

Report ID: INCA 2022-12

**Habitats Regulations Assessment:
Stage 1 Screening and Stage 2
Appropriate Assessment**

**SeAH Steel
Monopole Manufacturing Facility
South Bank**

Mike Leakey

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Introduction

This document has been prepared by INCA on behalf of SeAH Steel in connection with an application for the discharge of Condition 6 of Planning Permission reference R/2021/0729/CD. Condition 6 states:

“Upon the approval of the Reserved Matters in accordance with the phasing plan agreed through discharge of condition 4, and prior to the implementation of the approved scheme, the development shall be the subject of an updated Habitats Regulations Assessment. The HRA shall confirm, based on the approved detail of the development and its processes and the conclusions of the Environmental Impact Assessment that the development will not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and Ramsar sites. Where significant impacts not previously identified are assessed to arise from the approved detailed scheme, the additional information shall set out those mitigation measures to be employed to minimise or eliminate such impacts. REASON: to update the Habitats Regulations Assessment based on the detailed schemes.”

This report provides information to update both Stage 1 Screening and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). In line with the Condition, it is confined to impacts not previously assessed to arise from the approved detailed scheme.

Project description

SeAH Steel are looking to build a new factory in the UK making monopiles for the offshore wind industry. The monopiles will vary in size up to a maximum of 120m long by 15.5m in diameter.

The factory will consist of the main building where the monopiles will be constructed; a laydown/storage area for the completed monopiles prior to them being loaded on boats; and a number of ancillary buildings including an office, a workers' welfare block and storage buildings.

The development site covers 37.4ha (of which 9.9ha will be warehousing) centred on NGR NZ538220. The location and layout are shown in Figure 1.

The layout of the proposals is reproduced from Drawing SEAH-ASA-SK-EX.SI-D-A-SK28_(S0-PI), dated 11/03/22, and entitled “SeAH STDC South Bank Proposed Site Plan with Updated Layout Concept Option 2”.

The development is situated on land whose principal former use was as storage for bulk materials. The other main former element of the site was “brownfield” land, which for the most part was sparsely vegetated and topographically heterogenous. In addition the site formerly contained hardstanding, roads and built infrastructure.

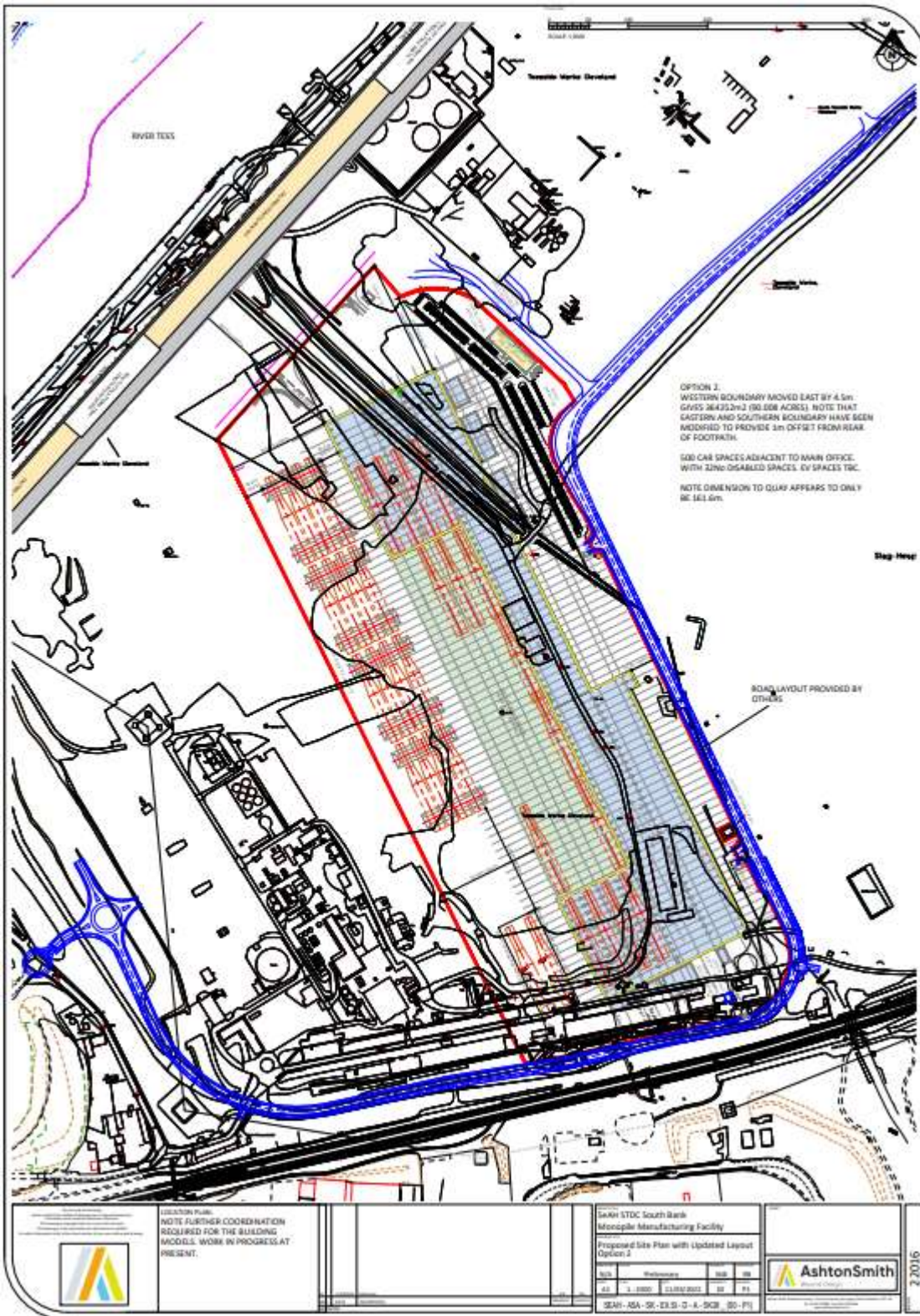


Figure 1. Site location, showing Red Line Boundary

European Sites

Four European sites are within 10km of at least part of the application site: North York Moors SPA; North York Moors SAC; Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA; Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar.

The westernmost units of the North York Moors SPA and North York Moors SAC are approximately 10km away from their closest point to the closest part of the application site. Given the distances involved and the nature of the proposals, these two European Sites have been screened out.

The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar lie 50m and 330m respectively of the closest parts of the application site. These European Sites are considered in this report.

Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA

The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Special Protection Area (SPA) was first classified in 1995 for its numbers of European importance of breeding Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*, passage Sandwich Tern *Thalasseus sandvicensis*, wintering Red Knot *Calidris canutus* and passage Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, as well as an assemblage of over 20,000 waterbirds. Extensions to the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA were formally classified on 16 January 2020. The SPA is now considered to be 12,210.62ha in size and includes additional areas of coastal and wetland habitats important for waterbirds.

Natural England has extended the SPA to include marine foraging areas for breeding Little Tern and breeding and foraging areas for Common Tern, the latter being a new qualifying feature in the light of recent increases in the size of the breeding population within the SPA. The extension also includes additional areas of terrestrial habitats such as wet grassland, saltmarsh, deep and shallow pools and intertidal areas important for other foraging and roosting waterbirds which were existing features of the SPA. Non-breeding Ruff *Calidris pugnax* and breeding Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* have also been classified as new qualifying features of the SPA.

The boundary of the SPA extension covers an area from Castle Eden Denemouth in the north to Marske-by-the-Sea in the south and includes the River Tees up to the Tees Barrage. The seaward boundary has been drawn to include waters out to around 3.5km from Crimdon Dene, to include the areas of greatest importance to the Little Terns at that colony, and out to around 6km offshore further south to include the areas of greatest importance to the Common Terns at the Saltholme colony.

Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar

The Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast Ramsar boundary has also been extended to include the additional terrestrial wet grassland, saltmarsh, deep and shallow pools and intertidal areas for breeding and non-breeding waterbirds, as for the SPA. Historically the Teesmouth SPA and Ramsar boundaries have been virtually coterminous and their interest features very similar. However, the Ramsar extension only covers the terrestrial extension areas of the SPA down to Mean Low Water. Although not a qualifying feature, the Ramsar site citation recognises that the site supports a rich assemblage of invertebrates, including the following seven Red Data Book species: *Pherbellia grisescens*, *Thereva valida*, *Longitarsus nigerrimus*, *Dryops nitidulus*, *Macrolea mutica*, *Philonthus dimidiatipennis* and *Trichohydriobius suturalis*.

The qualifying features for the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/Ramsar are given in Table 1. The number of birds in the Ramsar assemblage is greater than for the SPA as it includes Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* and Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, both of which are resident all year, while the SPA only protects migratory and wintering waterbirds along with Annex I species. As the Ramsar is to a very large extent a sub-set of the SPA the term SPA as it relates to the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast is taken to refer to both unless otherwise stated.

Table 1. Qualifying features for Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA/ Ramsar

Feature	Count (period)	% of Population	Interest type	Selection Criteria	New feature (Y/N)
Sandwich Tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	1,900 individuals (1988-1992)	4.3% GB, 1.3% Western Europe/Western Africa	Annex 1 (non- breeding)	Stage 1.1 (SPA), Criterion 6 (Ramsar)	N
Little Tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	81 pairs (2010-2014)	4.3% GB	Annex 1 (breeding)	Stage 1.1	N
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	399 pairs ((2010-2014)	4.0% GB	Annex 1 (breeding)	Stage 1.1	Y
Pied Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	18 pairs (2010-2014)	1.2% GB	Annex 1 (breeding)	Stage 1.1	Y
Ruff <i>Calidris pugnax</i>	19 individuals (2011/12-2015/16)	2.4% GB	Annex 1 (non- breeding)	Stage 1.1	Y
Red Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i>	5,509 individuals (1991/92-1995/96)	1.6% NE Canada/Greenland/ Iceland/UK population	Migratory (winter)	Stage 1.2 (SPA), Criterion 6 (Ramsar)	N
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	1,648 individuals (1987-1991)	1.1% East Atlantic population	Migratory (passage)	Stage 1.2 (SPA), Criterion 6 (Ramsar)	N
Feature	Count (period)	Average number of individuals		Selection Criteria	
Waterbird assemblage	2011/12-2015/16	26,014 individuals (SPA assemblage), 26,786 individuals (Ramsar assemblage)		Stage1.3 (SPA), Criterion 5 (Ramsar)	

The conservation objectives for the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified are:

“Subject to natural change, ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.”

European sites are underpinned by Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with SSSIs being divided into management units. In this case the relevant SSSI is Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast. The closest management unit to the application site is Unit 7 River Tees for which there is currently “no

identified condition threat” according to Natural England. Common Terns use these reaches of the tidal River Tees for foraging in the summer months, while Redshank and Curlew *Numenius arquata* feed and roost on the intertidal margins during the non-breeding season.

Stage 1. Potential for Likely Significant Effect

Effects on European Sites can be direct through such impacts as land take or damage, or indirect by, for example, increased disturbance. The significance of an effect depends on the sensitivity of the interest feature that might be affected.

Of the qualifying features listed in Table 1, none of the three breeding species (Little Tern, Common Tern and Avocet) nest within 2km of the development site; likewise, Ruff do not occur within this radius. Small numbers of Sandwich Tern and Knot are only occasional passage visitors to the River Tees and North Tees Mudflat. Common Terns do forage in the River Tees in reasonable numbers, however studies by INCA on behalf of the Tees Estuary Partnership, have demonstrated that terns are not disturbed by any current industrial operations occurring adjacent to the river and are therefore unlikely to be disturbed by future operations of a similar nature and scale. These features are therefore screened out at Stage 1, leaving impacts on Redshank and the waterbird assemblage to be assessed at Stage 2. The closest that these species occur to the site in significant numbers is North Tees Mudflats, which is 450m from the site at its closest point.

The following potential likely significant effects have been considered:

- i) Loss of supporting habitats caused by the development.
- ii) Changes to flight lines or sight lines for waterbirds occasioned by the development.
- iii) Disturbance to waterbirds caused by the development.
- iv) Discharges to water caused by the development.
- v) Emissions to air caused by the development.

Stage 2. Potential for Adverse Effect on Integrity, alone or in combination with other plans and projects

- i) Loss of supporting habitats caused by the development.

The current condition of the application site consists of a bare, unvegetated development platform. No supporting habitat for SPA birds will be lost as a result of the proposal, so no adverse effect on SPA integrity can be assumed.

- ii) Changes to flight lines or sightlines for waterbirds occasioned by the development.

The distance of the development site from the SPA (approximately 195m at the closest point from the Red Line Boundary) might suggest that sightlines could potentially be impeded. However, given that Redshank and other species comprising the waterbird assemblage are confined to North Tees Mudflat, which lies at a minimum distance of 450m away from the RLB, it is considered that sightlines for waterbirds utilising these SPA intertidal habitats SPA will be unaffected. Parts of the application site were until recently occupied by industrial buildings and other structures, which had no impact on birds using the SPA. Furthermore, since no supporting habitat known to harbour SPA waterbirds exists in the hinterland of the development site, it follows that there will be no impact

upon established flight lines. There is therefore no potential for these factors to have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA.

iii) Disturbance to waterbirds caused by the development.

The development would be within the parameters of the former uses of the site and with other industrial uses around the Tees, in terms of its scale and its visual and noise effects. Piling activity for the warehousing structures will take place at a minimum distance of 300m from the SPA boundary and 600m from the intertidal feeding habitats of North Tees Mudflat. It is considered that the distance between the development site and the SPA habitats used by Redshank and other species comprising the waterbird assemblage effectively rules out noise and visual disturbance from impacting upon waterbirds within the SPA boundaries.

iv) Discharges to water caused by the development.

No watercourses occur on the site. While the site itself is only 50m from the tidal River Tees at its closest point, a new impervious dock wall is to be constructed along the river frontage, and the development will incorporate appropriate measures to avoid any discharges to groundwater. The former Holme Beck runs adjacent to the site but is currently culverted to the south. Any groundwater and accumulated water encountered during the remediation of the site will be dealt with in line with the Arcadis report, "South Bank Priority Area; Former Steelworks, Redcar. Enabling Earthworks and Remediation Strategy – 10035117". It is therefore concluded that no adverse effect on SPA integrity is likely to result from discharges to water.

v) Emissions to air caused by the development.

Emissions to air could derive from both construction activities (principally dust and particulates) and subsequent commercial operations (for example oxides of Nitrogen and Carbon). The emissions from the construction activities resulting from these reserved matters are not predicted to exceed those assessed as resulting from the approved scheme. The operational phase is not anticipated to generate significant emissions, especially given the historical and current industrial context of the area. Adverse effect on SPA integrity is therefore ruled out from these sources.

In-combination effects

The proposed development needs to be considered alongside two extant permissions for "Demolition of existing redundant quay structures, capital dredging and development of new quay and associated works"; Phase 1 (R/2020/0684/ESM) and Phase 2 (R/2020/0685/ESM), both of which were approved on 19 March 2021. These permissions relate to the river frontage immediately adjacent to the proposed SeAH facility. The relevant applications were accompanied by a comprehensive Habitats Regulations Assessment.

The HRA for these Permissions concluded in Section 29.7 that "In [the] light of the conservation objectives for the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA, it is predicted that the proposed scheme, when assessed alone and in-combination with other plans and projects, will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and Ramsar site."

Conclusion

Given that the associated permissions for the redevelopment of the river frontage concluded no adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA and Ramsar site, and taking into account the narrative set out under Stage 2 above, it is safe to conclude that the additive and synergistic effects associated with the SeAH proposals will not cause adverse effect to the integrity of the Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA and Ramsar site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.