

Lancashire County Council
Development Management Group
Environment Directorate
PO Box 100
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 0LD

Our ref: NO/2019/111894/04-L01
Your ref: LCC/2019/0037
Date: 23 June 2020

Dear Sir/Madam

CONSTRUCTION OF A TEMPORARY WELLSITE AND ASSOCIATED ACCESS TRACK, DRILL, HYDRAULICALLY STIMULATE AND TEST TWO PETROLEUM EXPLORATION BOREHOLES INCLUDING DRILLING RIG (MAXIMUM HEIGHT 60M) AND ASSOCIATED PLANT AND EQUIPMENT, FOLLOWED BY WELLSITE RESTORATION

ALTCAR MOSS WELLSITE, SUTTON'S LANE, GREAT ALTCAR

Thank you for re-consulting us on the above application.

We have reviewed the following document:-

- Zetland Group response to consultation comments (dated 12/05/2020 on LCC website)

Several responses provided by Zetland Group make reference to our role and our regulatory controls through the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 (EPR 2016). However, there are a number of misleading or erroneous statements in the response that you should be aware of and must be corrected.

1. We have not agreed a conceptual model for the site, as stated in Response ID 33. We have discussed this in pre-permitting application meetings but no documentation has been submitted or agreed with us.
2. The statement in Response ID 37 relating to the Environment Agency accepting there were no plausible pathways to cause contamination to shallow aquifers at the Preston New Road site is correct, but it is a statement specific to that site. It relates to the geological and hydrogeological conditions and the mitigation measures that were agreed in the hydraulic fracturing plan for that site. For the avoidance of any doubt, it is not a generic comment and may not apply at the Altcar Moss site. Further details will need to be submitted at the permitting stage

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in order to confirm that this could be the case at this site. The documents submitted so far do not provide that reassurance.

3. Response ID 37 also states that *“the established quality of the groundwater within the target formation removes it from regulation under EPR 2016 as no pollution can occur as a result of the proposed operations.”*

This statement is incorrect. All groundwater is covered by the regulations in EPR 2016. There are no exemptions, regardless of depth or quality. The Water Framework Directive definition of groundwater is *‘all water which is below the surface of the ground in the saturation zone and in direct contact with the ground or subsoil’*. Aurora are aware of this fact. It has been covered in open discussions with Aurora who asked for clarity following a presentation on regulations at the two day *‘Use of the deep subsurface in the UK’* meeting to which reference has been made. This fact has also been made clear in correspondence between Aurora and ourselves.

4. In relation to Response ID 20, while the generic construction of the main borehole is acceptable, it should be noted that Figure 4.1 of the ES is an oversimplification. The expected geology as presented in Figure 3.2 of the ES shows two significant limestone units between the Lower Bowland and the Hodder Mudstones. Hydraulic fracturing would not be acceptable in these units under EPR 2016.
5. Response ID20 also states that the implications of proposed fracking operations in terms of water resources are not a planning issue. However, national planning practice guidance Paragraph 112 (Reference ID: 27-112-20140306) states that mineral planning authorities can and do play a role in preventing pollution of the water environment from hydrocarbon extraction, principally through controlling the methods of site construction and operation, robustness of storage facilities, and in tackling surface water drainage issues. As such, water supply, the volume of water to be used in Hydraulic Fracturing and the storage and treatment of flow back fluids are valid planning considerations which may require the submission of information as part of the planning application, should you require it.

Yours faithfully

John Neville
Lancashire Area Environment Manager

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