

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements

TR010044

Volume 6

6.3 Environmental Statement

Appendix 4.4: Screening assessment of proposed gas pipeline
works for the purposes of section 20 of the Planning Act 2008

Planning Act 2008

Regulation 5(2)(a)

Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and
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Planning Act 2008

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(Applications: Prescribed Forms and
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improvements
Development Consent Order 202[]**

**6.3 Appendix 4.4: Screening assessment of proposed gas pipeline
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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this document

- 1.1.1 National Highways (the Applicant) has submitted an application under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (PA 2008) (REF 1-1) for an order to grant development consent for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements (the Scheme). The Scheme proposes construction of a new 16km (10 mile) dual carriageway from the Black Cat roundabout to Caxton Gibbet roundabout, to be known as the A421, and in addition approximately 3km (1.8 miles) of tie-in works. The Scheme is defined as a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP) under s14(1)(h) and s22(1)(a) of the PA 2008 (REF 1-1).
- 1.1.2 The Scheme also includes the diversion of a high-pressure gas pipeline (Pipeline) which will be treated as an NSIP if it meets the thresholds set out in section 20 of the PA 2008 (REF 1-1). The relevant thresholds are:
- The construction of a pipeline by a gas transporter is within section 14(1)(f) only if (when constructed) each of the conditions in subsections (2) to (5) is expected to be met in relation to the pipeline.
 - The pipeline must be wholly or partly in England.
 - Either – (a) the pipeline must be more than 800mm in diameter and more than 40km in length, or (b) the construction of the pipeline must be likely to have a significant effect on the environment.
 - The pipeline must have a design operating pressure of more than 7Bar gauge.
 - The pipeline must convey gas for supply (directly or indirectly) to at least 50,000 customers, or potential customers, of one or more gas suppliers.
- 1.1.3 The Scheme meets the thresholds set out in (a), (b), (d) and (e). The Pipeline would be wholly in England, has a design operating pressure of more than 7 bar gauge and supplies more than 50,000 customers. In addition, the Pipeline is expected to be constructed by Cadent Gas Limited (the current operator of the gas pipeline to be diverted) who is a "gas transporter" (as it holds a licence under the Gas Act 1986).
- 1.1.4 The first part of threshold (c) does not apply, however the second part relating to likely significant effects on the environment is considered further in Section 1.3.
- 1.1.5 This document updates the screening assessment reported in Appendix 4.4, Screening Assessment of proposed gas pipeline works for the purposes of section 20 of the Planning Act 2008 [APP-158] of the Environmental Statement and provides details of the archaeological work undertaken to date in the field where the Pipeline diversion is proposed. The archaeological work has been undertaken pursuant to planning permission CB/20/04185/FULL and this updated screening assessment considers how the archaeological work undertaken affects the baseline for, and any conclusions of, this screening exercise.

1.2 Location of the pipeline

- 1.2.1 The Pipeline is located south of St Neots and east of the existing Black Cat roundabout in an area currently used for agricultural purposes. The Pipeline lies to the east of the East Coast Main Line railway and runs parallel with it.
- 1.2.2 At this stage the precise alignment of the diverted Pipeline has not been fixed and is subject to further detailed design and engineering considerations. However, for the purposes of this screening assessment, the limits of deviation for the Pipeline diversion have been assumed to correspond with the limits of deviation contained in the application as set out on the Works Plans **[APP-009 and APP-010]**.

1.3 Assessment of likely significant effects

- 1.3.1 This screening assessment has been prepared for the purpose of determining whether the threshold under section 20(3)(b) of the PA 2008 (REF 1-1) is met so as to establish whether the Pipeline diversion meets the criteria for designation as an NSIP.
- 1.3.2 The screening assessment **[APP-158]** assumed the Pipeline diversion would impact on the *in situ* archaeological remains already identified in the field as being of high value in accordance with DMRB LA 104 (REF 1-2).
- 1.3.3 However, the archaeological remains from the site are now in the process of being excavated pursuant to planning permission CB/20/04185/FULL. Planning permission for these works, and other archaeological excavations, was obtained along the route of the new dual carriageway so that they could be conducted in advance of a determination of the DCO application. As of 15 February 2022, 99% of the archaeological remains present in F44 have been removed under planning permission CB/20/04185/FULL and excavation is expected to be completed by 18 February 2022. In accordance with the conditions of planning permission CB/20/04185/FULL and the Archaeological Mitigation Strategy (AMS) **[TR010044/EXAM/9.23v3]**, reporting regarding the excavation is required; however, this will not be available in advance of the close of the Examination. A Post-Excavation Assessment report has to be submitted and approved by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC), as the relevant Local Planning Authority, within eight months of the completion of the archaeological fieldwork, unless otherwise agreed with CBC. Based on this planning condition, it is expected that the Post-Excavation Assessment will be completed and agreed no later than October 2022.
- 1.3.4 To assess the reasonable worst case, the screening assessment **[APP-158]** originally assumed that the design of the alignment for the Pipeline diversion would impact on the *in situ* archaeological remains. Given the precise alignment of the Pipeline diversion is still not known, any potential for mitigation through the design of the alignment for the Pipeline diversion has not been relied upon to screen out likely significant effects in this screening assessment.

- 1.3.5 The updated screening assessment in **Table 1-1** reflects the updated baseline that as at 15 February 2022, 99% of the remains have been removed and significant remains will not be *in situ* during the construction of the Pipeline diversion.
- 1.3.6 In line with the screening assessment [**APP-158**], the Pipeline diversion has been assessed alone rather than as part of the wider Scheme, in order to make a determination as to the effects of the construction of the Pipeline diversion under section 20(3)(b) of the PA 2008 (REF 1-1).
- 1.3.7 However, the Environmental Statement assessed the likely effects of the Scheme as a whole in line with best practice, and the requirements of The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (REF 1-3).
- 1.3.8 **Table 1-1** provides a qualitative assessment of the environmental effects of the Pipeline diversion, based on professional judgement of competent experts. The assessment has taken into consideration the effects identified in the main body of the Environmental Statement [**APP-074 to APP-083**]. No formal independent screening in connection with these works in isolation has been requested on the basis that they are proposed (and therefore assessed) as part of the Scheme.

Table 1-1: Assessment of the Pipeline for the purposes of determining whether section 20 of the Planning Act 2008 applies

Topic	Description of effect	Likely significant environmental effect
Air Quality	The area adjacent to the Pipeline diversion route is not subject to any air quality designations and the Pipeline diversion is not adjacent to any air quality receptors. It is expected there will be dust arising from the construction works to undertake the Pipeline diversion. However, in accordance with relevant environmental laws and best practice, dust suppression techniques will be used during construction to minimise potential impacts. In addition, there will be no air emissions generated during operation or maintenance.	No likely significant environmental effects identified.
Cultural Heritage	The site in and adjacent to the Pipeline diversion is not designated because of any cultural heritage assets or significance. However, a cultural heritage assessment for the Scheme identified, through aerial photography studies, that cropmarks were present and further investigation through geophysical survey and evaluation trenching identified that the site had Roman and Iron Age remains. Evaluation trenching also identified internal enclosures, diversion, roundhouses and occupation deposits. These remains have been evaluated as being high heritage value archaeological remains based on the assessment criteria within LA 104 (REF 1-2).	No likely significant environmental effects identified.

Topic	Description of effect	Likely significant environmental effect
	<p>Paragraphs 6.9.44 – 6.9.46 of Chapter 6, Cultural heritage [APP-075] of the Environmental Assessment set out a description of the archaeological assets in this location.</p> <p>As at 15 February 2022, 99% of the archaeological remains present on the site have been removed, and as a result those archaeological remains no longer form part of the baseline for the purposes of this screening assessment, as there are no uninvestigated archaeological remains surviving on site.</p> <p>As the excavation works in Field 44 are 99% complete as at Deadline 10 (on 15 February 2022) and will be completed by the end of Examination and considered to be fully mitigated on site. The full mitigation will only be completed when all the archaeological works, including the post-excavation analysis, assessment, reporting and deposition of the archive has taken place. This is in line with the AMS [TR010044/EXAM/9.23v3] which allows for the completion of the post-excavation works to be undertaken with the other post-consent archaeological works. Furthermore, the works at Field 44 are subject to a planning condition and therefore, if the scheme did not proceed, measures are in place for the completion of the mitigation works.</p>	
Landscape and Visual Effects	<p>The site in and adjacent to the Pipeline diversion is not in an area of landscape designation. Due to the location of the Pipeline diversion, construction works are not anticipated to disrupt views as the construction techniques used will be similar to agricultural machinery in fields. This effect will be temporary. In relation to operation, the Pipeline will be underground for its operation and will not affect views or the wider landscape.</p>	No likely significant environmental effects identified.
Biodiversity	<p>The site in and around the Pipeline diversion is not on, adjacent to or hydrologically linked to any biodiversity site. The northern hedgerow of the field within which the Pipeline diversion is located, is a bat commuting route and there is evidence of badgers foraging in the area. In the event that construction compounds for the Pipeline diversion extend in to the northern part of the field, best practice measures will be employed to maintain 3m stand offs between the hedge. If work is completed within March – August (inclusive), the hedge will be checked for nesting birds by an ecologist. The soil storage areas will be searched for badgers and excavations will be protected to ensure badgers and other mammals cannot get trapped. There will be no excavation in areas marked as reptile habitat as set out within Appendix 8.13, Reptiles [APP-200] of the Environmental Statement.</p>	No likely significant environmental effects identified.

Topic	Description of effect	Likely significant environmental effect
	During operation, the Pipeline will be grassed over and will not interact with its surroundings.	
Geology and Soils	The diversion of the Pipeline will not take place through an area which is designated for its geology. The soils in the area are Best and Most Versatile. By following relevant environmental laws and best practice, site hygiene practices will allow for subsoil and top soil to be returned in an order where it can still be used for agricultural purposes. During operation, the field will still be able to be used for agriculture.	No likely significant environmental effects identified.
Material Assets and Waste	The diversion of the Pipeline is not within or adjacent to any sites which are designated for either material assets or as landfill sites. During construction, it is expected the trench excavated to house the Pipeline will be filled in with excavated material and the rest of the material will be levelled into the site, resulting in no waste. During operation, no material assets will be negatively affected, or waste generated.	No likely significant environmental effects identified.
Noise and Vibration	The diversion of the Pipeline is not adjacent to any sensitive noise and vibration receptors. Nor is it adjacent to any noise sensitive sites. The effects on noise and vibration during construction will be negligible and during operation the pipe is a transmission line and will not result in pumping at the diversion site.	No likely significant environmental effects identified.
Population and Health	The diversion of the Pipeline is not adjacent to any sensitive population and health receptors or population centres, therefore there will not be any adverse effects during construction. The diversion route of the Pipeline is adjacent to the East Coast Main Line Railway; however, operation should not be affected because construction will integrate dust suppression techniques to minimize dust plumes arising from construction. The operation of the Pipeline is part of an existing network of natural gas pipework, resulting in a neutral effect to users because their existing service will be maintained.	No likely significant environmental effects identified.
Road Drainage and the Water Environment	The route of the diversion of the Pipeline is not adjacent to or hydrologically connected to any designated watercourses. However, in accordance with relevant environmental laws and best practice, any water runoff arising will be put through a sediment settlement process prior to being ground discharged and measures will also be used to ensure adequate treatment is implemented to reduce the amount of hydrocarbons and chemicals in water runoff, where there have been accidental releases. Water will be treated until it is at national standards for discharge.	No likely significant environmental effects identified.

Topic	Description of effect	Likely significant environmental effect
Climate	The diversion of the Pipeline will take place using conventional construction techniques and will not result in emissions which will alter the general climate. The Pipeline itself is part of the existing gas network and operational effects will be limited to the transportation of gas, not its combustion.	No likely significant environmental effects identified.

1.4 Conclusion

- 1.4.1 Following the updates to the baseline as a result of the excavation of 99% of the *in situ* archaeological remains pursuant to planning permission CB/20/04185/FULL (as at 15 February 2022), the qualitative assessment shows that there are no likely significant effects as a result of the Pipeline diversion due to the absence of the identified receptors.
- 1.4.2 As the construction of the Pipeline diversion would not give rise to likely significant effects, it is not considered to meet the threshold for an NSIP under section 20 of the PA 2008 (REF 1-1).

1.5 References

- REF 1-1 Planning Act 2008. The Stationery Office (2008).
- REF 1-2 Design Manual for Roads and Bridges: LA 106 Cultural heritage assessment (Revision 1). Highways England (2020).
- REF 1-3 The infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The Stationery Office (2017).