

Development Control Committee **24 April 2024**

Planning Application DC/22/1693/FUL – Land at Brandon Road, Eriswell

Date registered:	31 October 2022	Expiry date:	07 March 2024
Case officer:	Jo-Anne Rasmussen	Recommendation:	Approve application
Parish:	Eriswell Parish	Ward:	Lakenheath
Proposal:	Planning application - operation of a concrete batching plant for temporary period of 3 years		
Site:	Land at Brandon Road, Eriswell		
Applicant:	Mr Rory Holbrook		

Synopsis:

Application under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and associated matters.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the committee determine the attached application and associated matters.

CONTACT CASE OFFICER:

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Background:

This application has been referred to the Development Control Committee following consideration by the Delegation Panel.

One of the Lakenheath Ward Members and a neighbouring Ward Member for Brandon East have raised concerns regarding increased traffic, impact upon the landscape and consultation responses from Ecological consultees. No comments have been received from the Parish Council.

The application is recommended for APPROVAL. A Member site visit is scheduled to take place on Monday 22 April 2024.

Proposal:

1. The application seeks permission for the erection of machinery in association with the production and batching of concrete. The application seeks a temporary permission for 3 years. The plant has already been constructed on site but is not yet in use.
2. No additional parking is proposed, however there is already established parking areas associated with the wider site. The Batching plant would be accessed through the recycling plant.
3. The silos used for cement would be the highest part of the machinery and would be 17 metres. The plant would have an overall length of 33 metres and width of 20 metres.

Application supporting material:

4. Application form

Covering letter/statement

Location Plan Site Plan (existing) drawings ref. TSES-20195-368-DSN-00 and 01 Site Plan (proposed) drawings ref. TSES-20195-368-DSN-03 and 04

Batching Plant Plan and Elevation TSES-20195-368-DSN-05

Plant details, technical data and illustrative drawing no 400.08-5623.0BL1

Technical Briefing Note – Drainage

Landscaping information

Additional information on Stone Curlew impact (26th July 2023)

Notes on Impacts of Stone Curlew nesting (dated 31st July 2023)

Report to inform the HRA' (Middlemarch June 2023)

Additional Plans- Pipeline

Site details:

5. The development would be sited within the Lakenheath Recycling Centre.

To the north of the site is Lakenheath Clay Target centre. To the east of the site is Brandon Road (A1065) and beyond that is RAF Lakenheath. To the east and south is open agricultural land. The site is within the 1500m buffer zone around those parts of the SPA which support or are capable of supporting Stone Curlews and the Natural England SSSI Impact Risk Zone. There is a public right of way to the east of the site adjacent to the highway.

Planning history:

6. Various County Council applications relating to the Recycling centre including DC/16/2331/CR3 and DC/16/2848/CR3.

Consultations:

7. **Parish Council:** No Comments received
8. **West Suffolk Waste Management Operations Manager:** No Comment
9. **Suffolk County Council Highways:** No Objections.
10. **West Suffolk Private Sector Housing And Environmental Health:** No Objections subject to securing conditions relating to lighting, noise levels and hours of use.
11. **West Suffolk Environment Team:** No Objections
10. **Natural England:** No Objections. Detailed comments as set out below:

European Sites –

Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) Natural England

previously provided advice to your Council in response to planning application DC/22/1693/FUL. These responses were made in relation to Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) and the underpinning Breckland Farmland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In these responses we requested further information about visual impacts on stone curlews and air pollution (see our responses dated 5 May 2023 (our ref:428716) and 10 July 2023 (our ref: 4393970) respectively).

Based on the plans submitted and further information supplied, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have likely significant effects on Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) and has no objection to the proposed development.

Natural England notes that the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) has not been produced by your authority, but by the applicant. As competent authority, it is your responsibility to produce the HRA and be accountable for its conclusions. We provide the advice enclosed on the assumption that your authority intends to adopt this HRA to fulfil your duty as competent authority.

To meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulations, we advise you to record your decision that a likely significant effect can be ruled out. The following may provide a suitable justification for that decision:

The updated Report to inform Habitat[sic] Regulations Assessment: Stage 1 Screening (Middlemarch Environmental, June 2023) concludes that it is possible to rule out the likelihood of significant effects arising from the proposal, either alone or in-combination. The report confirms that the new building has already been constructed, having been erected prior to stone curlews attempting to nest in the vicinity. On page 24 it states that: "The two silos are the only tall parts of the building which could impact upon sightlines but these are relatively thin, narrow structures and would only cause a minimum interruption of the sightlines ... the concrete batching plant is located within 100 m of existing pine tree belts to the east. These existing tree belts along with the existing low level bunds are a more significant impact upon the sightlines of any stone curlews attempting to breed in the vicinity."

Natural England agrees with the conclusion that there will be no additional disturbance to stone curlew as a result of this pathway. Similarly, due to the air pollution and dust control mitigation measures detailed on page 31 of the report, that there should not be a pathway for aerial pollution from the batching plant to have likely significant effects on the SPA, and we concur with the conclusion in the report.

Breckland Farmland Site of Special Scientific Interest

Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not damage or destroy the interest features for which the site has been notified and has no objection.

12. Environment Agency: No Objections subject to securing conditions relating to contamination.

13. Suffolk Wildlife Trust: No Objections

14. WS Ecology & Landscape Officer: No Objections, subject to securing conditions relating to biodiversity improvements and lighting:

Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening carried out which concludes that likely significant effects from the development can be screened out.

'Habitats Regulations Assessment - screening

The proposal is for a concrete batching plant to be located at Lakenheath Recycling Centre – an existing lawful facility for materials used in the construction industry. The proposal is in connection with the construction ongoing at RAF Lakenheath. The site is located outside but immediately adjacent to Breckland Special Protection Area and is therefore within the 1500 metre (primary) buffer around components of Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) which support or are capable of supporting stone curlew. The application site is however outside the 400m metre buffer around components of Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) which support or are capable of supporting woodlark and nightjar.

Breckland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 650 metres to the northeast of the proposed development site.

Natural England has been consulted and has confirmed, in their most recent response of 13 October 2023 (subject to clarification on 17.11.23) that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts

on Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) or Breckland Farmland Site of Special Scientific Interest and NE has no objection.

Information about the designated sites

Breckland SPA

Qualifying Features:

- *Burhinus oedicephalus*; Stone-curlew (Breeding)
- *Caprimulgus europaeus*; European nightjar (Breeding)
- *Lullula arborea*; Woodlark (Breeding)

Conservation objectives: 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. Breckland SAC

The applicant has submitted a 'Report to inform the HRA' (Middlemarch June 2023). The applicant makes the case that:

- There is no suitable nightjar or woodlark habitat within 500m of the concrete batching site.
- The existing site is predominantly hardstanding and scattered ruderals with no habitats that contribute to the SAC features
- The proposed batching plant is located within an area already subject to disturbance as a consequence of operation of the existing recycling facility.
- Noise level from the concrete batching plant are predicted to be 85 DbA @ 15 m distance. This is lower than the noise level from existing aggregate recycling facility.
- In relation to the impact of the structures on sightlines of nesting stone curlew, the silos are already in place, having been erected prior to the bird breeding season, the two silos would only cause a minimum interruption of the sightlines because they are relatively narrow and the existing tree belts and low level bunds already impact on sightlines for stone curlew.
- Vehicle emissions across the wider SAC will be reduced by virtue of the concrete batching plant, which is primarily for construction at RAF Lakenheath, being located to the east of the main gate to the base.
- There will be no changes to the existing lighting levels of the site and there will be no increase light spill onto the surrounding habitats.

The applicant's letter of 28 September 22 sets out measures required, including by existing legislation, to control cement dust which will be adhered to.

A supplementary information note (31 July 23) also states

- The site is already well used by a range of vehicles and plant machinery.
- There would be no additional lighting.

- Based on a decibel calculator for cumulative noise levels, the concrete batching plant will cause, at worst, a minimal increase (less than 1 Dba) in cumulative noise.

The applicant's HRA report has additionally considered the application in combination with other projects in the area and concluded that there would be no likely significant effects.

Conclusion

Based on the above assessment likely significant effects can be screened out. However, as requested by NE, the following should be secured by condition:

- dust control measures within the batching plant, included those set out in the agent's letter dated 28 September 2022.
- external lighting to be maintained at a low level and directed so as to prevent any increase in light spill to adjacent habitats.'

15. **RSPB:** No Objections

16. **Place Services Landscape officer:** Object.

Response dated 19/12/2022

'We do have reservations regarding this proposal and the likely impacts it would have on the local landscape. The importance of understanding the landscape character of all landscapes in England is recognised in the NPPF. Landscape character assessment is the process which can identify these intrinsic values and unique characteristics of the diverse landscapes in the UK. Natural England have produced a framework of 159 countrywide landscape profiles for England, resulting in the 'National Character Areas' (NCAs). Countryside Character Volume 6: East of England identifies the site as lying within NCA 85: The Brecks. The relevant Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the site also includes the 'Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment' which identifies the site as lying within the Estate Sandlands Landscape Character Type (LCT) and the 'West Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment' which distinguishes the site as being located within the Elveden Estate Sandlands Landscape Character Area (LCA)...

The 'Guidance Notes' for the Estate Sandlands LCT acknowledges mineral extraction as a key force for change and states that careful design and mitigation proposals during extraction, together with effective management and oversight of the restoration of sites, can minimise the impact of mineral extractions...

The key characteristics of the Elveden Estate Sandlands LCA considered of relevance include [but not limited to]: gently rolling plateau of free-draining sandy soils, with scatterings of flints; no water courses; bold, large scale blocky pattern of arable farmland, heathland and mixed woodland; distinctive Scot's Pine line shelterbelts at field margins and along droves create striking, contorted silhouettes; extensive areas of lowland heathland; limited network of straight busy roads and tracks (byways); extensive areas inaccessible by road; extensive open access land, including both heathland and forest, within a valued recreational landscape; commercial forestry creates a changing pattern within the plantation landscapes; wealth of archaeological sites; and large air base on the edge of the Fens at Lakenheath.

The landscape strategy for the Elveden Estate Sandlands LCA aims to "...conserve and reinforce local distinctiveness" and the 'Strategic guidance for managing landscape change' also focuses on [but not limited to]: pine lines – which sets out a desire for an active programme of management and replanting; built development – which acknowledges the pressures for built development in the Elveden Estate Sandlands LCA and other ad hoc development associated with light industrial facilities, residential properties and small holdings and includes sheds, large storage structures, security fencing, lighting, access tracks and signage; it also notes that cumulative effects can often lead to an erosion of the rural character of this landscape; it emphasises that successful integration of new large scale infrastructure depends on reflecting the pattern and scale of the surrounding large scale landscape; and that there is a need to avoid or minimise the visual impact of new development (including lighting, fencing, etc) in views across or adjacent to natural heathland, where such changes could detract from the natural wild character of the landscape, and to conserve wooded skylines and ensure that all views to new development are seen against a backdrop of woodland...

An LVIA should form an integral part of the design process. It is a tool that when working through the design of development and should also be used as a test at the end of the process to ensure the impacts have been considered and where possible removed or mitigated for. Therefore, we are still of the opinion that an LVIA should be undertaken by a suitably qualified landscape professional and submitted prior to determination...

The 'Covering Letter and Statements also suggests that "...the highest part of the design, the cement silos, will be clad with grey/white coloured panels and the plant will be painted the same colours". Given the scale and nature of the proposals, we would expect that an Environmental Colour Assessment is undertaken in accordance with LI Technical Information Note (TIN) 04/2018 'Environmental Colour Assessment' in order to determine the range / palette of colours used to inform and guide choices in relation to the introduction of colour on structures / buildings, boundary treatments, materials and hard & soft surfaces to ensure that due regard is given to colour, texture and finish to mitigate visual impacts on the surrounding landscape and visual resources and to ensure that development is read in context with its particular environment..

Overall, given our concerns regarding adverse impacts on landscape character, visual resources and the Site's rural countryside location, as well as insufficient supporting information, we are of the judgement that the application does not comply with Policies DM1, DM2, DM5, DM6, DM7, DM13, DM14 and DM44 of the JDMPD, Policies CS1, CS2, CS3, CS4 and CS5 of the Core Strategy DPD and Policies GP1, GP2, GP3, GP4, WP8, WP9, WP17 of the SMWLP and would further conflict with the NPPF and therefore we cannot be supportive.'

Additional comments dated 2/2/2024;

'The landscape comments (dated: 19/12/2022) would therefore remain extant that a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) should be submitted and provided for review. Notwithstanding this, based on the limited information presented, we would advise that the level of harm in our

professional opinion to be 'Moderate' adverse harm. We would also deem moderate adverse as substantial (i.e., significant).

17. **Exolum Pipeline (Oil):** No Objections

18. **Health and Safety Executive:** No Objections

19. **Suffolk Minerals and Wastes:** No Objections

Representations:

20. No letters of representation were received.

Local member comment:

21. **Councillor Gerald Kelly (Lakenheath): Object**

Increased HGV traffic on the A1065 northbound is unlikely to be an issue, but clearly increased southbound traffic will have a detrimental impact on Brandon town centre and residential roads.

I may have missed but cannot find any reference to wheel washing facilities. To my mind this is essential.

It is to be built on one of three genuine "blots on the landscape" with no attempt to mask or mitigate the extremely large heaps on the A1065 or the holding area on Wangford Rd. This could be tolerated if there was any confidence that at the end of the necessary work on RAF Lakenheath the whole site were cleared and restored. However

The 3 year application is, I believe, unrealistic. While there have been delays with Covid there has been little or no activity to do with the base since.

Natural England's response is incredible, but we are getting used to that.

22. **Councillor Phil Wittam (Brandon East): Object**

'This site is a blot on the landscape and right in the middle of a site of special scientific interest.

I am both shocked and confused that RSPB, NE and Ecology do not Object. yet those very organisations are totally blocking any reasonable housing development in Brandon.

RAF Lakenheath has completed its F35 project and has no further need for this facility on its doorstep. Nor for that matter, the set down area on the Wangford Road which is nearby. This is a filthy, and unnecessary mess of a site and most definitely should not, in my humble opinion, be approved.'

Policy:

23. On 1 April 2019 Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council were replaced by a single authority, West Suffolk Council. The development plans for the previous local planning authorities were carried forward to the new Council by regulation. The development plans remain in place for the new West Suffolk Council and, with the exception of the Joint Development Management Policies Document (which had been adopted by both councils), set out policies for defined geographical areas within the new authority. It is therefore necessary to determine this

application with reference to policies set out in the plans produced by the now dissolved Forest Heath District Council.

24. The following policies of the Joint Development Management Policies Document and the Forest Heath Core Strategy 2010 have been taken into account in the consideration of this application:

Core Strategy Policy CS2 - Natural Environment

Core Strategy Policy CS3- Landscape Character and the historic environment

Core Strategy Policy CS5 - Design quality and local distinctiveness

Core Strategy Policy CS6 - Sustainable economic and tourism development

Core Strategy Policy CS10 - Sustainable rural communities

Policy DM2 Creating Places Development Principles and Local Distinctiveness

Policy DM5 Development in the Countryside

Policy DM10 Impact of Development on Sites of Biodiversity and Geodiversity Importance

Policy DM11 Protected Species

Policy DM12 Mitigation, Enhancement, Management and Monitoring of Biodiversity

DM13 Landscape features

DM46 Parking Standards

Other planning policy:

25. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

26. The NPPF was revised in December 2023 and is a material consideration in decision making from the day of its publication. Paragraph 225 is clear however, that existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the revised NPPF. Due weight should be given to them according to their degree of consistency with the Framework; the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework; the greater weight that may be given. The policies set out within the Joint Development Management Policies have been assessed in detail and are considered sufficiently aligned with the provision of the 2023 NPPF that full weight can be attached to them in the decision making process.

Officer comment:

27. The issues to be considered in the determination of the application are:

- The principle of development
- Impact upon Character of the area and surrounding Landscape
- Ecology
- Highways

Principle of Development

28. The proposal is outside of any development boundary and as such is within land classified as Countryside for planning policy purposes.

29. Policy DM5 sets out the criteria as to when development in the countryside would be supported and, amongst other things, states that:

'Proposals for economic growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise that recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside will be permitted where:

- it will not result in the irreversible loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a);
- there will be no significant detrimental impact on the historic environment, character and visual amenity of the landscape or nature conservation and biodiversity interests; and
- there will be no significant adverse impact on the local highway network.'

30. The site is classified as Grade 4 agricultural land and as such would be considered to be a poorer grade of agricultural land.

31. Impacts upon Highways, Ecology and the Landscape will be fully assessed within the report, however it is considered that the proposed economic use would comply in principle with policy DM5.

32. Policy CS6 aims to support sustainable economic development, specifically the existing economy, with particular priority given to key sectors including the air bases of Mildenhall and Lakenheath.

33. The RAF base at Lakenheath provides a significant amount of direct and indirect employment to the region.

34. The plant is situated within Lakenheath recycling centre, which recycles materials used within the construction industry. This includes the import, crushing / screening, grading and storage of concrete, brick, tarmac, top soil and sub soil as well as the import of sand, gravel, limestone, carstone and rail ballast.

35. The concrete batching plant is situated within a well established recycling centre (but the batching plant is not yet operational). Further to this it is understood that the proposed plant is required to provide materials for the current defence programme at RAF Lakenheath. The site is located within close proximity to the main entrance of RAF Lakenheath.

36. The proposed plant would support the current economic use of the site and is necessary to provide materials for the neighbouring RAF base. As such it is considered the proposal complies with the aims of policies DM5 and CS6.

Impact upon the Character of the area and surrounding Landscape.

37. Core Strategy Policy CS3 states 'The quality, character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the District's landscape and historic environment shall be protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced.'

38. Policy DM13 aims to protect landscape character and features by restricting development where it would have an unacceptable adverse impact. DM13 states that 'where harm will not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefit of the proposal, development will be permitted subject to other planning considerations.'

39. The proposed concrete batching plant is set within a well established, large scale recycling facility, which incorporates areas of aggregate storage. To the north of the site is a shooting range which has a number of associated structures including a large two-storey club house and shooting towers which range in height from 30.5 metres to 42.5 metres. To the west of the site is RAF Lakenheath which has a mix of fencing surrounding the perimeter, predominantly being 2.5 metres in height made up of a mix of barbed wire, chain link and closed board fencing. The RAF base in this location has numerous domestic and defence related buildings within its compound.

40. The proposed batching plant would represent a small element within the larger, existing site. The storage of aggregates and machinery necessary for the recycling centre already have permission (granted by the County as this is a waste recycling site) and cannot be changed by this application.

41. The application was not supported by a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and the Place Services Landscape Officer raised concerns about the potential impact of the development upon the character of the surrounding landscape. The Landscape Officer has stated that 'Notwithstanding this, based on the limited information presented, we would advise that the level of harm in our professional opinion to be 'Moderate' adverse harm.'

42. Natural England have produced a framework of 159 countrywide landscape profiles for England, resulting in the 'National Character Areas' (NCAs). Countryside Character Volume 6: East of England identifies the site as lying within NCA 85: The Brecks. The relevant Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) for the site also includes the 'Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment' which identifies the site as lying within the Estate Sandlands Landscape Character Type (LCT).

43. To the east and south of the site the area is characterised as being flat, open countryside. The Landscape Character Area (LCA) for Estate Sandlands identifies the juxtaposed characteristics of the locality highlighting the gently rolling plateau of free-draining sandy soils and lowland heathland adjacent to the large, urbanised Airbase. Further to this the landscape strategy for the Estate Sandlands LCA acknowledges the need for development associated with light industry.

44. Whilst the Landscape Officer is objecting, they have provided a condition which could be attached to any permission should it be determined that on balance when considered against all material considerations the proposal could be supported. The recommended condition would require a Environment Colour Assessment (ECA) be submitted to the LPA. It is considered that this would ensure due regard is given to colour, texture and finish of the machinery with the aim of mitigating some of the visual impacts of the development on the surrounding landscape.
45. The existing Recycling centre is visible from the adjacent A1065. This includes large stock piles of materials, diggers and other construction vehicles, large utilitarian buildings and associated machinery. There is some vegetation to the eastern side of the A1065 within the locality of the site. However, in places this is relatively minimal consisting of small self seeded shrubs and weeds. In other areas the screening is denser including more mature trees. There is bunding to the northern and eastern boundaries of the recycling centre which again has some degree of vegetation, however this is not particularly well established or mature and offers minimum screening.
46. The batching plant would be located to the eastern section of the site, some 345 metres from the boundary with the highway and this will serve to reduce the impact of the development from public views. As such whilst the development would be visible within the wider, rural landscape it would read as being part of the established recycling centre.
47. DM13 aims to protect landscapes from inappropriate development which would cause an unacceptable level of harm. It is considered that the proposed condition for a ECA would help the development assimilate into the wider landscape. Further to this the plant would be viewed within the context of the established recycling plant, and neighbouring RAF base and shooting range. The siting of the batching plant well within the recycling site and the significant distance from the highway would also serve to reduce the impact of the development from public view points. The positive impacts upon the local economy that would result from the development should therefore be balanced against the level of harm to the surrounding landscape character.
48. The proposed batching plant would be an extension of the existing commercial use of the site; the recycling centre. It would also support various upgrade works and projects at RAF Lakenheath which is one of the largest employers in the region.
49. It is considered that on balance the potential impact upon the surrounding landscape character would not be to such a significantly detrimental level that it would serve to outweigh the positive economic aspects the development would bring. This is supported by DM13 which looks to allow development where the associated landscape harm would not outweigh the benefits of the proposal.
50. Taking the above into account it is considered that on balance the proposal would be acceptable and would overall comply with the aims of policies DM13 and CS3.

Ecology

51. Core Strategy Policy CS2 seeks to protect biodiversity interests within the District. In particular 'New built development will be restricted within 1,500m of components of the Breckland SPA designated for Stone Curlew. Proposals for development in these areas will require a project level Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) (see Figure 3). Development which is likely to lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA will not be allowed.'
52. Policy DM10 looks to prevent development which would have an adverse impact upon sites of biodiversity importance. Whilst DM11 aims to resist development which would have a detrimental impact upon protected species and to mitigate potential harm where there is no alternative. development would not have an adverse impact upon protected species.
53. Policy DM12 states measures should be included in the design for all new developments for the protection of biodiversity and the mitigation of any adverse impacts. In addition, enhancement for biodiversity should be included in all proposals, commensurate with the scale of the development.
54. The site is located outside but immediately adjacent to Breckland Special Protection Area and is therefore within the 1500 metre (primary) buffer around components of Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) which support or are capable of supporting stone curlew.
55. The application site is however outside the 400m metre buffer around components of Breckland Special Protection Area (SPA) which support or are capable of supporting woodlark and nightjar.
56. Breckland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 650 metres to the northeast of the proposed development site. The site is also located within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone.
57. Initially Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), RSPB and Natural England objected to the proposal as there were concerns over potential ecological impacts, specifically to the Stone Curlew. These concerns relate to the visual impact of the batching plant, disturbance during construction, air quality impacts and lighting. A shadow HRA report was submitted along with additional information including 'Report to inform the HRA' (Middlemarch, June 2023) and supplementary information giving lighting and noise details.
58. The findings set out within the 'Report to inform the HRA' (Middlemarch June 2023) to support the proposal conclude that;
 - There is no suitable nightjar or woodlark habitat within 500m of the concrete batching site.
 - The existing site is predominantly hardstanding and scattered ruderals with no habitats that contribute to the SAC features.
 - The proposed batching plant is located within an area already subject to disturbance as a consequence of operation of the existing recycling facility.

- Noise level from the concrete batching plant are predicted to be 85 DbA @ 15 m distance. This is lower than the noise level from existing aggregate recycling facility.
- In relation to the impact of the structures on sightlines of nesting stone curlew, the silos are already in place, having been erected prior to the bird breeding season, the two silos would only cause a minimum interruption of the sightlines because they are relatively narrow and the existing tree belts and low level bunds already impact on sightlines for stone curlew.
- Vehicle emissions across the wider SAC will be reduced by virtue of the concrete batching plant, which is primarily for construction at RAF Lakenheath, being located to the east of the main gate to the base.
- There will be no changes to the existing lighting levels of the site and there will be no increase light spill onto the surrounding habitats.
- Details were also provided by the applicant which set out measures to control the cement dust.

59. The Ecology Officer has advised that any significant effects can be screened out and as such the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon ecology or protected species. Natural England, SWT and RSPB do not object. Natural England have requested a condition regarding lighting to ensure the level of lighting does not increase, this is considered appropriate and could be attached to any permission. Ecological enhancements can also be secured by condition to ensure the proposal is compliant with the aims of policy DM12.

60. Comments from local members concerning responses from consultees on ecology are noted however each application must be considered on its own merits.

61. Taking the above into account it is not considered the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon protected species or the biodiversity of the site or surroundings. The proposed conditions are considered reasonable and can be attached. As such it is considered the proposal would comply with the aims of policies CS2, DM10, DM11 and DM12.

Highways

62. Policies DM2 and DM46 both state that proposals for all development should produce designs that are in accordance with standards that maintain or enhance the safety of the highway network and provide appropriately designed and sited car parking.

63. SCC Highways have not objected and have stated 'This proposal constitutes a minor intensification and is unlikely to cause a detrimental impact on the highway network in terms of vehicle volume or highway safety.'

64. The applicant has stated that;

- The batching plant would be located 1.2 miles from gate 8 which is the designated access for the construction project.
- The majority of the raw materials needed for concrete are already available on the site.
- There is currently no limit on the amount of aggregates which can be bought to or processed on the existing site.
- The proposal would have a modest increase on traffic movements from the site, approximately 12% increase.
- Overall decrease in road mileage due to the close proximity of the RAF base and material already on site.

65.Regarding member concerns on traffic impacts; specifically that the proposal could increase the level of HGV traffic on the A1065 southbound, which would have a detrimental impact upon Brandon Town centre and residential roads. The applicant has advised there would be a modest increase of traffic to the site, most of the materials necessary are available within the Recycling Centre and traffic related to the new plant would predominantly be traveling short distances to and from the adjacent RAF base.

66.No additional parking is proposed in association with the batching plant, however there is an existing parking area for the Recycling Plant. No new access is proposed for the site and vehicles utilising the proposed batching plant would use the entrance / exit of the recycling centre.

67.The lack of wheel washing facilities proposed as part of the development has been raised. Whilst a condition could be attached for wheel washing it would be questionable as to whether this would be reasonable given that it could only apply to lorries using the batching plant, but not lorries using the existing recycling plant. The batching plant would be a small part of the much larger site and only a modest proportion of the vehicles accessing / exiting the site. Further it has not been requested by Highways or seen as necessary in highway safety terms.

68.Taking the above into account it is not considered the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon highway safety and as such complies with the aims of policies DM2, and DM46.

Other matters

69.An Oil pipeline runs through the site from north to south and crosses a section of access route for the proposed batching plant. Amended plans were submitted which addressed concerns by Exolum Pipelines and confirmed that the pipeline had been sufficiently protected.

70.. The applicant has submitted invoices and details of five contracts relating to projects which are to upgrade existing infrastructure at RAF Lakenheath as justification relating to the need for this batching plant.

Conclusion:

71.The proposal would support the existing recycling centre, which is a well established commercial use. The development will also be used to facilitate necessary upgrades for the adjacent RAF base. Whilst the potential impact upon the landscape has been taken into account, it is considered that on

balance this would not outweigh the benefits brought by the development and any harm can be minimised sufficiently to enable the proposal to be supported.

72. In conclusion, the principle and detail of the development is considered acceptable and overall would comply with the aims of relevant development plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Recommendation:

73. It is recommended that planning permission be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The use hereby permitted shall be carried on only for a period of three years beginning from the date of this permission. At the end of three years the use hereby permitted shall cease and all materials and equipment brought onto the land/premises in connection with the use shall be removed.

Reason: This permission is granted exceptionally and only in view of the personal circumstances of the applicant.

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the following approved plans and documents, unless otherwise stated below:

Reference number	Plan type	Date received
(-)	Location plan	28 October 2022
400.08-5623.0BL.1	Proposed plans	29 September 2022
TSES- 20195- 368- DSN- 05	Proposed plans	27 October 2022
TSES- 20195- 368 - DSN - 03 B- SHEET 2	Proposed plans	2 February 2024
TSES- 20195- 368 - DSN - 03 B- SHEET 1	Proposed plans	2 February 2024

Reason: To define the scope and extent of this permission.

3. Batching operations and any ancillary activities, including preparation/post-batching cleaning processes shall only be carried out between the hours of:
07:00 to 17:00 hours Mondays to Fridays and
07:00 to 12:00 hours on Saturdays.
And at no times during Sundays or Bank / Public Holidays

Reason: To protect the amenity of occupiers of adjacent properties from noise and disturbance, in accordance with policies DM2 and DM14 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies

4. The rating level of noise emitted from batching operations and any ancillary activities, including preparation/post-batching cleaning processes shall be lower than the existing background noise level by at least 5dB in order to prevent any adverse impact. The measurements/assessment shall be made according to BS

4142:2014+A1:2019 'Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound' at the nearest and/or most affected noise sensitive premise(s), and be inclusive of any penalties for tonality, intermittency, impulsivity or other distinctive acoustic characteristics.

Reason: To protect the amenities of occupiers of properties in the locality, in accordance with policies DM2 and DM14 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015, Chapters 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework and all relevant Core Strategy Policies.

5. Any external artificial lighting at the development hereby approved shall not exceed lux levels of vertical illumination at neighbouring premises that are recommended by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note 01/20 'Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light'. Lighting should be minimised, and glare and sky glow should be prevented by correctly using, locating, aiming and shielding luminaires, in accordance with the Guidance Note.

Reason: To prevent light pollution and protect the amenities of occupiers of properties in the locality, in accordance with policy DM2 and DM14 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015, Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework and all relevant Core Strategy Policies.

6. The development shall be completed and operated in accordance with the details set out within the letter dates 28/9/22, which aim to control cement dust. Thereafter the mitigation measures shall be retained and maintained in complete accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To protect the amenities of occupiers of properties in the locality, in accordance with policy DM2 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015, Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework and all relevant Core Strategy Policies.

7. Prior to development being brought into use, details of biodiversity enhancement measures to be installed at the site, including details of the timescale for installation, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any such measures as may be agreed shall be installed in accordance with the agreed timescales and thereafter retained as so installed. The use shall not commence unless and until details of the biodiversity enhancement measures to be installed have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To secure biodiversity enhancements commensurate with the scale of the development, in accordance with policies DM11 and DM12 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015, Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework and all relevant Core Strategy Policies.

8. Prior to development being brought into use a Environment Colour Assessment (ECA) needs to be produced (using the Natural Colour System) and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The colour palette which is developed through the ECA process must be based on 'on-the- ground' surveys and supported by a desk-top study, which

provides an analysis and synthesis of the colours found within the local landscapes. This study must then inform the colour palette for built form, boundary treatments, materials and hard & soft surfaces.

Reason: To assimilate the development into its surroundings and protect the character and appearance of the area, in accordance with policies DM2 and DM13 of the West Suffolk Joint Development Management Policies Document 2015, Chapters 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework and all relevant Core Strategy Policies.

9. The development hereby approved shall not begin operations/use until a remediation strategy that includes the following components to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site shall each be submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority:

A Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA) including a Conceptual Site Model (CSM) of the site indicating potential sources, pathways, and receptors, including those off site. The results of a site investigation based on (1) and a detailed risk assessment, including a revised CSM. Based on the risk assessment in (2) an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken. The strategy shall include a plan with details of how the remediation works shall be judged to be complete and arrangements for contingency actions. The plan shall also detail a long term monitoring and maintenance plan as necessary. No operation/use of any part of the development shall take place until a verification report demonstrating completion of works set out in the remediation strategy in (3). The long term monitoring and maintenance plan in (3) shall be updated and be Implemented as approved.

Reason To protect and prevent the pollution of controlled waters from potential pollutants associated with current and previous land uses in line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraphs 174, 183, 184 and relevant Environment Agency Groundwater Protection Position Statements

10. Should any contamination not previously identified be found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted a remediation strategy detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with and has obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: To protect and prevent the pollution of controlled waters from potential pollutants associated with current and previous land uses in line with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraphs 174, 183, 184 and relevant Environment Agency Groundwater Protection Position Statements.

Documents:

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online [DC/22/1693/FUL](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/DC/22/1693/FUL)