

Decision Number: 51 (2013/14)

Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030 Pre-submission Consultation Response

February 2014

1. Background:

The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan was published for consultation from 31st January – 16th March 2014.

The plan “sets out the overarching strategy and planning policies for mineral extraction, importation and recycling as well as waste management of all of the waste streams that are generated or managed in Kent.”

Site specific allocations for minerals and waste developments are **not** included in this consultation document but will be set out in the forthcoming Minerals Sites Plan and the Waste Sites Plan.

2. Implications for Sevenoaks:

- Sevenoaks District is included within the plan but there are no specific policies.
- Dunbrik HWRC and waste transfer is listed in paragraph 6.0.30 as one of the waste sites which will need to be replaced in the medium or long term.
- The plan also states in paragraph 2.3.3 that large areas of Kent have also been licensed by Government for petroleum exploration and development and specifically references Cowden where an exploratory borehole for fracking was drilled in August 1999 (SE/98/234). The plan states that “permission has since been granted for further tests on the capped well at Cowden to establish the extent of productive capacity of the oil field.”

From our records the Council responded to a KCCRG3 application with “No objection” in 2012 (SE/12/1516) for an extension “to retain Cowden Exploration Site, access and wellhead valve assembly for a further period of one year to allow time for the borehole abandonment and complete the site restoration”. The KCC decision notice for this application stated that no further testing should occur on the site after 31st May 2013. No further applications have been made to the District Council and it is concluded that at present the site has been restored to its previous state following abandonment of the borehole as per the permission. Therefore, the statement within the plan is incorrect or requires further clarification.

3. Proposed response to consultation made via the Limehouse online consultation portal:

Thank you for consulting Sevenoaks District Council on the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 pre-submission document.

The plan makes reference in paragraph 2.3.3 to the exploratory borehole in Cowden, near Tunbridge Wells which was drilled in August 1999. The paragraph states

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“permission has since been granted for further tests on the capped well at Cowden to establish the extent of productive capacity of the oil field.”

However, the District Council has not been made aware of any such permission. Permission was granted in 2012 for an additional one year extension to the original permission to allow time for the borehole abandonment and complete the site restoration. This permission expired in May 2013. Therefore, if a subsequent permission has been granted the District Council should have been consulted. As no consultation has been received, it has been concluded that the borehole is no longer in operation and the site has been returned to its original state. Therefore, SDC request that reference to the site at Cowden be removed from the document.

SDC has no further comments to make.

4. Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

Responding to the consultation is considered to be key to protect and enhance the quality of the countryside throughout the District and to protect residential amenities while making necessary provision for minerals and waste facilities. The alternative option is not to comment. The consequences of this would be to fail to protect the landscape and residents from harmful development .

5. Conclusions

The comments made above in the District Councils response should be forwarded to Kent County Council as the formal response to the consultation.

Risk Assessment Statement

THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION WOULD BE A FAILURE TO TAKE ALL APPROPRIATE ACTIONS TO PROTECT THE LANDSCAPE AND RESIDENTS FROM HARMFUL DEVELOPMENT