

24th November 2021

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Kathrine Haddrell
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Dear Kath

We write in response to the request from the ExA to provide an update on the likely implications of Natural England's decision on the designation of the Swanscombe Peninsula Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The decision was taken by Natural England on 10th November and we believe the decision was erroneous and not the best means of achieving a balance between the economic and environmental objectives for the site. However, we also note the following statements made by Natural England:

"Natural England recognises that there is interest and consideration of potential development opportunities in the Swanscombe area. Designation of this site for its nationally important wildlife features is an important step towards ensuring that its environmental value is recognised and taken due account of in any future planning decisions."

Tony Juniper, Chair: "In confirming the designation today Natural England again reiterated its commitment to continuing to work with developers and planners to ensure that nature can thrive alongside developments proposed for this area."

We will continue to work with Natural England as they discharge their statutory duty to work with developers such as ourselves to agree how we avoid or mitigate impacts upon the features of the SSSI, and other features of biodiversity interest present, and how we compensate for those impacts which cannot be avoided or mitigated. The decision to notify the site as a SSSI elevates the importance of certain features in the ecological baseline which will be recognised in the assessment of impacts. However, based on our comprehensive approach for investment in the site, alongside a complementary off-site investment strategy we are confident that together, we will establish a Statement of Common Ground.

For the avoidance of doubt, there has not been, nor will this precipitate any material changes to our application, nor will the project be 'materially different'. Changes to design in response to the SSSI designation are limited to subtle changes in the green infrastructure strategy to preserve a greater area of notified habitat outside of the resort, whilst the off-site ecological compensation strategy is being reframed to directly account for SSSI impacts. We remain committed to providing the ExA with the new and updated documents as previously promised. We can also confirm, as previously indicated that we will be addressing the full range of issues in relation to time-dependent information being sufficiently current and will, as a matter of normal process in any Examination, be supplementing our reports with additional information.

Finally, we welcome the request for us to reinstate four weekly progress reports and commit to doing so.

Yours sincerely

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PY Gerbeau
Chief Executive