

Landscape response to Hampshire County Council Minerals and Waste LVIA Scoping:

To: Peter Bond, Planning Officer, Hampshire County Council

From: The Landscape Planning Group, Economy, Transport and Environment, Hampshire County Council

Date: 24/02/22

Application ref: CS/22/92277: Site reference EA112: Former Hamble Airfield, Hamble Lane, Hamble-le-Rice, SO31 4NL

Description: Proposed extraction of sand and gravel, with restoration to grazing land and recreation using imported inert restoration materials, the erection of associated plant and infrastructure and the creation of a new footpath and access onto Hamble Lane.

Address: Former Hamble Airfield, Hamble Lane, Hamble-le-Rice, SO31 4NL

Type of Consultation: EIA – Planning Application

Summary Response: Landscape Comment on this site, further information is requested but there is no outright objection.

Comments

- 1.1** These comments are a response to the landscape and visual effects associated with the proposal to extract sand and gravel from the former Hamble Airfield. The proposed development is for the extraction of approximately 1.7million tonnes of sand and gravel at a rate of approximately 250,000 tonnes per annum, and is likely to last up to 7 years. The site will be restored using in situ soils and overburden from the site, together with imported inert restoration materials. It is estimated that infilling would take a further 6 years followed by a further year to finalise planting. The site is currently relatively flat, open land which is privately owned. It has been used for many years for informal recreation and dog walking. Due to lack of positive management over the years the site has become invaded by scrub and rough grasses.
- 1.2** The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), submitted as part of the Environmental Assessment (EA), describes the site well and in general appears to be a fair assessment of the potential effects of this development. The proposed working of the site has taken account of most of the landscape concerns.

2.0 Landscape Planning Policy

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF): The following clauses in the NPPF are key issues in relation to Landscape and visual planning decisions:

2.2 *174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

175. Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries

2.2 Hampshire County Council Minerals and Waste Plan

Policy 5: Protection of the countryside

Minerals and waste development in the open countryside, outside the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, will not be permitted unless:

a. it is a time-limited mineral extraction or related development; or

b. the nature of the development is related to countryside activities, meets local needs or requires a countryside or isolated location; or

c. the development provides a suitable reuse of previously developed land, including redundant farm or forestry buildings and their curtilages or hard standings.

Where appropriate and applicable, development in the countryside will be expected to meet highest standards of design, operation and restoration.

Minerals and waste development in the open countryside should be subject to a requirement that it is restored in the event it is no longer required for minerals and waste use.

2.2 Eastleigh Borough Council Local Plan

The Borough Council's local plan is still emerging however their Environmental policies require development to retain trees, woodlands, hedgerows, ponds, priority habitats or other landscape features of value to the character of the area, or to replace them with features of equivalent or enhanced value. Provide a landscape scheme which provides a fully connected green infrastructure that interlaces the development and connects into the wider network and provides satisfactory management arrangements for all landscape, green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement.

2.3 Effects on Planning and Landscape Character

Whilst the proposed development is not located within a protected landscape it is a very well used area of land for informal recreation. The Landscape and Visual Impact assessment (LVIA) has valued this site as having medium to low sensitivity to the proposed development. This is agreed as the proposal does not permanently affect the landscape elements on the site. However the report does not fully address the effects on the perception of the site.

Whilst it is accepted that this is private land the land owner has allowed access to take place over many years and therefore the land is of high value to the local population and their perception is of an area of open space adjacent to, or nearby to their homes.

2.4. The proposal appears to have taken care to minimise the effects on the landscape elements in terms of tree loss, impacts on the wider landscape character and the proposed mitigation is to restore the land to similar ground levels as currently existing, therefore replicating the existing topographical features. The proposed mitigation should integrate the landscape features into the surrounding landscape as required in EBC's Local Plan.

2.5. The timescale for the works is 14 years, until the restoration is fully completed, this is considered to be long term. As this site is of high value to local residents and the proximity of the works is adjacent to housing, it would be preferable to see each section of the site fully restored sequentially as the site progresses. Rather than leaving all the restoration including removal of screen bunds and planting until the end of the works with the planting taking place in years 13/14. We also need to be assured that the works can be carried out within this timescale, as we often see mineral operators requiring an extension of time, this would not be acceptable in this highly populated area.

2.6. Visual Effects

2.7. The description of the visual effects is considered to be accurate and it is agreed. The visual envelope for this scheme is limited to the immediate setting and surrounds. Unfortunately this includes a significant number of private houses. However the proposals do not maximise the extraction area on the site and the proposed screen mounds are not located immediately

adjacent to garden fences and they are a reasonable distance away. This is often due to other constraints on the site such as the presence of the Hamble Rail trail and the footpath along the eastern boundary of the site, but this benefits householders. Screen mounds can be very oppressive and enclosing if they are located too close to residential areas or public rights of way. Unfortunately the screen mound along the eastern footpath will be quite enclosing and domineering. The path is long and straight and the high mound will be on one side and garden fences on the other side. The proposal provides a 3m wide path, which is a reasonable width and will help to lessen this problem, but if in areas it could widen out further it would be preferable. This is an area that would benefit from sequential restoration occurring after each phase is completed, removing the mound and opening up views across the open landscape again.

2.8. Restoration Proposals

2.9. Whilst the outline restoration proposals appear to create a suitable landscape for this area. The documents are confusing with regard to the timescale of the proposed seeding and planting works. It would be preferable to achieve phased planting occurring as the restoration of the site progresses. This would be a positive benefit to the scheme and local residents, if the main body of planting was not retained until the end. This would require the screen bunds to be progressively removed, but as set out in 2.7 above it would be a positive benefit.

2.10. In the '*Outline Landscape Restoration and aftercare Programme*' document there are a few comments that require further explanation. In clause 5.1 it states "*Following soil placement, soil samples will be taken so that appropriate lime and a base dressing fertiliser will be applied for crop establishment.*" Why is lime being used as a soil ameliorant when the aim is to sow an Acid grassland seed Mix?

2.11. The second comment is in clause 9.18 which states that "*Dead trees to remain standing.*" This clause needs to be clarified, because leaving dead trees standing could cause damage and harm, if they were to fall in locations where they are in close proximity to the highway, rights of way or private property, gardens or houses.

2.12. The plant species mix includes Aspen, this tree suckers very badly and whilst tolerant of harsh conditions, I would prefer to see one of the willows planted.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 The landscape issues relating to this site are very limited. It would be helpful to have clarification on the points raised above.

When these points have been addressed and possible amendments made this scheme should be acceptable from a landscape viewpoint.