
Chapter 2

Sustainable Development



Earth – Sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.

Introduction

- 2.1 Sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It means recognising that our economy, environment and social well-being are interdependent. It means protecting and, where possible, enhancing the environment and ensuring we satisfy people's basic needs.
- 2.2 In 1992, nearly 180 countries met at the 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro to discuss how to achieve sustainable development. They agreed a plan of action, *Agenda 21*, and recommended that all countries should produce national and sustainable development strategies. The United Kingdom was one of the first to do so with, 'Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy', published in 1994.
- 2.3 A replacement strategy, 'A better quality of life, a strategy for sustainable development in the UK', was published in 1999. This strategy builds on the achievements of the 1994 strategy, but emphasises the social dimension of sustainable development alongside economic issues, the environment and resource use. The strategy is based on four broad objectives:
- (i) Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
 - (ii) Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
 - (iii) Effective protection of the environment; and
 - (iv) Prudent use of natural resources.
- 2.4 PPG 12 states that the planning system, and development plans in particular, can make a major contribution to the achievements of the Government's objectives for sustainable development.
- 2.5 The Plan seeks to promote the objectives of sustainable development by incorporating and where appropriate expanding on the criteria in Mineral Planning Guidance Note 1 (MPG1) 'General Considerations and the Development Plan System'. For minerals these are:
- (i) to conserve minerals as far as possible, to minimise the production of waste during mineral working and to encourage the efficient use of minerals, including appropriate use of high quality materials and recycling of wastes, whilst ensuring an adequate supply to meet society's needs;
 - (ii) to ensure that the environmental impacts caused by mineral operations and the transport of minerals are kept to an acceptable minimum, and that all efforts will be made to ensure that methods other than road haulage are used whenever possible;
 - (iii) to encourage sensitive working, restoration and aftercare practices so as to preserve and enhance the overall quality of the environment once extraction has ceased with the creation of valuable new habitats and features;

- (iv) to protect areas of designated landscape or nature conservation value from development, other than in exceptional circumstances and where it has been demonstrated that development is in the public interest (see PPS7 paragraph 22 and PPG9 Annex C);
 - (v) to give appropriate protection to areas and features of cultural heritage; and
 - (vi) to prevent the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources.
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POLICY M2.1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Planning permission for minerals development will only be granted where it has been demonstrated that the Plan's sustainable development objectives have, where appropriate, been fully addressed.

- 2.6 Policy M2.1 requires developers to take account of all relevant objectives for sustainable development listed in Paragraph 2.5. This applies to both new proposals and amendments to existing schemes. All proposals will be expected to show that they address the principle of sustainable development, albeit that not all the criteria listed in Paragraph 2.5 will be relevant in every case.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 2.7 A 'Sustainability Appraisal' of the Minerals Local Plan has been carried out in accordance with PPG 12 and forms a separate report. This appraisal provides the means of ensuring that the policies and objectives of the Plan conform with the principles of sustainable development and that the best options have been taken.
- 2.8 The Appraisal comprises two main parts. Firstly, all sites put forward by the industry for allocation have been assessed against a wide ranging set of sustainability criteria in order to identify the sites best suited to maintaining mineral supplies in areas of shortfall. Secondly, all policies in the Plan were similarly assessed against the sustainability criteria. This identified certain policy weaknesses which were addressed, thereby making the Plan's approach to sustainability stronger.
- 2.9 The fact that the Plan is subject to a sustainability appraisal does not take away the requirements for an environmental impact assessment of individual development proposals where this is required by legislation.
- 2.10 Sustainability issues are covered where applicable in the remaining chapters, except for protection and conservation of mineral resources which are set out below.

Protection of Mineral Resources

- 2.11 The County Council wishes to avoid the unnecessary sterilisation of important mineral resources. Mineral extraction, however, may be just one of various competing claims for the use of land. To achieve a balanced assessment between such claims, it is essential to establish the particular importance of the mineral resource and the implications of its potential extraction or sterilisation. Therefore mineral exploration initiatives will normally be supported, subject to satisfactory environmental safeguards, (see Chapter 5).
- 2.12 The degree of importance will be influenced by a number of factors: relative scarcity, including the geological extent of the deposit, permitted reserve levels, need, quality, 'special' qualities and suitability for extraction.
- 2.13 In Nottinghamshire relative scarcity and/ or high demand levels apply to sand and gravel, gypsum and opencast coal. For these minerals sterilisation is likely to be an issue across most of the known resource, except where absolute planning and other constraints apply. In contrast, for Sherwood Sandstone and clay, where the geological resource is vast, sterilisation is only likely to be a justifiable constraint adjacent to existing permitted or allocated areas where further extensions are possible.
- 2.14 Where sterilisation is an issue, the feasibility of extracting the mineral in advance of other development should be explored.

POLICY M2.2 MINERALS STERILISATION

Development which would result in the sterilisation of mineral resources will not be permitted except where one or more of the following criteria are met:

- (a) the mineral deposit appears to have no existing or future potential commercial value or;**
 - (b) it is unlikely that the mineral will be worked due to environmental constraints or;**
 - (c) the deposit comprises Sherwood Sandstone or clay and is unlikely to form an extension or replacement to an existing quarry or;**
 - (d) the development cannot be reasonably located elsewhere and it is not practicable to extract the mineral in advance.**
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Mineral Consultation Areas

- 2.15 The district councils have a duty to consult County Planning Authorities over any proposal for the development of land, in any area where notification has been given that it may affect, or be affected by, the winning and working of minerals (other than coal). Consultation with the Coal Authority for non-mineral development within coalfield areas is covered by separate legislation.
- 2.16 The County Council endorses the concept of such Mineral Consultation Areas and draft plans have been issued to the district councils. Mineral Consultation Areas do not in themselves constitute a land use policy; there is no presumption for or against development in the notified areas.

Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund

- 2.17 The Aggregates Levy was introduced under the Finance Act 2001 in order to address the environmental costs associated with aggregate extraction, such as noise, dust, visual intrusion, loss of amenity and damage to biodiversity. It is also hoped that the levy will reduce the use of freshly won aggregates and encourage a greater use of recycled aggregates. The levy presently charges a tax of £1.60 on every tonne of aggregate quarried in the UK.
- 2.18 Part of the money raised has been directed to the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund, some of which is available for projects which deliver landscape, community, ecological, biodiversity and heritage benefits in areas affected by aggregate extraction. This allocation is to be distributed by English Nature, English Heritage and the Countryside Agency in consultation with local authorities, interest groups and the aggregates industry so that a benefit can be returned to the local community.

