

To: David Bray
Planning, Policy and
Development Control

From: Janet Askey
Assistant Landscape Officer
Environment & Countryside

Date: 26th October, 2011

Ext: 7279

Your Ref: PAD944/161 M

My Ref: EC3010SM/JGA

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Copies to: Julia Banbury, ECU Consultations

Subject: PAD NO: PAD944/161 M - PHASE 2 OF DEVELOPMENT - GAS GENERATOR - AT LAND AT THREE NOOKS FARM, HORTON, LEEK

Thank you for your email dated 5th October, 2011 requesting comments on the above submission.

Ecological survey work as described below is required. The proposals are within 250m of Sprinks Wood, which is recorded as ancient semi-natural woodland in the Staffordshire Inventory of Ancient Woodland (Provisional), 1993. It is noted that a tree survey will accompany the full application. Additional measures are required for visual mitigation in respect of the proposed building. A positive contribution towards the landscape policy objective is sought.

Archaeology and Historic Landscape Character

There are no recorded designated or undesignated heritage assets on the proposed site or within the immediate vicinity of the scheme. As a result it is considered that groundworks associated with this development are likely not to impact upon previously unrecorded archaeological remains and therefore it is advised that archaeological mitigation would not be appropriate in this instance.

Historic Built Environment

There are no historic built environment constraints affecting this proposal.

Ecology

The ecological survey work carried out by Apex Ecology in 2009 should be revisited, due to the elapsed time since the last survey. To meet legislative and policy requirements this should be extended to cover the pipeline route and all land within 30 metres and should include assessment of field boundary features - hedges, walls. In addition bat and bird survey is required of the shed to be demolished. I note that we are entering a period of low suitability for habitat and species survey. SCC planning application validation guidance for biodiversity states that surveys should be carried out at the appropriate times of year. Buildings assessment for use

by bats, some protected species survey, and hedgerow assessment can be carried out in winter months but this may not be suitable for some aspects of survey. Mitigation proposals should be incorporated into the proposal where protected or priority species or habitats are affected by the works. Should there be impacts on European protected species, e.g. bats, it must be demonstrated that there are no feasible alternatives that avoid impact on the species.

Forestry

Phase 2 will also be within 250m of Sprinks Wood, which is recorded as ancient semi-natural woodland in the Staffordshire Inventory of Ancient Woodland (Provisional), 1993. A letter from the DETR dated 15 March 1999 adds the Forestry Commission to the list of non-statutory consultees on planning applications. It requires, *inter alia*, that the Commission should be consulted on proposals where any part of the development site is within 500 metres of an ancient semi-natural woodland or ancient replanted woodland, and where the development would involve erecting new buildings or extending the footprint of existing buildings. Plans supplied suggest that the Forestry Commission should be added to the list of non statutory consultees.

Of greatest concern is the indication that the new cable will be located along field boundaries where there is the potential habitat loss. Hedgerows should be surveyed as part of the ecological surveys, as indicated in the "Briefing note". It is noted that the full planning application will include a tree survey where trees may be affected by development.

Landscape

The replacement of the existing farm building to accommodate the proposed equipment will screen much of this phase of the development. It is therefore important that the new building should be in keeping with the rural context, and blend unobtrusively into the landscape. The public right of way footpath No.21 Horton passes through the site, adjacent to the building. To ensure that visual impact upon the landscape as well as footpath users is kept to a minimum, I recommend that the building be of an agricultural barn design similar to that removed - but much improved. The height of the roof line should not exceed that of adjacent barns. The roof should be constructed using Marley Eternite Farmscape roofing in anthracite, or similar product, and the upper section of the barn wall construction should be clad with Yorkshire boarding. The boarding will weather to give a soft silver-grey finish, which will be recessive in this landscape. Exhaust pipes which will protrude through the roof should be finished in black. As not all of the associated equipment will be housed within the building, external elements should also be finished in a recessive colour such as black, to reduce visual impact.

A contribution towards the landscape policy objective will be sought in association with this phase of the development. New woodland planting would be of high value in areas showing the effects of hedgerow decline. Planting species rich hedges is also considered as a high priority in this landscape, with maintaining and managing existing hedges and hedgerow trees to help stem the decline of landscape quality and character. In addition, restoring sections of dry stone walling would contribute towards the landscape policy objective, and I suggest discussions with the farmer could identify areas where further landscape restoration and improvements could be accommodated within the vicinity of the development. Full details of a landscape

scheme relating to Phase 2 of the development would need to be submitted to support the application.

Rights of Way

According to the current Definitive Map, there are no public rights of way or routes claimed under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which will be directly affected by this development. The public right of way footpath No.21 Horton passes through the site, adjacent to the building. Works must not cause obstructions to the right of way, and construction operatives must be made aware of the existence of the right of way.