



24th November 2023

Richard Gee
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Lancashire
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Dear Richard,

Re. Kirkby Golf Course, Ingoe Lane, Field Lane Estate, Knowsley, L32 4SS (Planning application 21/00744/FUL) – Response to the Environment Agency’s comments dated 21st September 2023.

It is noted that the Environment Agency “have no objection in principle to the proposed development” but have taken the opportunity to provide the comments.

The following reviews the Environment Agency’s comments in relation to Biodiversity and clarifies where possible the Applicant’s response.

The Environment Agency’s comments to the Applicant and Local Planning Authority on biodiversity were as follows:

Biodiversity:

“From November 2023 all new developments will be required to deliver a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain. A BNG assessment has been done but we have not reviewed this”.

The date for achieving 10% net gain has been recently delayed to January 2024, this amendment occurred in November 2023.

“We have, however, reviewed the Ecology Services Report Addendum 27th June 2023 which states that the revised Kirkby Golf Course development Biodiversity Metric calculation results in a net bio gain of 7.66% for area-based habitats and 9.11% for hedgerows. It does not state anything for rivers. However, where relevant (present on site) rivers should also be baseline condition assessed and enhanced via development where present within red line development boundaries.”

The Applicant has confirmed that they do not own the river. The majority of the works are over 10m from the River Alt and therefore do not impact on the riparian zone as defined under the river metric. The planning application boundary has been redrawn to show the extent of works area subject to planning approval which excludes the flood zones where no golf works will be undertaken. This is consistent with the Site Plan Proposed – Overall Masterplan (drawing ref. 22017 – BCA – ZZ – ZZ – DR – A – 02100) submitted with the planning application. The majority of the river and riparian zone lie outside the planning application boundary/ proposed works and therefore does not require the river metric to be applied. The only location where works will be undertaken within the riparian zone is the bridge crossing. The bridge has been designed so that the abutments lie beyond the 8m easement measured from the toe of the bank. Each abutment has a footprint of 1.5m wide by 4.5m long with minimal encroachment within the riparian zone.



“The River Alt is failing to meet the Water Framework Directive ‘good ecological potential’ threshold. Since revision of the plans there has been a reduction in the proposed amount of open water habitats to be created on site. The flood risk assessment seems to show some uncertainty regarding the level of surface water flooding mitigation required, with further measures to be implemented at a later date if necessary. Our advice is that BNG calculations could be re-visited to see if it could be practical to increase the wetland habitats delivered on site which could potentially help the development to meet any outstanding BNG delivery requirements. The BNG Metric could and should support decision making. We recommend that as a central distinctive feature and natural ecologically functional connecting habitat that the River Alt is included in the baseline river condition assessment and includes proportional enhancement in the development plans”.

The development is currently meeting BNG targets of achieving a measurable net gain in line with the National Planning Policy Framework. There are no outstanding BNG delivery requirements. The proposed development includes creation of c. 205m² ephemeral water body with 40m² marginal planting, plus 2,250m² standing water with 1,819m² aquatic and marginal planting, which will provide aquatic habitat enhancement within the site. MEAS has not requested completion of the river metric as part of its comments on the application.

“The flood risk assessment states a new outfall may be required in future. We recommend the applicant considers how this may impact the riparian zone/main River Alt corridor. We would also recommend the applicant ensures the ecological survey covers the potential location of an outfall.”

The Applicant has confirmed that there is no future outfall planned.

“We advise the applicant reviews the Alt Crossens Catchment Plan. A weir is present at the downstream end of the site and we are in the process of trying to improve ecological functionality on the main river system. One way we plan to do this is by overcoming barriers to fish and eel migration. We advise the applicant makes contact with the Mersey Rivers Trust to discuss possible opportunities to improve on existing work”.

The Applicant has confirmed that they do not own the river. The Environment Agency/Mersey Rivers Trust should contact the owners to pursue improvement opportunities relating to the river.

To summarise, the applicant has confirmed that they do not own the river. The majority of the extent of works area subject to the planning application lies outside the 10m riparian zone and therefore does not require the river metric to be completed. There is minimal impact within the riparian zone (two bridge abutments of c.6.75m² each), located beyond 8m from the toe of the bank. The development is currently meeting BNG targets, there are no outstanding BNG delivery requirements and the proposed development will provide aquatic habitat enhancement within the site. MEAS has not requested completion of the river metric as part of its comments on the application. Completion of the river metric is not, therefore, considered justified.

Kind regards

Lyn Eccles-Sargeant

L Eccles-Sargeant BSc (Hons)
Ecological Director