

DERBYSHIRE AND DERBY MINERALS LOCAL PLAN

Towards a Minerals Local Plan: Spring 2018 Consultation

CHAPTER 12

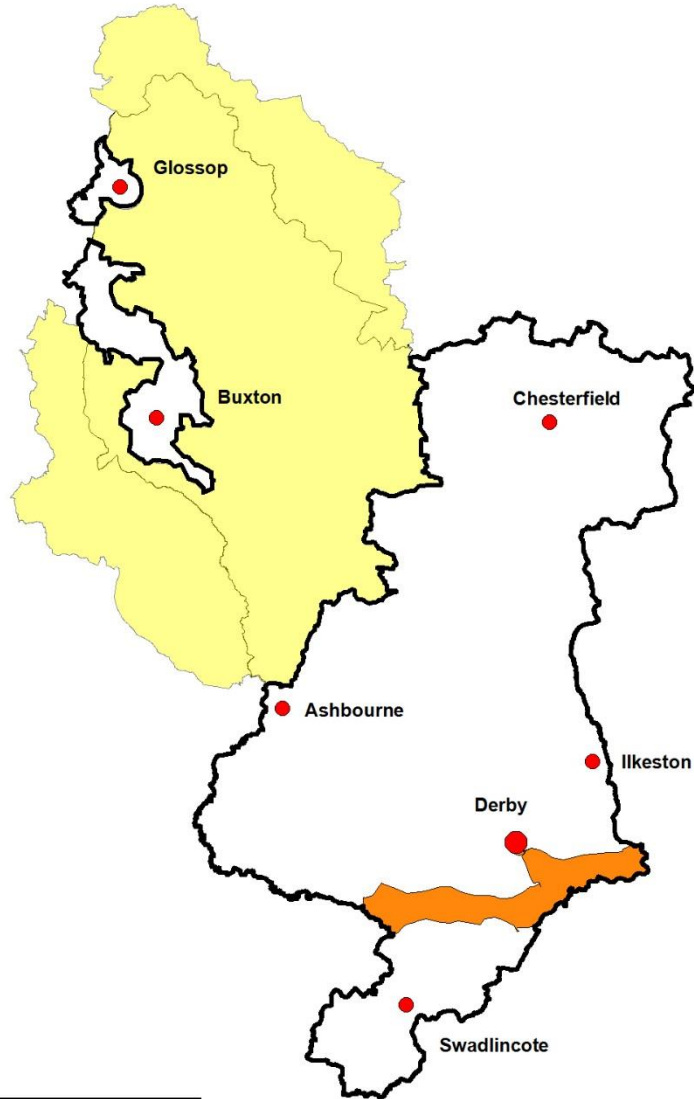
12.2 Restoration Strategy for the Trent Valley

December 2017

Introduction

- 12.2.1 In the past, sand and gravel workings in the Plan Area have been restored to after-uses with an approach that has concentrated on the requirements of the specific site rather than also considering fully its context within the wider surrounding landscape of the river corridor. As sand and gravel workings have developed over a wider area, this approach has resulted in a landscape which has become progressively fragmented; the overall environmental and cultural integrity of the landscape is gradually being altered.
- 12.2.2 This fundamentally disjointed approach to the restoration of mineral workings has triggered the need to take a different approach in the emerging Minerals Local Plan. This alternative approach seeks to develop a long term strategy for the restoration of sand and gravel workings in the Trent, Derwent and Lower Dove Valleys, indicating what the valleys should look like in the future and how the restoration of individual sites would fit into this. It is expected that this would promote a more coordinated landscape scale approach to minerals planning that involves developing an overarching strategy for the working and restoration of sites in the Trent Valley. It would seek to contribute to the delivery of a new, connected and more attractive, landscape, improving life for existing communities, where people want to come to live, with new economic and recreational opportunities, and which is rich in history and wildlife and attracts visitors to the area. The area covered by this Strategy is shown on Figure 1 below.
- 12.2.3 This has developed and evolved from what was discussed initially in the early stages of the preparation of the Plan, as a strategy for guiding the future restoration of mineral workings, into one which, by determining the overall integrity and sensitivity of the landscape, can also help to guide the identification of sites for future mineral working. As a result, the environmental sensitivity mapping element of the strategy has helped to inform the assessment of sites for future sand and gravel extraction.

Trent Valley Restoration - Study Area



KEY

-  Plan Area
-  Trent Valley Restoration - Study Area
-  Peak District National Park



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- 12.2.4 It has also become a wider strategic issue, as neighbouring authorities, including Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire County Councils, have expressed their intent to extend the approach to the areas of the Trent and Dove Valleys which lie within their jurisdiction. It is expected, therefore, that in the longer term the approach will cover an area which includes the majority of the Trent Valley and its main tributaries. The approach has also gained the backing of the Local Nature Partnership (LNP), which strengthened further the strategic nature of the Trent Valley project. The wider Vision (into which this Strategy will fit) for the Trent Valley area has been identified as a Core Project for the LNP.
- 12.2.5 The strategy would help to maintain and encourage a thriving minerals industry, providing it with a greater degree of certainty regarding the available mineral resource and clarity about the physical constraints that exist to mineral working in the valleys.
- 12.2.6 It may also encourage mineral operators to revisit former extraction areas (possibly restored) to undertake additional work that might further benefit the broad long term objective for the valleys, for example connecting existing water bodies or providing a link to the river.

Vision and Objectives

- 12.2.7 The Vision will help to define the direction of the Plan by stating where we want to be in terms of mineral development by the end of the Plan period. It will set out what the Plan area will be like in terms of mineral development in 2030 if the policies and proposals of the Plan have been delivered successfully over the Plan period. The Objectives will set out how the Vision will be delivered and implemented.
- 12.2.8 The policies in this chapter will seek to help deliver the following Objectives of the Plan:

Objective 5 – Minimising Impacts on Communities

The Plan will minimise the potential adverse impacts of minerals development on local communities in the area by protecting their existing amenity, quality of life, social fabric and health.

Objective 6 – Protecting the Natural and Built Environment

The Plan will conserve and enhance the area's natural and built environment, including its distinctive landscapes, habitats, wildlife and other important features by avoiding, minimising and mitigating potential adverse impacts of minerals developments.

Objective 8 – Minimising Flood Risk and Climate Change

The Plan will seek to minimise and mitigate the risk of flooding and the impacts of climate change arising from minerals developments. This will include securing appropriate forms of restoration which address how sites interact with their surroundings in the longer term.

Evidence Base

Environmental Sensitivity Mapping

12.2.9 The Environmental Sensitivity Mapping project has been carried out by the County Council's Conservation & Design Section. This is the initial part of a larger project to show how sand and gravel sites should be restored and how these will fit in with the overall changing landscape of the river valleys. This initial work assessed the relative sensitivity of the river valleys in overall environmental terms. The most sensitive areas are those that are above average with respect to their ecology, historic environment and landscape qualities, and will be most susceptible to change and which should be protected from mineral working. Those areas defined as the least sensitive have the potential for more change and, in particular, change that can help to deliver a range of economic, environmental and community benefits that will help to make the local environment more attractive and accessible.

12.2.10 A technical paper sets out the methodology for establishing a strategic environmental baseline for land-use planning within the Trent, Derwent and

Lower Dove Valleys through the assessment of its current assets relating to landscape character, ecology and the historic environment. This work is an important environmental baseline to inform the emerging Minerals Local Plan and feed into the strategy for the river valleys. It will also inform the assessment of sites which have been proposed for sand and gravel extraction.

Further more detailed information regarding the environmental sensitivity mapping is available in the “Methodology to Map Environmentally Sensitive Areas in the Trent Valley” Technical Paper, December 2017.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 12.2.11 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that worked land should be reclaimed at the earliest opportunity, taking account of aviation safety, and that high quality restoration and aftercare of mineral sites takes place, including for agriculture, geodiversity, biodiversity, native woodland, the historic environment and recreation.

National Planning Policy Guidance

- 12.1.12 National Planning Policy Guidance states that following mineral working, land should be restored to make it suitable for beneficial after-use. In assessing sites for future working, it sets out that the feasibility of a strategic approach to restoration should be explored. It also sets out that a site-specific landscape strategy should accompany applications for either a new site or any significant extension to an existing working.

Central Rivers Initiative

- 12.1.13 The Central Rivers Initiative (CRI) is a broad based partnership representing key interests who are working together to shape and guide the progressive

restoration and revitalisation of the Trent valley between Burton, Lichfield and Tamworth.

12.1.14 The vision is to create and connect beautiful places where people can explore and enjoy water, landscape and wildlife, and to ensure that careful extraction and restoration by the area's many sand and gravel quarries will leave a sustainable network of wildlife habitats, public amenities and agricultural land. The aim is also to inspire and encourage landowners, communities and individuals to get involved in shaping their local landscape.

Bigger and Better - RSPB

12.1.15 This document sets out a vision for the Trent and Tame River Valleys to become one of Britain's greatest wetlands, providing a wetland artery for wildlife, flowing from source to sea in an attractive, multi-functional and inspiring landscape loved and valued by all.

12.1.16 It sets out that the current review of the six minerals local plans covering the area of the Trent and Tame river valleys offers a unique opportunity to develop minerals planning policies that promote a strategic, co-ordinated and landscape-scale approach consistently across county boundaries. This will help to establish a coherent and resilient network of wetlands across the whole of the Trent and Tame River Valleys. It also highlights the scale of opportunity provided by minerals planning and mineral site restoration to help deliver the vision and the multiple benefits that this can bring, for both people and wildlife and seeks to ensure that the Central Rivers Initiative and other strategies such as the emerging Strategy for the Trent Valley in Derbyshire are coordinated.

Consultations Undertaken and Comments Received

Stakeholder Workshop 2009

12.1.17 From the initial stages in the preparation of the Minerals Local Plan, people expressed support for the development of a comprehensive restoration strategy for the Trent Valley.

Issues and Options 2010

12.1.18 As a result of the support for this approach, it was included as an issue in the Issues and Options Report. 65% of responses to the issue supported the development of such a strategy (Option 1 in the Issues and Options report), rather than the current less strategic approach to restoration (Option 2 in the Issues and Options report).

Period of Continuous Consultation 2012/2013

12.1.19 In late 2012, through a series of drop-in sessions held with communities in the river valleys, the local communities continued to express their support for the development of a restoration strategy and to offer comments on how this should be developed. A report of comments raised at these sessions is available in the following document.

**Summary of Issues Raised at the Sand and Gravel Drop in Sessions,
July 2012**

Towards a Minerals Local Plan- Rolling Consultation 2015/2016

There were 28 comments from 11 individuals or organisations to this part of the Plan during this period of consultation.

- Eleven comments supported the proposed approach.
- Three expressed concern that the Environmental Sensitivity Mapping excludes national environmental designations from its analysis.
- Two consider that the environmental baseline information should not be used in the assessment of sand and gravel sites.
- One asked for the strategy to coordinate with the Central Rivers Initiative for the Trent and Tame Valleys.

- One asked that the RSPB document “Bigger and Better” should be taken into account in the Strategy.
- More general comments relate to wording and the consistency of the strategy with the sand and gravel strategy.

Assessment of Comments and Outcomes for the Plan

- With regards to national designations, these were excluded from the sensitivity mapping because it was considered that these designations are already afforded the highest level of environmental protection so to a large extent already inform where gravel extraction is likely to take place or not. These are included on the plan to show their extent and how they relate to other environmental qualities that were included in the assessment. Local wildlife sites derived from past mineral working were specifically excluded because they are unlikely to influence future mineral workings because the sand and gravel has already been extracted – an approach we thought reasonable in ascertaining those areas of the Trent Valley that still display intrinsic sensitivity to future development. As the methodology explains, the intent is to “identify those areas of landscape that are considered to be of greatest sensitivity with respect to landscape character, biodiversity and the historic environment” – i.e. the combined sensitivity of the landscape with respect to these environmental datasets. I think in this regard our approach fully reflects the expectations of paragraphs 109, 113 and 117 of the NPPF.
- The information from the environmental assessment of the Trent Valley area is only one element that has been used to assess the sites that have been suggested for sand and gravel extraction. The environmental element of the assessments combines both the detailed site assessment work and the strategic environmental sensitivity work. It is considered that this strategic baseline information provides a useful and important element of this assessment work.
- Reference is made to the Central Rivers Initiative and the RSPB document “Bigger and Better”

12.1.20 All comments have been used to inform the development of the proposed approach set out below.

Duty to Cooperate

12.1.21 In order to obtain as much relevant information as possible about this topic, Derbyshire County Council and Derby City Council engaged in meetings and discussions with relevant authorities. We also corresponded with organisations and individuals with relevant knowledge and experience of restoration to develop our evidence base for the Plan and for developing the proposed approach set out below.

12.1.22 The development of a long term strategy for the Trent Valley is a strategic issue as it covers a number of administrative areas and therefore requires the co-operation of a number of organisations which cover these different areas. We have worked, and will continue to work, closely with the mineral operators (Cemex, Hansons, Tarmac), local planning authorities (South Derbyshire District Council) adjoining MPAs (Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire) to ensure a coordinated approach is taken to the strategy and also with other organisations (including the Local Economic Partnership and the Local Nature Partnership and East Midlands Airport, Nature After Minerals (RSPB) and The Canal and River Trust) in the preparation and development of the strategy. The strategy will be coordinated with the Central Rivers Initiative Strategy to ensure that it links with neighbouring areas.

12.1.23 We have held meetings with Nottinghamshire County Council who also support the development of a new vision for the Trent Valley, and in its Minerals Local Plan Preferred Approach has undertaken a project to assess areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity in the Trent Valley. We have had discussions with Staffordshire County Council who are seeking to develop a compatible strategy for its part of the Trent Valley. This should ensure consistency of approach along the Trent Valley. As a result of these developments, the strategic nature of the approach has been strengthened.

Sustainability Appraisal

12.1.24 The Sustainability Appraisal process is a way of testing the impact of the Plan against a series of Sustainability Objectives. Where the process recommends improvements to the Plan these will be incorporated. A sustainability appraisal was undertaken on all the Papers that constituted the Towards a Minerals Local Plan Rolling consultation 2014-2017, including the restoration strategy for the river valleys. It reported on this strategy as follows:

The policy approach is likely to have medium to long term positive effects upon biodiversity and landscape management by delivering a network of green infrastructure. This could have knock on benefits for communities by creating opportunities for recreation. The policy will provide certainty for the minerals industry about the standard or restoration that is expected as well as guiding the allocation of sites. Some sites could be vulnerable to flooding. However, a joined up approach may better help to identify potential for water/flood management schemes.

The full appraisal is set out in the following document:

**Towards a Minerals Local Plan: Spring 2018 Consultation,
Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report 2017**

The Proposed Approach

12.1.25 This work has the opportunity to create more resilient landscapes firstly, through the conservation of areas of highest environmental value, secondly with robust mitigation and management in areas where some change is proposed and thirdly through the planning and enhancement of areas currently

deficient in these environmental qualities. There will be resultant environmental, economic and community benefits in all cases.

12.1.26 At this stage, a broad policy will be included in the Local Plan and the detail of the strategy will be included in a Supplementary Planning Document to be prepared once the Plan is adopted.

12.1.27 This will help to ensure that the Mineral Planning Authority will be able to continue to work closely with mineral operators (Cemex, Hansons, Tarmac), landowners, local planning authorities (South Derbyshire and Derbyshire Dales district councils) and adjoining MPAs (Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Leicestershire) to help ensure a coordinated approach is taken in the preparation and development of the detail of this strategy, recognising its application to a much wider area. We will also continue to work with other organisations and stakeholders that are important to the development of this strategy, including the Central Rivers Initiative, the RSPB, East Midlands Airport, the Environment Agency, the Canal and River Trust as well as local communities in the Trent, Derwent and Lower Dove river valleys.

Policy R2: Restoration of Sand and Gravel Sites in the River Valleys

When considering the restoration of sand and gravel sites in the Trent Valley area, the overall wider context of the site in the valley should be taken fully into account, including the potential for taking a coordinated approach with the restoration schemes of other sand and gravel workings in the area.

Restoration schemes should also take account of the areas in the Valley area identified as being of highest environmental value and which should be conserved. Secondly, those areas where sand and gravel extraction could take place with robust mitigation and management and thirdly those areas which have been identified as currently being deficient in these environmental qualities and where sand and gravel extraction could occur with the planning and enhancement of these qualities.

The Councils will work with communities and mineral operators and other stakeholders to help ensure that proposals for mineral working in the Trent, Derwent and Lower Dove Valleys show how the restoration of sites will fit in with this long term restoration strategy for sand and gravel sites in the river valleys.

Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to the restoration strategy for the river valleys, as set out in this chapter?