

## Local Aggregate Assessment 2017-2019 Consultation Update

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### 1. Summary

- 1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Mineral Planning Authorities to publish an annual Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA). The LAA is an assessment of the demand and supply of aggregates in Somerset. It is a very important part of the evidence base to ensure that a steady and adequate supply of minerals is maintained to meet the mineral needs of the country. This LAA was prepared by the policy team at SCC with the support of our appointed consultants BPP, in conjunction with Exmoor National Park Authority and in discussion with mineral operators in Somerset.

A draft version of the LAA was shared in February 2022 with the South West Aggregate Working Party (SWAWP) and other stakeholders. The SWAWP is an advisory group comprising of Mineral Planning Authorities, central government and representatives from the aggregate industry in the South West. Overall, the comments received were supportive and some revisions were made to take account of those. In July, a final version of the LAA was sent to members and SLT for any final comments. No comments were received, and subject to final sign off, the LAA is ready to be published.

### 2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. The LAA report outlines that Somerset remains a major producer of crushed rock aggregates. Indeed, Somerset had the highest sales of crushed rock of all the Mineral Planning Authorities areas in England in 2019 with aggregate sales of 15.19 million tonnes. Importantly, Somerset has sufficient permitted aggregate reserves of carboniferous limestone with a 27.1 year landbank. (The landbank figure is the number of years supply with planning permission). The current reserves are therefore above the 15-year landbank provision as set out in the Somerset Mineral Plan.
- 2.2 For the first time, and with the agreement of the operator, the LAA has been able to report separately the data for Silurian Andesite. The high polished stone value of Silurian Andesite is used for road surfacing due to its anti-skid qualities. Due to these specific qualities, the Somerset Mineral Plan also makes provision for a separate 15-year landbank for Silurian Andesite. The current reserve of just under 3 million tonnes gives a landbank figure of 7

years which is below the 15-year plan requirement. In order to address this issue, and the difficulties expressed by the operator in safely accessing those permitted reserves, the operator is looking to submit a planning application within the next year to extend the quarry.

- 2.3 One key point that did arise from the consultation process was stating the importance of the 2 rail linked quarries (ie Whatley and Torr Works). Moreover, whilst the current landbank for crushed rock is 27.1 years, the planning permission end dates of the two main rail-linked quarries, are due to expire in 2030 and 2040 respectively. This has potential implications for the ability of crushed rock worked in Somerset to meet future demand for crushed rock in the London and the South-East. Whilst the 2 rail linked quarries are clearly very important, close monitoring is required of all the expiry dates to ensure that the landbank is maintained. Engagement with operators has begun and shall continue to ensure that the steady and adequate supply of minerals is maintained.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. The LAA is an assessment of the demand for and supply of aggregates in Somerset. Aggregates (sand and gravel, and crushed rock) are the raw materials used in construction and a range of other products. The LAA is required by central Government to forecast the demand for aggregates based on the average of 10 year sales data and other relevant local information. SCC, as the Mineral Planning Authority must participate in the operation of an Aggregate Working Party (AWP) and take the advice of that AWP into account when preparing their LAA. SCC are members of the South West AWP which is an advisory group comprising of Mineral Planning Authorities, central government and representatives from the aggregate industry in the South West
- 3.2 The Somerset LAA is also prepared on behalf of the Exmoor National Park Authority for that part of Exmoor which is located in Somerset.

### **4. Consultations undertaken and outcomes**

- 4.1. The draft LAA was shared in February 2022 with the South West Aggregate Working Party (SW AWP) and other stakeholders. Three responses were received from the SW AWP, the South East AWP and Aggregate Industries (quarry operator). Overall, the comments received were supportive considering the report to be thorough and comprehensive. Aside from some clarification sought in relation to some of the figures and tables, the key points made stressed the importance of the 2 rail linked quarries at Whatley and Torr Works. Moreover, particular attention should be given to the landbank figure and the planning permission expiry dates for those 2 rail linked quarries, both of which currently expire in 8 and 18 years respectively. Additional wording was added to the LAA report to acknowledge this point.

In July 2022, a final version of the LAA was sent to members and SLT for any final comments. No comments were received, and subject to final sign off, the LAA is ready to be published.

## **5. Implications**

- 5.1.** The Local Aggregate Assessment (2017-2019) report is an important part of the evidence base for the SCC Mineral Planning Authority setting out the latest position regarding mineral supply and demand. Without the report, the Mineral Planning Authority would not be able to thoroughly undertake its monitoring role nor have the latest information to assist and inform the forthcoming review of the Somerset Mineral Plan.

## **6. Background papers**

- 6.1** Local Aggregate Assessment 2017-2019 report.

**Note** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author