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24th April 2020

Your contact is: **Susanna Bedford, Planning**

Dear Mr Sanders,

Scoping Opinion Request - EIA Regulations 2017 (as amended)

Enquiry Reference & Address: 200229 - Reading Golf Club, 17 Kidmore End Road, Emmer Green, Reading

Proposal: Request for an EIA Scoping Opinion in accordance with Regulation 15 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) with regard to the proposed development at Reading Golf Course to develop a scheme for a mixed-use residential led development to incorporate up to 275 new homes; medical space; associated open space and landscaping; vehicle parking, pedestrian, cycle and vehicular accesses, associated highway works; and associated infrastructure.

Following my Scoping Opinion letter of 15th April 2020 formal comments have now been received from Natural England. Their comments are attached in full to this letter.

In relation to the comments from Natural England I would highlight the following points:

Topic Ecology:

- Natural England advises that survey, impact assessment and mitigation proposals for Habitats and Species of Principal Importance should be included in the ES.
- Natural England advises that a habitat survey (equivalent to Phase 2) is carried out on the site, in order to identify any important habitats present. In addition, ornithological, botanical and invertebrate surveys should be carried out at appropriate times in the year, to establish whether any scarce or priority species are present.

Topic Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment:

Nationally Designated Landscapes

- As the development site is adjacent to Chilterns AONB, consideration should be given to the direct and indirect effects upon this designated landscape and in particular the effect upon its purpose for designation within the environmental impact assessment, as well as the content of the relevant management plan for Chilterns AONB.

Landscape and visual impacts

- Natural England would wish to see details of local landscape character areas mapped at a scale appropriate to the development site as well as any relevant management plans or strategies pertaining to the area. The EIA should include assessments of visual effects on the surrounding area and landscape together with any physical effects of the development, such as changes in topography.
- The EIA should consider potential impacts on access land, public open land and rights of way routes in the vicinity of the development.

Topic Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions:

- The England Biodiversity Strategy published by Defra establishes principles for the consideration of biodiversity and the effects of climate change. The ES should reflect these principles and identify how the development's effects on the natural environment will be influenced by climate change, and how ecological networks will be maintained

Additional Topic: Soil and Agricultural Land Quality

- Impacts from the development should be considered in light of the Government's policy for the protection of the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land as set out in paragraph 170 of the NPPF. We also recommend that soils should be considered in the context of the sustainable use of land and the ecosystem services they provide as a natural resource, as also highlighted in paragraph 170 of the NPPF.
- The Environmental Statement should provide details of how any adverse impacts on soils can be minimised. Further guidance is contained in the *Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soil on Development Sites*
- The applicant should consider the following issues as part of the Environmental Statement:
 1. The degree to which soils are going to be disturbed/harmed as part of this development and whether 'best and most versatile' agricultural land is involved.
 2. If required, an agricultural land classification and soil survey of the land should be undertaken.
- The Environmental Statement should provide details of how any adverse impacts on soils can be minimised. Further guidance is contained in the *Defra Construction Code of Practice for the Sustainable Use of Soil on Development Sites*.

Cumulative and in-combination effects

- A full consideration of the implications of the whole scheme should be included in the ES. All supporting infrastructure should be included within the assessment.

I trust that this information is of assistance, but should you require any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me on the above telephone number. This opinion is without

prejudice to any decision that may be made and is given in the context of the planning policies, regulations and guidance applicable today.

Please note that this Scoping Opinion is offered with the caveat that should the form of development deviate to a significant degree from that described and assessed within the Scoping submission, a further application for Scoping Opinion may prove necessary.

Please note that Regulation 15(9) states that the authority which has adopted a scoping opinion is not precluded from requiring additional information from you in connection with any statement that may be submitted by you as an environmental statement in connection with an application for planning permission or a subsequent application for the same development.

Yours sincerely

Susanna Bedford (via email only) *RE*

Susanna Bedford - Principal Planning Officer