to change mineral planning policy or guidance with housing delivery remaining the Minister's top priority. <p>MN advised that the MPA Conference was scheduled for May 17 at NEC Birmingham led by the RTPI. The programme and speakers were being assembled.</p> <p>MN also relayed headline figures from the latest mineral products sales press release: <i>Sales volumes of ready-mixed concrete (RMC) in Great Britain improved by 4% in 2016 compared to 2015, matched by a 4.2% increase in aggregates, and a 4.68% for mortar. Asphalt sales remained broadly flat compared to 2015 (+0.1%).</i></p> <p><i>On a quarterly basis, sales volumes for these materials in 2016 Q4 were also positive and improved compared to the weaker markets observed over the summer. Sales of RMC and aggregates grew by about 1.5% in 2016Q4 compared to the previous quarter, and 2.4% for asphalt. Materials such as RMC and aggregates are used across all major construction sectors, particularly in the earlier stages of projects, and therefore provide hard evidence of sustained activity on the ground. In addition, mortar sales, underpinned by strong housebuilding activity, increased by 4.3% over the same period.</i></p>	<p>All</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>MPA update on local plans</p>	<p>MPAs/ All</p>
	<p>A draft update had been circulated prior to the meeting using the previously agreed template.</p> <p>RH referred to some slippage in Thurrock's Plan arising from the Lower Thames Crossing still being up in the air. The Borough Council can't progress the Plan until confirmation is provided in connection with Government's preferred routing. The Minister still has to confirm Option A (Dartford) – announcement expected in March. Issues & Options stage scheduled for Summer 2017.</p>	

	<p>Discussions with ECC still needed on whether the Joint Strategic Plan will build in minerals & waste policies or whether these would be separately covered in Local Plans.</p> <p>RD confirmed NCC will start its Minerals & Waste Local Plan Review after the silica sand hearing sessions in mid March. Operators are being asked whether they still wish to see sites carried forward.</p>	
8	AOB	All
	MN referred to the latest Annual Mineral Planning Survey being available which SEM would circulate or viewable on the MPA website.	SEM
9	Date of Next Meetings	Chair
	14 June 2017; 18 Oct 2017; 7 Feb 2018 all at 14:00 hrs, Essex CC	All