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Mr and Mrs Cathcart
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Your ref: PINS ref TR010060

Our ref: Interested Party number 20033024

Letter served via portal

Dear Sirs

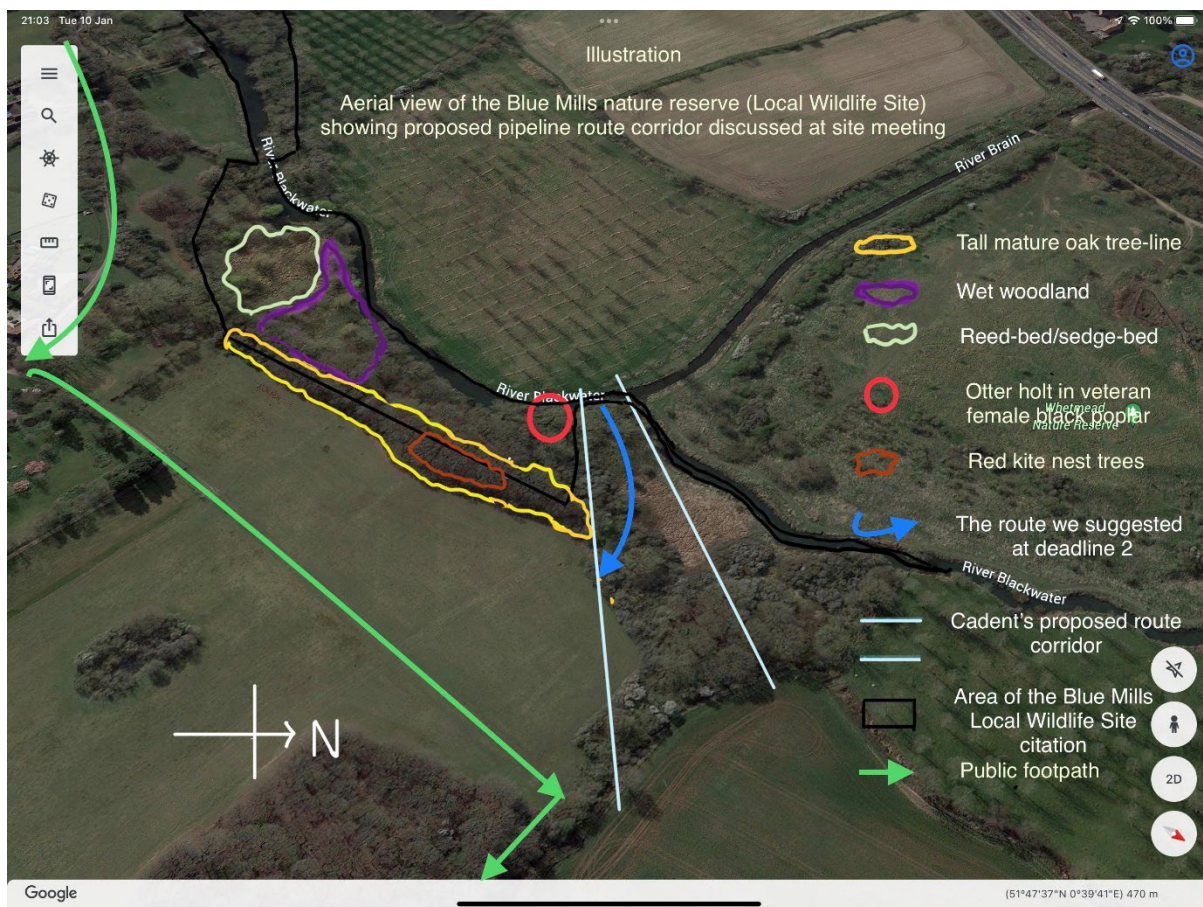
Submission to the Planning Inspectorate in respect of the proposed Cadent gas pipeline diversion near Witham (TR010060 A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening Scheme – Gas Pipeline Diversion)

Procedural Deadline 5 – Comments on further information received – 10 May 2023

Further to a site meeting at Blue Mills between ourselves and Cadent's technical design officer, environmental officer and tunnelling specialist on 22 March 2023, we write to express our support for the route corridor and tunnelling construction method proposed by Cadent for this section of route. We understand it to be Cadent's preferred option.

The route corridor surveyed crosses the river Blackwater to the north of the Blue Mills nature reserve (area of Local Wildlife Site citation) and passes between the veteran black poplar otter holt and the confluence of the Brain and the Blackwater. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below. It coincides with the preferred routing we put forward in our deadline 2 submission.

FIGURE 1



We support this route corridor because it safeguards the following ecological assets in the Blue Mills Local Wildlife Site citation area:

- The veteran black poplar¹ with an otter holt² in the hollow at its base. The Black Poplar is assessed to be of national importance and otters are a European Protected Species.
- The wet woodland area³, which is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat, and is assessed to be of national importance.
- The strip of mature predominantly oak woodland to the east of the area, assessed as Category A woodland⁴.
- All transitional veterans, notable trees and category A trees noted in the Arboricultural Report for Blue Mills⁵. Some of the oak trees in the woodland are estimated to be 350-400 years old⁶, the tallest reaching a height of 23 metres⁷.
- The area of reed and sedge-bed⁸ in the centre of the Local Wildlife Site citation area which straddles the southern edge of the DCO corridor.
- The tall mature oak nest trees of a breeding pair of red kites⁹.

We also support this route corridor as it avoids cutting through the strip of Category A woodland, (also assessed 'a high quality arboricultural feature'¹⁰), thereby avoiding any visual impact on the nearby Ishams Chase footpath.

We support the tunnelling construction method proposed as it narrows the width of the route corridor required, causes negligible vegetation loss, and minimises disturbance to wildlife, most notably in respect of the otter holt.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Cathcart MA(Cantab)
Anne Cathcart-Taylor BA(Hons), FCA

10 May 2023

REFERENCES

Note 1

REP3-008 Supplementary Arboricultural Survey Report Page 8 section 2.10.3 '*A potential veteran Black Poplar (T2077) is located on the margins of the Blackwater River...the survey identifies that this tree qualifies as a veteran tree under a veteran tree assessment (as specified by the Woodland Trust)... it is understood that there are two black poplar (Populus nigra betulifolia) in the vicinity, one of which was identified as such by Ken Adams BSBI (Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland) through DNA testing.*'

REP2-027 Supplementary Botanical Survey Report Page 21 '*A female black poplar was identified within the survey area, and it is understood from a consultation response from Essex Wildlife Trust a second female black poplar is located to the south (outside the survey area and Order Limits).*'

MA90 Blue Mills citation for Local Wildlife Site status '*a large mature Black Poplar, also known as Water Poplar, an Essex Red Data List (EDRL) species. A second, similar sized native Black Poplar lies on the eastern site boundary.. Both of the veteran Black Poplar are females of significant age and size, and are likely to be two of the largest examples of this increasingly rare species in Essex.*'

The black poplar trees were observed during the Accompanied Site Inspection.

Note 2

REP2-029 Supplementary Riparian Mammal Report Page 8 '*Consultation with Essex Wildlife Trust in January 2023 confirmed their knowledge of the use of the site by otters*' and Pages 15 and 16 confirm the potential otter holt, sprainting sites including fresh spraint (one 5m from the holt), slides, a couch, and also confirmed four field camera sightings.

MA90 Blue Mills Local Wildlife Site citation refers '*Habitats of Principal Importance in England – SC11 Otter Holt*'

The holt was observed during the Accompanied Site Inspection.

Note 3

REP2-027 Supplementary Botanical Survey Report Page 21 '*One UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) Priority Habitat, wet woodland, was identified during the survey. This habitat is infrequent within the UK.*'

Note 4

REP3-008 Supplementary Arboricultural Survey Report Page 8 section 2.10.1 '*..the area surveyed is formed of cohesive woodland groups that are Category A quality under BS5837:2012 categorisation.*

The Blue Mills woodland was observed during the Accompanied Site Inspection.

Note 5

REP3-008 Supplementary Arboricultural Survey Report Pages 19-42 Appendix F Tree Survey Schedule - General observations and comments, category grading.

Note 6

REP2-027 Supplementary Botanical Survey Report Page 19 *'line of dominant oak trees (approximately 350/400 years old) with occasional scattered mature ash (Fraxinus excelsior) and alder trees along a continuous fence line throughout the eastern boundary of the survey area'*

Note 7

REP3-008 Supplementary Arboricultural Survey Report Pages 27 and 34 Appendix F Tree Survey Schedule - Height

Note 8

In the REP02-027 Supplementary Botanical Survey Report the sedge/reed-bed is categorized as 'marsh' with 'occasional' sedge/reed and 'dominant' nettle, possibly because at the time of the survey, marginal nettle growth largely obscured the central area of dominant sedge/reed-bed. The MA90 Blue Mills Local Wildlife Site citation refers: *'A central area of reedbed is dominated by Lesser Pond-sedge..'*

The sedge/reed-bed was easily visible and observed during the early Spring Accompanied Site Inspection.

Note 9

The cluster of nests in the woodland were observed during the Accompanied Site Inspection. Red kites like to build several nests at the top of tall hardwood trees such as these oaks and choose one nest each year in which to raise their young.

Note 10

REP3-008 Supplementary Arboricultural Survey Report Page 1 section 1.1.7.