

## **CHAPTER 4: STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Approach to the Environmental Impact Assessment**

#### **EIA guidance**

- 4.1 The structure of this ES complies with the EIA Regulations and relevant guidance and the EIA has been undertaken with reference to the following documents:
- The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2011; and
  - National Planning Practice Guidance, 2014.
- 4.2 In addition, specific guidance has been used where appropriate to inform individual assessments and such guidance is referenced in the corresponding topic chapters.
- 4.3 This ES is a culmination of an extensive assessment process during which wider environmental and other factors relevant to the creation of a high quality mixed use development have been considered. This includes discussions at the design stage, not only with the planning and highways departments of the Councils but also other relevant parties such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and local Internal Drainage Boards. These discussions have culminated in the scheme the subject of this assessment.

#### **EIA Methodology**

- 4.4 The proposed development assessed by the EIA is that described in Chapter 2 and includes mitigation measures described in the following topic chapters. In accordance with the EIA Regulations and Good Practice Guides, each of the topic areas identified within the Chapter 1 of this ES are dealt with in a consistent fashion, where applicable, with this including:
- A description of the methodology.
  - The identification of existing conditions.
  - Highlighting of potential impacts arising from the proposed development (during and after construction).

- Exploration of the scope for remediation and mitigation of potentially adverse impacts and explaining how these have been incorporated into the development proposals.
- The setting out a monitoring programme, where necessary.
- Discussion of any alternatives considered, including any input that the topic area had into a design process.
- The identification of any weaknesses in the assessment made.
- The drawing of conclusions on the topics.

### **Baseline Conditions**

4.5 The EIA process compares the site conditions, as they would be with the development completed, with the baseline site conditions at the start of the development programme, ie, with existing uses in place. The study for the baseline situation often extends beyond the application boundary and depends on the nature of the environmental topic under construction. Understanding the characteristics of the baseline situation allows the significance of the effects of development within and beyond the site to be determined against a known benchmark. Identifying the baseline situation is achieved through a combination of a review of existing data and trends, and in some instances site survey. The evaluation of this information enables the sensitivity or value of the environmental feature to be determined against stated criteria.

4.6 Table 4.1 attached to the end of this Chapter, summarises the potential environmental effects for each topic, and the baseline studies undertaken to assess these. These findings are reported on a topic by topic basis, with an assessment of their significance and the need for, and the likely success of, any mitigation. Related Technical Papers are compiled in Volume 2 of the ES in those cases where a significant amount of substantive information and/or analysis is required.

### **Characterising the Impacts of Development**

4.7 Initially, potential impacts on receptors and the receiving environment are identified. Receptors are the environmental features which are affected in some way by the proposals and are often human beings, flora and fauna, and also assets and

resources such as soils and watercourses. The value or worth of a feature, such as its special visual qualities, rarity or vulnerability, may also be acknowledged in law or through public perception.

- 4.8 Impacts may be positive and negative, short or long term, permanent or temporary, and direct or indirect. The scale of the impact may be negligible to very large and can result in a range of effects from no change in the environmental feature to its destruction or loss. Cumulatively, the effects may result in a different outcome to those anticipated in isolation.
- 4.9 The EIA assesses both the construction stage, where appropriate, and the operational stage of the development. Construction activities include excavation, earthworks, drainage, infrastructure such as roads, the erection of buildings and structures and landscaping. Operational activities include the use and maintenance of the development including the activities required to reach the site such as travel.

### **Mitigation Strategy**

- 4.10 An iterative approach has been adopted towards the design of the scheme such that the potential effects of the proposals have informed the evolution of the design proposals. Having identified the character and scale of potential impacts, mitigation measures have been suggested for adverse effects so that the impact is avoided, reduced or compensated for. In addition, enhancement of existing features may allow beneficial effects and opportunities to be realised.

### **Assessment of Impact Significance**

- 4.11 The assessment of the significance of an effect is based on the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude or scale of the impact and will vary between subjects. There is no universally recognised definition of what constitutes 'significant' although where possible, recognised quality standards or thresholds are used to determine the significance of an effect supported by experience and professional judgement. Any uncertainty about the significance of the effect or problems in undertaking the assessment are also identified.

4.12 The effects of the proposed development on each topic area are reported before and after any proposed mitigation with, where applicable, reference to the following qualitative criteria:

- The geographical importance of potential impacts (local to international levels);
- The likely significance (slight, moderate, major);
- The likely impact (beneficial, neutral, adverse);
- The nature of the impact (short term, medium term, long term, reversal, irreversible).

4.13 This approach allows the cumulative effects of the development to be assessed, as set out in Chapter 17 of this ES.