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Planning Inspectorate

BY EMAIL ONLY

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Dear Planning Inspectorate

M25 Junction 10 / A3 Wisley Interchange Project – TR010030

The Examining Authority's request for comments regarding replacement land options issued on 2 July 2020

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

With regard to the question of ratios to be applied to calculate the quantum of replacement land I should first of all make clear that it is not Natural England's role to advise on this specific point. Guidance on the provision of replacement land in this type of scenario is provided by DEFRA.

From Natural England's perspective the most important aspect is to seek to ensure that the replacement land is at least of equal value as the common land and accessible open space lost and can fulfil the same purposes.

And whilst Natural England is not a statutory consultee over impacts on the neighbourhood from the loss of common land we would want to ensure that the local community is not disadvantaged.

We are somewhat surprised that this question has arisen at this late stage in the process. The views of the local community and users of the land were sought by the applicant at an early stage in scheme development and views will have been provided on the understanding that the replacement land provision would be as currently proposed. Should the replacement land provision be altered it will be important to ensure that there is no significant reduction in the value and 'useability' of the land and that it provides at least equal functions of linkage to the wider network of rights of way and informal routes across the landscape. And if the provision is altered the reasons for the change should be communicated clearly to the local community and users of the land.

We are also concerned that if the ratios are altered this does not set a deleterious precedent for similar situations in the future. It will be important to clearly set out the basis for any change and explain the context.

Natural England is satisfied with the 'offer' of replacement land options as proposed by the applicant. This appears to us to provide a good balance of meeting the various objectives being sought, ie

- Provides opportunities for better linkage to the wider network of paths and rights of way;
- Provides access to attractive and enjoyable areas set back from the busy roads;
- Provides opportunities for biodiversity enhancement;
- Has good functional connectivity to other accessible parts of the site.

I hope that these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Marc Turner
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Thames Solent Team