

High Weald AONB Unit

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Advising on the management of a nationally valued landscape

Application Number: WSCC/005/14/BA

Location: Lower Stumble Hydrocarbon Exploration Site, London Road, Balcombe,

Proposal: Temporary permission for exploration and appraisal comprising the flow testing and monitoring of the existing hydrocarbon lateral borehole

Thank you for the consultation regarding the proposed temporary permission for exploration and appraisal comprising the flow testing and monitoring of the existing hydrocarbon lateral borehole. The High Weald AONB Unit is a small, specialist team charged with increasing the understanding of the High Weald's special qualities and providing advice on action to conserve it. The comments below are an assessment of the extent to which the proposals may have an impact on the objectives for the AONB defined by the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004, adopted as local authority policy in respect of the AONB. The AONB Management Plan sets out a long term strategy for the area and is used to assess how public bodies and statutory organisations fulfil their duty to have regard for the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the High Weald. The opinion below represents the professional view of the Policy Manager and not the views of the High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee.

It is recognised that the site is a temporary test well with a limited and defined period of operation. This current proposal must, therefore, be assessed in this light given that no permanent change or structures are permitted on the site.

The proposal to continue using this site for testing and temporary drilling operations is unlikely to have any additional impacts on the components of natural beauty identified by the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2004. However the continued development and use of the site may require a further study to determine the likely visual impact of the structures and fencing and a landscape and visual impact assessment would seem to be the most appropriate way of achieving this. This work should also be complemented by a wider assessment of any associated and immediate impacts to the local area with particular regard to endangered and sensitive plant and animal species that may be found locally.

Such a potentially polluting installation would not normally be considered appropriate in the AONB and would generally be considered to be out of keeping with the landscape character but given the application is for a temporary installation only and, subject to the findings of a landscape and visual impact assessment, the proposal as outlined appears unlikely to have significant and long term impacts on the High Weald AONB.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AS'.

Andrew Shaw
Policy Manager