

**CUADRILLA RESOURCES
LIMITED**



APPENDIX - J

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
SCREENING OPINION**

&

GOVERNING PLANNING POLICIES

Cuadrilla Resources Limited
January 2010

Lower Stumble Hydrocarbon Exploration Site
Planning Application [January 2010].
Prepared by Phil Mason

Cuadrilla Resources Limited
BBD House
Stowe Court
Stowe Street
Lichfield
WS13 6AQ

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
(ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (ENGLAND AND
WALES) REGULATIONS 1999**

**SELECTION CRITERIA FOR SCREENING SCHEDULE 2
DEVELOPMENT**

Site Address:

Lower Stumble Wood, Balcombe, Mid Sussex.

Description of Development:

Temporary permission to drill an exploratory well for hydrocarbons and test any discovered zones. The proposal includes re-grading existing stone surface, construction of a drill cellar, and vehicle passing at entry of the site.

Screening Opinion Reference: BA/09a

The following are the selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 developments, as set out in Schedule 3 of the 1999 Regulations

Classification of the Proposed Development:

Schedule 2

Yes **No**

Schedule 1

Schedule area

The site falls within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and is bounded by Ancient Woodland.

Size of the Development

Does the proposal exceed applicable thresholds?

Further details/comments

The development falls within part 2 (d) (Extractive Industry – Deep Drilling) of Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations 'deep drilling for exploratory purposes'. The development does not exceed the applicable criteria, in that the site is less than 1 hectare.

Indicative Thresholds and Criteria

Annex A of Circular 2/99 (para A9) advises that EIA is more likely to be required where the scale of the drilling operations involves development of a surface site of more than five hectares. Regard should be had to the likely wider impacts on surrounding hydrology and ecology. On its own, exploratory deep drilling is unlikely to require EIA. It would not be appropriate to require EIA for exploratory activity simply because it might eventually lead to some form of permanent activity.

Cumulation with other Development:

Will the proposal be undertaken in conjunction with other development?

Details: *N/A*

Will there be any cumulative impact?

Details: *N/A*

Use of Natural Resources:

Yes No

Will any natural resources be lost?

Details: *Existing previously developed land.*

Will their loss be significant?

Why: *N/A*

Production of waste:

Will the proposal generate waste?

Will this be significant in terms of impact on the site?

Will this be significant in terms of off-site impacts?

The proposed use of the site involves low volume of drill cuttings (waste) which are disposed of off-site and are subject to Environment Agency (EA) permitting requirements.

Pollution and Nuisances:

Will the proposal cause any pollution/nuisance?

Will it be short term (during construction)?

Will it be medium term (first 12 months of use)?

Will it be longer term?

Are the impacts significant?

The potential impacts include pollution to controlled waters, noise, light, and dust together with traffic generation and associated activity. Impacts to hydrology are the subject of separate environmental permitting regimes controlled by the EA.

Risk of Accidents:

A higher than average risk of accident during construction?

A higher than average risk of accident during operation?

Potential risk of accidents revolves around drilling operations and traffic generation. Drilling operations are subject of strict EA and Health and Safety regimes. The site is benefits from good existing access arrangement to the B2036. Any planning application will need to be supported by a Safety Audit and transport assessment.

Location of Development:

Does the site have an existing land use?

Although currently vacant, the site has previously been used for exploratory drilling in 1986 - 1987 and once restored was subsequently used as a forestry storage area of the Balcombe Estate.

Is there an abundance of natural resources in the area?

Are they of high quality? NA

Do they have regenerative qualities? NA

Can the natural environment absorb the proposal?

The site is located within the High Weald AONB and adjacent to Ancient Woodland. Existing and previous use of the land is such that potential impacts upon these natural resources are considerably reduced.

Extent of impacts:

Yes No

Will the impacts extend beyond the site?

How far beyond the site?

The development will result in a temporary period of intense Heavy vehicle movements. The site has a direct access onto the B2036 (London Road) that travels through the villages of Balcombe to the north, and Cuckfield to the South

Drill cuttings will be disposed of off site, however, the drilling and testing activity is primarily confined to the site. Drilling operations require operation of a substantial drilling rig (approx 30m in height) and associated lighting 24 hours per day, 7 days per week for a temporary period of approximately 1 month. These operations are likely to result in noise impacts off-site and visual impacts from the highway and a small number of residential properties to the north and north-west.

What size of population will be affected?

A limited number of residential properties lie in the immediate locality of the site (nearest approximately 300m to the north and 700m to the North West).

Routing of vehicles to/from the sit has the potential for impacts upon the villages of Balcombe to the north, and Cuckfield to the South.

Transfrontier Impacts:

Are there any impacts beyond the national boundary?

What are they?

Magnitude and Complexity of the Impacts:

Are the impacts of greater scale or complexity than

other applications?

Information required in support of planning applications as required by the National and Local lists (see WSCC website: http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/cms-service/stream/asset/?asset_id=3378817) should lead to sufficient information to consider an application in respect of the above proposed development.

Probability of the impacts:

Are the impacts very likely to occur (100%)?

Duration, Frequency and Reversibility of the Impacts:

Will be impacts last beyond the construction phase?

Will the impacts be frequent?

Are any impacts reversible?

Which ones:

Noise and light impacts can be diminished or mitigated by measures required as an integral part of any Planning Permission that may be granted or by conditions imposed on such permission.

Are any impacts irreversible?

Which ones:

Visual impacts and vehicles movements are not easily mitigated, however, these are of a temporary nature (Construction 2 weeks, drilling 4 weeks, and well testing 4 weeks) and not considered of scale sufficient to warrant an EIA.

Conclusion:

YES NO

Is an Environmental Statement required?

Further comments:

The application is for a temporary drilling activity on a site within the High Weald AONB and bounded by ancient woodland. Although situated in a potentially environmentally sensitive area, the site has previously been developed for oil exploration and has subsequently been used as a forestry storage area. Accordingly, the site itself is considered of low ecological sensitivity. An ecological report will be required to accompany any planning application which should address the potential impacts upon on ancient woodland and bats.

Although the proposals would involve considerable vehicle movements over a short period, potential environmental impacts are not considered of a scale or duration sufficient to warrant an EIA. Preliminary Consultation with the Highway Authority indicates that the site access arrangements onto the B2036 are likely to be satisfactory. A Safety Audit and Traffic Assessment detailing HGV routing will be required to support any planning application.

The proposed drilling rig will be approximately 30m in height, potentially giving rise to a degree of visual impact when viewed from the residential properties to the north and north-west. This impact is limited to a temporary period of 3-4 weeks. Details of the nature and extent of visual impacts should be considered in any future planning application.

Disposal of drill cuttings (waste) off-site, and potential impacts to hydrology will be the subject of Environment Agency Permitting requirements.

The proposal does have the potential to give rise to environmental effects. In light of the above it is considered that these are unlikely to be significant within the meaning of the Town and County Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England & Wales) Regulations 1999 and as such no environmental impact assessment is felt necessary.

Signed: Michael Vine - Planning Officer *MV*

Date: *23/12/09*

Signed: James Neave - Acting Team Leader *JN*

Date: *23/12/09*

West Sussex County Council Minerals Local Plan Adopted July 2003.

POLICY 26: APPLICATIONS FOR THE EXPLORATION, APPRAISAL AND/OR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF OIL OR GAS RESOURCES WILL BE PERMITTED WHERE IT IS DEMONSTRATED TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE MINERAL PLANNING AUTHORITY THAT THE PROPOSAL PRESENTS THE BEST OPTION IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER ALTERNATIVE SITES WITHIN THE AREA OF SEARCH AND THAT THE PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTABLE IN RELATION TO THE SURROUNDING AREA. PARTICULAR ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO

- (1) the impact on other countryside resources;
- (2) the site access and the routing of heavy vehicles;
- (3) the means of protecting nearby residents and amenities from the effects of the operations;
- (4) the safeguarding of public rights of way; and
- (5) the safeguarding of water supplies and the water environment.

POLICY 27: PERMISSION FOR HYDROCARBON EXPLORATION WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE ISSUES ADDRESSED IN POLICY 26 HAVING REGARD TO THE LIMITED DURATION AND AREA OF THE ACTIVITY.

POLICY 28: PLANNING PERMISSION FOR THE APPRAISAL AND THE DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION OF AN OIL OR GAS FIELD WILL NOT FOLLOW AUTOMATICALLY FROM SUCCESSFUL EXPLORATION. THE APPLICANT WILL BE REQUIRED TO APPRAISE THE EXTENT AND IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS, AND TO SUBMIT AN OVERALL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT. REGARD WILL BE GIVEN TO OTHER LICENSEES' PROGRAMMES AND CO-OPERATION WILL BE SOUGHT FROM LICENSEES IN ORDER TO AVOID DUPLICATION OF DEVELOPMENT AS FAR AS POSSIBLE. THE MOVEMENT OF PRODUCTS BY UNDERGROUND PIPELINE OR BY RAIL WILL BE SUPPORTED.