

13. Summary and Conclusions

13.1 Given the time lapse since the previous FEI submissions, this ES Addendum has reviewed and refreshed as necessary the EIA baseline surveys utilised as part of the assessments undertaken to ensure any future decision taken on the application is robust and based on the latest available information.

13.2 A summary of each of the environmental disciplines re-examined as part of this ES Addendum is provided below.

Geology, Soils and Agriculture

13.3 A verification site visit was undertaken in February 2023. A review of the relevant databases has confirmed that the 2014 and 2019 findings remain accurate.

13.4 No significant adverse impacts on geology, soils or agriculture on or surrounding the site will occur provided the appropriate mitigation outlined in the original 2014 ES is followed.

The Water Environment

13.5 The WFD assessment has been updated to account for updates in the WFD classifications and objectives for the waterbodies downstream from the application site. The Drainage Assessment submitted to DfI Rivers has also been reviewed and summarised with a renewed Schedule 6 Consent to Discharge (from the application site) provided.

13.6 The predicted impacts and mitigation outlined in the original 2014 ES remain valid.

Land Quality

13.7 This ES Addendum identifies any additional land uses or events since the previous assessment which might lead to unacceptable risk to health of the environment. That has included a verification site walkover in February 2023.

13.8 As part of this re-assessment the Concept Site Model (CSM) has been updated. The additional risks identified, including fly tipping and materials contained within the derelict building on the site, have been classified as “Nil to Tolerable”.

13.9 Screening (Generic Assessment Criteria) values for both the soil and water laboratory results have been reviewed and updated where applicable. All samples remain below relevant GAC protective of human health and controlled waters.

13.10 The conclusions made in the original assessment and subsequent Addendums remain valid (‘Nil to Tolerable’ risk).

Ecology

- 13.11 The only legislative change of note since previous FEI submissions is the publication of an update to the Northern Ireland Priority Species list in February 2023. Whilst an updated position since the previous assessment was undertaken, it is not considered that the updated priority species list alters the conclusions with regard to the relevant ecological receptors. All surveys have been carried out in accordance with DAERA and other relevant guidelines, ensuring that all notable, priority and protected species are recorded.
- 13.12 Further site surveys have been undertaken throughout 2021 and 2022 confirming that there has been no material change in the habitats or ecological features present on site. On this basis, it is considered that the specific survey and assessment work previously undertaken remains valid and robust.
- 13.13 The original ES conclusions and mitigation previously outlined remains appropriate.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 13.14 An updated landscape and visual appraisal was undertaken in February/March 2023 confirming that there are no notable physical changes since the last Addendum in 2019 with the exception of the extension of the Gibson farm solar farm at Sealstown Road. The footpath network has also been extended at Colinward Hall connecting Cave Hill with Hightown Road.
- 13.15 Noting the above changes in the baseline conditions, the conclusions of the submitted original ES chapter and subsequent landscape and visual submissions remain broadly valid, the only changes since being as a result of the increasing influence of infrastructure and urbanisation in the landscape surrounding the application site.
- 13.16 This does not affect the significance of effects on features, character or views in relation to the proposed development alone and the submitted original ES Chapter 10 remains an assessment of the scenario of maximum significance of effects of the proposed development.

Cultural Heritage

- 13.17 Following a review of the DfC Historic Environment Division database, 11 additional features of cultural heritage interest have been identified within 1km of the proposed development.
- 13.18 These assets are located out with the application site and will not be physically impacted by the proposed development. All additional assets are classified as “defence heritage” with the closest located 0.77km from the application site. In relation to any potential impact on setting, the quarry will screen much of the development which in addition to distance from the application site will result in no impact to the setting of the asset within the historic environment.
- 13.19 The findings and recommendations from the 2014 assessment and 2019 Addendum therefore remain valid.

Transport

13.20 As part of the 2023 review of the original TA, the following was undertaken as part of this ES Addendum:

- *New traffic data was collected on 24th May 2023 from 07:30 to 09:30 and 16:30 to 18:30;*

13.21 The new data obtained demonstrates that the observed daily traffic flow levels were highest in 2018 when compared to all other survey years.

13.22 It should also be noted that in the passage of time since the 2018 traffic surveys, Junction 2 – Hydepark Road/ Hightown Road has been upgraded from a priority-controlled junction to a signalised junction that includes controlled pedestrian crossing facilities on the Hightown Road at the junction.

- *A review of the approved planning applications within 2km of the site was undertaken to identify if any new committed developments should be included in the update; and*

13.23 This review identified a number of committed developments to be included within the assessment. For robustness however, the original assumptions/volumes for committed developments have been retained as well as the additional 2023 committed developments (to reflect the difficulty in confirming accurately the degree of build out of originally committed developments).

- *The PSNI were contacted to obtain new road traffic accident data for the period 2020 - 2022.*

13.24 The type, number and location of accidents within the study area is generally consistent between the latest data obtained in the 2019 FEI and it is therefore considered reasonable to conclude that the previous findings in relation to the Road Safety remain valid.

13.25 Previous analysis had made various assumptions about the volumes of waste that would be destined for the Cottonmount landfill site. For robustness and to better reflect the existing scenario, the 2023 assessment undertaken makes no allowance for Councils sending waste to Cottonmount and therefore all traffic to the proposed site are considered new trips.

13.26 The TA assessment years were also updated as follows:

- Opening Year = 2028; and
- Design Years = 2038 and 2043.

13.27 The TA review re-endorses the conclusion of the original TA's Traffic Impact assessment and the subsequent 2016 and 2019 FEIs in that only two junctions (Hydepark Road/Boghill Road and Hydepark Road/Hightown Road) exceed the 5% threshold required to undertake detailed analysis to determine their operational performance with and without development traffic. The modelling assessments that have been undertaken demonstrate that the junctions operates

within capacity and will operate within capacity threshold limits in the future assessment scenarios.

13.28 Based on the 2023 review, it is considered that the conclusions within Chapter 12 of the original ES that potential operational impacts associated with the development are not significant and are localised in their area of influence is unchanged and remains valid.

Noise

13.29 The Noise Impact Assessment has been revisited to take into account changes to relevant assessment methodology guidance where required; undertake updated background noise surveys due to the passage of time (completed in March 2023); consider the noise impacts of the latest available traffic flows on the local road network for the revised opening year of 2028 and consider any additional cumulative assessment required.

13.30 This re-assessment concludes that the operational noise of the proposed scheme remains as per the previous conclusions identified in ES Chapter 13 Noise.

Air Quality

13.31 The Air Quality Impact Assessment has also been revisited to take into account the new operation commencement date of 2028, any changes in future background concentrations and the latest available traffic flows.

13.32 This re-assessment concludes that the findings of the original ES remain valid.

Climatic Factors

13.33 The updated carbon assessment concludes, as before, that the EfW Facility will lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (43,463 less tonnes of CO₂e per annum) compared to current waste management practices, both when the facility opens and over its lifetime.

13.34 The proposed development is considered to be appropriately designed and constructed to adapt to impacts arising from climate change and there are no significant residual effects.

13.35 Therefore, the Proposed Development is considered to be resilient to the effects of climate change and the EfW Facility will provide a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to the baseline scenario, supporting the UK's Net Zero trajectory.

13.36 Further, the Proposed Development will be a platform for the deployment of a range of decarbonising and circular economy technologies as they become technically and economically feasible.

Population and Human Health

13.37 While this planning application is not bound by the 2017 EIA Regulations, a Population and Human Health Chapter has been prepared which embeds the methods and principles of Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

13.38 Following a review of current regulatory and policy requirements, in combination with a review of the supporting evidence, technical inputs, baseline data and suitability of the assessment protocols applied, the HIA remains appropriate, complies with current requirements and the findings have been reinforced through ongoing research.

13.39 The conclusion and recommendations of the original 2014 HIA therefore remain valid insofar as there will be no significant population and human health effects.