EIA Quality Mark Case Study

Purfleet Thames Terminal – Car Deck

Key Issues:

The Proposed Development was located on a land parcel which had relatively received planning consent for a surface storage car park, which had not yet been constructed. This was an important consideration within the environmental impact assessment as it formed the future baseline against which the impacts of the Proposed Development would be assessed.

The key considerations associated with the Site were the potential for ground contamination as it was a previously developed site, the proximity of an Air Quality Management Area and the proximity of residential receptors.

The consented development, which was yet to be constructed, also included the creation of four areas of open mosaic habitat that provided mitigation for the wider intensification of the site. It was really important therefore to understand how the Proposed Development may impact these proposed areas of ecological mitigation.

Purpose of the project:

The overall vision for the Port was to deliver ‘more of the same’: improving safety, increasing efficiency and facilitating consolidation of the existing port operations, as well as increasing the capacity of the Port. In response to changing market conditions the client needed to bring forward additional capacity at the port.

Description of the project:

The proposed Car Deck is a purpose-built car storage building for the temporary storage of cars specifically and solely in connection with the transhipment of vehicles. The proposed building comprising six storeys plus ground floor with internalised space for loading and unloading transporters and internalised ramps between floors. A circulation route around the building perimeter will serve as access for emergency vehicles. Areas of ecological mitigation are included within the application. The building would provide storage capacity for c 10,000 cars. The building footprint measures 208m by 174m. It extends up to 25m in height, and cars will be stored on the open top deck and each floor of the car storage building.
EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt:

Understanding the future baseline and how the Proposed Development sat within this consented baseline was critically in determining the scope of the environmental impact assessment.

Given the EIA team’s extensive knowledge of the site and the availability of publicly available environmental information submitted as part of the previous planning application, we were able to deliver a proportionate environmental impact assessment that focussed on four environmental topics:

- Ecology and Nature Conservation
- Traffic and Transport;
- Air Quality; and
- Noise.

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Lessons learnt continued:

The pre-application meetings played a key role in defining the scope of the EIA as we were able to discuss our approach to proportionality with the case officer in advance of submitting a scoping request.

Given the timescales, relative simplicity of the project along with extensive knowledge of the site, a decision was taken not to submit a scoping request for the Proposed Development. This was discussed and agreed with the Local Planning Authority during the pre-application meetings. Using the statutory consultation responses from the previous planning application, the EIA Team were able to demonstrate that the key concerns were understood and would be addressed within the environmental impact assessment and a formal scoping request wasn’t necessary. The case officer and their supporting officers agreed with this approach and the application was consented without the need for the submission of further environmental information.

The key lessons learnt from this particular project were that early consultation with the local planning authority is incredibly important and that EIA is an integrated part of the planning process that needs to be managed appropriately to manage risks and should never be undertaken in isolation.

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