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South Bank Access Road

Ecology report

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1. Introduction

1.1 INCA has been commissioned by Lichfields on behalf of Teesworks to undertake an ecological assessment of a proposed access road associated with the LM Wind application.

1.2 The route of the access road would be entirely within the red line boundary of consented application R/2020/0357/OOM (hereafter referred to as the consented application), which was for the demolition of existing structures and redevelopment of the site. The ecological impacts of that consented application were assessed by ARUP, which included a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. That ecological assessment was based on the assumption that all habitats and species on the site would be lost as a result of the proposals.

1.3 This ecological assessment is based on the condition of the site as assessed by ARUP for the consented application. It should be noted that development of the site, in line with that consent, has progressed significantly and that the current ecological condition is considerably reduced from the situation that ARUP reported

2. Project description

2.1 The proposal would involve the construction of an access road leading from Tees Dock Road in the west, which would then run around the perimeter of the southern half of South Bank. The route of the access road is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The route of the access road



3. Assessment methodology

3.1 The current ecological assessment is based on survey data that was gathered by INCA and used to inform the ARUP reports for the consented application. All of the vegetated areas were surveyed in order to define the habitats that were present and to assess the condition of each of those habitats. The potential for protected, priority or other notable species to be present was also noted, so that appropriate surveys could be implemented where relevant.

3.2 The route of the proposed road along the western perimeter of the site was surveyed in May 2019. The route along the eastern perimeter has been surveyed on several occasions but most recently in June 2020. The route of the proposed road along the southern boundary was not surveyed to inform the consented application as the route at this point follows an existing road and sealed surfaces which have no ecological value. However the route of the road along the southern boundary was visited in May 2021 as part of the Ecological Clerk of Works role, to inspect the adjacent structures for nesting birds.

3.3 All site surveys and visits described in 3.2 were undertaken by Ian Bond CEnv MCIEEM, ecologist with INCA, who has over 20 years of experience of ecological surveys on Teesside.

3.4 The site was not surveyed specifically to inform this application. This is not considered to be a constraint on the ecological assessment as the entire red line boundary of this application was considered in detail in the consented application from 2020. The surveys which informed that application would be considered current as they are no more than two years old. No factors are known or considered likely to have enhanced the ecological value of the site within the intervening period. In fact, the site will have reduced very considerably in ecological value due to the consented development.

4. Site description

4.1 Where the route of the road joins from Tees Dock Road, running west-east, it crosses an area of neutral grassland which is moderately herb-rich though containing a limited range of tall perennials, such as Ribbed Melilot *Melilotus officinalis*, and Black Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. In total approximately 0.1ha of this habitat would be lost.

4.2 Where the route runs south along the western perimeter it crosses land which grades between bare, sealed surface and sparse ruderal/ephemeral vegetation. The latter is of low quality in this location and is of negligible ecological value. A further area of approximately 0.1ha of neutral grassland of relatively poor quality would also be lost to this part of the route.

4.3 The route of the road along the southern boundary follows the line of an existing road and sealed surfaces and has no ecological value.

4.4 The main habitat that the route of the road along the eastern perimeter crosses is neutral grassland, which is in relatively poor condition, i.e. it is rank and species-poor. Some scattered scrub is present within the grassland. The route of the road also crosses some grassland which is of higher quality, in that its structure is more open and its composition more species-rich however, this latter habitat amounts to <0.1ha. A small part of the route along the eastern perimeter crosses land, which at the time of the 2020 surveys was bare and had been used for stockpiling materials.

4.5 At the time of the June 2020 survey, Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, was present within 100m of the south east corner of the route of the road and within 150m of the north east extent of the road.

4.6 At its closest point the road would be almost 600m away from the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and its constituent SSSI and 900m from the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar site.

5. Assessment

5.1 The road would result in the loss of approximately 0.2ha of grassland habitat, which is of at least moderate quality. The remainder of the habitats which would be lost, which in total would be of the order of <1ha, are of poor quality.

5.2 Other than some limited potential for nesting birds, no protected or priority species were identified in the consented development as being present within the route of the proposed access road or in close enough proximity that they might otherwise be affected by the access road.

5.3 The Habitats Regulations Assessment conducted by ARUP for the consented development concluded that, "it is considered that there will likely be no significant effects to the integrity of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and Ramsar from the construction and operation of the proposed development." This was on the basis of works being conducted on a much larger scale than the proposed access road and in some cases effectively adjacent to the SPA and within 300m of the Ramsar site. The proposed access road would not produce any effects that were not considered in the HRA for the consented development and as it is on a much smaller scale and further away from the Natura 2000 sites than the consented development then similarly it is concluded that there would be no likely significant effect on the integrity of those sites.

6. Recommendations

6.1 It is very likely that some nesting birds will be present along the route of the proposed access road. Any vegetation or other features which may support nesting birds should be removed outside of the nesting bird season, unless such features are checked by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to removal and that ecologist confirms that no nesting birds are present.

6.2 Suitable precautions should be taken either to isolate the Japanese Knotweed from activities associated with the road construction, or else to remove the Japanese Knotweed entirely.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The proposed access road would result in the loss of a small amount of habitat, mainly of poor quality. This loss has been accounted for in the consented development.

7.2 Subject to the recommendations in section 6, no other ecological impacts are anticipated.