

## **Minerals Options Paper – Consultation response form**

We have set up a simple to use web-based response questionnaire. Please visit [www.somersetconsults.org.uk](http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk)

If you do not have access to the web please use this form. It can be returned to us via email at [mineralsandwaste@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:mineralsandwaste@somerset.gov.uk) or post to Minerals and Waste Policy Team, Environment Directorate (PP C601c), County Hall, Taunton, TA1 4DY.

**More help:** If you need help completing this form please email or call 0845 345 9188 to arrange a time to help you.

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### **Consultee details**

Please give your name: ***Jonathan Richards (Planning Liaison Officer)***

Address

***Mendip Hills AONB Unit  
Charterhouse  
Blagdon  
BS40 7XR***

Are you replying on behalf of an organisation? **Yes**

If you selected 'Yes' which organisation:

**Mendip Hills AONB Unit**

Note: All responses will be treated as in the public domain. If you have concerns about supporting information that may be commercially sensitive please contact us.

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### **Vision and objectives**

**Question 1:** Do you agree with the Vision and Objectives? **Yes**

Please let us know if you have any comments on the Vision and Objectives.

**The AONB Unit supports the proposed Vision as it has a strong environmental protection element to it.**

**The Unit also supports the objectives and considers that Objectives C, F and G are of particular relevance to the AONB.**

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## Aggregates

### Issue A1: How big should the crushed rock landbank be?

**Question 2:** Which option do you support for Issue A1?

Please select one option from the list.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Option a: Additional reserves should be identified now to ensure sufficient reserves remain at the end of the plan period to supply a further 15 years*.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option b: Additional reserves should not be identified now. Policy will be included in the plan to allow further reserves to be secured, if necessary, towards the end of the plan period to ensure 15 years* supply is maintained.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer to question 2. If you chose 'Other' what alternative would you propose.

In particular refer to the annual provision that should be made in tonnage (recent sales average or sub-regional apportionment for example) and how many years of supply should be planned for.

\* 15 years has been used as an example in the options. You may consider 10 years or 20 years or more to be more appropriate.

**The AONB Unit does not have a strong preference between these options, but considers that identifying sites up front would give more certainty in relation to sites proposed for future extraction. We consider any new sites or extended extractions should be located outside the AONB boundary unless an overriding national need for the materials can be proven and acceptable mitigation demonstrated.**

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**Question 3:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of identifying preferred areas for future permissions in the Core Strategy?

**As stated in question 2, this would give greater certainty that sites can be found to provide the county's required apportionment without needing to open new sites within the AONB.**

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**Issue A2: If additional reserves are needed for a demand that cannot be met from existing reserves, how much more should be permitted?**

**Question 4:** Which option do you support for Issue A2?

Please select one option from the list.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Option a: The quantity of additional reserves is irrelevant as long as the environmental and local community impacts can be mitigated or are not significant. A proposal should be considered on its own merits.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option b: When the landbank is already sufficient any addition under exceptional circumstances should be limited, for example to 25 years supply, to meet the identified need only.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer to question 4 and give an alternative if you selected "Other". If you support Option b please provide additional information on what would be a reasonable limit and why.

**The AONB Unit considers it essential that environmental and community safeguards are put in place to ensure that impacts are not significant and can be mitigated. A presumption against additional large scale quarrying in the AONB should be established, unless there is an overriding national demand for a material that can only be supplied in that location and adequate environmental, social and economic mitigation can be put in place.**

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**Question 5:** How should an excessive landbank be defined?

**The AONB Unit considers that a 10 year landbank for crushed rock across the AONB and East Mendips, as suggested in MPS1 and the draft NPPF, is reasonable.**

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### Issue A3: Maintaining local supply

**Question 6:** Which option do you support for Issue A3?

Please select one option from the list.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Option a: Proposals will only be permitted if they result in significant benefits to the environment or local communities and do not significantly increase the size of the landbank.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Option b: Proposals will only be permitted if they result in significant benefits to the local community or the environment and are proportionate to the output capacity at the relevant site.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option c: There is no need to make provision for additions to the landbank when the landbank is excessive.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer to question 6. If you support option a or b please comment on the limits that should be applied to additions to the landbank. If you selected "Other" please give an alternative.

**There may be future opportunities for small scale additions in the AONB to maintain the local supply. There must, however be a clear policy to protect and enhance the environment and provide benefits for local communities. These additions should be linked to an existing site, such as Callow Rock or Battscombe, and the extensions should be proportionate to the output from the site. Additions within the AONB should generally be small scale and there needs to be a restoration plan in place to provide landscape, biodiversity and recreation gains.**

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### Dormant and abandoned sites

**Question 7:** Are there other sites that are unlikely to be worked again, or sites listed which should be considered as viable for future working?

**Chelmscombe is the only dormant site listed in the Mendip Hills AONB and the AONB Unit would wish it to remain dormant and be restored to enhance landscape, biodiversity and recreation.**

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**Question 8:** Which former quarry sites (dormant or abandoned) are particularly problematic and why?

**The former Broadmead Quarry, near Westbury sub Mendip, in the AONB is not listed. There would be significant issues of concern to the AONB Unit in terms of landscape impacts if quarrying were proposed again in this location.**

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**Question 9:** For the sites that you are familiar with, what outcome would you like to see for each? Eg. Remove the risk of reopening, or restore for amenity or wildlife, or development such as housing?

**For sites, such as Chelmscombe, within the AONB the general presumption should be for securing environmental enhancements to the landscape, biodiversity and recreation provision. Unless there is an overriding national need in the future, the dormant sites in the AONB should be closed permanently.**

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**Issue A4: How should we manage the shortfall in sand and gravel reserves?**

**Question 10:** Which of the options do you support for Issue A4?

Please select one or more of the options in the list.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Option a: Retain the Areas of Search and Preferred Areas around Whiteball to help meet the apportionment in conjunction with Devon.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option b: Review potential Areas of Search or Preferred Areas through a call for sites from the minerals industry.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Option c: Criteria based policy approach for new sand and gravel reserves.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer to question 10.

**This is not really an issue within the Mendip Hills AONB. However, there may be sites that are visible from the Mendip Hills, and the impact on these views could be included within a criteria based policy.**

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**Issue A5: Restoration and after-use in the East Mendips**

**Question 11:** Which option do you support for Issue A5

Please select one option from the list.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Option a: Restoration and after-use of quarry sites should be determined on a site by site basis.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Option b: Restoration should be determined by meeting criteria defined in an agreed long term strategic landscape scale restoration strategy for the East Mendips.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

Note, consultation with the local community and local landowners will form part of any new restoration strategy.

Please explain your answer to question 11.

**The AONB Unit supports the proposal for a long term strategic, landscape scale restoration strategy. This should be co-ordinated with the AONB Management Plan to ensure that the landscape is managed and enhanced across the whole of the Mendips.**

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**Question 12:** What land uses do you think are particularly suitable for quarry after use?

**Wherever possible, the AONB Unit would wish to see sites restored so as to provide landscape-scale environmental enhancements. The priorities should be to enhance landscape character and biodiversity. In some locations there may be opportunities, subject to the above landscape/biodiversity objectives to create new recreational facilities to benefit local communities and visitors to the area.**

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## Issue A6: Renewable energy

**Question 13:** Which option do you support for Issue A6?

Please select one option from the list.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Option a: Renewable energy schemes should be encouraged where in conjunction with minerals operations to support carbon reduction.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option b: Renewable energy schemes should be considered separately from a mineral application.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer to question 13. If you selected "Other" please provide an alternative.

**Schemes that involve mineral extraction and renewable energy facilities should be developed in an integrated way. They also need to fully consider landscape and biodiversity issues as part of an overall Masterplan for the site. Particular care will be required if sites are within on adjacent to the AONB boundary.**

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**Question 14:** Are there any forms of renewable energy generation that you do not think should be supported?

**Within the AONB, it is unlikely that large scale wind turbines or solar farms could be adequately integrated into the landscape.**

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**Question 15:** Are there any forms of renewable energy generation that are particularly suited to minerals working areas that should be encouraged?

**Small scale solar schemes may be useful to generate energy within the quarrying area and could be ground-mounted or utilise the roofs of any quarry buildings. The visual impact of these would need to be considered as part of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for the whole quarry. Ground or air source heat pumps could possibly be used to supply quarry buildings.**

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## Peat

### Issue P1: Establishing a landbank for peat

**Question 16:** Which option do you support for Issue P1?

Please select one option from the list.

	Option a: A suitably sized landbank will be maintained to ensure adequate provision of peat whilst avoiding over supply.
	Option b: No further peat permissions should be granted.
	Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer to question 16. If you selected "Other" please provide an alternative.

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

**Question 17:** If a landbank policy is developed what should we consider in calculating the size of the landbank?

Please comment on the length of time needed to secure and implement a new permission, what annual supply rate should be planned for and any other factors that should be taken into account.

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

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### Issue P2: Sites with potential to impact on the Somerset Levels and Moors Special Protection Area.

**Question 18:** Which option do you support for Issue P2?

Please select one option from the list.

	Option a: Permissions that will have a detrimental effect on the Somerset Levels and Moors Special Protection Area can be voluntarily revoked and offset by grant of permission at an alternative less sensitive site. The replacement site will still have to be acceptable in planning terms.
	Option b: Peat permissions that will have a detrimental effect on the Somerset Levels and Moors Special Protection Areas should be reviewed and permissions modified or revoked as appropriate. Loss of asset will have to be compensated from the public purse.

	Other (please specify)
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Please explain your answer to question 18. If you selected "Other" please provide an alternative option.

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

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**Issue P3: Reclamation Framework**

**Question 19:** Which option do you support for Issue P3?

Please select one option from the list.

	Option a: The framework for reclamation included in the Minerals Local Plan is still relevant and should continue to guide the type of restoration and after-use of sites.
	Option b: A framework for reclamation allows the industry and community to work towards a positive landscape and range of after-uses in the area, but the Framework in the Local Plan needs to be revised to reflect changes in the industry and opportunities such as biodiversity ambitions of the Natural Environment White Paper.
	Option c: Restoration options should not be prescriptive and should allow for a variety of beneficial land uses. It should be the responsibility of the developer to demonstrate the benefits of the restoration and after-use scheme.
	Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer to question 20. If you selected "Other" please provide an alternative option.

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

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**Question 20:** Which after uses should be included within a restoration framework and why?

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

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## Building Stone

### Issue BS1

#### Local stone for local demand

**Question 21:** Which of the options do you support for Issue BS1?

Please select one or more of the options in the list.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Option a: Affirm the importance of building stone for maintaining local character and develop policy in support of new building stone quarries where a need for the stone can be demonstrated.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Option b: Consider activities and new products that could be developed at building stone quarries to enhance economic viability.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

Please explain your answer to question 21. If you selected "Other" please provide an alternative option.

**Whilst the Core Strategy does not propose the quarrying of building stone within the AONB, there are likely to be situations where building stone could be required to retain the character of local buildings and other stone structures in the AONB. These needs need to be planned for and incorporated into the Core Strategy.**

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**Question 22:** Which building stone types are in short supply or unavailable in Somerset? Please provide specific examples, if known, of inappropriate stone use in sensitive locations?

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**Question 23:** What additional activity do you think could provide additional revenue and could be compatible with a building stone quarry?

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

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**Question 24:** What factors should be considered by the Minerals Planning Authority when determining whether additional activities are appropriate?

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

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## **Mineral Safeguarding Areas**

**Question 25:** Do you agree with the mineral types listed for safeguarding in Chapter 9? Are there any others you would include?

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

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**Question 26:** Are the buffers listed in Chapter 9 appropriate? If no, please propose alternative buffer distances with justification.

**The AONB Unit has no comments to make on this question.**

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## **Issue MSA1**

### **Safeguarding minerals for future use**

**Question 27:** Do you have concerns about the Minerals Planning Authority identifying areas for safeguarding? **Yes**

If you selected 'Yes - please highlight aspects of concern.

**The AONB Unit's main concern is in ensuring that the national importance of the Mendip Hills landscape is fully considered during the safeguarding process.**

Would you like to be involved in defining minerals safeguarding areas. **Yes**

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## **Development Control Policies**

**Question 28:** Do you agree or disagree with the list in Chapter 10? Agree / Disagree

Please state why.

**Where the list refers to AONBs it could also refer to the importance of considering the AONB Management Plan in developing minerals schemes.**

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## **Additional Comments**

Please provide any additional comments you may have below.

**Management of the Mendip Hills AONB is co-ordinated through the Mendip Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-2014, which sets out a number of themes, objectives and actions to ensure the long-term, sustainable management of the AONB. Key objectives in relation to quarrying are as follows:**

**F3 – The restoration and after use of all quarries is planned and carried out to minimise the impact on the landscape, and to be compatible with the purposes of the AONB designation.**

**D1 – All Local Development Framework (LDF) documents and planning decision-making processes will use the following criteria to determine the acceptability of a proposed development in the Mendip Hills AONB. Development will:**

- **Ensure quarrying takes place in the least environmentally damaging manner until the consent expires.**  
**(one of a number of bullet points)**

**The AONB Unit considers that the Core Strategy should make clear cross-references to the AONB Management Plan in relation to any proposals that may impact on the AONB. The Management Plan is a statutory requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and has been endorsed by Somerset County Council.**

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