

Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017
Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement

Application name:	Peel Hall Farm, Whitehills, Near Blackpool
SoS case reference:	PCU/EIAScrn/M2325/78201
Schedule and category of development:	10 b) Urban Development Projects

Full statement of reasons as required by 5(5)(a) of the 2017 EIA Regulations including conclusions on likelihood of significant environmental effects.

Schedule 3 selection criteria for Schedule 2 development refers:

The proposal is for a residential led development including up to 700 dwellings on a 29ha largely greenfield site. The site is located adjoining the M55 and A354 at the south easterly extent of the Blackpool urban area. It is near to the location of a number of existing and approved developments. The major residential led development of Whyndyke Farm (council ref: 11/0221) is to the north and is to be approved subject to the completion of the necessary legal agreement. The project site is not located in a sensitive area defined within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) 2017 Regulations.

The Secretary of State has considered whether the above proposal is likely to have significant environmental effects. He has undertaken this screening taking into account the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. In preparing this screening direction, the Secretary of State has also had regard to Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In doing so he considers the main issue to address is the potential for cumulative impacts from the project alongside other development occurring as the Blackpool urban area expands to its south and east. In relation to the indicative criteria and threshold, PPG advises EIA is more likely to be required if the area of the scheme is more than 5 hectares, or the development would have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area (e.g. a new development of more than 1,000 dwellings). This advice indicates the main matters to consider; the physical scale of such developments, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise. Due to the view of Natural England provided through the council's screening process (July 2017), ecology, particularly in relation to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and various SSSIs, is also considered to be a main matter.

The Secretary of State notes that although the proposal is for development well in excess of 5ha in area, when considered in isolation, it falls below the PPG indicative size threshold in terms of dwellings. However, there are number of other residential and commercial development proposals in the area in addition to the large scale, neighbouring Whyndyke Farm development proposals to the north. To the west of the site beyond the Preston New Road (A353) is the White Hills site where there have been a number of housing and employment approvals. These are generally consistent with the sites allocated in the emerging local plan. Relevant applications include:

7/0359 – Retail park. Approved.

17/0779 – outline for 350 dwellings. Pending consideration.

15/0807 – 14 dwellings. Approved.

15/0472 – 80 dwellings and 1500 sqm of offices. Approved.

14/0818 – 100 dwellings. Approved.

There are also applications on a site to the south - 11/0847 outline and 15/0891 RM approving 10 dwellings.

In terms of cumulative impact PPG also states that each application (or request for a screening opinion) should be considered on its own merits. It goes on to state that there are occasions where other existing or approved development may be relevant in determining whether significant effects are likely as a consequence of a proposed development. Therefore, for this project, cumulative effects

arising from the proposed development together with the above approved and other neighbouring development is an also important consideration.

The Secretary of State has carefully considered the information provided by the local authority and the requesting party. In this case, there is large scale development set to occur in the wider area, provided for in an advanced stage emerging local plan. The available information confirms that there are a number of applications for the wider urban expansion south and east of Blackpool that are either submitted, approved or under construction. It is clear that large scale development in this area is being, and will continue to be delivered. An application should not be considered in isolation if it part of a wider development area. The Secretary of State believes there will be interaction and impacts arising from the proposed site and these various other developments.

The requesting party considers that the information associated with larger scale development at Whyndyke Farm, satisfactorily demonstrates that significant impact is unlikely in terms of transport and related impact, such as noise and air quality. In terms of the emerging Fylde Local Plan the requesting party says that Highways England has no issue with the plan in terms of the strategic highway network and contends that there will be available capacity due to proposed improvements to accommodate all local development in terms of the future capacity of the M55 junction 4. However, in terms of cumulative impact the existing environmental statement for Whyndyke Farm was last updated in 2014 and for all the highway related issues, the local committed development considered at the time is not consistent with the development now set to occur locally. While the Secretary of State is reassured in terms of the M55 motorway junction capacity at junction 4, having also considered the view of the highway authority (August 2017) he is unconvinced that it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that significant cumulative transport related impact is unlikely to occur on the nearby road network.

Turning to the issue of ecological impact, the recent consultation by the local authority with Natural England (July 2017) identified the potential for significant adverse impacts on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and various SSSIs. In response the requesting party has submitted a site specific assessment phase 1 habitat survey (updated in a note - September 2017). This assessment indicates that given habitats present on the site, and distance between Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA that there will not be significant impact on the SPA and its qualifying species from the development. However, the assessment provided in part relies on the findings for Whyndyke Farm environmental statement. This statement is starting to become dated and does not account for the potential for cumulative impacts with the quantum of reasonably foreseeable development proposed of the area.

In the Secretary of State's opinion there will a number of likely cumulative effects from the proposal due to it contributing to the urbanisation of the countryside in the locality. Overall, the urbanising effect of this level of development and the limited information on the cumulative impact in relation relevant issues (particularly transport and associated impacts including noise and air quality, ecology, especially in relation to the SPA and SSSIs but also loss of best and most versatile land as well as construction phase impacts depending on timing alongside other nearby development) indicate that, cumulatively, significant effect is a possibility. EIA is therefore required for this proposal. In reaching this conclusion the Secretary of State has also considered the measures proposed to mitigate the environmental impacts from the development and has concluded that the proposed measures are not sufficient to obviate the need for an environmental impact assessment because of the extent that the impacts are unknown when nearby development across the wider area is considered as a whole.

Is an Environmental Statement required?	Yes
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Name	Mike Hale
Date	12 January 2018