

WSCC COUNTY ARBORICULTURIST response to planning consultation

Application reference number: WSCC/016/24

Location: The Haulage Yard, Dial Post West Sussex RH13 8NY

Proposal: Proposed extension to existing haulage and plant maintenance depot to enable an inert waste transfer and recycling facility (Variation of Condition 2 for Proposed Installation of Wash Plant Equipment)

District: Horsham

Date: 11/06/2024

Summary response: Further information is required.

Response:

Preservation of trees

Having reviewed the Proposed Site Plan (ref. 22-12-02) and Elevations and Sections plan (22-12-03) it's apparent that existing earth bunds will be cut back on one side and a retaining wall constructed. This occurs to the southern, south-western and south-eastern aspects in the vicinity of recent tree planting secured by planning permission WSCC/008/15/WG; without mitigation measures such as working methodologies, adverse impacts to these young trees/vegetation could occur as a result of construction activities (raised soil levels, or accidental damage for example).

Ancient woodland

Of principle concern are the impacts which could occur to Grinder's Wood situated to the south of the site, which is of Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland (AW) status. The cutting works proposed to the earth bund, the construction of the retaining wall, and installation of plant equipment (as well as its foundations and any required surfacing) are all proposed within the minimum 15m buffer zone (as recommended by statutory guidance¹ for AW which should represent a root protection area from construction activities). Such activities should be avoided from within the buffer zone unless suitable mitigation can be provided. Without mitigation, such works could cause a direct impact to the rooting area within the buffer zone of the AW, as well as an indirect effect from uncontrolled dust dispersal leading its deterioration (potentially impacting both trees and ecology within).

The bund as it currently stands provides an existing physical buffer circa. 12m from the AW boundary, this is proposed to be reduced to only 6m. Without mitigation, direct effects of reducing the existing buffer could occur from increased levels of light pollution as well as noise and vibration.

AW is recognised as irreplaceable habitat. Local planning Policy M17 (West Sussex Joint Minerals Local Plan, July 2018) states that "proposals for minerals development will be permitted provided that: (d) there is no loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including Ancient Woodland and aged or veteran trees, unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the loss". This policy accords with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2023) paragraph 186 (c) which recommends refusal in such circumstances.

The proposal lacks in supporting documentation which demonstrates how effects which may lead to the deterioration of AW will be avoided, mitigated or compensated for (known as the mitigation hierarchy) as recommended by statutory guidance¹.

Provision of trees

¹ Natural England and Forestry Commission, 2022. [Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/Ancient_woodland,_ancient_trees_and_veteran_trees_advice_for_making_planning_decisions_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

The Proposed Site Plan (ref. 22-12-02) identifies unknown tree planting to the eastern border. Whilst welcomed, further landscaping details are required such as planting specifications and aftercare requirements.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the applicant provides clarification on the following with regard to Grinder's Wood AW:

- a. Provide information on any foundation requirements and surfacing requirements for the proposed plant equipment and retaining wall.
- b. Advise as to why the proposed plant equipment, enabling works and surfacing cannot avoid the minimum buffer zone for ancient woodland?
- c. Advise on what mitigation measures are proposed during and post construction to minimise effects or prevent deterioration, and how are these are proposed to be secured?
- d. If mitigation and avoidance cannot be achieved – Advise how the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the deterioration of Grinder's Wood, and as a last resort, what compensation measures are proposed and how are these are proposed to be secured?

It is also recommended that the following documents are submitted as control document for the proposal:

- a. Vegetation Retention and Removals Plan (VRRP) - which identifies all vegetation, including shrubs and trees, to be retained or removed.
- b. Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) – which provides specific control measures and working methodologies to prevent damage or loss of trees to be retained.
- c. Landscape Management Plan –which provides details of planting proposals, including: all planting and maintenance specifications; use of supports, guards, or other protective measures; and, confirmation of location, species and sizes, nursery stock type, and defect periods. An aftercare and maintenance programme for all proposed planting must also be included which enables the establishment of all proposed planting.

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