

## SCREENING OPINION

### Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011

- Sites:** East Sleekburn site 1(west) adjacent A198 spine road and East Sleekburn site 2 (quay) including Ash Barge Dock, north and south of Brock Lane, Cambois, Northumberland.
- Description:** East Sleekburn Local Development Order.
- Proposal:** The Local Development Order (LDO) will grant planning permission exclusively for land use, buildings and ancillary facilities; and associated development in Use Classes B1, B2, B8 and ancillary A1 and A3 uses<sup>1</sup> provided that they are linked to the manufacture, maintenance and servicing of plant, machinery, equipment, parts and vessels for off shore industries; or advanced manufacturing and technology; or port and logistics related business; or storage and distribution linked to off shore industries. The permission is subject to various conditions.
- Screening:** I am of the view that, in part, the development to be permitted would fall under part 10a of Schedule 2 development of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 i.e. 'Industrial estate development projects'.
- Column 2 of Schedule 2 requires that 'industrial estate development proposals', which meets or exceed 0.5 hectares must be screened to establish whether the proposal is EIA development. Overall the consent granted by the LDO exceeds the 0.5 hectare threshold and additionally is within close proximity to sensitive sites. The LDO must therefore be screened.
- An assessment of the Local Development Order has been undertaken with reference to Schedule 3 of the Regulations in order to identify if the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

**Characteristics:** Schedule 3, Paragraph 1 of the Town and Country (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011(the

---

<sup>1</sup> As defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987

Regulations) states that the characteristics of development must be considered.

Annex A of Circular 02/99 Environmental Impact Assessments 1999 (the Circular) states that EIA is more likely to be required if the site area of the new development is more than 20 hectares. The site to which the LDO relates is well below this indicative threshold, at around 8 hectares.

Development may take a range of forms including office buildings, research and development light industrial workshop buildings and large scale industrial sheds.

Facilities may include large outdoor areas of hard-standing for moving or assembling large components and/or parts.

Cumulative considerations are relevant, in the context of other sites at Bates, Dun Cow Quay and Commissioners Quay all within around 3km of the sites. A Local Development Order is similarly being pursued for the Bates site.

It is not anticipated industrial processes in the sectors being targeted will result in hazardous substances or emissions, however, there is scope for pollution and nuisance in respect of increased traffic movements and resulting impacts on air quality; and potential noise from operations, particularly outdoor operations.

There is some potential for waste to be produced during the remediation and construction stage. However, there this will depend upon the nature of the end user and factors such as required load bearing capacity. There are known voids in the East Sleekburn site 2 (quay) site and potential for construction waste and existing demolition arisings on the site to be used for cut and fill balance within the site boundary.

The risk of accidents or risks to human health as a result of the development permitted by the LDO are considered to be low.

**Location:**

Schedule 3 Paragraph 2 of the Regulations states that the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected must be considered.

The sites are situated north of the River Blyth, north of Blyth town centre. East Sleekburn site 1 (west) is in part a greenfield site in agricultural use and partly a temporary motor cross circuit. East Sleekburn site 2 (quay) is a brownfield site which formerly housed a power station. It includes the former Ash Barge Dock – part of the Power Station operations.

The town of Blyth has a population of around 36,000. The Cambois area is relatively sparsely populated with areas of housing including East Sleekburn and Cambois interspersed by

agricultural and open land and industrial development.

The wider Blyth estuary area is an intensively developed landscape. There are significant areas of derelict land and large scale industrial development, including highly visible structures such as storage silos and wind turbines.

There are no nature conservation designations within either of the sites but the Northumbria Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site, are within 1.5km of site 1 and 230m of site 2, whilst the Northumbria Coast Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); and Blyth Estuary Local Wildlife Site are around 650m from site 1 and immediately adjacent site 2.

There are no landscape designations within the site boundaries. In addition there are no AONBs or National Parks within 20km of the sites. Northumberland National Park is located approximately 30km North west of the site and the North Northumberland Heritage Coast is located approximately 10km north of the sites.

The nearest listed buildings/structures are the coal staithes which immediately adjoin site 2. A condition is included in the Order to ensure new development responds to local character including the listed structure. Archaeological interests are not fully known but are to be investigated further before development.

**Potential  
Impact:**

Paragraph 3 of Schedule 3 to the Regulations requires that the potential significant effects of a development must be considered.

The key potential impacts are considered to be as follows:

- 1) Pollution / Nuisance – The LDO permits uses which could be detrimental to nearby residential properties by way of noise, smell, fumes and dust. However, the conditions and environmental protection regulations outside the planning system can control these impacts, were they to arise.
- 2) Nature Conservation – The LDO sites are within close proximity of a number of sites designated for their nature conservation importance at a European, National and local level. The potential impacts of development of the sites alone and in combination have been assessed through a Nature Conservation and Ecological Assessment which includes a Habitat Regulations screening exercise. The assessment which explores characteristics of potential effects concludes that there will be ‘no likely significant effects’ on these sensitive areas. In addition there are no related transfrontier impacts.
- 3) Economic Growth - South East Northumberland suffers high levels of deprivation and unemployment. The development of the East Sleekburn sites as part of wider initiatives to create the conditions for economic growth could have positive economic outcomes. The magnitude of the positive impacts will depend upon a range of factors including the required

level of staff skills. The sectors being targeted are likely to need to attract employees from the wider north eastern area and potentially from other parts of the country or Europe. The socio-economic benefits for the local area may therefore be in-direct benefits achieved in the long term rather than the short term – e.g. through investment in the area and potential for supply chain growth and associated jobs.

- 4) Physical changes to the locality – the LDO permits potentially large scale industrial developments. The sectors being targeted may have specific requirements e.g. for moveable cranes and may involve the construction or assembly of large parts / components. An initial visual impact assessment has been undertaken suggesting the impact of development would be unlikely to be significant given the existing industrial landscape. The impacts would be most significant for the occupiers of nearby housing. However, site 1 benefits from extensive screen planting and its topography makes development less intrusive. Site 2 was formerly a large scale power station with associated structures of a similar nature to what it being proposed.
- 5) Accessibility – the sites are relatively isolated and are not well served by public transport. New development could generate heavy good vehicles in an area which already has such vehicles access port facilities and car based traffic from employees. The magnitude and complexity of the impact will depend upon the nature of the end user. Given the site's port access and the sectors being targeted it may be that more ship based movements are used, taking traffic off the roads. The Order includes conditions to require highway impacts to be fully assessed and sustainable transport options to be facilitated.

It is considered that, due to the size of the sites concerned, the proposed development would have only a local impact that would be limited in its extent beyond the site boundaries. There would be no significant impact on the Listed Blyth Coal Staithes. Whilst the setting would be altered, this would not have a detrimental or substantive impact on the heritage asset which is situated within an area which has evolved and changed over time.

The conditions attached to the LDO will provide acceptable mitigation against the anticipated impacts of the development proposed.

The cumulative impact of the development needs to be considered as part of the screening exercise. The site is adjacent to existing development at the Port of Blyth and near the recently constructed renewable energy test facility within the Port at Wimbourne Quay on the south side of the river. To the west of the sites, a wind farm consisting of 6 turbines with a 80m hub height and a 90m rotor diameter and one turbine with a 100m hub height and 126m rotor diameter is currently being constructed. There is a current application for a 100MW biomass

power station at Battleship Wharf under consideration by the Planning Inspectorate.

Within the context of the current committed developments it is not considered that, due to the size of the sites and the nature of the development proposed, the cumulative impact of the development would give rise to any significant environmental impacts.

**Conclusion:** As set out above, as the development permitted by the Local Development Order falls within Schedule 2 part 10a of the Regulations. The development has been considered against the criteria within Schedule 3 to determine if an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. It has also been considered against the advice in the Circular.

Whilst the development will have some impact on the environment in terms of the potential scale of the buildings; increased traffic generation, particularly during construction; and potential to generate noise, these are mitigated by conditions included in the Order and none of these impacts is considered to be so significant in scale that an Environmental Impact Assessment would be required.

Additionally, although the site, is in relative proximity to a number of designated ecological areas, ecological assessments have concluded that there will be no likely significant effects on these areas.

**Screening Opinion:** The Local Planning Authority has considered the proposed development in the context of the Regulations and the advice contained in the Circular and considers that the impact of the Local Development Order at the East Sleekburn sites **would not** be so significant to require an Environmental Impact Assessment for the reasons set out above.

Signed:



John Dowsett  
Authorised Officer on behalf of Northumberland County Council

Date: 3rd September 2012