

18th March 2015

Mr M Crofton-Briggs
Oxford City Council
City Development
St Aldates Chambers
109-113 St Aldates
Oxford
OX1 1DS

Our Ref: 425.04519.00002

Dear Michael

RE: REVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT (ES) FOR ROGER DUDMAN WAY

We refer to the above, SLR's meeting (2nd February 2015) and conference calls (30th January 2015) with the University's consultants in respect of our Report submitted in December 2014 and subsequent conversations.

The basis of the discussions was primarily to responses Nicholas Pearson Associates (NPA) supplied in response to SLR's aforementioned Report. For completeness, the responses were received from NPA as follows:

Chapter	Response received	Conference call (30 th January 2015) or meeting (2 nd February 2015)
7 – landscape and visual impacts	30 th January 2015	Meeting
8 – historic environment	No response given SLR's Report	Not applicable
9 – ecology and nature conservation	30 th January 2015	Meeting
10 – geo-environmental	30 th January 2015	Conference call
11 – flood risk and drainage	30 th January 2015	Conference call
12 - transport	30 th January 2015	No discussion – it was agreed with NPA a call/meeting was not necessary.
13 – air quality	4 th February 2015	No discussion – it was agreed with NPA a call/meeting was not necessary.
14 - noise	30 th January 2015	Conference call
15 – socio-economic	2 nd February 2015	Meeting

It must be noted that SLR's preparation time for the calls and meeting was limited by the date/time of release of the information by NPA but the discussions were detailed given the previous review work undertaken.

Whilst the matters of air quality and transport were not to be specifically discussed, SLR has assessed the responses received from the consultants and provides the requisite commentary within this correspondence.

In addition to the above, NPA provided a response to SLR's comments on the introductory chapters of the ES (1-6) on 30th January. On this point, there are still two topics that lack clarity from NPA; firstly, it is unclear why three design mitigation strategies have been assessed *i.e.* three forms of development in one ES. Secondly, irrespective of the previous point, there remains to be a lack of consistency in terms of the assessment of the three options within the chapters. SLR has subsequently held a separate telephone conversation with Adam Boyden of NPA regarding these two points. Mr Boyden offered that perhaps a note of clarification would assist. For example with regard to 'transport' a statement that the development of the preferred design mitigation strategy would not result in any increase in traffic levels and as such there was not a need to consider transport further, if appropriate. SLR raised that should NPA wish to continue to present the assessment of three options noting that point was for their consideration then the associated construction/demolition traffic would logically need to be assessed or at the very least commentary made as to why that was not necessary.

The table within this letter confirms items where it is respectfully advised that the City Council requests further information/clarification upon.

It is highlighted that there are points of differing professional opinion particularly at the meeting but this is not unusual and it is recommended that NPA/its consultants provides that requisite commentary, as appropriate.

A general point of agreement related to where SLR's Report had commented upon the structure and reporting of chapters and in parts the lack of terminology normally expected within an ES. There were not discrepancies in the information but rather the reporting format. This was a point applicable to a number of chapters, which NPA/its consultants agreed to within the discussions and as such rather than laboriously list these elements, these will be captured generally when applicable. If a matter is not included, it has been concluded its materiality does not warrant as such.

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Chapter	Point of discussion	Recommendation
7 – landscape and visual impact	The assessment does not clearly relate its judgement on visual effects to the conservation areas (CAs) to specific visual receptors. Further clarification with reference to specific viewpoints and receptors is required in the assessment of Jericho, Binsey and Wolvercote.	The City Council requests that the visual effects on the CAs, including as additional viewpoint from the Council from the canal, be related to the visual receptor groups.
	The judgements of landscape and visual effect should be as two separate assessments. Currently these are presented as one conclusion but should be separate in accordance with GLVIA3.	The City Council requests separate assessments on landscape and visual effects.
	The NPA assessment focusses upon viewpoints rather than receptor groups and this made the conclusions less clear as it did not draw out how the viewpoints were used – number and type of people. A further assessment should be undertaken for viewpoints to represent pedestrians, cyclists, water users etc. including an indication as to the intensity of use as it will clarify the value of viewpoints and therefore the context for understanding the significance of the landscape and visual impacts to users.	The City Council requests the work to be undertaken or further information to be provided as necessary.
	The effects of the development on the Oxford skyline had not been assessed in this chapter and SLR considers as a visual matter as opposed to solely historic these should be assessed in Chapter 7.	The City Council requests the work to be undertaken or further information to be provided as necessary.
	NPA confirmed that further consideration has been given to the design and management of the tree planting in the badger run.	The City Council requests the work to be undertaken or further information to be provided as necessary.
Chapter 9 – ecology and nature conservation	The technical, geographic and temporal scope should be clearly defined and omissions identified.	The City Council requests the work to be undertaken or further information to be provided as necessary.
	An evidence-based, fully-referenced assessment of impact should be undertaken for key onsite and offsite receptors – particular reference was made to the Oxford Meadows SAC.	Post-meeting, evaluation of the City Council's Habitats Regulation Assessment report of the Sites and Housing Plan DPD 2012 has considered this site from any appropriate assessment. If the City Council is satisfied,

Chapter	Point of discussion	Recommendation
		this need not be considered further.
Chapter 10 – geo-environment	Frankham agreed to all of SLR's comments within the December 2014 Report. Particular reference was made to Residual Impacts (10.6), which would be rewritten and as part of that tables would be used, which look at contaminant; receptor; risk; potential significance; mitigation; residual risk; and residual significance and nature of effect.	The City Council requests the work to be undertaken or further information to be provided as necessary.
Chapter 11 – flood risk and drainage	Baseline conditions to be provided in respect of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarification of latest planning policy and guidance; Update baseline to reflect March 2011 SFRA; EA flood data to be provided as a supplementary appendix to allow for the validation of the baseline flood risk; Summary of local surface water quality to key receptors. 	If the City Council is satisfied then the FRA need not be updated. Flood data can be provided and this is recommended as too a review of the water quality objectives. The City Council requests the work to be undertaken or further information to be provided as necessary.
	Impact Assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline (unmitigated) effects to be summarised and tabulated in an EIA matrix. Magnitude, likelihood, and potential significance of unmitigated effects to be set out. Summary of proposed mitigation to be presented. Mitigated (residual) effects to be summarised and tabulated in an EIA matrix. Update mitigation to include retrospective mitigation measures. SLR noted that no particular residual beneficial effects would be anticipated from the impact assessment, with the possible exception of surface water quality. Principally, neutral or low negative effects would be anticipated. 	If the City Council is satisfied then this need not be updated.
	Impact interaction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clarification of interaction between groundwater and surface water, and associated impact 	If the City Council is satisfied then this need not be updated.

Chapter	Point of discussion	Recommendation
	assessment; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update to include retrospective mitigation measures and associated interaction with landscape. 	
	Flood risk assessment (appendix 11.1): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update as per Baseline Conditions cited previously. Clarify assessment of safe access and egress to demonstrate that safe off-site routes are available via the wider (strategic) highway network during flood conditions. 	If the City Council is satisfied then this need not be updated.
	Drainage Strategy, Statement and Plans (appendix 11.2): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clarification of latest proposed drainage scheme. Assess residual effects upon surface water receptors based upon latest proposed drainage scheme. 	If the City Council is satisfied then this need not be updated.
Chapter 12 - transport	The additional information provided by email has addressed the majority of previously listed points by SLR. SLR accepts and is satisfied with all information provided by Mayer Brown albeit with one exception - impact on cyclists. The detailed response concludes that the proposals would generate less than one cycle/minute which '...would not give rise to any perceptible impact.' SLR disagrees that this level of increase would not be perceptible but accepts the conclusions that the increase would not be to the detriment of the highway safety or capacity.	The City Council need not pursue this matter further if satisfied.
Chapter 13 – air quality	The additional information provided by email has assisted SLR. Two points remain to be addressed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation is required that the correct NO₂ emission rate has been used in the calculations as two differing levels have been supplied (boiler specification sheet and input data for the D1 spreadsheet); and The D1 methodology has been used correctly albeit SLR questions whether this is the most suitable tool for assessing emissions from the plant. 	The City Council need not pursue this matter if satisfied.

Chapter	Point of discussion	Recommendation
Chapter 14 - noise	<p>Scope: Update scope to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference to a Construction Noise Assessment. However state that a BS5228-1:2009+A1:2014 <i>Code of practice for noise and vibration control on construction and open sites</i> has been scoped out as Longcross conformed with the Considerate Contractors Scheme and as a consequence it is considered that impacts upon nearby receptors would have been kept to a minimum. Reference a Vibration Assessment but state that as it was not included in the initial scoping with the Council and was only addressed as part of a planning condition. It will not be included in the baseline assessment of the ES but will be acceptably presented in the residual section of the ES only. <p>Methodology: Guidelines that should be referenced in the impact of railway noise upon the site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed that only BS8233 should be referenced, as long as it is stated that in consultation with EHO it was agreed that the site should only be assessed in accordance with BS8233:1999. <p>Impact, effect, and significance: Needs to be defined for each assessment undertaken.</p> <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, with regards to the impact of railway noise upon the site, the impact scale should make reference to the recommended internal noise levels presented in BS8233:1999 <i>Sound insulation and noise reduction for buildings - Code of practice</i>. During the 	<p>The proportionate significance of these points is not considered such that further information need be provided to validate the conclusions of the ES Chapter.</p>

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	<p>daytime an internal noise level of over 40dB would be a major impact, whilst an internal noise level of less than 30dB would be a negligible impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similarly for the traffic noise impact assessment reference may be made to the noise level changes presented in the DMRB Noise and Vibration Chapter. <p>Effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A table needs to be included detailing the effects of a specified noise level, or a change in noise level. For example, the effect on sleep of exceeding a certain noise level. <p>Significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significance table needs to be included. This table should link impact with the sensitivity of the receiver. For example if the impact was moderate, this would have a major significance for a very highly sensitive receptor but only a moderate impact for a highly sensitive receptor. <p>Impact Assessment: <i>Noise from Mechanical Services Plant</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciated that noise from mechanical services plant is negligible. However, whilst this may be the case, evidence needs to be provided. Either some basic calculation need to be presented, or it needs to be scoped out. <p>Cumulative Effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reference that electrification of the line should have a benefit to the noise environment as the number of diesel engines at the site will be likely reduced. State that no other assessment is required as details 	

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	<p>from Network Rail with regards to future projects are not in the public domain.</p> <p>Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a summary table. 	
Chapter 15 – socio-economic	<p>The justification for the design mitigation strategy is based upon the socio-economic assessment. SLR considers, in consultation with the City Council, that the following requires to be undertaken for the reasons given to assess the conclusions of the ES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on construction markets - SLR is not sure whether the consultant is agreeing that some additional work should have been done on the potential effects on the construction market. The point is that the three options would require significant expenditure on works (ranging from £6 million up to £17.5 million). Even if local contractors didn't win this work, local sub-contractors and workers might benefit, and there would be local expenditure by the construction workforce (accommodation, meals, fuel, etc.) during the course of the project. All of this would have a positive impact on the local economy and should have been considered. • Viability - there was a discussion at the meeting about economic feasibility/viability. It should be noted that there is nothing in the documents that we have seen that says that the University could not undertake the work for financial reasons. However, it does say that this course of action could imply a delaying or abandonment of other development projects that the University would like to do in the medium term. However, as highlighted previously, these alleged potential consequences/effects are not described in 	<p>The City Council requests this information as part of the subsequent ES for the chosen option.</p> <p>The City Council requests this additional information is provided or further information to be provided as necessary.</p>

Chapter	Point of discussion	Recommendation
	any detail or quantified. It would considerably strengthen the University's case if the potential effects on any delays or abandonment of future developments (with knock-on consequences for direct and indirect employment during both construction and operational phases) were described and (better still) quantified. At the moment there is no evidence that allows SLR to agree with the conclusion that the University's advisers have reached.	

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We appreciate the differing levels of information and discussion points in this response. We trust the above provides the City Council with guidance to progress this matter further.

Yours sincerely
SLR Consulting Limited



Laura Marshall
Principal