Cooil Road Development Order
Environmental Impact Assessment
Non-Technical Summary
March 2009
i.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

i.1 This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is a concise summary of the main findings of the Environmental Report (ER) produced by TEP in support of a Development Order being prepared by the Department of Local Government and the Environment (DoLGE) for industrial, business park and car showroom development at Cooil Road, Braddan, Isle of Man.

i.2 Confirmation of a Development Order will have the effect of granting planning permission in principle for the proposed development. The specific detail of the proposed development will be confirmed when a future planning application for the development is made, but the detail will need to be consistent with the development described in the Order.

i.3 The ER provides information on the proposals, includes a description of the project and a comprehensive description of the surrounding environment. The potential positive and adverse environmental impacts of the proposed development are assessed and mitigation measures identified, where appropriate, to reduce or avoid adverse effects.

Project Description

i.4 The proposed development site is to the south of Cooil Road and east of Colooney’s Lane in the Parish of Braddan. The proposed development will comprise industrial uses, a business park and car showrooms occupying a site area of 19.8 hectares. The proposed development will effectively form an extension to the existing commercial development on the adjacent Eden Park and Isle of Man Business Park.

i.5 The landscape character of the site and its surroundings is of regular sized open agricultural fields interrupted by occasional small woodlands or tree belts. The land is largely pasture fields, but with some arable fields in more sheltered areas. Field boundaries are typically 1 metre high and consist of earth, stone and turf banks.

i.6 Two different scenarios of development have been assessed different breakdowns of the intended uses on the site following its development. The first scenario allows for 55% industrial use, 30% business park and 15% car showrooms. An alternative scenario of 40% industrial, 40% business park and 20% car showrooms has also been assessed.

i.7 It is proposed to use the existing road into the Spring Valley Industrial Estate and the B&Q superstore located at the far north east corner to access the proposed development site. This will involve constructing a roundabout junction in place of the existing three-way junction. An access for emergency vehicles only is proposed via the existing access at Robinson’s packing plant on Cooil Road.

i.8 The proposed development will seek to maximise accessibility for other transport modes including pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.
Alternatives

i.9 DoLGE does not consider that there are suitable alternative sites which meet the Spatial Strategy and other policies in the approved Strategic Plan. Most of the potential areas around Douglas, Onchan and Braddan are classified as areas of High Landscape Value and Coastal or Scenic Significance. Alternative sites that have been considered are poorly related to the strategic highway network and the principal gateways to the Island (Douglas Harbour and Ronaldsway Airport). Other possible alternatives are areas of ecological significance; or are land safeguarded for water supply purposes.

Socio-Economic Need Case

i.10 An assessment was undertaken of the Isle of Man economy, including economic trends, the commercial market, growth sectors, employment land availability and employment land take-up. This was used to assess the likely impact of the proposed development on the Island’s economy and outline the need case for the proposed development.

i.11 Research and development and corporate HQs facilities, engineering and maritime activities, film and media, and IT and e-businesses have been identified as major engines of future economic growth.

i.12 Readily available office space within established town centres is currently very limited, particularly in Douglas. The development of new office space on business parks would likely prove popular with a range of companies. The majority of industrial development/land is located in two key areas: the area around Douglas and Braddan; and the area around Ronaldsway airport. These locations are typically preferred by occupiers due to their close proximity to target markets and suppliers.

i.13 The rate at which employment land is developed and occupied and the latest estimations of currently available employment land suggest that there is currently an undersupply of land for industrial use. It is likely that should the proposed development site not be developed, the present undersupply of industrial land in the eastern sector of the Island will increase further. This could threaten the attractiveness of the Island for potential occupiers in the future.

i.14 The proposed development site would be well placed to provide high quality accommodation for a range of identified future growth sectors, including e-businesses and high technology manufacturers.

Planning Context

i.15 The Isle of Man Strategic Plan was approved in July 2008 and contains a written statement setting out DoLGE’s general policies in respect of the use of land on the Island. The Strategic Plan remains valid for the period 2001 – 2016.

i.16 The Braddan Local Plan was adopted in July 1991 and provides a number of thematic and specific area policies and recommendations for Braddan Parish District. This plan was due to be replaced by The Braddan Parish Plan 2003, however, work on the replacement plan has now stopped. The policies within the 2003 plan hold no valid planning status, but reference, where appropriate, is made to them, to provide more up-to-date guidance on environmental, planning and land-use issues.
i.17 The need to undertake Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is detailed under Strategic Plan Environment Policy 24. DoLGE considers that the proposed development at Cooil Road, Braddan requires an EIA as it is a commercial development of more than 500m² outside an identified settlement.

i.18 Strategic Plan Business Policies 1 and 2 state a general presumption in favour of employment generating developments provided good transport links are available or can be provided and the development is suitably located in the context of the surrounding area.

i.19 Policy 13.3 of the Local Plan (1991), Policies B/NC/PR/2, B/NC/PR/3 and B/NC/PR/6 of the Local Plan (2003) and Strategic Plan Environment Policies 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 state that development should not have any significant adverse effects on landscape and biodiversity, including areas of landscape value, archaeological sites, habitats and species of international, national and local importance, woodland and watercourses. The proposed development has been assessed as unlikely to have any significant effects on these environmental features.

Landscape and Views

i.20 An assessment has been undertaken of the anticipated effects of the proposed development on landscape character and views.

i.21 The proposed development site is designated as an area of high landscape value in the approved Isle of Man Strategic Plan. This designation covers the majority of the island and includes a belt that runs around the entire coast. The site is also designated as being of high landscape value in the 1991 adopted local plan (policy 13.3) and as an agricultural open space in the 1991 adopted local plan. Policy 6.7 states that ‘no further extension of any industrial areas into areas designated as open space will be permitted’.

i.22 The landscape character of the site and surroundings is of regular sized open agricultural fields interrupted by the occasional small woodlands or tree belts. The land is predominantly pasture, but with some arable fields in more sheltered areas. Less intensive farming has resulted in the encroachment of scrub and bracken from field margins, spreading across large areas in places. Field boundaries typically consist of earth, stone and turf banks, with a combination of established gorse/bramble/bracken scrub, thorn hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

i.23 Views within the site are limited in an east to west direction by the Ballapadag development and also the intervening earth banks and hedgerows to field boundaries, which generally restrict views from one field to another. The rolling landform from east to west means that some views are possible from higher ground in the centre of the site across to fields on the far western side.

i.24 The development will have a moderate adverse significance of effect on landscape character during the construction and early establishment phases of the development. This will reduce to a low adverse effect in time as the landscape structure of the site matures, having a positive effect on the transition between urban edge and countryside.

i.25 The development would, in general, have a low adverse effect upon views with moderate scale of effects on a few near and sensitive locations. The proposals for the site will result in a more appropriate treatment to the transition between countryside and urban
development, which would have a positive effect on views toward the eastern edge of Douglas.

i.26 Adverse affects on the surrounding environment would be reduced through appropriate mitigation measures such as the retention of trees, hedgerows and areas of habitat, new planting and the addition of a landscape buffer. Maximum building heights for each type of development on the proposed site will further reduce adverse effects on the surrounding landscape.

Ecology

i.27 An assessment has been undertaken to establish the likely impact of the proposed development on the ecological features of the proposed development site and the surrounding area.

i.28 Ecological surveys were carried out by the Manx Wildlife Trust (MWT) and the Manx Bird Atlas (MBA) during 2006 and 2007. Existing ecological information for the wider area dating back to the 1990s has also been used in the assessment.

i.29 The valuable ecological features of the site have been incorporated into the site proposals. The use of native species in the new landscaping and the management of retained habitats for wildlife ensure that negative residual impacts of the proposed development will be minimized as far as possible.

i.30 Positive impacts will result from the management of existing standing water habitat within the site. This benefit can be increased by creating more aquatic habitats in the final design, independently or as part of a Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) scheme.

Cultural Heritage

i.31 An archaeological assessment has been undertaken to assess the nature and importance of any archaeological features present on the site and the likely impact the proposed development may have on them. Identified features include original quarterland boundaries, Ballapaddag quarry, fragments of diorite, extant agricultural and farmhouse buildings from the industrial period, and a formal garden.

i.32 The desk-based assessment and site walkover identified ten sites requiring further comment. One site dates from the Neolithic period, one from the Bronze Age, three from the Early Medieval period and five from the industrial period. Impacts of ‘major’ significance are anticipated at two sites and an impact of ‘major to intermediate’ at one other site. Other impacts are forecast to be ‘intermediate’ or ‘neutral’.

i.33 Three sites have potential to be of national importance. The remaining sites are perceived to be of local importance.

i.34 There is a substantial lack of knowledge about the archaeology of the site. It is forecast that more detailed assessment of the risks to existing archaeology will reduce the risks to construction and development which may arise from the presence of archaeological remains.
Transport

i.35 An assessment has been completed to consider the likely effects of the proposed development on the surrounding highway network including the consideration of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, vehicle access requirements, parking and the generation of extra car trips.

i.36 The off-site traffic impacts resulting from the proposed development have been assessed as generally capable of being absorbed throughout the highway network, with the majority of junctions operating within capacity in the opening year of 2010 and the future assessment year of 2020.

i.37 However, mitigation measures have been identified for the following junctions which are likely to operate in excess of capacity during certain scenarios:

- Spring Valley Crossroads roundabout junction;
- Quarterbridge roundabout junction; and
- New Castletown Road/Annacur Lane and New Castletown Road/Groves Road signalised junctions.

i.38 A Travel Plan for the proposed development will be produced to show how the potential impact of the proposed development might be minimised. It will identify measures that promote a more responsible use of the private car by ensuring the availability of alternative modes of transport. Provision for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and parking will also be contained within the Travel Plan.

i.39 The environmental effects arising from construction generated traffic have been assessed in terms of the nature and level of impact on the identified sensitive receptors. Such receptors include residents and workers, public transport users, children and elderly and pedestrians and cyclists. Mitigation measures, detailed within an outline Construction Management Plan will be sufficient to ensure adverse effects arising from construction traffic are reduced to acceptable levels.

Traffic Air Quality

i.40 An assessment was undertaken to establish the anticipated effects on air quality arising from the generation of extra traffic associated with the proposed development.

i.41 Potential impacts were assessed at four receptor locations to ascertain whether the proposed development is likely to lead to a breach in National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) objectives. The predicted air quality values for all four receptors during the operation of the development fall well within the NAQS thresholds.

i.42 The generation of construction traffic has been assessed as having a minimal impact on air quality.

Traffic Noise and Vibration

i.43 An assessment was completed to establish the anticipated effects of an increase in noise and vibration levels arising from an increase in traffic activity. Predicted noise levels were calculated at four different receptor locations using seven different scenarios.
Changes in noise levels between development scenarios during the operational phase are all expected to be less than 3dB (A). These changes would have a ‘slight impact’ and the subjective response of sensitive receptors would be ‘barely perceptible’. Noise generated by the development is unlikely to have any significant effects on local receptors.

Vibration levels generated by the proposed development during the operational phase are unlikely to have any significant effects on sensitive receptors.

A number of mitigation measures will be included in the Construction Management Plan to ensure that adverse effects during the construction phase of the development will be reduced as far as possible.

**Concluding Statement**

The environmental effects of the proposed development have been considered and range from short term relating to the construction phase of the project through to more permanent effects resulting from the operation of the project. Effects of both a positive and negative nature have been identified and assessed.

Negative impacts were identified on landscape and views, ecology, cultural heritage, and transport. The effects of the proposed development are of a permanent adverse nature; however they are considered to be local in scale and are generally considered to be of low significance.

The proposed development will bring positive benefits in meeting an identified need for a sustainable and desirable location to accommodate future industrial, business park and office space demand. The scale and nature of the identified adverse effects are not considered to be of sufficient significance to prevent the proposed development from proceeding.