



## Northamptonshire County Council

Mark Hodgson  
Savills (L&P) Limited  
Unex House  
132-143 Hills Road  
Cambridge  
CB2 8PA  
[mhodgson@savills.com](mailto:mhodgson@savills.com)

Please ask for: Phil Watson  
Tel: 01604 366638  
Our ref: 15/00001/SCO  
Your ref:  
Date: 13<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Dear Mark

### **TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS 2011: REGULATION 13 SCOPING OPINION Proposals for Scope and Content of an Environmental Impact Assessment for sand and gravel extraction and restoration at Great Billing, Northampton**

I refer to your email dated *19 October 2015* and the accompanying scoping report. The scoping report has been the subject of consultation in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations and copies of the responses have been emailed to you.

I note that the proposed overall scope and methodology for the EIA is in section 6 of the scoping report, with the specific topics scoped in listed in paragraph 6.1.1. Whilst I can confirm that the overall methodology of the approach is acceptable there have been comments which need to be taken into account. In particular it is considered that 'odour' impact should also be scoped in to the Environmental Statement (ES) (see consultation response from both Wellingborough (WBC) and Northampton Borough (NBC) Environmental Protection Officer responses. Additionally, Natural England do not agree with the impact on soils being scoped out of the ES as the majority of the site is agricultural land and there could be significant impact on land quality if this is not given detailed consideration.

It is important that the consultant reports which will accompany the ES take account of the latest phasing and restoration plans which accompanied the latest scoping report (or any future changes to these) as these have changed since the 2012 scoping opinion, particularly in relation to the location of the plant site and silt management areas, and the introduction of the introduction of the Poplar tree belt. This is particularly relevant for the landscape and visual impact assessments and may be relevant to the ecology assessment.

Planning Services, Floor 3  
Guildhall Road Block,  
County Hall,  
Northampton, NN1 1DN

**w.** [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk)  
**t.** 01604 366638;  
**f.** 01604 366065  
**e.** [gpwatson@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:gpwatson@northamptonshire.gov.uk)



Northamptonshire  
County Council

Please take account of all the comments received in the consultation responses. In particular I draw your attention to the following which I have dealt with under topic matter:

### Landscape and Visual Impact

I understand the proposed viewpoints for visual impact were agreed between your consultant and Tina Cuss my ecology and landscape advisor. I also draw your attention to the comments from Northampton Borough Council (NBC) (Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning) dated 11 January 2016, which advocated that the list of visual receptors should include the residential area to the east and south of Ecton Brook Road and the Ecton Lane Travellers site. Please consider if there is a view of the development site and associated operations from these locations.

It is also suggested by my ecology and landscape advisor that the proposal for planting a screening belt of Poplar trees should be carefully considered in relation to how suitable it is in landscape terms (and its potential impact on ground nesting birds).

The landscape and visual amenity impacts of the plant site and water and silt management areas also need to be assessed.

### Ecology

Please refer to the detailed comments provided by the County Council's Ecology Advisor (Tina Cuss), Natural England and the Wildlife Trust in conjunction with the paragraphs below

The ES should include a full assessment of the direct and indirect effects of the development on the features of special interest within the nearby the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pit (SSSI, SPA, Ramsar) and identify mitigation measures as may be required in order to avoid, minimise or reduce and significant adverse effects.

The scoping report does not mention the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area (NIA) and therefore this needs to be taken into account. In this context the Wildlife Trust consider that the restoration scheme is based too much on agricultural land and not enough on natural habitats /BAP Priority Habitat Areas.

The Ecology Advisor does not agree with the proposal that the protection of newts is given no further consideration. Some newts were found and the site has potential to support Great Crested Newts. The populations of Grass Snake, Smooth Newt and frogs need to be protected and adequate mitigation provided in accordance with best practice guidance.

In respect of ecological enhancement, reference in the ES should be made to two Supplementary Planning Documents relating to biodiversity and the Upper Nene Valley

Gravel Pits on the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit website at:  
<http://www.nnjpu.org.uk/publications/default.asp>

### Transportation and Access

There are Public Rights of Way (PROW) and Byways running through and along the site, including the Northampton Round Route. The Highway Authority commented in 2012 that ideally these routes should be kept open and safe for public use and/or temporarily diverted and restored after extraction. The proposed access road and internal haul road cross TE10 twice within the site. The transport and access section of the scoping report doesn't refer to the impacts on the PROW's and the users thereof and this needs to be assessed. To help address concerns regarding PROW, the application should be accompanied by a construction management plan including detail of how the site would be managed with regard to TE10 and the need to minimise disturbance to users and the surface of TE10.

It is considered that this proposal may provide opportunities to improve access to the area and the wider Nene Valley. This should be explored through the ES.

Northamptonshire Highways would wish to discuss the scope of the Transport Assessment prior to it being undertaken and submitted. Contact details are on its consultation response.

Highways England makes a number of points to be considered in its response dated 22 December 2015

### Amenity Impacts

#### *Air Quality (including Dust) and Noise, Lighting*

Dust and noise are considered likely to be the most difficult amenity issues to mitigate with regard to this site. It is acknowledged that control measures are proposed but the Environmental Statement (ES) would need to demonstrate that impacts from dust and noise would be mitigated under these proposals. It is suggested that noise and dust management plans should be submitted at the application stage to help address these issues up front.

The proposed approach on noise and vibration is generally considered to be appropriate by the Environmental Protection Officers (EHO). The NBC EHO refers to the need to use broadband reversing alarms and the noise management plan should also include a management process to seek to achieve similar alarms on HGV's delivering waste soils to the site. The off-site nuisance impact of tonal reversing alarms should not be underestimated.

### *Odour*

Odour has been raised as a concern in consultation responses from the EHO's at NBC and WBC. It is recognised by the Mineral Planning Authority (MPA) that mineral working and inert waste operations are not likely to generate odour issues but in this case the site was previously used for sewage sludge disposal. In light of this, and given the ongoing odour issues associated with the nearby sewage treatment works and green waste composting site, it is considered that odour should be addressed in the ES.

### *Lighting*

Information should be included in the ES to address amenity impacts from any temporary or permanent lighting and should be extended to include potential impacts on ecology.

### *Air Quality*

The WBC EHO requires the approach to the air quality assessment to be discussed and agreed prior to it being undertaken.

The air quality assessment should include assessments of potential impacts on ecological receptors as well as other sensitive receptors.

### Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Flood Risk

Given the location (including land within flood zones 1 and 2) and the size of the site (greater than 1.0 hectare) the ES would need to consider all sources of flooding and provide a Flood Risk Assessment. I refer you to the Environment Agency response dated 28 June 2012 (attached) which provides a detail response to the previous scoping report (this 2012 response is provided because the recent consultation inadvertently omitted the Environment Agency. A late consultation has been sent and will be forwarded when received).

Since 2012 some responsibilities for surface water flood and drainage have been passed to the Northamptonshire County Council. Please refer to the consultation response from the Surface Water Drainage Assessment Team dated 22 December 2015 which requires that the ES to fully consider the impact of the development on surface water.

### Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

The County Council Archaeology Advisor has stated in the consultation response that the non-intrusive and desk based assessment undertaken within the study area are out of date and need to be revised. The current baseline information suggests a high potential for archaeological activity which need to be tested by intrusive works (trial trenching). More details are provided in the consultation response. It is important that the requirements of the archaeological evaluation are discussed and agreed with the archaeology advisor before completing the Environmental Statement.

## Contamination

The intention to include an assessment of contamination is supported. The EA's 2012 response refers to a previous risk assessment at this site. In particular the EA is aware that there is a phosphate impact on the River Nene in this area and that any application would be expected to assess the potential impacts of working the contaminated land in light of previous sewage sludge disposal.

The EA has requested further information be included in the ES regarding how minerals are processed as it is considered wash waters could become contaminated. This would necessitate that settlement lagoons be built into the design to contain contaminated fines. The EA has also asked for clarification about proposals to avoid flood waters coming into contact with contaminated soils

## Soils

Detailed comments regarding soils have been provided by Natural England. These should be taken into account in preparing the ES. Impacts on agricultural land are particularly relevant to the site and the proposed restoration.

## Cumulative Impact

It is considered important that the assessment addresses cumulative impacts on amenity (noise, dust, odour), landscape, biodiversity (including green infrastructure) and highways matters. This assessment should relate to both impacts generated from the subject site and in conjunction with surrounding developments, (existing, approved, proposed and likely) in particular the two permitted quarries at Earls Barton Spinney and land west of Grendon Road, Earls Barton.

## Restoration

Responses from the RSPB (in 2012) and Wildlife Trust include concerns about the proposed restoration. In particular the responses consider the site offers significant potential for restoration with biodiversity and green infrastructure benefits over and above what is currently being proposed. In particular it is noted the site is located within a Nature Improvement Area where restoring biodiversity is considered a high priority. There may also be opportunities through restoration to further improve flood alleviation measures. It is noted that the EIA Scoping report (paragraph 7.3.12) states that: "*opportunities for ecological enhancement of the site following restoration will be explored during the design process*". It is important that these opportunities are explored before the application is submitted. I note the restoration strategy plan with the scoping report; however this should be discussed further with the other organisations prior to submission. Paragraph 7.3.14

refers to consultation with other organisations and the RSPB should be added to those listed.

### Alternatives

I note that the proposed location of the plant site and settlement lagoons has changed since 2012. The ES should consider this and (any other relevant alternatives considered) relating to the environmental impacts of the alternatives and the reason for the choice made.

### 2012 Scoping Opinion

The 2012 scoping opinion has been appended to the scoping report and the contents therein should also be taken into account.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. P. Watson'.

Development Control Manager

On behalf of Assistant Director Environment and Planning