

Report of: Planning Services Business Manager

To: Executive Board

Date: 16 July 2007

Item No:

Title of Report : Draft response to County's proposal for a mineral site (Sand and Gravel) at land between Grandpont and North/South Hinksey



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: For Executive Board to be aware of the County's proposal to identify land at Grandpont as suitable for mineral extraction.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Cllr John Goddard

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment

Ward(s) affected: Hinksey Park; Jericho & Osney; Carfax

Report Approved by

Portfolio Holder: Cllr John Goddard

Legal: Legal and Democratic Services (Jeremy Thomas)

Finance: Financial Management (Christopher Kaye)

Strategic Director: Michael Crofton-Briggs



Policy Framework: None



Recommendation(s): That the Executive Board agrees to support the member's reasoned objections to the proposal that land at Grandpont is a suitable site for mineral extraction.



Background:

1. Oxfordshire County Council Minerals and Waste is reviewing the policies and sites covering mineral and waste management in Oxfordshire, the new Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework will replace the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. This consultation is at the Issues and Options stage and will inform preparation of the Preferred Options consultation Paper, which is expected in November 2007.
2. The proposed site at Land between Grandpont and North/South Hinksey has been identified, via a nomination to Oxfordshire County Council, for extraction of sand and gravel. Estimated total yield is 1.5 million tonnes that is likely to be processed on-site, and the total development area is 20 hectares, a map of the site is shown in Appendix A.
3. It is very important to raise objection to the Grandpont site at this stage as, while there will be further opportunities for objecting to the proposal at Grandpont before its adoption in January 2010, it is desirable that the issue is dealt with at this stage while the County have a variety of options to fulfil their minerals extraction obligations.
4. As the consultation period ends on the 15th June 2007 and this report is to be discussed at the Executive Board meeting on the 16th July 2007, the Portfolio Holder and affected ward councillors have been given the opportunity to amend the response before the report is finally submitted. The planning officer has requested that the objections raised here are to be endorsed by the Executive Board.

Summary of objections:

5. There are a number of important issues affecting the site, the main objections to the proposal that land at Grandpont is a suitable site for mineral extraction include:
 - Biodiversity and trees; the site would involve the destruction of Hinksey Park, Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) and would be likely to adversely affect the adjoining Hinksey stream SLINC. These sites with Hinksey pond has a wide variety of aquatic plants, invertebrates, macroinvertebrates and birds, and any development in this area would have a significant impact upon the quality of biodiversity. It would also be likely that the proposal would mean many of the remaining trees around the site would have to be removed. The site is also within a 2km consultation zone for mineral extraction requested by English Nature in 1998 for the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation and Iffley Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest.

- Landscape quality, including visual intrusion, view points, and green belt; the area is within the Oxford Green Belt which is intended to 'preserve the setting and special character of Oxford', and in the Oxford Landscape Character Assessment the area in which this land is located is described as being of high quality and having an important role in Oxford's setting. This proposal will also be highly visible from viewpoints around Hinksey.
- Transport, guided bus, footpaths and flooding; likely road access from the A34 would cause further problems in the form of congestion, pollution and accidents. Access could also create adverse impacts by building a road within the flood plain. Once developed Oxford could lose any potential to later provide some form of guided bus route into the city from the south, footpaths and sports grounds would also be lost.
- Archaeology; the site lies within 200 metres of one of the archaeologically richest parts of the Oxford Flood Plain and as such it is important that further information and investigation be carried out in order to make an informed decision about the significance of the archaeological deposits.
- Noise and dust; there are many residential properties within close proximity of the site that are very likely to suffer from noise and dust created by quarrying, spoil and lorry movements. This is on top of a considerable number of complaints Oxford City Council receive currently from the ballast handling operations at the Hinksey sidings, the proposed development is only likely to intensify these issues.

Conclusion:

6. While some of these impacts can be mitigated against and some form of restoration will occur in the future, of which a rowing lake is not considered an appropriate option, the loss of the rich biodiversity, the tree coverage and the increased traffic on the A34 would be difficult to mitigate against and therefore it is recommended that the City Council strongly objects to this proposal.
7. The completed comment form is at Appendix B.
8. A cutting from the Oxford Times showing the proposal by Grandpont Waters in late 2005 that was dismissed. It highlights how greatly the area would be affected and Oxford City Council's reasons for refusal.


The next stage:

9. Following Executive Board endorsement of these objections, the response will be forwarded Oxfordshire County Council's Minerals and Waste team, as the City Council's formal response.

Name and contact details of author: Steve Pickles, spickles@oxford.gov.uk; Brian Durridge, bdurridge@oxford.gov.uk; Karen Seal, kseal@oxford.gov.uk; Beverley Pagan, bpagan@oxford.gov.uk

Background papers: Minerals Site Proposals and Policies Document, Issues and Options Consultation, April 2007. Available online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk and follow links to Minerals and Waste Policy.

Appendix

 Appendix A – Map showing proposed area.

Appendix B - A copy of the formal response to Oxfordshire County Council.

Appendix C – A cutting from the Oxford Times showing the previous proposed development

