

Ref Application: LCC/2021/0007

PROPOSAL: PRIOR EXTRACTION OF SAND / GRAVEL AND SUBSEQUENT RESTORATION WITH INERT ENGINEERING FILL TO FACILITATE A PLATFORM FOR EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT, OR AGRICULTURE, WITH PERIPHERAL LANDSCAPING

LOCATION: LAND NORTH OF A674 MILLENNIUM WAY, NORTHEAST OF M61 JUNCTION 8 GR: 358909 419837

Planning Officer: Robert Hope

LANDSCAPE COMMENTS

Date: 22.09.22

Site Character:

Low lying open pasture, with ditches, which aid land drainage and a farmer's access track. Part of the site is also used for occasional car boot sales. Peripheral boundaries are demarcated to the east by tree and hedgerow vegetation between the field area and that associated with the Leeds to Liverpool canal directly adjacent. To the south west field boundaries are characterised by tree and hedgerow vegetation on embanked slopes to the A674 leading from the M61 Junction 8. Post and mesh/ post and rail fencing also demarcate the various boundaries. Sporadic trees and vegetation are situated on eastern slopes adjacent and directly adjacent to the M61. Little if any vegetation characterises northern or southern boundaries.

The area in the north west of the site is identified as having a peat ground / soil profile.

Views of the site are extensive, given its low lying nature. Close views are afforded both from the M61 looking eastwards and from the A674 looking in a north westerly direction. The latter view also affords views of adjacent farmland to the north. There are many users to the Leeds to Liverpool canal along this stretch and the towpath is directly adjacent the eastern boundary of the site. More distant views are afforded from residential areas along the B6228 at Great Knowley and likely from residential areas with rear views from A6 to the west) and again long and distant views from B6229 Moss Lane. There are few immediate residential receptors.

There are two PRoW immediately north of the site and leading to/ from B6229 Moss Lane. No further footpaths are indicated on local map sites, however the OS map illustrates a PRoW running through the centre of the site (likely on the access track) in a N-S direction.

Awaiting feedback from ecologists on what/ where the SSSI reference alludes to on the application site;

No services are indicated as running under the site, whilst an overhead power line spans the north west area of the site. It is known (from personal experience), that in the building of the Church of Latter Day Saints (to the west), a new gas main was laid beneath the canal immediately east of the site. It is unknown where the pipe went after crossing?

Planning Context:

Chorley Local Plan denoted the area as EP1 Employment land and a Mineral Safeguarding area;

Peat protection under local/ national/ regional guidance;

Environment Act 2021 with reference to BNG of Proposed Development;

LCC Mineral Safeguarded Area

Good Design as prescribed in Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026

A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire (LCC)

Comments:

1. It is noted that extraction is not proposed to the known peat area, Gale Moss, to the north west of the site area, as this would be protected under local, regional, national planning guidance re: Climate Change. It **MUST** be ensured that current watercourses/ ditches and the quality of water feeding this moss area are retained. It is recommended that an independent hydrologist monitors this throughout the works and provides regular evidence as to such;
2. The proposed bunds are noted to comprise stripped soils, the composition of the bund profile and gradients of slopes should be agreed. Topsoil and subsoil elements must be separated in the soil strip and stored separately. It is customary for soil mounds not to exceed 2m in height. This should not be exceeded (as it destroys the structure of the soil). Proposed bunds should be seeded and maintained in a weed free condition throughout the works; A methodology is required for carrying out restoration works of the soils.
3. It is understood that ultimately much of the site will be for Employment use and therefore developed, however the application notes that its restoration might be for continued grazing. The Application Restoration Plan does not detail the proposed landscape restoration should continued grazing be proposed. It is imperative that 'inert material fill' is verified as fit to support grazing for livestock. Equally a landscape restoration plan is required to ensure proposed grass seeding supports grazing (see also note on ditch as above) ;
4. The Planning Application details that there are trees on the site. As such an AIA (Arboricultural Impact Assessment) should be carried out and should not be determined without this. This should contain details of all trees within the site and their RPA's (Root Protection Areas), equally the AIA should also include those trees immediately adjacent to the site whose RPA's extend within the site area;
5. With regards to (4) above it is noted that the drawings provided are at such a small scale that it is difficult to determine exact extents of proposed dig and especially in regard to tree/ hedgerow areas on eastern and south western boundaries. The trees and vegetation on these boundaries are important; alongside the canal they not only form an ecological corridor along this length, but also provide context and setting to the canal and help screen views and buffer noise from the A674 from this important recreational route. Equally trees along the embanked section south west of the site screen views of moving traffic coming from the M61 junction. **IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT IN BOTH INSTANCES EXTENTS OF DIG REMAIN OUTSIDE THE RPA OF TREES ALONG THESE BOUNDARIES;**
6. The Landscape Restoration Plan and AIA should be carried out by landscape Architectural and Arboricultural recognised professionals respectively. Equally Landscape Restoration works should be carried out by a B.A.L.I. (British Association of Landscape Industries) Landscape Contractor;
7. It is unknown whether a PRoW does cross the site (as per OS mapping), if this is the case some form of connectivity around/ through the area is desirable to ensure footpath routes are not lost and maintain some form of continuity with the new landscape pattern and character;

8. Has a Phase 1 Ecological Habitat Survey been carried out? Without this it is unknown whether ecological characteristics are of value. This information was not available with the application;

Recommendation:

Notwithstanding that the area forms part of a Mineral Safeguarded Area within Local and Regional context, there is a requirement to carry out works in a professional manner. This would include the inclusion of Phase 1 Ecological Habitat Survey, an AIA (Arboricultural Impact Assessment) and if the site is to be continued as grazing a Landscape Restoration Plan, none of which have been provided. The Application should not be determined without these.

It is desirable to retain trees and vegetation on eastern and southwestern boundaries and to ensure dig areas remain outside RPA's;

Drainage to/ from the wetland peat area in the north west corner should be retained and monitored to ensure the quality and quantity of drainage pattern is maintained;

Topsoil and Subsoil should be separated, particularly if for reuse. Bunds should be at limited heights, seeded and maintained throughout the duration of the works;

Should a PRoW exist through the site, an alternative route should be established to ensure continued connectivity with adjacent footpaths.

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