9 Mitigation measures

Hydrology and hydrogeology

Potential effects during construction include possible pollution of surface water caused by release of sediment to watercourses from excavated/stockpiled materials or as a result of works near streams. There is also the potential for pollution of surface water through operation of machinery (e.g. spillage of fuels, oils etc) as well as modifications to groundwater flows and agricultural field drainage systems.

The existing planning permission includes a planning condition requiring the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the approval of the planning authority prior to the commencement of construction.

The CEMP is required to include:

- a Soil Management Plan showing details of the proposed locations of stockpiles of excavated materials and their management

- a Site Waste Management Plan detailing pollution prevention monitoring and mitigation measures for all construction activities

- a scheme for the identification of drainage systems and measures for their protection during construction and reinstatement following the completion of construction.

Subject to a similar condition requiring the submission of such a CEMP on this proposal being applied and subsequently employed during construction, no significant effects are predicted upon hydrology and hydrogeology as a result of the proposed development.

Biodiversity

The proposed site predominantly comprises land under agricultural cultivation which it is considered likely to be of limited ecological value.

Some small areas of trees and hedgerows are present within the site and the wider area which may provide potential nesting habitats for a range of birds. In addition, areas of open ground could potentially support ground-nesting species. To mitigate for potential impacts on breeding birds, it is proposed that vegetation clearance will be avoided where possible within the breeding bird season (March to August). In areas where this is unavoidable, a suitably experienced ornithologist will first check areas to be cleared to confirm active nests are not present. If active nests are recorded, these areas will not be cleared until the nest is empty and any young have fledged.

Trees along the Buddon Burn have previously been identified as having potential to support roosting bats. To avoid potential disturbance to bats, it is proposed that pre-construction surveys be undertaken to confirm their potential. Proposed mitigation will include avoiding any trees with high or medium bat roost potential wherever possible. Where this is not possible it will subsequently be determined through daytime tree inspection or emergence/re-entry surveys whether a bat roost is present. This will inform further mitigation.

As per the planning permission in principle consent for the wider cable route, it is proposed that a suitably qualified and experienced ecological clerk of works be appointed for the duration of the construction works to ensure compliance with an approved CEMP for the site and wider environmental protection legislation and best practice.

Land use and soils

The proposed application site comprises prime quality agricultural land which will be temporarily taken out of agricultural use during construction of the proposed development. The proposed alternative route would not require the use of more prime quality agricultural land than the route currently approved. Once construction is complete, the land would be fully reinstated back to agricultural use.

The construction works have the potential to affect the quality of the existing agricultural soil on site. As with the existing planning permission, it is proposed that soils be excavated, handled, stored and reinstated in accordance with a Soil Management Plan to be agreed with the planning authority prior to the commencement of development.

Following the implementation of such a plan, no significant effects are predicted upon land use or soils as a result of the proposed development. A voluntary land agreement has been agreed with the landowner.

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