

Independent Examination of the Somerset Minerals Plan

Matter 11: Safeguarding Minerals and Minerals Facilities

**South Somerset District Council
Hearing Statement
(August 2014)**

1. South Somerset District Council (SSDC) wishes to make the following points in relation to the Examination of the Somerset Minerals Plan on Matter 11: Safeguarding Minerals and Minerals Facilities.
2. SSDC are broadly supportive of the Minerals Plan, but are concerned with the approach being proposed in relation to minerals safeguarding, as set out in Policy SMP9.
3. SSDC support consultation with the Minerals Planning Authority when non-mineral planning applications are being considered in Mineral Safeguarding Areas. However, we consider that Policy SMP9 is too restrictive as it does not allow for non-mineral development where it may be needed in order to provide wider sustainability benefits, such as meeting the community's need for additional housing (including affordable housing), or community facilities (e.g. village hall, local shop, primary school).
4. Somerset Minerals Plan Objective C and the supporting text to Policy SMP9 (e.g. paragraphs 11.4, 11.5, 11.6) make clear that safeguarding means ensuring the presence of mineral resources is flagged up for consideration alongside other planning issues, and the overriding need for the development may be greater than the need for the mineral. However, this important point is not reflected in Policy SMP9 itself.
5. It is also important to note that the maps in Appendix B of the pre-submission Minerals Plan appear to show some overlap between the Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) and South Somerset's emerging Local Plan proposals at the Chard strategic site allocation, and 'directions of growth' at Somerton, Langport/Huish Episcopi, Wincanton, and Ansford/Castle Cary. Somerset County Council has not objected to these proposals in the emerging Local Plan.
6. Therefore, SSDC consider that Policy SMP9 of the Somerset Minerals Plan is unsound because it is not:
 - positively prepared, as such a restrictive approach could impede the delivery of objectively assessed development;
 - justified, as it is not the most appropriate strategy when considering the reasonable alternative of allowing greater flexibility; or
 - consistent with national policy, as such a restrictive approach could impede the delivery of objectively assessed development being proposed in the emerging South Somerset Local Plan.
7. In order to address this issue, SSDC suggest that the following criterion should be added to Policy SMP9:

"e) there is an overriding need for the non-mineral development which can be shown to provide wider sustainability benefits".
8. SSDC consider that the addition of criterion "e)" as highlighted above would make Policy SMP9 sound.

9. In its representation on the 'pre-submission' Minerals Plan, SSDC cited other adopted minerals plans where the safeguarding policy included a criterion similar to that which SSDC is seeking. For example, Leicestershire Minerals Core Strategy and Development Control Policies (MDC8: Safeguarding Mineral Resources) includes a criterion allowing non-mineral development where "...*there is an overriding need for the compatible development...*"; and Wiltshire Minerals Development Control Policies (MDC4: Safeguarding Mineral Resources, Rail-head facilities and Mineral recycling facilities) allows such development where "...*there is an overriding need for the proposed non-minerals development to commence without delay.*"
10. SSDC notes that the adopted Greater Manchester Minerals Plan forms part of the evidence base for the Examination (document reference TD53) – this also contains a similar criterion to those highlighted above, in Policy 8 'Prior Extraction of Mineral Resources within Mineral Safeguarding Areas' which permits development where "...*the need for the development outweighs the need to extract the mineral...*"
11. SSDC have consistently made these points in the preparation of the Somerset Minerals Plan, in providing comments on the Mineral Safeguarding Areas Topic Paper in December 2012 and the Minerals Preferred Options in March 2013.

Please note that South Somerset District Council do not wish to participate in the hearing sessions.