

Review of SG Safeguarding7: Areas of search for minerals

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to review the supplementary guidance which protects our mineral resources from sterilisation and identifies further areas of search for minerals throughout Aberdeenshire. Other general development within identified 'areas of search' for minerals is normally discouraged unless the proposal meets specific criteria. This review will assess whether SG Safeguarding7 is still fit for purpose and remains a reliable tool for assessing development proposals that fall within the boundaries of 'areas of search' for minerals.

2. Policy Approach

- 2.1 Minerals are such valuable finite resources that they must be preserved and protected from sterilisation as a result of other developments. The current policy has two elements to it, reflecting the value and scarcity of the resources in question. "Areas of Search" are identified for sand and gravel reserves, whereas "Safeguarded Areas" safeguards specific minerals from development other than for their extraction. Development is permitted if it is:

- a major development that will allow extraction prior to construction; or
- a small scale development ancillary to existing use; or
- a development with a short life.

It must also be demonstrated in each of the above cases that there is no alternative site suitable for the development.

- 2.2 SG Safeguarding7 is accompanied by a table and 63 maps displaying the 43 identified areas of search for minerals (sand and gravel reserves) and 27 safeguarded areas for minerals within Aberdeenshire. Table 2 identifies the nature of the minerals safeguarded by the policy.

3. Background

National context

- 3.1 It is a requirement of Scottish Planning Policy that local authority development plans identify and safeguard areas of search for minerals within their region and any development proposals within the areas should meet certain criteria. *"Planning authorities should have regard to the availability, quality, accessibility and requirement for mineral resources in their area," and "liaise with operators and neighbouring planning authorities and use verifiable sources of information to identify appropriate search areas"*.
- 3.2 For mineral rich land that has been approved or allocated for development, SPP applies safeguarding principles to ensure that extraction of the mineral resource prior to development should be encouraged.
- 3.3 SPP emphasises that during the preparation of development plans, the overall appropriateness of areas of search should be monitored:
"Where there is no developer interest, planning authorities should modify or delete the search areas from the plan, taking into account possible long term

requirements, the need to avoid sterilisation of resources and the views of the industry’.

- 3.4 To satisfy Scotland’s infrastructure investment plans, and housing and business needs, the National Planning Framework 2 emphasises the importance of maintaining an adequate supply of minerals available to the construction industry. Ideally, these minerals should be sourced locally to be most sustainable.

Strategic/regional context

- 3.2 Both the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan 2009 and the Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan make limited reference to mineral development. However it is stated that as developments such as mineral extraction aim to meet more than local needs, developers must justify this against the overall ethos of the Strategic Development Plan, such as meeting the regeneration needs.

4. Drivers of Change

- 4.1 SPP continues to encourage development plans to produce specific areas of search for minerals, ensuring these finite resources are safeguarded and protected from development that does prioritise their extraction.
- 4.2 In accordance with SPP, areas of search should be modified or deleted if there is no developer interest whilst also considering the long term supply of minerals. The need to avoid sterilisation of resources and the views of the industry must also be considered.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 Clarity can be added by removing the reference to “we will only approve development” from the text of the policy and adding clarification in the reasoned justification that small scale development is not automatically precluded from areas of search.
- 5.2 SPP encourages planning authorities to monitor and review the current areas of search after considering the developer interest, mineral supply, sterilisation and views of the industry. The safeguarded areas represent long term protection for these reserves. On the basis that all of these sites should be protected from sterilization no review is thought necessary at this time.
- 5.3 Reference to ‘outcrops’ in the second paragraph within the Reasoned Justification is technically wrong and should be changed to read ‘deposits’. An outcrop means something at the surface only and deposit it actually the correct term to use.

6. Summary of Main Points

- 6.1 SG Safeguarding7 remains a coherent policy in safeguarding and identifying areas of search for minerals. There have been no major changes in national or regional policy that would imply any significant changes to be made to SG Safeguarding7. The current policy approach continues to be supported by SPP. There are minor recommendations as a result of this policy review although these do not require discussion within the Main Issues Report as the significance is minimal.

References

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (2009) *Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan*

Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (2013) *Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan*

Aberdeenshire Council (2012) *Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012*

Scottish Government (2009) *National Planning Framework for Scotland 2*

Scottish Government (2010) *Scottish Planning Policy*