

St Briavels Parish Council

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Minerals Local Plan Consultation
20140814
Strategic Infrastructure
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall
Gloucester
GL1 2TH

Our ref:

Your ref:

14 August 2014

Dear Sir

RESPONSE TO GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DRAFT MINERALS LOCAL PLAN (MLP) 2014 CONSULTATION

1. General Statement

1.1 St Briavels Parish Council understand the obligations placed on Gloucestershire to provide crushed rock for the construction industry, however it is the view of St Briavels Parish Council that the proposals in the MLP exceed any requirements placed on the authority. Consequently St Briavels Parish Council **most strongly objects** to the content of the MLP proposals regarding:

- Area B at site CRFD1: Stowe Hill / Clearwell
- Area C at site CRFD1: Stowe Hill / Clearwell
- Area A at site CRFD4: Hewelsfield

1.2 St Briavels Parish Council has worked closely with neighbouring parish councils and has canvassed the opinions of residents to determine the overall consensus of local residents and therefore objects on the following grounds.

2. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.1 The following clauses in the NPPF are relevant here; they deal with obligations imposed on planning authorities which require them to adopt policies which fulfil the following criteria:

2.2 (Clause 109) “to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- Preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability”.

- 2.3 (Clause 110) “in preparing plans ... the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment”.
- 2.4 (Clause 112) “where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, [they] should seek to use areas of poorer quality land ...”
- 2.5 (Clause 118) “if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided then planning permission should be refused”. “Proposed development on land ... likely to have an adverse effect of a SSSI should not normally be permitted”.
- 2.6 (Clause 122) “... local planning authorities should focus on whether the development itself is an acceptable use of the land, and the impact of the use, rather than the control of processes or emissions ...”
- 2.7 (Clause 123) “Planning policies and decisions should aim to avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse effects on health and quality of life ...”
- 2.8 (Clause 128) “Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.”
- 2.9 (Clause 131) “In determining planning applications ... account should be taken of the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic viability.”
- 2.10 (Clause 145) “Minerals planning authorities should plan ... jointly ... with other mineral planning authorities ...”
- 2.11 (Clause 145) “Minerals planning authorities should plan ... ensuring that large land banks bound up in very few sites do not stifle competition.”
- 2.12 (Clause 157) “Local Plans should be based on co-operation with neighbouring authorities ...”

- 2.13 (Clause 207) “Local planning authorities should consider publishing a local enforcement plan to manage enforcement proactively, in a way that is appropriate to their area. This should set out how they will monitor the implementation of planning permissions ...”

3. CRFD 1- Stowe Hill / Clearwell Quarry (Area B and C)

- 3.1 St Briavels Parish Council specifically objects to the proposals for Stowe Hill / Clearwell quarry as follows:

3.2 Land use.

3.2.1 The permanent loss of 185.5ha (445 acres) of good grade 2 agricultural land (areas B and C) which is required to meet ever increasing demands for food is totally unacceptable.

3.2.2 There is no requirement to include this agricultural land in the MLP as other forms of development would not be permitted.

3.2.3 The current tenant farmer at Longley farm will lose his livelihood and home due to the quarry expansion. There are no farms available in the area to which he may relocate.

3.2.4 Inclusion of these areas in the MLP will result in presumption for quarrying and future planning applications will be granted.

3.3 Need.

3.3.1 The draft MLP states that areas A and B “*could be sufficient to maintain productive capacity....to 2030 and potentially beyond*”. Any one site should not be looked at in isolation and account must be taken of reserves elsewhere, not only in Gloucestershire but other counties where we understand there are ample reserves through to 2030 and beyond.

3.3.2 MLP, Section 2, Page 11, Drivers for change, states that “*there are sufficient amounts of workable crushed rock to last 18.58 years*” i.e. until 2033

3.3.3 MLP, Section 2, Page 11, Drivers for change, states that “*Growth is focused on urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham and will include regeneration of brown field land. This offers opportunities for the reuse and recycling of waste materials as a replacement for construction aggregates*”.

3.3.4 Para 4.2.8 states that there is a “*shortfall of 2mt for the Forest of Dean, but a surplus of 3mt for the Cotswolds*”.

3.3.5 The 70/30 production split between the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds is an historic ratio and it is important that this is tested against today's reserves and demands to ascertain if it is still valid.

3.4 Health

3.4.1 There are serious concerns about the effects of airborne dust particles - believed to be toxic - released on blasting, processing and transportation. There is evidence of an increase in respiratory health issues among those living and working close to and downwind of quarries. Before any further land is identified in the MLP independent Health Impact Assessments (HIA) should be undertaken for every potential site.

3.4.2 Para 2.2.5 states "*Where mineral working takes place, amenity, health, quality of life and economic vitality will be paramount to the decision making process*".

3.4.3 Dust reduction measures, a condition of previous planning permission granted have only been implemented July 14 prior to the submission of a new planning application. Planning conditions have been ignored and not enforced leaving residents exposed to serious health issues.

3.5 Transport network

3.5.1 This site is located in a rural area served by narrow, minor, unclassified roads. To reach the motorway network LGV's are required to travel on local A and B class road which are not designed for such traffic. The increase in LGV's through the local area will increase congestion, noise and pollution.

3.5.2 Despite repeated requests from St Briavels Parish Council the recognised LGV route through the area is not signposted therefore LGV's routinely transit through St Briavels, the development of sites nominated in the MLP can only add to the numbers of LGV movements. Sourcing stone from quarries located closer to the motorway network would be more environmentally friendly.

3.5.3 Para 2.1.2 states "*Moving minerals by road puts a strain on an already pressurised highway network. It can cause adverse local impacts and contribute to climate change.*"

3.5.4 Para 2.3.4 (Proposed Strategic policies) states "*Where transportation by road is the only practical option, roads unsuitable for LGVs will be avoided*".

3.6 Water courses

3.6.1 Quarrying can have irreversible effects on underground water courses and aquifers. This will lead to reduced underground storage capacity

and thus to an increased risk of flooding given the scientifically accepted fact that climate change will lead to more frequent incidents of heavy rainfall.

3.6.2 There is particular concern about the effects on Slade brook, Mork brook, Clearwell well and Valley Brook. Before any land is identified as suitable for quarrying the County Council as the responsible authority must ensure that modelling for each site is undertaken correctly.

3.6.3 Para 6.2.5 states “...development will not be permitted unless appropriate measures can be imposed to mitigate any harmful effects [on water quality]”.

3.6.4 Slade brook is a SSSI whose waters rise from springs located adjacent to area C. Removal of stone from this area has potential hydrological issues which will directly impact on the SSSI. Slade brook is the longest tufa (travertine) stream in the UK and is of national importance. (see Petecost et al. The Travertine Dams of Slade Brook, Gloucestershire: their formation and conservation *Geology Today* 16 24-28).

3.6.5 There are many springs in the area, many of which are historic and part of the areas rich history. Increase in either size or depth of the existing quarry may have severe impact on the local hydrology.

3.7 Employment and Economy

3.7.1 Any increase in quarrying activity would be detrimental to the local economy, which is based largely on farming and tourism, without providing any significant employment opportunities. Indeed it is likely that there would be a net reduction in employment opportunities in the area.

3.7.2 Local businesses such as pubs, hotels, guest houses, shops and the youth hostel depend on tourists to survive. Large scale expansion would be detrimental to these businesses and result in loss of job and facilities for local people.

3.8 Environment and Landscape

3.8.1 The effect of additional quarrying will have a devastating and permanent effect on the landscape which is a major attraction for tourists and residents by virtue of the fact that the land lies within the ancient Hundred of St Briavels, is adjacent to the Statutory Forest and the Wye Valley AONB.

3.8.2 Para 2.3.4 (Proposed Strategic Priorities) states “To protect [the environment] and where appropriate, enhance, the quality of landscapes, habitats, heritage and other environmental assets, having full regard to their international, national and local importance”.

- 3.8.3 Para 2.6.2 states that the Council will always work “*to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area*”.
- 3.8.4 Para 6.3.3 states “*proposals for minerals development will be permitted where they do not have a significant adverse effect on the local landscape or unless the impact can be mitigated. Where significant adverse impacts cannot be fully mitigated, the social, environmental and economic benefits of the proposal must outweigh any harm arising from the impacts*”.
- 3.8.5 Due to the landscape of areas B and C it would be impossible to construct bunds of sufficient size to prevent oversight of quarry activities in these areas which would result in considerable negative impact on the area.
- 3.8.6 The bunds required to shield any quarry works from wind would themselves be an eyesore, impractical and prohibitively expensive to construct. Lack of suitable bunds would result in excessive dust being blown from the works resulting in a significant health hazard.

3.9 History and Archaeology

- 3.9.1 The effects of additional quarrying on historical artefacts, buildings and items of great archaeological importance are irreversible.
- 3.9.2 Para 2.2.5 states “*Mineral working will act as a positive driver for protecting and enhancing the quality of environmental assets and designations such as the....Wye Valley AONB*”. This area lies within the ancient Hundred of St Briavels, is adjacent to the Statutory Forest and the Wye Valley AONB.
- 3.9.3 Para 6.6.2 states “*There will be a presumption in favour of the conservation of the significance of designated heritage assets and their settings, and of those non-designated heritage assets with archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance*”.

3.10 Enforcement

- 3.10.1 Experience has shown that conditions attached to existing quarrying permissions have been frequently and blatantly disregarded by operators and enforcement woefully lacking, so, until evidence is provided that a long term commitment is given to resource the planning authority to ensure rigid enforcement no further land should be identified as a potential for quarrying.
- 3.10.2 Para 2.2.25 (Proposed Strategic priorities) states “*to secure sound and enforceable working practices which will mitigate against adverse*

impacts on local communities and businesses and will be systematically monitored.”

3.11 Cumulative Impact

3.11.1 Para 8.2.3 states “*Planning permission will be granted where the proposal would not have an unacceptable cumulative impact....and would include an assessment of noise, odour, traffic, dust, health, ecology and visual impacts*”.

3.11.2 Residents have raised concerns about property values in the vicinity of areas B and C. Due to the MLP indicating these areas as potential sites for stone extraction will result in any property search highlighting this fact and make those properties directly adjacent to these areas valueless.

4. CRFD 4- Hewelsfield (Area A)

4.1 St Briavels Parish Council specifically objects to the proposals for Hewelsfield quarry as follows:

4.2 Land use.

4.2.1 The site is directly adjacent to Cowshill farm which is renowned for its beef production. Quarry development would impact on their reputation and destroy many years of development of the beef herd.

4.2.2 Permanent loss of 36ha of good grade 2 agricultural land which is required to meet ever increasing demands for food is totally unacceptable.

4.2.3 There is no requirement to include this agricultural land in the MLP as other forms of development would not be permitted as the site is within the AONB.

4.2.4 Inclusion of these areas in the MLP will result in presumption for quarrying and future planning applications will be granted.

4.3 Need.

4.3.1 The draft MLP states that the site “*...being within the Wye Valley AONB is a significant constraint and given the NPPF policy on mineral working in the AONB, very special circumstances need to be made to justify allocations...*” These ‘very special circumstances’ simply do not exist.

4.3.2 The draft MLP states that the site “*...would be unlikely to contribute to the landbank until the very late stages of the plan period and largely contribute towards the period post 2030*”. The inclusion of Hewelsfield

is outside the scope of the MLP and will take significant time to develop and have some “*very significant issues to overcome*”.

- 4.3.3 MLP, Section 2, Page 11, Drivers for change, states that “*there are sufficient amounts of workable crushed rock to last 18.58 years*” i.e. until 2033
- 4.3.4 MLP, Section 2, Page 11, Drivers for change, states that “*Growth is focused on urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham and will include regeneration of brown field land. This offers opportunities for the reuse and recycling of waste materials as a replacement for construction aggregates*”. Greater use of recycled materials will significantly reduce the need for quarries and destruction of the areas proposed in the MLP
- 4.3.4 Para 4.2.8 states that there is a “*shortfall of 2mt for the Forest of Dean, but a surplus of 3mt for the Cotswolds*”.
- 4.3.5 The 70/30 production split between the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds is an historic ratio and it is important that this is tested against today’s reserves and demands to ascertain if it is still valid.

4.4 Health

- 4.4.1 There are serious concerns about the effects of airborne dust particles - believed to be toxic - released on blasting, processing and transportation. There is evidence of an increase in respiratory health issues among those living and working close to and downwind of quarries. Before any further land is identified in the MLP independent Health Impact Assessments (HIA) should be undertaken for every potential site.
- 4.4.2 Para 2.2.5 states “*Where mineral working takes place, amenity, health, quality of life and economic vitality will be paramount to the decision making process*”.
- 4.4.3 The prevailing wind direction would result in dust being blown directly towards St Briavels / St Briavels Common and have a direct impact on residents.

4.5 Transport network

- 4.5.1 This site is located in a rural area served by the B4228, a narrow road with many tight bends. To reach the motorway network LGV’s would be required to travel on local A and B class road which are not designed for such traffic. The increase in LGV’s through the local area will increase congestion, noise and pollution.
- 4.5.2 Despite repeated requests from St Briavels Parish Council the recognised LGV route through the area is not signposted therefore LGV’s routinely transit through St Briavels, the development of sites

nominated in the MLP can only add to the numbers of LGV movements. Sourcing stone from quarries located closer to the motorway network would be more environmentally friendly.

4.5.3 Para 2.1.2 states *“Moving minerals by road puts a strain on an already pressurised highway network. It can cause adverse local impacts and contribute to climate change.”*

4.5.4 Para 2.3.4 (Proposed Strategic policies) states *“Where transportation by road is the only practical option, roads unsuitable for HGVs will be avoided”.*

4.6 Water courses

4.6.1 Quarrying can have irreversible effects on underground water courses and aquifers. This will lead to reduced underground storage capacity and thus to an increased risk of flooding given the scientifically accepted fact that climate change will lead to more frequent incidents of heavy rainfall.

4.6.2 There is particular concern about the effects on local water courses. Before any land is identified as suitable for quarrying the County Council as the responsible authority must ensure that modelling for each site is undertaken correctly.

4.6.3 Para 6.2.5 states *“...development will not be permitted unless appropriate measures can be imposed to mitigate any harmful effects [on water quality]”.*

4.7 Employment and Economy

4.7.1 Any increase in quarrying activity would be detrimental to the local economy, which is based largely on farming and tourism, without providing any significant employment opportunities for local people. Indeed it is likely that there would be a net reduction in employment opportunities in the area.

4.7.2 Local businesses such as pubs, hotels, guest houses, shops and the youth hostel depend on tourists to survive. Large scale expansion would be detrimental to these businesses and result in loss of job and facilities for local people.

4.8 Environment and Landscape

4.8.1 The effect of additional quarrying will have a devastating and permanent effect on the landscape which is a major attraction for tourists and residents by virtue of the fact that the land lies within the ancient Hundred of St Briavels and the Wye Valley AONB.

- 4.8.2 Para 2.3.4 (Proposed Strategic Priorities) states *“To protect [the environment] and where appropriate, enhance, the quality of landscapes, habitats, heritage and other environmental assets, having full regard to their international, national and local importance”*.
- 4.8.3 Para 2.6.2 states that the Council will always work *“to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area”*.
- 4.8.4 Para 6.3.3 states *“proposals for minerals development will be permitted where they do not have a significant adverse effect on the local landscape or unless the impact can be mitigated. Where significant adverse impacts cannot be fully mitigated, the social, environmental and economic benefits of the proposal must outweigh any harm arising from the impacts”*.

4.9 History and Archaeology

- 4.9.1 The effects of additional quarrying on historical artefacts, buildings and items of great archaeological importance are irreversible.
- 4.9.2 Para 2.2.5 states *“Mineral working will act as a positive driver for protecting and enhancing the quality of environmental assets and designations such as the....Wye Valley AONB”*. This area lies within the ancient Hundred of St Briavels and the Wye Valley AONB.
- 4.9.3 Para 6.6.2 states *“There will be a presumption in favour of the conservation of the significance of designated heritage assets and their settings, and of those non-designated heritage assets with archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance”*.

4.10 Enforcement

- 4.10.1 Experience has shown that conditions attached to existing quarrying permissions have been frequently and blatantly disregarded by operators and enforcement woefully lacking, so, until evidence is provided that a long term commitment is given to resource the planning authority to ensure rigid enforcement no further land should be identified as a potential for quarrying.
- 4.10.2 Para 2.2.25 (Proposed Strategic priorities) states *“to secure sound and enforceable working practices which will mitigate against adverse impacts on local communities and businesses and will be systematically monitored.”*

4.11 Cumulative Impact

- 4.11.1 Para 8.2.3 states *“Planning permission will be granted where the proposal would not have an unacceptable cumulative impact....and*

would include an assessment of noise, odour, traffic, dust, health, ecology and visual impacts”.

4.11.2 Residents have raised concerns about property values in the vicinity of the proposed quarry. Due to the MLP indicating these areas as potential sites for stone extraction will result in any property search highlighting this fact and make those properties in the area valueless.

4.11.3 The MLP adopted in 2003 was subject to a public inquiry where the site was not recommended for inclusion by the inspector. There has been no change to the justification since the public inquiry.

5. Statistics for Other Authorities

5.1 Monmouthshire County Council Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011

5.1.1 Para 5.121 “... will address the requirements of the national policy [for the supply of aggregates] by ensuring that a sufficient land bank is maintained and by safeguarding known aggregate resources.”

5.1.2 Para 5.122 “... the number of years of mineral extraction that a land bank will provide should be based on the latest 3 years production figures” (this differs from Gloucestershire’s basis which is 10 years).

5.1.3 Para 5.122 “The average crushed rock production ... was 0.44mt for the years 2003-2005; ... the estimated reserves were 18.4mt, therefore, the authorities had more than sufficient reserves”.

5.1.4 It thus appears from the LDP that Monmouthshire could make a significantly increased contribution to the national requirement.

5.2 Somerset County Council Minerals Plan

5.2.1 Para 6.23 “The South West regional “apportionment” for 2005 to 2020 was 412.73mt. Somerset’s recommended apportionment for 2005 to 2020 was 214.65mt which equates to a provision of 13.41t each year”.

5.2.2 Para 6.26 “...the authority should prepare an assessment based on a rolling average of 10 years sales data...”

5.2.3 Para 6.29 “... average 10 year sales figures ... 10.81mt...”

5.2.4 Para 6.35 “Somerset has a land bank of approximately 451mt (2012 figure).”

5.2.5 Para 6.36 “... based on [the above] Somerset has sufficient reserves for the next 41 years.” (i.e. 451 / 10.81)

5.2.6 It is perfectly clear therefore that there are more than adequate reserves in Somerset to allow a significant reduction in levels of production in Gloucestershire without affecting the supply nationally. Furthermore, the quarries in that county are far better placed to access the motorway network and indeed 4 sites have rail links direct from the quarry.

6. Forest of Dean District Council Allocations Plan Pre Publication Draft

6.1 This plan, currently out for consultation, quotes, in respect of St Briavels:

- Service village; Policy CSP16, a settlement with some local facilities but generally relatively little opportunity for additional development.
- Partly within AONB, some Important Open Areas and protected outdoor recreation space, protected Wye valley woodlands close by. SACs and Conservation Area, Scheduled ancient Monument, Listed Buildings.

6.1.1 Para 42.1 The village has an attractive historic centre around the castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. This part of the settlement is characterised by traditional buildings of stone, slate and render. It is a Conservation Area and includes several Listed Buildings.

6.1.2 Key Issues 2. The countryside surrounding St Briavels provides an attractive setting and it is not considered appropriate to allow the developed area to expand into the surrounding open countryside.

7. Biodiversity and Ecological Services

7.1 The loss of the areas to quarrying indicated in the MLP will contribute significantly to further loss of biodiversity with Gloucestershire. These losses cannot be replaced once lost and cannot be relocated to allow development.

7.2 Irreversible damage caused by human pollution and exploitation of the natural world has and will, further impact on ecological services such as:

- Provision of clean water
- Adequate water storage
- Clean air
- Absorption of pollutants
- Pollination services
- Temperature regulation
- Climate tempering
- Extreme weather buffering
- Food provision

7.3 The overall impact on biodiversity and ecological services of the MLP needs to be considered and greater use of recycling of construction materials imposed. Innovative ways of recycling construction materials need to be developed and enforced which if implemented correctly will reduce the environmental impact whilst reducing extraction and transportation costs.

8. Conclusions

8.1 There is little justification for the areas of Stow Hill, Clearwell and Hewelsfield to be included in the 2014 MLP as mineral requirements for Gloucestershire can be met from within existing plans and by co-operation and negotiation with other authorities where there appear to be huge reserve available.

8.2 Local jobs can be safeguarded whilst ensuring the local environment and health of residents doesn't suffer.

8.3 Local MPA contribution to the national requirement can be achieved by limiting quarry development to area D of Stow Hill, Clearwell quarry (CRFD 1).

8.4 As stated at the outset of this response we acknowledge an obligation on the part of the county MPA to contribute to the national demand and accept that new areas for extraction will need to be identified in the longer term.

8.5 We have no objection to the allocation of area A at Stowe Hill / Clearwell quarry (approximately 10ha) being included in the MLP providing full assessments and safeguards are imposed and enforced to ensure minimal impact on residents health is caused by dust, noise and vibration. Additionally, impact to the environment is considered and geomorphological, hydrological and ecological assessments are undertaken.

8.6 St Briavels Parish Council, with the overwhelming support of local residents urge you in the strongest possible terms to:

Exclude areas B and C at Stowe Hill / Clearwell quarry from the draft MLP

Exclude the proposed allocation at Hewelsfield in its entirety from the MLP.

Yours truly

**Andrew J Carss QGM
Chair
St Briavels Parish Council**