# EIA Quality Mark Case Study

## North East Bexhill Sustainable Urban Extension

### Key Issues –

The site, following many years of promotion, is identified within the Development Plan for Rother District Council to provide a strategic and sustainable urban extension to the town of Bexhill, forming part of a large area delivering strategic commercial development and infrastructure including the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road.

Notwithstanding the positive development plan position, years of litigation had preceded this project, given the opposition of local residents, community groups and pressure groups to resist delivery of strategic road infrastructure which would open up the land for development, due to the impact upon the sensitivity of the valley landscape and ecological constraints.

The EIA acknowledged this background, and was a project, whose proposals from the outset, were heavily influenced and driven by the landscape and ecological sensitivity of the locality, managing both the developer’s vision/expectations when coupled with the environmental constraints, which in themselves, became opportunities for delivering a high quality scheme.

### Purpose of the project

The purpose of this project was to achieve outline planning permission for a residential led mixed use sustainable urban extension at North East Bexhill, comprising of up to 1,050 new homes, up to 7,000sqm of commercial floorspace, up to 2,100sqm of associated uses, including multi-use community facilities, primary school, neighbourhood centre, open space and supporting infrastructure.

### Description of the project

Bidwells were appointed to co-ordinate an Environmental Impact Assessment, and prepare an Environmental Statement to accompany an outline planning application for a residential led mixed use sustainable urban extension (as described above). The consent achieved, now sets the development parameters for the future development of North East Bexhill, which is likely to take 8-10 years to construct.
Lessons learnt

**Effective communication**
Given the number of stakeholders involved, alongside statutory consultees and other interested parties, it was important to keep dialogue open between all parties throughout the process. This started at the earliest opportunity, engaging the local community and key stakeholders to help identify at the scoping stage, the environmental issues to be incorporated into the scope of the EIA. This effective communication throughout, enabled issues to be identified and dealt with at an earlier stage. This communication culminated in an unanimous approval of the scheme at the Council’s Planning Committee, whereby the team were commended upon the quality of the submission and how the environment constraints had influenced a quality development scheme.

**Landscape & Ecology Led Masterplan**
From the outset, the environmental, particularly landscape and ecological sensitivities of the site were recognised, and were the key drivers to how the masterplan developed, iteratively evolving as more baseline work came from the assessment process. With the extent of protected species on the site, the key to the success of how the project then developed, was for the scheme to realise these constraints as opportunities, and avoid impacts upon such species, making for a better assessment outcome, whilst also minimising the cost and time related exposure to mitigation.

Lessons learnt cont. -

**A co-ordinated approach to mitigation**
The integral nature and interaction between the landscape and ecological constraints of the site and how the proposals developed, culminated in joint/overlapping approaches being developed in the form of mitigation/enhancement through the production of Landscape and Ecological Management Plans, combined plans, with their requirements maintenance, implementation, monitoring and enhancement being delivered through planning condition and legal agreement.

Contact details
- James Alflatt
- Bidwells
- 01603 763939
- james.alflatt@bidwells.co.uk

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