

**M71. Would Policy SI11 be consistent with national policy in respect of the exploration, appraisal or production of shale gas via hydraulic fracturing? If not, what is the justification for the approach taken?**

- 71.1 As set out in the Mayor's response to the Preliminary Questions<sup>1</sup>, Policy SI11 is consistent with the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<sup>2</sup> against which the draft Plan is being assessed.
- 71.2 Whilst the Mayor of London is not a Minerals Planning Authority (MPA) and does not produce Mineral Plans, it is important for the Mayor to assess the appropriateness and justification for shale gas exploration and hydraulic fracturing in London.
- 71.3 The Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) – Planning for Onshore Oil and Gas (2015) refers to '*a need to explore and develop our shale gas and oil resources in a safe, sustainable and timely manner*' and sets out a number of measures so planning applications and appeals for oil and gas applications are dealt with as soon as possible.<sup>3</sup> The 2015 WMS specifically applies to underperformance by local authorities in respect of oil and gas applications and is not considered applicable to the preparation of the London Plan.

*Shale gas resources in Greater London*

- 71.4 Shale gas exploration and production can only occur in licensed areas. The 2014 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for minerals highlights that the exploratory, appraisal, or production phase of extraction can only take place in areas where a license has been issued by the Department of Energy and Climate Change.<sup>4</sup> Further, the PPG requires MPAs to make appropriate provision for hydrocarbons in local minerals plans through the use of published data on the location of hydrocarbons, and available data on existing wells.<sup>5</sup> It notes that such an approach will allow MPAs to highlight where proposals for hydrocarbon extraction may come forward, as well as managing potentially conflicting objectives for land.<sup>6</sup>
- 71.5 There are currently no onshore licenses for hydrocarbon extraction or gas wells within Greater London and, according to published data, there are no prospective areas for shale gas extraction within London, nor have any licenses been issued.<sup>7</sup> In addition, there are a limited number of boroughs within London with local minerals plans, and none have identified areas for potential hydrocarbon extraction.<sup>8</sup>
- 71.6 The WMS – Energy Policy (2018) provides guidance for MPAs in planning for shale gas exploration.<sup>9</sup> It states that '*mineral plans should reflect that minerals resources can only be worked where they are found, and applications must be assessed on a site*

<sup>1</sup> NLP/EX/03: Mayor of London, The Mayor's responses to the Panel's preliminary questions, September 2018

<sup>2</sup> NLP/GD/03: DCLG, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012, Paragraph 147

<sup>3</sup> MHCLG, '[Planning for Onshore Oil and Gas: Written Statement – HCWS201](#)', 16 September 2015, Paragraph 1

<sup>4</sup> MHCLG, '[Planning Practice Guidance: Minerals](#)', 6 March 2014, Paragraph 104 Reference ID: 27-104-20140306,

<sup>5</sup> MHCLG, '[Planning Practice Guidance: Minerals](#)', 6 March 2014, Paragraph: 105 Reference ID: 27-105-20140306

<sup>6</sup> MHCLG, '[Planning Practice Guidance: Minerals](#)', 6 March 2014, Paragraph: 105 Reference ID: 27-105-20140306

<sup>7</sup> Oil and Gas Authority, '[Onshore Oil and Gas Activity](#)' online interactive mapping tool, Accessed 29 November 2018

<sup>8</sup> Only the LB of Redbridge has a Local Minerals Plan, this document does not identify any areas for shale gas exploration nor extraction. LB Redbridge, '[Minerals Local Plan](#)', September 2012.

<sup>9</sup> MHCLG, '[Energy Policy: Written Statement – HCWS690](#)', 17 May 2018

by site basis and having regard to their context'<sup>10</sup>. There are currently no areas identified for shale gas development within Greater London. The nearest potential area is the Weald Prospective Area, south of London. As highlighted in the draft Plan, the British Geological Survey concluded in 2014 that there is no significant shale gas potential in the Weald Basin.<sup>11</sup> It is therefore highly unlikely that there are any sites that are suitable for hydraulic fracturing in London.

- 71.7 The 2018 WMS states that '*plans should not set restrictions or thresholds across their plan area that limit shale development without proper justification*'<sup>12</sup>. As outlined above, there are no areas for shale gas exploration or extraction within Greater London. However, even in the event that there were, the Mayor considers that limiting hydraulic fracturing in Greater London is justified, taking into account the local circumstances of London, in particular due to environmental and health concerns. Allow fracturing would also contradict key Policies and objectives for Good Growth within the draft Plan, as well as the principles of the London Environment Strategy and Mayor's Transport Strategy.

*Moving towards a low carbon economy*

- 71.8 The Mayor has set a clear strategy in his London Environment Strategy to meet London's energy needs that is focused on the provision of affordable, secure and low carbon electricity and heat.<sup>13</sup> As outlined in Policy GG6 of the draft Plan, the aim is to move progressively to lower carbon fuel sources, with the objective of London becoming zero carbon by 2050.<sup>14</sup> This is consistent with the *GLA Act 1999* that requires the Mayor to '*contribute towards the mitigation of, or adaptation to, climate change in the United Kingdom*'<sup>15</sup>.
- 71.9 The Mayor's policy approach to energy and the reduction of carbon emissions is consistent with national policy, including the *Climate Change Act 2008* and the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050<sup>16</sup>, international obligations such as the Paris Agreement<sup>17</sup>, and the Government's own commitment to clean growth<sup>18</sup>. Hydraulic fracturing and the exploration and production of shale gas, a fossil fuel, in London is therefore not considered consistent with the aims of Good Growth, the London Environment Strategy or the GLA Act. In order to decarbonise, there is a need to move away from gas; shale gas extraction and production would detract from the numerous initiatives underway to create a low carbon energy system and a market to support it.

*Risk to water resources*

- 71.10 The whole of London is already considered a seriously stressed water area<sup>19</sup>, with climate change and associated rising temperatures set to increase this further. As

<sup>10</sup> MHCLG, '[Energy Policy: Written Statement – HCWS690](#)', 17 May 2018, Paragraph 9,

<sup>11</sup> NLP/CD/01: Mayor of London, draft New London Plan, December 2017, Paragraph 9.11.2

<sup>12</sup> MHCLG, '[Energy Policy: Written Statement – HCWS690](#)', 17 May 2018, Paragraph 9,

<sup>13</sup> NLP/SI/025: Mayor of London, London Environment Strategy, May 2018, Chapter 6 Introduction Paragraph 2,

<sup>14</sup> NLP/CD/01: Mayor of London, draft New London Plan, December 2017, Policy GG6 Part A

<sup>15</sup> *Greater London Authority Act 2007*, Section 30, Subsection 5, Paragraph C

<sup>16</sup> *Climate Change Act 2008*, Section 1, Paragraph 1

<sup>17</sup> UNFCCC, [Paris Agreement](#), December 2015

<sup>18</sup> HM Government, [The Clean Growth Strategy](#), October 2017

<sup>19</sup> NLP/SI/029: DEFRA/Environment Agency, Water Stressed Areas – Final Classification, July 2013

London seeks to sustainably accommodate substantial levels of growth, it is imperative that London's water resources are protected. There are significant concerns regarding the impact that hydraulic fracturing could have on water quality through contamination of water resources, especially aquifers, and the health implications this could have for Londoners. In addition, the extraction of natural gas by hydraulic fracturing can, depending on geology, well depth and length and the number of fracturing stages, use a significant volume of water.<sup>20</sup> Policy SI5 sets out how development proposals should minimise the use of water resources as well as protect existing resources, and hydraulic fracturing would be contrary to this.

#### *Conflicting land uses*

- 71.11 Land in London is under significant pressure to accommodate the different uses to meet a variety of needs. However, the draft Plan sets out an ambitious but achievable strategy to accommodate the vast majority of growth within its boundaries. Given this, any potential site for hydraulic fracturing would be competing with land required for other priority uses such as housing, employment, physical, social or green infrastructure, as well as restricting development nearby due to its potential impacts. As noted in the PPG for minerals, proposals for hydrocarbon extraction should manage potentially conflicting objectives for land, which would be extremely difficult considering the conflicting pressures for land in London<sup>21</sup>. The use of land for hydraulic fracturing would be incompatible with the aims of Good Growth and the priorities of the draft Plan, in particular Policy GG2 Making the best use of land, Policy GG4 Delivering the homes Londoners Need and Policy GG5 Growing a good economy. It would also be in conflict with a number of other Policies within the draft Plan, potentially having significant detrimental impacts on London's Green Belt or other green spaces, and therefore conflicting with Policies G1-G4, G6 and G7, which seek to protect London's green spaces and biodiversity.
- 71.12 In summary, Policy SI11 is considered necessary to ensure the effective delivery of other Policies and objectives in the draft Plan and the Good Growth of London. Policy SI11 also aligns with the Mayor's other strategies and meets the Mayor's objectives and legal requirements in accordance with the *GLA Act*, whilst also being consistent with national legislation and the UK's international obligations. The Policy is therefore considered justified and appropriate.

---

<sup>20</sup> The Royal Society & The Royal Academy of Engineering, [Shale Gas Exploration in the UK: a review of hydraulic fracturing](#), 2012, Page 20

<sup>21</sup> DCLG, '[Planning Practice Guidance: Minerals](#)', 6 March 2014, Paragraph 105 Reference ID: 27-105-20140306