EIA Quality Mark Case Study

Chichester Growth Pipeline – EIA and Planning Support

Key Issues:

**Chichester WwTW:** The sewer network in the Chichester district is affected by high levels of groundwater infiltration, which leaks into the sewer system. When this occurs the combination of groundwater flow, and expected foul and combined flow is greater than the Chichester WwTW capacity causing the WwTW to operate in storm overflow conditions, resulting in partially treated sewage being pumped into Chichester Harbour (a designated SSSI, SAC, RAMSAR and SPA). Until the groundwater infiltration is under control the Environment Agency has set a limit on the level of flows that can be conveyed and treated at the WwTW. Due to this limit, no wastewater flows emanating from the three major housing sites allocated by the Chichester Local Plan can be treated at Chichester WwTW.

**Housing development phasing vs resolution of groundwater issues:** The major housing developments are due to commence before works to resolve the groundwater infiltration issues associated with Chichester WwTW. Southern Water have a statutory obligation to treat wastewater from the major housing developments and have considered a number of options, concluding that the construction of a new pipeline linking the major housing sites to Tangmere WwTW as the most sustainable solution.

Purpose of the project:

Southern Water proposes to construct a new 9.2km pipeline and 3 associated pumping stations to transfer wastewater from proposed housing sites designated in the Chichester Location Plan, to Tangmere Wastewater Treatment Works (WTW), east of Chichester. The transfer of flows was also required as the Environment Agency has limited flows at Chichester WTW due to the frequency of storm spills into Chichester Harbour, a site of European importance, and ongoing issues in relation to water quality and aesthetics in the area.
### Planning Permission:
As the proposed development was deemed by West Sussex County Council to require EIA the Permitted Development Rights Southern Water benefits from under Schedule 2, Part 13, Class B (A) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, no longer apply; accordingly a planning application had to be submitted for this development.

### Community Engagement:
As pipeline is routed west to east through the urban fabric of Chichester the construction phase will have a significant impact upon local residents in terms of partial road closures and construction activity in proximity to dwellings. The residents of Chichester are very informed and actively engage in the planning application process accordingly they were keen to understand the likely impact of the proposed development identified as part of the EIA process.

### Description of the project:
The pipeline starting point is in a rural area to the west of Chichester, the end point was Tangmere WTW. Built development in Chichester and the historic core presented a significant physical constraint.

The proposed pumping station locations were in greenfield locations on agricultural land; the locations being based on the future layout of housing developments. The proposed pipeline construction method is principally open cut, however in some locations trenchless technology, such as Horizontal Directional Drill and auger bore, is to be employed.

A scheme of archaeological investigation was undertaken prior to submission of the planning application, with finds dating back to 1500BC.

### EIA Learning Outcomes

#### Lessons learnt:
**Community Engagement:** Early community engagement was seen as a vital element of the project to explain the likely impacts of the development to communities. A two stage consultation process was undertaken with public exhibitions at an early stage of the design process and then just before the submission of the planning application. All households within 200m of the proposed route were notified of the proposals and the options of visiting the exhibition or viewing the proposal online. The exhibitions were well attended with over 400 people attending the exhibitions and the website attracted over 700 hits. The exhibition was manned by the technical experts who were involved in the design and construction of the pipeline as well as a number of environmental experts who were able to answer any questions raised by residents at the exhibition. This proved to be a good option as very few comments were submitted to the client at the end of the public consultation.

![One of the community consultation events](image)
period and even fewer were received by the West Sussex County Council. It was therefore concluded that early community engagement, and having those involved in the design and construction of a development, including the environmental specialists, communicating directly with the community has resulted in a better understanding of the project by local residents and fewer objections to the planning application on the basis of possible impacts.  

Communication with the Local Planning Authority: the LPA can be your best friend; they can highlight issues you may not be aware of, identify key consultees in the community and arrange meetings with local councillors. Pre application engagement should reduce the risk of request for additional information once the application has been submitted.

Lessons learnt continued:

Beware of the limitations of the Councils planning application consultation website: EIA planning applications contain a lot of information included in reports and plans which must be readily accessible on the Council’s website. Due to the limitations of these websites the ES may have to be split into sections and plans separated from reports. It is therefore important when producing the ES and supporting documentation to be aware of these limitations and to format documents and label plans in such a manner that they can be readily uploaded to the council website.

Design Freeze: It is essential for the design to be finalized well before the completion of the EIA. Minor changes to the proposed route resulted in amendments to many parts of the ES to ensure all chapters took account of not only the design change but changes in other sections of the ES. This process was very time and resource consuming

Flexibility: There has to be some flexibility in the programme to allow for changes to the ES due to external circumstances. In this instance, despite the design amendments, the date for submission of the ES and planning application remained fixed. As a consequence the programme pre-application reviews of the ES were not undertaken and the validation of the planning application was delayed due to the need to address LPA concerns which were anticipated to be identified at the pre application submission stage. It is, therefore, essential that other parties involved in the project are aware of the consequences of their actions and the program adjusted accordingly.

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