

We are concerned about the joint effect of policies 1 and 4 and are therefore submitting this representation under the heading of both policies.

So far as aggregates are concerned the draft plan includes a map which shows where these occur and then, like the adopted plan, it defines specific sites and preferred areas for their extraction. The adopted plan includes policies which clearly state how applications for quarrying will be dealt with: policy 4 says that applications outside preferred areas WILL BE REFUSED UNLESS [certain criteria apply]; policy 1 (which applies to all areas) says that permission will be granted ONLY WHERE IT IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE SUPPLIES ARE AVAILABLE TO MEET [certain requirements].

These policies of the adopted plan are admirably clear in setting out the tests which have to be met. The corresponding policies of the draft plan (also numbered 1 and 4) are very much less clear. They are so vague that residents who may be affected by proposals will not be able to ascertain whether or not the proposals are in accordance with the plan. Secondly, the draft policies are equivocal and give insufficient weight to the protection of the natural environment, agricultural productivity, biodiversity and scenic quality of the County, as compared to the need for mineral extraction.

To be more specific, draft policy 4 says that provision for Hertfordshire's apportionment contribution will be met by the identification of specific sites and preferred areas; it does not go on to say that the need for aggregates will be met exclusively by extraction from those sites and areas, and there is no policy in the plan which states that extraction from non-designated areas will not be permitted. There should be such a policy, as there is in the adopted plan, although we recognise that a blanket ban may not be appropriate and that some exceptions may have to be mentioned. Draft policy 4 also says that applications in the designated areas will be CONSIDERED AGAINST draft policy 3 (maintenance of a landbank). It should say clearly, as the existing policy 1 does, that permission will not be granted if the landbank is already sufficient.

As to draft policy 1, this seems to have been included to reflect the government's overall attitude to planning matters as set out in the NPPF. As such there can be little objection to it, but it adds nothing to the plan and in fact serves to muddy the waters. It is the third paragraph which introduces unnecessary confusion. Take the example of an application for a quarry outside any of the specific sites or preferred areas. The plan contains no policies about quarrying in these undesignated areas, since draft policy 4 applies only to designated areas. We can find no policy which explains how applications for quarrying outside those areas will be dealt with. So in this example, paragraph 3 of draft policy 1 would come into play: as there are no policies relevant to the proposal, the Council would grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account [etc]. This has the effect of throwing all the cards back into the air: what is required is a clear statement, like that in policy 4 of the adopted plan, that applications outside the preferred areas will be REFUSED UNLESS