

- 1.1 The Structure Plan provides the strategic framework within which local plan policies and proposals are prepared. It contains policies on minerals, the countryside, infrastructure provision and development, and waste management, all of which have a relationship with mineral working. It also sets out a guiding objective to be achieved in operating the mineral planning system in the Plan area which is the implementation of the principles of sustainable development. This means that development proposals should specify actions to be taken to compensate for any environmental losses; that the use of alternative materials and the reduction and recycling of wastes should be encouraged; and that greater controls should be sought on the use of high quality or scarce raw materials.
- 1.2 The key issue in the Local Plan is to balance, through its proposals, the essential need for minerals against the protection of the environment and local amenity.
- 1.3 In the case of land won construction aggregates, it is appropriate in the light of Government guidance to consider the location of future mineral extraction in some detail, by identifying those parts of the Plan area where sand and gravel and building sand could be worked. Where geological information is available and reasonably precise, 'preferred sites' for extraction can be included in the Plan. If the extent and quality of mineral resources is less certain, broader 'areas of search' are more appropriate, and the latter course has generally been adopted in the Plan area. This follows the approach set out in national guidance which emphasises that proposals for the future supply of minerals for the construction industry should be clear.
- 1.4 This approach is not appropriate for the other minerals produced in the Plan area. Here, geological exposures are generally much more widespread and it is impractical, and unnecessary, to identify in site-specific terms areas for future working. There is no national requirement to identify future resources with the same precision that applies to aggregates. Circumstances vary between the different minerals concerned, and this needs to be reflected in policy. However, when new proposals come forward for mineral working or processing, the mineral planning authorities will normally give preference to the extension of existing and permitted sites, rather than the development of new 'green field' sites.
- 1.5 Mineral working can create significant environmental impact, either as a direct result of extraction or because of related processing. All mineral applications are subject to the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 1999. Major development proposals, and those in sensitive locations, have to be accompanied by an environmental impact statement in line with this legislation. In other cases, the mineral planning authorities will need to be satisfied that the environmental impact of mineral workings will be minimised and suitable remedial measures adopted in accordance with its policies on sustainable development. Transport associated with the movement of minerals or manufactured products can cause disturbance for local residents, and the Plan seeks to minimise the impact of lorries, and to encourage the use of rail freight where circumstances permit.

1.6 Commercially valuable minerals often underlie agricultural land. The MAFF Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system identifies 5 grades, with the best and most versatile land falling into grades 1,2 and 3a. Land of this quality is best suited to the changing needs of agriculture and it is Government policy (included in PPG 7, "The Countryside - Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development") that considerable weight be given to its protection. Furthermore, where there is a choice between sites of different classifications, development should be directed towards land of the lowest possible classification. This Plan supports that policy.

1.7 Mineral processing or related manufacturing creates specific environmental problems. Plants associated with extraction sites are often in the countryside and in sensitive locations. Elsewhere, for example at marine aggregates wharves, their impact is similar to that of industrial development. The mineral planning authorities acknowledge that these activities often have to adjoin mineral sites and that the proposals in this Plan should not prevent this. In certain cases however, it may be more appropriate for manufacturing plant, such as brickworks, to be located away from their associated mineral site. There are also circumstances where material worked from a small deposit may be taken to a 'satellite' processing plant rather than an on-site mobile facility. However, processing and manufacturing plant which are remotely located are likely to generate significant levels of road traffic. Any such proposal would therefore be required to demonstrate the need for the plant in the particular location. In all cases, strict controls need to be applied to ensure that any loss of environmental quality is balanced by appropriate compensatory measures as part of the development.

**POLICY 1**      **The mineral planning authorities will assess proposals for mineral working, processing or related activities against the following general principles :-**

- a) they accord with and do not materially conflict with Structure Plan policies or with policies and proposals in other adopted local plans;
- b) they accord with the development control policies in this Plan;
- c) there is a preference for the extension of existing and permitted workings and for proposals for aggregates extraction within 'preferred sites' and 'areas of search';
- d) the need for mineral processing and manufacturing plant must be satisfactorily demonstrated, particularly if they are remote from their associated mineral site.

1.8 The most significant issue dealt with in the Plan concerns construction aggregates. Future supplies of land won aggregates in the Plan area are constrained by scarce natural resources of suitable material and by extensive nationally important environmental constraints where the 'most rigorous examination' of proposals is required. Against the national policies set out in MPG6, "Guidelines for Aggregates Provision in England", the Plan seeks to supplement scarce land won supplies by planning for appropriate levels of imports and by encouraging greater use of secondary aggregates and recycled material.

- 1.9 In relation to the other minerals, the Plan seeks broadly to maintain operations at a level consistent with countryside protection and other environmental policies. *All the policies set out in the Plan should be read in conjunction with relevant policies in the Structure Plan and other local plans and the policies for individual minerals should be read together with the development control and restoration policies in Chapters 8 and 9 of this Plan.*