

Planning

HEAD OF SERVICE: **Adrian Duffield**



Listening Learning Leading

Via email

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Ref: P24/S0746/CM

Your ref: MW.0115/21

15 April 2024

Dear Ms Hudson,

**Re: Notice of Submission of Further Information in relation to:
Extraction and processing of sand and gravel including the construction of new site access roads, landscaping and screening bunds, minerals washing plant and other associated infrastructure with restoration to agriculture and nature conservation areas, using inert fill.**

Consultation End Date: 15 April 2024.

At: Land at White Cross Farm, near Winterbrook

Thank you for consulting South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) on the additional information submitted in support of the above referenced application.

SODC wrote to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) on the 14 October 2021, 25 November 2021 and 17 May 2022 setting out the District Council's objections to the proposed development.

This letter covers issues relating to the additional information that has been submitted from the council's various specialist officers. I have set out each of these in turn:

Ecology

It is recommended that careful consideration is given to potential direct and indirect impacts to River Thames and the associated riparian habitat. Specialist hydrological input could be incorporated alongside ecological control measures to reduce likelihood of impacts and to maintain an appropriate buffer to the watercourse, as per the minimum requirements of ENV4 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP).

The mitigation hierarchy should be strictly applied, with habitats retained wherever feasible. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) would be required to support the application. A number of species have been recorded onsite, including grass snake, barn owl, badger, otter and a good assemblage of bat species; and due consideration of impacts would be required for protected species, along with any associated mitigation and compensation strategies. It is likely that targeted ecological surveys (such as reptile population surveys or bat activity transects) would be required, as informed by the baseline EclA survey.

From GIS records, a proportion of the site appears to comprise potential priority grasslands, and due assessment of habitat type and botanical composition could be made to inform long-term management and assessment of affects. It is advisable and biodiversity condition assessments could be utilised to assess the baseline condition of the grasslands. As the site is partially within a Conservation Target Area (Thames Wallingford to Goring), consideration of this local strategic significance should be factored into any ecological and biodiversity assessments.

The restoration of the site would provide good opportunity to create habitats and positive outcomes for biodiversity; and it would be recommend informing the habitat management approach with targeted keystone and locally important species in mind. Mosaics of woodland and grassland habitat, along with enhancement of the bankside riparian habitat could offer strong opportunities for recolonisation of historic species known to occupy the site. Biodiversity condition assessments alongside species surveys could be further utilised to monitor the outcomes long-term.

Trees

There are trees on and adjacent to the site that contribute positively to the wider landscape. The trees are a prominent feature, visible from Nosworthy Way to the north and the Thames Path running through the site.

The latest phasing plan (v4) is still showing conflicts with Root Protection Area of trees shown to be retained. This has been highlighted in comments with relation to earlier phasing plan versions submitted under P21/S3961/CM / MW.0115/21.

The phasing plan should be consistent with the tree protection measures identified in the Arboricultural Report (Feb 2022) to ensure adequate protection of trees.

It is also recommended the OCC Tree Team are consulted on this application to provide comments.

Environmental Protection Matters

Having reviewed the submitted planning application and supporting documentation, specialist officers have extensively considered Environmental Protection matters related to noise, odour and dust.

Particular consideration has been given to the Noise Assessment as prepared by Vibrock Limited and noted that the development is in close proximity to nearby noise sensitive receptors.

Therefore, subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures and recommended conditions included in the noise assessment there is no objection to the proposed development in respect of noise.

Landscape

The July 2022 Restoration Concept Plan appears to show a reduced planting scheme from that shown on the previous Landscape Masterplan, LMP22-1, with planting largely limited to retained hedges rather than enhancing these with additional native hedge and tree planting belts. There seems to be some additional loss of existing vegetation along the central northsouth ditch corridor and proposed black poplar and willow tree planting is no longer indicated. There is no longer a permissive path proposed south of the A4130 linking to the Thames Path. Overall, the new restoration proposals provide less landscape benefits than the previous proposals.

The Council's previous comments remain, due to the sensitive location of the site and the nature of the proposals, there would be adverse landscape and visual impacts, including adverse effects on the setting of the River Thames, the Thames Path and the Chilterns National Landscape. This would be contrary to policy ENV1 of the SOLP and paragraph 182 of the NPPF.

Conclusion

The additional information submitted in support of this application does not alter the fundamental objections the District Council has previously put forward in its substantive response of the 14 October 2021. I would ask that OCC Officers consider this supplemental letter and comments to the additional information in conjunction with the District Council's previous responses.

The conclusion remains the same as previously stated: that the proposed development is not in accordance with Policies ENV1 and ENV7 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and Policy E3 of the Cholsey Neighbourhood Plan. The benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the harm.

If the County Council is minded to approve the application I would request that the District Council is able to have input into the conditions attached to the scheme.

We would like to continue to work with officers at the County Council in assessing this planning application.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrian Duffield".

Adrian Duffield
Head of Planning