

Minerals and Waste Planning Policy
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Maidstone Borough Council

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By email to: mwlp@kent.gov.uk

Date: 07/09/2023

Dear sir or madam

Kent Minerals and Waste local Plan, and Kent Minerals Sites Plan; Regulation 18 Consultation Draft

Thank you for consulting Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) on the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039 - Further Proposed Changes, and the amendments to the Kent Mineral Sites Plan.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) places a legal duty on planning authorities to engage constructively, actively, and on an ongoing basis, to ensure the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in relation to strategic issues. Effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy.

Maidstone Borough Council wrote to you on the 09 August 2023 setting out its preliminary views on the proposed changes to the Minerals and Waste and Sites Plans, and confirmed that these would be subject to formal ratification.

A meeting of the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee was held on 6th September 2023, and it is therefore appropriate that I convey the strength of feeling relating to the allocation of Hermitage Quarry to the consultation response, in addition to the letter which was sent on 09 August 2023.

The views from the policy advisory meeting are as follows:

MBC notes that the proposed Kent Minerals Sites Plan proposes an extension to Hermitage Quarry and that allocation extends the workings into the borough of Maidstone.

Maidstone Borough Council recognises the need to preserve and plan for mineral extraction, and that extending this site will meet a local need for minerals which will limit broader environmental impact of materials being shipped in from elsewhere. Additionally, the extension of this quarry will allow existing on-site infrastructure and processing areas to be used. However it has concerns that the proposed allocation lies within an area designated as a Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland, meaning that the development will cause harm to biodiversity. Whilst the NPPF allows for exceptional circumstances, it is for the County Council to demonstrate that there exists exceptional circumstance that would meet policies set out in the NPPF.

MBC will expect that KCC will provide significant reassurances that there are exceptional circumstances to accord with the NPPF, and should this be demonstrated then maximum mitigation and restoration of the site to prevent the site coming forward for residential development will be expected.

MBC notes that KCC has recently commenced a hard rock call for sites. Should an alternative site be found through this process, then MBC will respond accordingly.

It is noted that the extended allocation also lies within close proximity to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and MBC requests that should the site be included in the adopted plan then policy shall require that mitigations be put in place to prevent adverse impact on this designation.

I hope these further comments are helpful, and Maidstone Borough Council look forward to continuing, constructive dialogue on strategic issues as part of the duty to cooperate as our respective Local Plans progress.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Paul Cooper

Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development

Maidstone Borough Council, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ