

Report to: **Lead Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment**
Date: **28 July 2008**
By: **Director of Transport and Environment**
Title of report: **Partial Review of RPG9 and Draft South East Plan – Review of Sub Regional Allocation of Land-Won Aggregates**
Purpose of report: **To agree a response to the Regional Assembly on the proposed review of the sub regional allocation of land-won aggregates that would have to be brought forward in the County Council’s Waste and Minerals Development Framework**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to respond to the Regional Assembly that the County Council:

(1) welcomes a more rounded approach to sub-regional apportionment. However, the methodology proposed is too inflexible to deal with the particular circumstances of East Sussex/Brighton & Hove, which has low production; remote reserves; and a high dependence on marine dredged aggregates;

(2) does not support any of the Options put forward and would prefer that East Sussex/Brighton & Hove is treated as a special case and omitted from the sub regional apportionment exercise; and

(3) does not support splitting the apportionment to separately identify soft sand.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There is little cost involved in preparing the response to the Regional Assembly. There is budget provision for 2008/09 for overall work on Waste and Minerals Development Framework (WMDF).

2. Supporting Information

2.1 At the Examination in Public on the Review of RPG9 for Waste and Minerals in 2004, the Panel of Inspectors recommended that a more robust and forward looking methodology should be developed for the policy apportioning the requirement for the delivery of 13.2m tones of sand and gravel each year across the Region (Policy M3). Mineral Planning Authorities have to maintain a landbank based on the apportionment – East Sussex/Brighton & Hove requirement is 0.01million tonnes per annum (mtpa). This Policy was ultimately included in RPG9 and incorporated into the draft South East Plan.

2.2 The current allocation in Policy M3 is based on past rates of production. The Regional Assembly commissioned consultants to examine a revised methodology for apportionment based on likely future demand for construction, the likely availability of minerals and the consideration of environmental constraints. The study considered a variety of options with various weightings.

2.3 The Regional Assembly has chosen to consult on 3 Options – ‘Demand’ (Option C), ‘Environmental’ (Option D) and ‘Demand and Resource’ (Option E which places equal weighting on demand and location of aggregate resources). The revised allocation for East Sussex/Brighton & Hove would be 0.86mtpa – Option C, 0.42mtpa – Option D and 0.69mtpa – Option E. The Regional Assembly is also consulting on whether the allocation should be split between soft sand, and sharp sand & gravel. The full report can be seen at http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/consultation_details.php?consultation=3

2.4 The principle of a more rounded approach to the sub regional apportionment can be welcomed. However, the methodology adopted for all the options is a somewhat statistically based exercise that is not responsive to particular local characteristics or the possibilities of distortion arising in the data. In particular, in East Sussex/Brighton & Hove there are limited sand and gravel

resources. In recent years there has been negligible production of land won aggregates. Permitted reserves NE of Camber are unlikely to commence until after 2016 and are relatively remote to the main areas of population. There is a small extraction of soft sand close to Lewes which only amounts to 0.38mt in total. Consequently, the County is dependent on imports mostly marine dredged aggregates.

2.5 Of the Options chosen for consultation, considerable weight is given to the existing population levels criterion (70% - Option C, 40% - Option E) and even the high environmental weighting option leaves East Sussex/Brighton & Hove with a considerable increase. An option giving high weighting to past sales would involve the lowest increase for the area but this has not been chosen for public consultation.

2.6 East Sussex/Brighton & Hove current apportionment represents 0.08% of the Region's allocation. Option D increases this to 3.45%, Option E to 5.66% and Option C to 7.06%. The outcome of this is that at worst East Sussex/Brighton & Hove would have to increase current land won aggregates reserves to 2016 by 40 times. This is clearly not feasible.

2.7 The definition of unconstrained mineral resource availability used in the report relies upon a separate study. The extent of availability may have been distorted for East Sussex/Brighton & Hove as the area of soft sand to the north of the South Downs is very narrow and viable extraction may not be possible in a lot of the area identified. The separate identification of a soft sand apportionment does not favour East Sussex.

2.8 None of the Options for consultation provide an allocation that reflects the particular circumstances of East Sussex/Brighton & Hove. The Regional Assembly still wishes to press ahead with a sub regional apportionment based on the consultants study. This ignores the position of East Sussex/Brighton & Hove with low resource, a dependence on marine dredged aggregates and an inability to feasibly meet any of the Options. It is unlikely that consensus could be achieved among the other mineral planning authorities in the South East to support a different methodology. An alternative approach could be to exclude East Sussex/Brighton & Hove from the calculations of the sub regional apportionment and accept any reserves that are permitted as a "windfall" contribution to Regional supply. Each remaining sub region's allocation would be slightly increased but this is not considered unreasonable as all the major producing counties had lower allocations under the Options (e.g. Surrey's allocation is proposed to be halved).

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 The particular characteristics of East Sussex/Brighton & Hove having low production, reserves mainly on the Kent border and most of the County served by marine dredged aggregates, needs to be recognised as a special case. The 3 Options would all involve an unacceptable increase that could not be realistically met. It is recommended that the County Council's response is that the methodology proposed is inflexible and probably cannot be adapted to incorporate our unusual circumstances. It is suggested that East Sussex/Brighton & Hove is treated as a special case and excluded from the apportionment exercise. The separate split for soft sand is also not supported.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Review of Sub Regional Allocation of Aggregates – SEERA Consultation Document