

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

RPC SUB-GROUP – STATUTORY CONSULTATIONS

Date: 25 February 2008

Subject: Planning application consultation ref A/08/008

Site Address:	Queen Mary Reservoir, Laleham, Middlesex.
Proposal:	Proposed removal of part of the breakwater baffle at Queen Mary Reservoir, the dredging of the underlying sand and gravel, landing of mineral and processing involving retention of the existing access, haul route and processing plant.
Local Planning Authority:	Surrey County Council
Applicant:	Reservoir Aggregates
Date consultation issued:	8 January 2008

Report of: Regional Planner

**Recommendation:**

The South East England Regional Assembly makes the following observations:

The county council should grant planning permission only if it is satisfied that;

- the proposal will not have an adverse effect on water quality to accord with Policy NRM1 of the draft South East Plan;
- the proposal is in accordance with guidance in PPG2 (Green Belts) and complies with the objectives of Policies E2 and E3 of RPG9 and Policies W14, CCI0a and NRM4 of the draft South East Plan;

If the county council is minded to grant planning permission, it should also address the following through appropriately worded conditions and/or legal agreements to secure:

- Appropriate mitigation measures concerning air quality (including dust emissions) noise levels and transport impacts to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency, to accord with the objectives of Policy E7 of RPG9 and Policies NRM7 and NRM 8 of the draft South East Plan.

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To assess the proposed development against the Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9 plus Alterations) and the draft South East Plan, and set out the recommended consultation response for consideration and agreement.

## **2. Site Description**

- 2.1 Queen Mary Reservoir lies south of Kingston Road (A308), and east of the Ashford Road (B377) with the residential areas of Ashford lying to the north, and Staines to the west. The village of Charlton is situated immediately to the south-east with the M3 beyond. The village of Littleton lies to the south with the residential area of Shepperton Green beyond. The nearest residential properties lie on the Ashford Road some 150 metres to the west.
- 2.2 The reservoir is operational and comprises a large open body of water, with a breakwater baffle approximately 1km in length that stretches in a south-westerly direction two thirds of the way across the reservoir. To the north-west of the reservoir is the existing processing plant. A number of silt lagoons and former wet gravel pits lie to the west between the reservoir and Ashford Road. The River Ash runs along the foot of the western embankment of the reservoir.
- 2.3 The reservoir and the land west of it lie within the Metropolitan Green Belt, and are designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). The existing processing plant however lies outside the SNCI.
- 2.4 Access to the site is principally via the Ashford Road (B377). All lorry traffic leave the site via an internal haul road system connecting the Kingston Road (A308) only.
- 2.5 A site location plan is attached at Appendix I to this report.

## **3. Details of the Proposal and Background**

- 3.1 In 1968 planning permission (reference SUN 8962) was granted for deepening operations involving the removal of sand and gravel deposits inside the reservoir and on land between it and the Ashford Road. Following a review of the original planning permission in 1997, the site now operates under revised planning conditions approved by Surrey County Council in 2003 (SP97/0643).

- 3.2 The Queen Mary Reservoir is currently an active concrete aggregate site operating at a reduced level of production. At the current rate, working will cease by the summer of 2008. The proposal seeks the removal of part (two thirds) of the breakwater baffle at Queen Mary Reservoir, the dredging of the underlying sand and gravel, landing and processing of mineral plus the retention of the existing access, haul route and processing plant located on land west of the reservoir, to be retained until 31st December 2013.
- 3.3 The proposed extraction rate is 240,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) up to 2013. The applicant estimates that 88 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV) movements per day will be generated from the processing plant as a result of the proposal.
- 3.4 The application is submitted concurrent with three other submissions;
- i. Proposed importation of 'as-raised' (unprocessed) sand and gravel on to land west of Queen Mary Reservoir and processing involving continued use of the existing processing plant site until 31st December 2013, and the siting and utilising thereafter of a mobile plant until 31st December 2013.
  - ii. Proposed change of use to enable the importation of construction and demolition waste, and siting of a mobile recycling plant to enable the recovery of alternative aggregates for sale, and the production of materials for restoration on land west of the reservoir until 31st December 2013, and thereafter to be sited until 31st December 2033 within the existing plant site details of which are to be provided prior to relocation.
  - iii. Details of a revised scheme of working, restoration and landscaping for the area west of the reservoir pursuant to Condition 23, and details of an aftercare scheme pursuant to Condition 24 of planning permission SP97/0643 dated 20 October 2003.
- 3.5 The scale and nature of the 3 associated applications (above) are not, in themselves, considered regionally significant. However, they are integral to this regionally significant application as they are linked with proposals to dredge and process sand and gravel on-site. This report focuses on the main application but makes appropriate cross references to the other 3 applications where necessary.

#### **4. Relevant Policy Considerations**

*RPG9*

4.1 The relevant issues and policies within the adopted Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG9) and Adopted Alterations on Waste and Minerals are considered to be:

- i. M3 – primary aggregates
- ii. E2 – biodiversity
- iii. E3 – Green Belts
- iv. E7 – air quality

*The South East Plan*

4.2 Having been submitted to the Government on 31 March 2006, the draft South East Plan is a material consideration in the determination of major planning applications. The relevant issues and policies are considered to be:

- i. NRM1 – water quality
- ii. NRM4 – biodiversity
- iii. NRM 7 – air
- iv. NRM8 – noise
- v. CCI0a – Green Belts
- vi. W14 – restoration

4.3 The above policies on waste and minerals in 4.1 have been carried forward into the draft South East Plan. Reference in this report to policies in RPG9 (adopted alterations), also apply to the draft South East Plan unless explicitly stated.

4.4 Other material considerations are identified as the:

- i. Surrey Structure Plan (2004)
- ii. Surrey Minerals Local Plan (1993)

#### **5. Policy Assessment**

Policy M3 – primary aggregates

5.1 Policy M3 of RPG9 and the draft South East Plan states that the regional apportionment of construction aggregates to be met by Surrey County is 2.62 million tonnes per annum (mtpa). The proposed extraction rate is 240,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) up to 2013, forming about 9% of the required annual apportionment for Surrey over the period.

- 5.2 In terms of mineral extraction throughput, this proposal will broadly contribute towards meeting local needs for construction aggregate and the overall apportionment set out for Surrey in Policy M3 of RPG9. Additionally, the proposal will serve to supplement Surrey's low landbank reserve which is currently below the required minimum of 7 years for sand and gravel extraction. In this respect, the proposal appears to be consistent with the objectives of the Policy M3 of RPG9.

Policy NRM1- water quality

- 5.3 Policy NRM1 of the draft South East Plan states that water supply, ground water and river water quality should be maintained and enhanced through avoiding adverse effects of development on the water environment. Policy NRM1 also seeks to ensure that development does not lead to unacceptable deterioration and pollution of water quality and encourages sewerage companies to work closely with the Environment Agency (EA) to achieve high water quality standards.
- 5.4 The applicant states that algae accumulation in the north eastern corner of the western side of the break water baffle has adversely affected water quality in the reservoir. To improve water quality, an engineering appraisal (that simulated 3 scenarios - full removal, removal of a third, and the removal of two thirds of the break water baffle) was carried out in 2005. Based on the conclusions of the appraisal, Thames Water agreed to the removal of two thirds of the breakwater baffle as the preferred option.
- 5.5 It is not clear from the application whether the EA was involved in assessing options for improving water quality involving the removal of part or the entire breakwater baffle. Considering that the proposal could have a significant impact on water quality, the Council should ensure that the EA is satisfied that the removal of two thirds of the break water baffle will lead to an improvement in water quality to accord with Policy NRM1.

Policies E2, E3, W14, CC10a and NRM4 – nature conservation, Green Belts, restoration and biodiversity

- 5.6 Policies E2 of RPG9 and NRM4 of the draft South East Plan seek to maintain and enhance the region's biodiversity. Policy NRM4 (v) specifically encourages opportunities for restoration of mineral extraction sites to help deliver biodiversity targets. Policy E3 of RPG9 and CC10a of the draft South East Plan recognise the importance of improving the landscape, nature conservation and environmental value of Green Belts. Policy W14 of the draft South East Plan is also concerned with high quality restoration of waste management sites including worked out minerals sites to help achieve regional biodiversity targets.

- 5.7 The application site is designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) because of its value to wintering and breeding birds. Though the proposal site falls within the Metropolitan Green Belt, the use of land for minerals extraction activity is not identified as inappropriate use in Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG2) provided it does not harm the objectives of the designation. It is therefore necessary for the applicant to demonstrate the provision of an appropriate site restoration plan and aftercare scheme to meet high environmental standards.
- 5.8 The council must therefore satisfy itself that mitigation measures to protect and enhance biodiversity are appropriate and will not cause harm to the SNCI and Green Belt to accord with Policies E2 and E3 of RPG9 and Policies WI4, CCI0a and NRM4 of the draft South East Plan.

### Other Matters

In addition to the above, there are a number of priorities arising out of RPG9 and the draft South East Plan which can be dealt with by way of condition or legal agreement. These relate to the following policy areas:

- Air and Noise (including impacts of transport).

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 Provided that the county council is satisfied with the detailed issues on outlined in this report, it is considered that the proposal would accord with the general principles established in RPG9 (adopted alterations) and the draft South East Plan.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 Members are requested to agree the following recommendation to the local authority:

- 7.2 The South East England Regional Assembly makes the following observation:

The county council should grant planning permission only if it is satisfied that;

- the proposal will not have an adverse effect on water quality to accord with Policy NRM1 of the draft South East Plan;
- the proposal is in accordance with guidance in PPG2 (Green Belts) and complies with the objectives of Policies E2 and E3 of RPG9 and Policies WI4, CCI0a and NRM4 of the draft South East Plan;

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David Nkrumah-Boateng  
Regional Planner  
25 February 2008

Contact: Sue Janota, Regional Planner  
T: +44 (0) 1483 555238 E: [suejanota@southeast-ra.gov.uk](mailto:suejanota@southeast-ra.gov.uk)