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for people and wildlife

Environment Agency

Horsham District Council
Planning team
Park North
North Street
Horsham
West Sussex
RH12 1RL

Our ref: HA/2023/125468/02-L01
Your ref: EIA/24/0003

Date: 04 July 2024

Dear Planning team (FAO: Jason Hawkes),

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCOPING OPINION REQUEST (AMENDED FROM PREVIOUS SCOPING OPINION MADE UNDER EIA/23/0007) IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSED WEST OF IFIELD DEVELOPMENT.

WEST OF IFIELD DEVELOPMENT.

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on the above Scoping Opinion Request.

We have reviewed the 'West of Ifield (WOI) EIA Scoping Opinion Request Report' dated 21 May 2024 (the Report). In general, we are satisfied with the Report and the range of topics that have been proposed to be included within the Environmental Statement (ES).

We do have some comments to make on some specific matters and these are set out below.

Abstraction of groundwater

The site is not currently situated within a Source Protection Zone and is located upon Weald Clay (mudstone) deposits, which are designated as Unproductive Strata with outcrops of Secondary Aquifer, where areas of Weald Clay (sandstone / ironstone) are present.

It is understood that the proposed development is now to include a 200m deep borehole to enable the abstraction of groundwater from the underlying Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand Member for potable water supply. We have reviewed the Hydrogeological Risk Assessment submitted and understand that the proposed development is considered to pose a low risk to the proposed abstraction given the extent of the underlying unproductive strata (Weald Clay - mudstone). Groundwater quality data from local abstractions within the Weald Clay Formation has identified high chloride concentrations, and it is understood that the proposed borehole is to be cased and sealed in areas of Weald Clay Formation to prevent the ingress of chloride rich groundwater into the underlying Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation. It is also

understood that environmentally hazardous chemical / fluids, including those that are hazardous to groundwater, are not to be utilised during the drilling of the borehole which we support.

We would recommend that consideration be made when planning/designing the proposed development to prevent any discharges or potentially contaminative land uses within 50m of the Source Protection Zone 1 that will be created around the proposed abstraction borehole. It would be helpful to consider this point within the ES.

As noted within the Report, an abstraction licence from us will be required for the proposed borehole (Apply for a water abstraction or impounding licence - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)). Before an application for an abstraction licence is made, a Groundwater Investigation Consent from us will be needed (Apply for consent to investigate a groundwater source - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)). The Local Planning Authority is likely to require evidence of an approved abstraction licence or valid abstraction licence application before being able to determine the planning application.

The relevant forms for requesting pre-application advice from us for an abstraction licence can be accessed here - Get advice before you apply for a water abstraction or impounding licence - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). It is likely that the enhanced (paid for) service will be needed. General enquiries about consents or licences can be sent to our National Customer Contact Centre on **03708 506 506** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) or by emailing enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Please note that it can take up to a year to go through the Groundwater Investigation Consent and Abstraction Licensing process. Making an application does not guarantee that a consent/licence will be granted.

Flood risk

The Report includes a chapter on the water environment and flood risk (chapter 13). It is welcomed that the construction and operational impacts are to be are scoped into the ES as, due to the nature of the flood risk at the proposed development site, it is essential this element is assessed in detail and any development designed to ensure it is safe for its lifetime without increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.

Although the chapter is generally high level in its detail, paragraph 13.6.3 states that a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) would be prepared for the proposed development, providing an assessment of flood risk from all sources, along with the identification of any mitigation works required to manage the flood risk throughout the lifetime of the proposed development whilst ensuing flood risk elsewhere is not increased. The submission of an adequate site-specific FRA is an essential document to support the proposed development, especially considering the proposal for a new bridge crossing the River Mole and the access road crossing the floodplain.

In addition, the FRA should also consider the cumulative impacts of this development on other areas up and downstream of the proposed development and should take into account the most up to date climate change allowances. The FRA should also fully cover the risk to flooding throughout the lifetime of the development, and therefore should cover construction phases to demonstrate that flood risk will not be increased at any time during the duration of works at the proposed development site. The FRA should also fully consider development within the functional floodplain, or Flood Zone 3b, taking into account the most up to date guidance on the definition of Flood Zone 3b.

Cont/d..

Please note that this development and the associated works on the site will require a permit under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 from us for any proposed works or structures, in, under, over or within 8 metres of the top of the bank of any designated main rivers. This type of permit is called a 'Flood Risk Activity Permit'. Further details about Flood Risk Activity Permits can be found on the gov.uk website using the following link –https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits. A permit is separate to and in addition to any planning permission granted. The granting of planning permission does not necessarily lead to the granting of a permit.

If you have any queries regarding the above information, please do not hesitate to contact the advisor identified below.

Yours faithfully,

Environment Agency – Solent & South Downs

Sustainable Places Advisor: Anna Rabone
[redacted]

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