## EIA Quality Mark Case Study

### Land at Cowley Hill, St Helens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues:</th>
<th>Purpose of the project:</th>
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<td>The proposed development of the site falls within Part 10(b) (infrastructure projects) of schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Part 10(b) relates to ‘urban development projects’ where the development includes more than 150 dwellings or the overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares. As the Site covers approx. 46 hectares, it was considered that an EIA would be required.</td>
<td>Nexus Planning were instructed as the planning consultants and project co-ordinators for the Environment Impact Assessment for Land at Cowley Hill, comprising residential led development on the brownfield site of a former glass works. Nexus Planning co-ordinated the EIA process including production of the Scoping Report and the first 6 chapters of the Environmental Statement (ES), and co-ordinated the remaining technical chapters and the Non-Technical Summary (NTS).</td>
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| The Site had a number of constraints, including:  
  - ground contamination from its previous use as a glass factory;  
  - two extensive areas of regenerated woodland and scrub underlain by burgy waste (a waste product from glass manufacturing);  
  - the presence of a HSE exclusion zone at the north of the Site preventing any development within the inner zone;  
  - an inconsistent topography including 36 mine shafts;  
  - a brook (culverted towards the south of the Site); | **Description of the project:**  
The Site was allocated within the emerging St Helens Local Plan Submission Draft 2020-2035 for a strategic housing allocation under Policy LPA1.05 (ref. 6HA). The policy allocated the Site for a notional capacity of 816 homes.  
A planning application was prepared for:  
  - Up to 1,200 new dwellings;  
  - Up to 4,700sqm of mixed use floorspace providing for flexible use within... |
• a gas pipeline to be retained which runs along the western boundary of the Site;
• consideration to acoustic and visual buffers to the retained Pilkington site; and
• multiple land ownerships in areas surrounding the Site.

Therefore, the design process to ‘fix’ the Land Use Parameter Plans and Illustrative Masterplan was dependent on a variety of different constraints. The Masterplan was designed to maximise the developable area of the site. This was then split into four development plots, and two mixed use zones at the north and south of the site.

The development of the Site was considered to offer opportunities including connecting St Helens town centre to the more suburban area of Windlehurst; providing frontages to the edges of the site around City Road and Cowley Street; and providing landscape buffers and public open space to frame views and link the plots together.

Description of the project continued:

...Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, B1, C1, D1 and D2;
• Demolition of the remaining structures on site and ground remodeling;
• Green infrastructure, public open space and SuDS; and
• Vehicular access from highways

Two Parameter Plans - a Land Use Parameter Plan and Green Infrastructure Parameter Plan – were submitted alongside an Illustrative Masterplan.

EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt:

Consistency: A crib sheet should be issued to the project team to confirm key details including the site area, client name, site name, description of development and other key details. It is vital to ensure a joined up approach when assessing the environmental impacts. The briefing sheet should also clearly set out the language and formatting to be used in each ES chapter.

Timescales: The importance of allowing sufficient time for a number of reviews of each chapter, appended report and NTS text. Understanding that some chapters are linked, and the production of certain disciplines relies on others – e.g. noise and air quality disciplines were reliant on traffic data.

Standalone Reports: The Scoping Report received from the Council allowed Waste, the HSE Zone, Lighting, Climate Effects and Utilities to be scoped out of the Environmental Statement. These issues were dealt within ...
Lessons learnt continued:

**Flexibility of project team:** Some changes to the proposals are inevitable, so the quick and considered response of the project team to such changes is highly valued.

**Pre-application process:** Regular development team meetings with St Helens Council allowed members of the project team to discuss with their counterpart the proposed approach to the EIA process, including agreeing screening, scoping, methodologies and results of the assessments.

**Embedded mitigation:** Landscape and ecological mitigation was embedded through the production of a Landscape and Ecology Strategy Plan, appended to the ecology chapter. The recommendations made by this plan were incorporated into the Illustrative Masterplan and Land Use Parameter Plans.

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**Parameter Plans:** The parameter plans developed were in direct response to the Site’s constraints, and needed to be sufficiently flexible to allow future reserved matters applications to come forward without prejudice. Therefore, the ES needed to assess the parameters of the proposed development to ensure that it had assessed the realistic worst case.

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**Contact details**

Peter Tooher  
Executive Director  
0161 819 6570  
p.tooher@nexusplanning.co.uk

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