## EIA Quality Mark Case Study

### Re-location of Rugby Farmers’ Mart

#### Key Issues:

The main challenge for the EIA was integrating the development into the site and its rural surrounds, in particular from a habitat, landscape character and visual impact perspective. The EIA was underpinned by a Sequential Test process that demonstrated ‘very special circumstances’ under the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework for development in the Green Belt. Although the Green Belt is a land-use policy designation, and EIA effects on it are not specifically assessed, it was key for the EIA process to properly assess the potential for significant effects from the project in its rural, greenfield setting. This included the amenity of the local area (and the potential for odour and noise effects on it), as well as consideration of the historic environment and the site biodiversity value.

The project had multiple key stakeholders, due to the location, background circumstances, and the impact of HS2; these included the farming community attending markets, Stoneleigh Park for whom RFM is a tenant, the LPA, and the local community. The EIA process therefore drew on comprehensive stakeholder and public consultation. This included detailed pre-application consultation with officers from Warwick District Council (WDC), scoping consultation on the content of the Environmental Statement, and a leaflet drop and public consultation event inputting the views of local residents and the farming community into the project.

Cumulative impact assessment was a key issue, to consider potential inter-project cumulative effects with a nearby road improvement scheme, a strategic housing allocation, and the HS2 high speed rail line.

#### Purpose of the project:

Construction of a farmers’ market facility, to accommodate the relocation of Rugby Farmers’ Mart (RFM). RFM is currently located within Stoneleigh Park. The move is to take account of the construction of the HS2 high speed railway through Stoneleigh Park. This will safeguard the business as the park is re-designed with various businesses being relocated around the impacts of HS2. The EIA and planning application were undertaken on behalf of LaSalle Investment Management, who managed Stoneleigh Park at that time.

#### Description of the project:

The site is within the Warwick District; approx. 0.5 km north-west of Stoneleigh village and 1.6 km east of Kenilworth, close to the A46, and 2 km north of the existing RFM, which sits within Stoneleigh Park. RFM conducts regular sales and seasonal fairs for cattle and sheep. The proposed facilities will include animal penning, sales rings, vehicle wash, café and welfare facilities, retail space, and back office space. Some of which are provided from Stoneleigh Park’s existing facilities, but which are required to be part of a self-contained re-location site.

The site was chosen based on a number of factors including its limited visual envelope, and position close to a junction of the A46 trunk road. Sensitive receptors include: Stoneleigh village (and its Conservation Area); Arden Parklands Local Landscape Type (within the Arden Regional Character Area); Stoneleigh Abbey, a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden; and the long distance footpath Centenary Way/Coventry Way, immediately south of the site.

The site is located within the Green belt.
### EIA Learning Outcomes

**Lessons learnt:**

Use of an early-stage environmental constraints process, and an understanding of the key sensitivities of the local area gained from previous projects around Stoneleigh Park, helped inform the planning and scoping of the EIA, as well as supporting the Sequential Test process underpinning the proposed development.

The public consultation process was key in allowing the input of the farming community and local residents, to establish the importance of RFM and dictate the design requirements to feed into the EIA. Comments and outcomes from the public consultation, discussions with WDC, and other stakeholder engagement were tracked and implemented through an engagement grid.

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**Lessons learnt continued:**

The location and project required an iterative design approach, with close working between the LVIA, design and ecology teams. Delivering an EIA that established the sensitivity of the site, and producing environmental design and a landscape strategy that retained and enhanced the important landscape and ecological features. This included retaining hedgerows and trees, incorporating building materials sympathetic to the semi-rural and wooded context, creating an appropriate landscape structure (with species of local provenance), meadow grassland, and a sensitive lighting scheme.

Biodiversity net-gain was demonstrated; commensurate with local and national policy direction. In the end, the development of a full detailed scheme of landscape proposals was brought forward to the pre-determination stage, to fully demonstrate how sensitive design and environmental mitigation would be implemented.

A good working relationship had already been established with WDC as part of addressing the wider implications of the impact of HS2 on Stoneleigh Park. Scoping consultation with WDC, a good understanding of the environmental constraints of the location formed early in the process, and a coordinated approach to cumulative assessment allowed the potential for the project to generate inter-project cumulative effects with three other major projects around the site to receive careful consideration through the EIA.

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