

GOVERNMENT OF MONTSERRAT

MODIFICATION

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

FOR

NORTH MONTSERRAT

2012-2022

JULY 2020

PHYSICAL PLANNING UNIT

Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and the Environment

Modification to the Approved National Physical Development Plan (2012-2022)

Sand Mining in the Upper Belham Valley (Zone V)

Overall Approach

The Physical Planning Act stipulates that a national plan (referred to as the National Physical Development Plan) must be prepared which sets out how land in Montserrat is to be developed. This plan, once approved, serves as a guide for land use and development for a particular period. All national development plans therefore have a “shelf life” and are expected to be reviewed and updated as time progresses so that further forecasts for growth and development of the country can be made. However, as outlined in the Act, prior to its “expiration”, parts of the plan can be changed/modified accordingly, the procedure for which is provided in the Act.

It should be noted that the National Physical Development currently in effect was prepared for the north of Montserrat and covers the period 2012 to 2022. Therefore, this plan is soon due for revision and update, and thus strategies for the development of the southern region of the island need to be considered. All modifications will be done in such a way as to be included in the revised plan for the next development period.

Key Features of the PDP

The PDP aims to integrate a wide range of issues into a physical development strategy that supports the SDP development objectives. The plan aims to facilitate social development and economic growth activities, identified via public consultations across Montserrat, while ensuring that people have access to a wide range of services locally, have access to appropriate housing and community facilities, and are able to maintain or attain a high quality of life. The strategy must also support the valuable environmental and built heritage assets that underpin socio-economic development of the island through tourism, quality of life, and water provision. The key element of this update has to do with sand mining. Sand mining was considered within the Physical Development Plan but was limited to Zones B and C. The sand mining industry is positioned to take off with considerable demands for the resource which can only be realised if other areas such as the Upper Belham (Zone V) and Parts of Fort Ghaut in Plymouth are considered.

Sand Mining

For the foreseeable future and subject to volcanic activity, sand-mining activities will be based in the upper Belham Valley area and alternative locations conducive to sand mining. Sand mining will be managed in such a way as to minimise any adverse impacts on nearby businesses and residential areas and on the environment. For this purpose, a variable lower mining limit, which is pegged to the Hazard Level System, has been established as the mining boundary. All sand-mining activities are subject to the Health, Safety and Environmental Management Guidelines for Sand Mining in Montserrat: An Operational Plan for Reducing Environmental and Social Impacts. These guidelines are to be enforced through appropriate management and legislation.

Background

Sand mining has been an ongoing activity for some time in the Belham Valley and has been identified as a thriving industry in Montserrat. As indicated in the National Physical Development Plan (PDP) for North Montserrat 2012-2022, this activity is concentrated in the area zoned for mining in the Belham Valley area (See figure 1).

Sand Mining Guidelines were approved by Cabinet in 2016. This document sets the framework for how Miners should operate in the Belham Valley by decision 667/2019.

During the year 2019, the Physical Planning Unit collaborated with the Lands & Survey Department to physically establish the lower limit of the sand mining zone to prevent sand miners from venturing into restricted areas. As verified by the Chief Surveyor, the points were determined using GPS devices and highlighted on the ground using spray paint. Signs were erected to advise the public of the areas where sand mining is prohibited.

Over the years great emphasis has been placed on ensuring that sand miners concentrate in the areas zoned for mining. The Government of Montserrat has also ensured that all the crushing and processing is carried out in Cork Hill- a zone prepared for this aspect of the operations in order to reduce the impact of the noise and dust associated with these activities.

Furthermore, the Physical Planning Unit commissioned IMC Worldwide to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment of the Belham Valley to cover all the existing miners operating in the valley. Devlaw, a consultancy firm, was also hired to develop mining legislation to support the Physical Planning Act which addresses the need for mining licenses and proper administration and enforcement of the mining sector. This legislation is being worked on and a number of stakeholders were further consulted where comments received would be factored into the final legislation.

The Planning and Development Authority, in collaboration with the Physical Planning Unit has worked to regularize the industry which existed and operated in an adhoc manner for several years. Rehabilitation Plans are being prepared to ensure that sand miners operate according to acceptable environmental standards and best practice.

Sand Miners expressed an urgent need to access material further up the Belham Valley, considering that there was only a limited supply left in the area where mining was conducted. The Planning and Development Authority has accepted the proposal from the sand miners to extend the sand mining limit further up the Belham and parts of Fort Ghaut. This would be done in tandem with the Montserrat Volcano Observatory and the National Disaster Preparedness Response Advisory Committee (NDPRAC) to evaluate the risks from the Volcano.

Policies and Proposal

General Strategy

It is important that this area is well managed to allow the recovery of neighbouring residential areas and increase their contributions to the island's economy. It is expected that the existing residential land use will continue to grow, via infilling of the areas, during the plan period to 2022. The Vue Pointe Hotel will be encouraged to reopen and will provide a much needed economic boost to the area and the island. It is not expected that residential areas east of Garibaldi Hill in Zone B or beyond the access gate to Zone C, will become habitable within the plan period.

Sand mining will be permitted to continue further up the Belham valley in a well- planned and regulated manner such that adverse impacts on neighbouring residential areas are minimised. The principal mitigation measure to minimise negative impacts from sand mining is to separate, as far as practicable, the mining activities from the residential areas and tourist accommodation.

A move to take mining activity further from the residential areas would serve to minimize the negative impacts from dust and noise. This solution will provide additional revenue streams to Montserrat's economy while enabling the island to benefit from increased residential developments, including the Isles Bay Plantation, Isles Bay Hill and other areas in the proximity of the Belham Valley.

Proposed Land Use in Zone V (Upper Belham and Fort Ghaut).

The area where the Miners wish to mine falls within **Zone V** of the exclusion zone and would require the necessary permits from the Governor on the advice of the National Disaster Preparedness and Response Advisory Committee (NDPRAC). This Committee would advise on the safety risks posed by the volcano and the response mechanisms that would be required for each operator in the zone.

The area in the Upper part of Belham comprises of 121,878.87 meters squared or 30.12 acres. The length of land which has been requested by the Miners extends 794 meters above zone V (see Figure 2).

Efforts will be made to minimise the effects of the mining and export of material from sand mining in the Belham valley, taking into consideration the nature of local guesthouse/hotel and restaurant businesses, residential accommodation and other approved land uses. To this end, all sand mining activities will be regulated in line with the Physical Planning Act and regulations governing the industry to ensure sustainability of the sand mining industry and to minimise environmental degradation to the environment.

Monitoring framework

The Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and the Environment will work with the sand miners to help restore degraded areas in the Belham Valley and to monitor the sand mining industry to ensure that sand miners comply with the required standards going forward.

The Montserrat Volcano Observatory will provide regular feedback to sand miners in regard to safe operations in Zone V in the event of pyroclastic flows and other risks posed by the volcano. This will ensure that sand miners are able to mobilise workers out of the danger area once called upon within short notice.

All relevant agencies will work with the sand miners to improve the standing of the industry to ensure Montserrat sand mining industry can meet the required standards for export on a continuous basis. The land use considerations to allow sand mining industry would be robust and in line with best practice once permission is granted to access Zone V.

Appendix

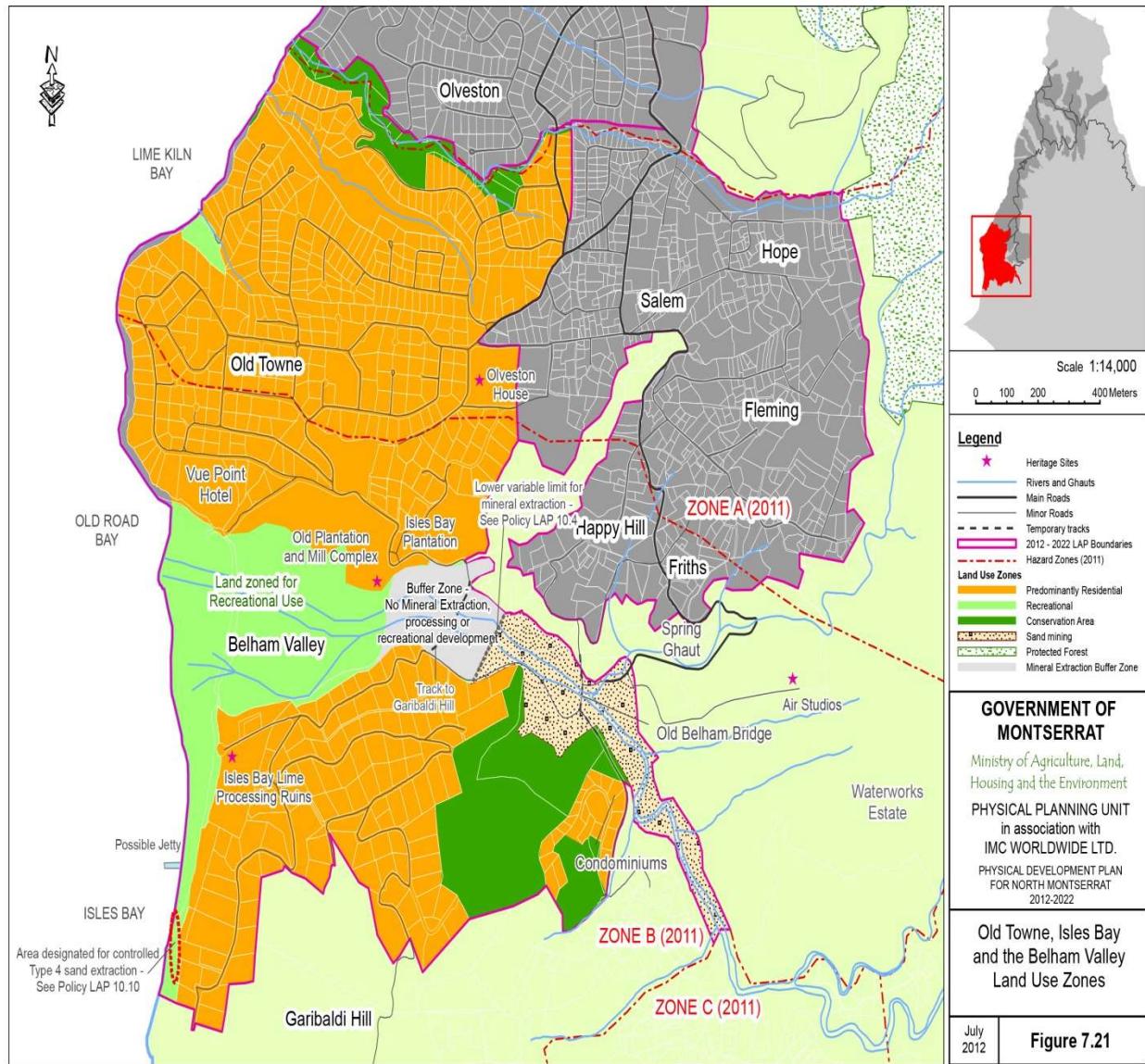


Figure 1: Area zoned for sand mining in the Belham Valley (Physical Development Plan page 218).

Proposed land use in the Upper Belham Valley



Note: Area -794 meters or 2604 feet above Zone V

Proposed Sand Mining Zone in the Upper Belham Valley

Legend

Courtesy: Physical Planning Unit

- Proposed Emergency Road Access**: Yellow line
- Zone V Demarcation Line**: Red line
- Old Belham Bridge Road**: Dotted red line