Planning consent for the redevelopment of the former Southall gasworks site in west London was granted in 2010 by the Mayor of London. The consent was for remediation of the site and construction to provide housing, retail space, offices, open space and supporting community facilities.

An Environmental Statement was prepared in 2008 to accompany the original planning application. At 44.7 hectares and with over 3,000 residential units and over 50,000 square metres of non-residential floorspace, the site exceeded the requirements of Schedule 2 of the 1999 EIA Regulations (as were in place at the time) and there was potential for likely significant effects associated with the transport related effects on noise and air quality; visually on the local area; from a socio-economic position; and from existing contamination given the historic use of the site.

As part of the evolution of the project following the initial consent, changes were made to the masterplan which would require variation of one of the conditions to the planning application and consideration through the EIA process.

To provide updated environmental information to accompany an application for minor material changes through Section 73 of the Town and Country Planning Act to the London Borough of Ealing. The S.73 allowed the applicant to vary one of the conditions associated with the planning consent relating to the layout of the development.

The proposals comprised demolition of 22 houses; remediation; redevelopment to deliver a large mixed use development including up to 3,750 residential units, non-food retail, food retail, restaurants, bars and cafes, hotel, conference and banqueting, cinema, health care facilities, education facilities, office units, car park, sports pavilion, an energy centre, multi storey car park and associated car and cycle parking, landscaping, public realm, open space and children’s play space.
Lessons learnt

The first key lesson was to understand that the development as amended needed to be assessed in accordance with the EIA Regulations even though the changes in themselves were minor and potentially not significant. Given that a S.73 application is treated as a new application, the age of the previous EIA work undertaken and scope of design changes, it was clear that an ES would be required for the London Borough of Ealing to determine the application.

The second key lesson was to carefully consider the best way to present the new environmental information. In this case, the majority of the information used to inform the assessments undertaken as part of the 2008 ES, including the environmental baseline, planning policy, technical guidance etc. was out of date, and therefore preparing an update would be complicated and potentially cause confusion. Accordingly it was decided that the clearest approach would be to prepare a new ES to accompany the planning application, making use of the information in the original ES where appropriate.

Lessons learnt cont.

The third lesson that can be learnt from this project in particular was the importance of having a good understanding of the scale of the remediation work required to clean up the land contamination caused by the historic land uses. The remediation work shaped the construction programme and was essential to ensure the site was suitable for the proposed uses.

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