



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

# Guidance on the Managed Aggregate Supply System

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## Introduction

1. Aggregate Minerals (principally sand and gravel and crushed rock), like all other minerals, make an essential contribution to the nation's prosperity and to the quality of life. They underpin the construction sector and provide the critical raw material for built development, other construction, manufacturing and the maintenance of infrastructure.
2. There are a number of sources of supply of aggregates, which include secondary, recycled and marine sources. However, the majority of aggregate demand is met from extraction from land. There are also significant geographical imbalances in the occurrence of suitable natural aggregate resources, and the areas where they are most needed.
3. For over 35 years, these imbalances in supply and demand have been met through the Managed Aggregate Supply System. The underpinning concept behind the Managed Aggregate Supply System is that Mineral Planning Authorities which have adequate resources of aggregates make an appropriate contribution to national as well as local supply, while making due allowance for the need to reduce environmental damage to an acceptable level. Furthermore, Government expects resource-poor areas to make some contribution to meeting local and national needs, where that can be done sustainably.
4. Since quarries take many years to plan and bring into production, the Managed Aggregate Supply System has provided the mechanism to deliver long term planning for the supply of aggregates, based on sound evidence. It has also served to proactively manage the rate of primary extraction, by placing added emphasis on the need to meet demand from other sources – including secondary and recycled materials and marine dredged aggregates.
5. The Government recognises the need to maintain the main principles of Managed Aggregate Supply System. However, whilst recognising that minerals are a national strategic resource, the Government considers that a steady and adequate supply of aggregate minerals should be delivered by decentralising more power to Mineral Planning Authorities to determine the appropriate level of aggregate extraction, in keeping with its principles for a more localist approach to planning more generally.
6. The key principle under this reformed Managed Aggregate Supply System is the "Local Aggregate Assessment", where each Mineral Planning Authority is expected to prepare an assessment of the demand for and supply of aggregates, covering:

- a forecast of the demand for aggregates based on the average of 10-years sales data and other relevant local information<sup>1</sup>;
- an analysis of all aggregate supply options, as indicated by landbanks, mineral plan allocations and capacity data e.g. marine licences for marine aggregate extraction and the potential throughputs from wharves. This analysis should be informed by planning information, the aggregate industry and other bodies such as local enterprise partnerships; and
- an assessment of the balance between demand and supply, and the economic and environmental opportunities and constraints that might influence the situation. It should conclude if there is a shortage or a surplus of supply and, if the former, how this is being addressed.

Mineral Planning Authorities may, if they intend to prepare joint plans, prepare joint local aggregate assessments. Any analysis and assessment must be evidence-based.

## **Aggregate Working Parties**

7. Effective monitoring of aggregate extraction is essential to ensure the continued steady and adequate provision of aggregate to market. Each local aggregate assessment should therefore be submitted to a technical advisory body (“Aggregate Working Party”), made up of groupings of Mineral Planning Authorities, to provide fit-for-purpose and comprehensive data on minerals planning, and to fulfil the duty placed on Mineral Planning Authorities to co-operate on strategic aggregate minerals planning. To be effective, membership of each Aggregate Working Party should include members of each Mineral Planning Authority and aggregate industry representation as agreed by each Working Party, and the Marine Maritime Organisation where necessary. Other organisations should be allowed to attend at the discretion of the Panels themselves. It will be for each Aggregate Working Party to decide on the Chair and frequency of meetings. Each should operate in a transparent manner, with all minutes of meetings and annual reports being made publicly available.
8. The role of each Aggregate Working Party should be to monitor the operation of the Managed Aggregate Supply System, and in particular by:
  - a) providing technical advice to each individual (or group of) Mineral Planning Authority on the adequacy of each local aggregate assessment. Each Mineral Planning Authority should submit its annual local aggregate assessment to the relevant Aggregate Working Party for consideration and

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<sup>1</sup> Including , for example, the National Infrastructure Plan, an update of which is published every year. Mineral Planning Authorities should also look at the average 3 year sales in particular to identify the general trend of demand as part of the consideration of whether it might be appropriate to increase supply.

scrutiny. The views of the Aggregate Working Party are capable of being a material consideration, both in preparing mineral plans and in making decisions on individual planning applications.

b) providing an assessment on the position of overall demand and supply for the Aggregate Working Party area, including whether, in its view, the area is making a full contribution towards meeting both national and local needs. This assessment should be based on local aggregate assessments and should be informed by other economic data. The assessment should also include an indication of emerging trends of demand in the Aggregate Working Party area; and

c) obtaining, collecting and reporting on data on minerals activity in their area. Each Aggregate Working Party should collate annual data on sales, permissions and mineral reserves in their area, data on recycled and secondary sources, and produce an annual report on these issues.

9. In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, and to ensure complete geographical coverage in England, each Mineral Planning Authority should belong to an Aggregate Working Party. However, in order to allow each authority to deal best with its own local issues, the authority should align itself with neighbouring and other authorities with whom it considers appropriate. Mineral Planning Authorities should not feel compelled to work within imposed geographical boundaries, nor to work on the basis of former government office region boundaries.

## **Local Aggregate Assessments**

10. Local Aggregate Assessments should seek to provide an assessment of the demand for and supply of aggregates in the Mineral Planning Authorities area based on the following supply options:

- a) recycled aggregates, including from construction, demolition and excavation waste;
- b) secondary aggregates, whose sources come from industrial wastes such as glass, ash, railway ballast, fine ceramic waste and scrap tyres; and industrial and minerals by-products, notably waste from china clay, coal and slate extraction and spent foundry sand;
- c) marine sources, from areas licensed by the Marine Maritime Organisation for marine sand and gravel dredging. Over the next few years, the Marine Maritime Organisation will prepare Marine Plans around England to guide the licensing process;
- d) imports into and exports out of the Mineral Planning Authority Area. The Mineral Planning Authority must capture the amount of aggregate that it is importing and exporting as part of its Assessment; and
- e) land-won resources, including land banks and allocations.

11. The Government recognises that very few Mineral Planning Authorities will be able to source aggregates from all the supply options mentioned in paragraph 10 above, but expects each Mineral Planning Authority to plan for aggregates, taking account of all sources and having regard to the overall objective to minimise the amount of primary extraction consistent with delivering the overall policy of a steady and adequate supply.
12. There exist a range of sources where such information may be obtained to assist in the preparation of local aggregate assessments. These include, but are not limited to:
  - a) the Annual Minerals Raised Inquiry Survey, which sets out sales of each type of mineral in Great Britain;
  - b) the four-yearly Aggregate Minerals Surveys on the sales, movement, consumption and permitted reserves of aggregate minerals;
  - c) local data on the arisings of and recovery/disposal routes of Construction and Demolition waste, including inert waste used to restore mineral sites. This includes data available from the Environment Agency;
  - d) the Annual Report of the Aggregate Working Party, which sets out sales of aggregates, aggregate mineral reserves, local information on Construction and Demolition waste, secondary aggregates, and planning permissions;
  - e) any Annual Monitoring Reports prepared by Mineral Planning Authorities setting out the effectiveness of mineral policy and providing information to be used in reviewing and preparing new policies;
  - f) data and information on mineral resources held by the British Geological Survey and the Crown Estate.
13. In identifying sources and preparing local aggregate assessments, Mineral Planning Authorities should also have regard, where possible, to the intended use of each source of aggregate. There are some uses – for example, construction fill – for which the source may not be important. However, for some uses, it will be necessary to ensure that the quality of the aggregate is appropriate, and Mineral Planning Authorities should plan accordingly.
14. Mineral Planning Authorities should provide, as far as possible, a clear guide to mineral operators and the public about locations where land-won aggregate mineral extraction may take place. Provision for land-won extraction should take the form of specific sites, wherever possible, but preferred areas and/or areas of search may be appropriate.
15. The Government recognises that, to deliver the overarching policy objectives, there is still a clear role to forecast for the provision of aggregates in England. It will therefore continue to publish National and Sub-National Guidelines using an econometric model and will continue to make assumptions on the likely contribution of demand for alternatives,

imports and marine-dredged sand and gravel. These Guidelines will serve two key roles:

- a) they will seek to provide an indication of the total amount of aggregate provision that the Mineral Planning Authorities, collectively within each Aggregate Working Party, should aim to provide. There is no expectation that each Aggregate Working Party must meet the total set out in the Sub-National Guidelines especially if the environmental cost of meeting the guidelines is likely to be unacceptable. Nor is it expected or desirable that Mineral Planning Authorities will simply take the figure for each sub-national level and apportion it amongst constituent authorities. However, in those areas where apportionment of the land-won element has already taken place, those figures may be used as an indicator as to how much should be planned for. These Guidelines should therefore be seen as a means of providing an indicative amount that can be used as a cross-reference or another source of evidence when determining plans. This may mean that Mineral Planning Authorities may decide, collectively, to plan for more than set out in the Guidelines or, where based on robust evidence, plan for less. However, although these guidelines should be considered on this basis and not as a provider of rigid standards, they are nonetheless capable of being a material consideration when determining the soundness of minerals plans; and
  - b) they will provide individual Mineral Planning Authorities, where they are having difficulty in obtaining data, with some understanding or context of the overall demand and possible sources that might be available in their Aggregate Working Party area.
16. The Government is clear that every Mineral Planning Authority with mineral resource has a role to play in meeting national and local demand. However, it recognises that in some areas, the availability of the resource is affected by environmental constraints. Although local aggregate assessments will be taken into account when preparing minerals plans, the Plan itself will still continue to be subject to the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment, based on a robust evidence base for aggregate supply options.
17. Mineral Planning Authorities are strongly encouraged to include such local aggregate assessments within any Annual Monitoring Reports as part of their responsibility of keeping the demand and supply of aggregates under regular review.

### **National Aggregate Co-ordinating group**

18. The work of individual Mineral Planning Authorities and the Aggregate Working Party will be guided by a National Aggregate Co-ordinating Group convened by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The Group will include representatives from each Aggregate Working Party, as well as from Government and other organisations as deemed appropriate.

19. The overall purpose of the National Aggregate Co-ordinating Group is to monitor the overall provision of aggregates in England, and to provide timely advice to Government and individual Aggregate Working Parties. To meet its purpose, specific activities include:
- a) monitoring annual reports produced by each Aggregate Working Party, with particular scrutiny of the landbank position;
  - b) examining any significant difference between individual Aggregate Working Party reports and the relevant National and Sub-National Guideline figure, to understand the reason for such a difference, and whether it raises issues of concern about ensuring a steady and adequate provision of aggregates in England. The National Aggregate Co-ordinating Group should share its findings with both the individual Aggregate Working Party and Government as necessary; and
  - c) providing guidance to Government on future National and Sub-National requirements for aggregates supply. This will include whether, and when, it needs to review National and Sub-National guidelines for aggregate provision in England
20. The advice of the National Aggregate Co-ordinating Group to each Aggregate Working Party may be a material planning consideration when preparing plans and making decisions on individual planning applications.

## **Aggregate landbanks**

21. Aggregates landbanks are principally a monitoring tool to provide Minerals Planning Authorities with early warning of possible disruption to the provision of an adequate and steady supply of land-won aggregates in their particular area. They should be used principally as a trigger for a Mineral Planning Authority to review the current provision of aggregates in its area, and consider whether to conduct a review of allocation of sites in its local minerals plan. This is of particular importance in the case of aggregates because of the scale and long term nature of the industry, as well as the length of time it may take from identifying a site to the commencement of extraction.
22. Mineral Planning Authorities are strongly encouraged to report on their level of landbanks in their Annual Monitoring Reports.
23. The landbank is the sum in tonnes of all permitted reserves for which valid planning permissions are extant. This includes current non-working sites but excludes dormant sites and “inactive sites” (set out under the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 and Environment Act 1995, for which a review is required which may need to include an Environmental Statement, before operation can commence or resume). The length of the landbank should be calculated using the expected provision (supply in response to demand) included in the local minerals plan, expressed on an annual basis.



24. Mineral Planning Authorities should seek to maintain a landbank of at least 7 years for land-won sand and gravel and 10 years for crushed rock, based on the past 10 years average sales. Longer landbank periods are often appropriate to address specific operational issues. Separate landbanks should be calculated for crushed rock and sand and gravel because they partly serve different markets and have different site infrastructure requirements. In general, quarries producing rock aggregates will need a longer security of reserves to justify capital investment in, for example, crushing equipment. However, a degree of flexibility is needed to allow for maintenance of production capacity when major sites have to be replaced or for scarce types or qualities of aggregate, or to allow for distance to market.
25. Landbanks are also capable of being used as a development management tool and as an indicator required to assess when new permissions should be considered within each Mineral Planning Authority Area. However, should Mineral Planning Authorities wish to use landbanks in this way, then each application for minerals extraction must be considered on its own merits, regardless of the length of the landbank. Mineral Planning Authorities should not be automatically granting planning permission because the landbank levels are under 7 or 10 years (as appropriate).
26. Equally an adequate or excess landbank is not a reason for withholding planning permission unless there are other planning objections which are not outweighed by planning benefits. There may be valid reasons why an application of minerals development is brought forward in an area where there exists an adequate landbank, including:
- significant future increases in demand that can be forecast with reasonable certainty;
  - the location of the consented reserve is inappropriately located relative to the main market areas;
  - the nature, type and qualities of the aggregate such as its suitability for a particular use within a distinct and separate market;
  - known constraints on the availability of consented reserves that might limit output over the plan period.
27. Moreover, a large existing landbank bound up in very few sites or in limited ownership should not stifle competition.
28. Where there is a distinct market for a specific type or quality of aggregate such as high specification rock, asphaltting sand, building sand or concreting sand, a separate landbank calculation based on provision to that market may be justified for that material or those materials.