



J E S K Y N S

**PROPOSED COMMUNITY GREENSPACE
Environmental Impact Assessment
Phase one report – summary of scoping**

produced for the
Forestry Commission Thames Gateway

by
The Landscape Partnership
February 2006

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Doc ref: ScopingReportRevC-ES-05421.ppt

Executive summary

The Forestry Commission requires that an Environmental Impact Assessment is undertaken to assess the likely environmental impacts of the proposed community greenspace at Jeskyns Farm, Cobham, Kent. This document details the proposed approach and scope of issues to be covered by the assessment.

Table 1 overleaf provides a summary of the main issues that will be covered by the environmental impact assessment and a proposed significance rating which reflects the level of assessment proposed for each topic. A 'Low' significance rating indicates that impacts are not considered to be significant and will be considered only briefly within the ES, a 'Medium' significance rating indicates a likelihood of moderately significant impacts and will be given general consideration within the ES and a 'High' significance rating indicates impacts that are potentially of high significance which will be covered by a specialist assessment.

View towards the Thames from Scotland Lane



Main issue and author	Significance rating	Sub-issues
Population <i>(The Landscape Partnership and Odyssey Consulting Engineers)</i>	High	Impact on character of local settlements
	High	Impact on security and amenity of adjacent properties
	Low	Impact on health and fitness of the local population
	Medium	Impact on accessibility to the countryside
	Medium	Impact on local facilities (including schools)
	High	Impact on traffic and highways
Fauna and flora <i>(The Landscape Partnership)</i>	High	Relationship to Biodiversity Action Plans and Habitat Action Plans
		Impact on existing wildlife: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breeding birds • Mammals • Invertebrates • Reptiles • Amphibians
		Impact on existing habitats
		Impact of proposed habitats
Soils and Land use <i>(Land Research Associates)</i>	High	Non-farming use of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land
		Impacts on soil quality
Water quality and hydrology <i>(The Landscape Partnership)</i>	Low	Groundwater recharge
Air quality <i>(The Landscape Partnership)</i>	Low	Potential for air quality improvement
Climate <i>(The Landscape Partnership)</i>	Low	Impact on local climate and possibility of acting as a carbon sink. Impact of climate change upon species choice and plant provenance.

Table 1: Proposed scope of environmental statement for Jeskyns

Table continued overleaf...

Main issue and author	Significance rating	Sub-issues
Material assets including the architectural and archaeological heritage <i>(Gifford)</i>	High	Assessment of the archaeological potential of the site.
		Assessment of potential impacts upon archaeological remains.
		Suggestions for further archaeological investigations.
		Impact on Listed Buildings eg Owletts
		Historic field boundaries
Landscape and Visual Environment <i>(The Landscape Partnership)</i>	High	Character and quality of the Kent Downs AONB
		North Downs Special Landscape Area
		Metropolitan Green Belt
		Landscape features – hedgerows, veteran trees
		Landscape character
		Views from surrounding properties and public rights of way towards the site
		Views from the site of the surrounding area (particularly long distance views)
		Views from the CTRL and A2
Policy Context <i>(The Landscape Partnership)</i>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International designations/policies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National designations/policies/PPGs
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Planning Guidance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure plan policies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local plan policies
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies in the emerging LDF
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forestry policies

Table 1 continued

1.0 Introduction

1.01 The Forestry Commission (FC) is the government department responsible for forestry in Britain. Its mission is to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment. The Forestry Commission in England (FCE) has a number of tools available:

- **Forestry Regulations:** Felling Licences and Environmental Impact Assessments;
- **Grant aid:** The English Woodland Grant Scheme;
- **Advice and outreach:** direct advice and seminars to woodland owners; and
- **Direct woodland management:** through its agency Forest Enterprise.

1.02 The regulatory, grant and advisory elements are provided by the FCE's Regional Conservancy teams while direct land management is provided by Forest District teams. Both arms of the FCE have discrete management structures which report directly to the Forestry Commission's Director for England.

View north across the site towards the Thames Estuary

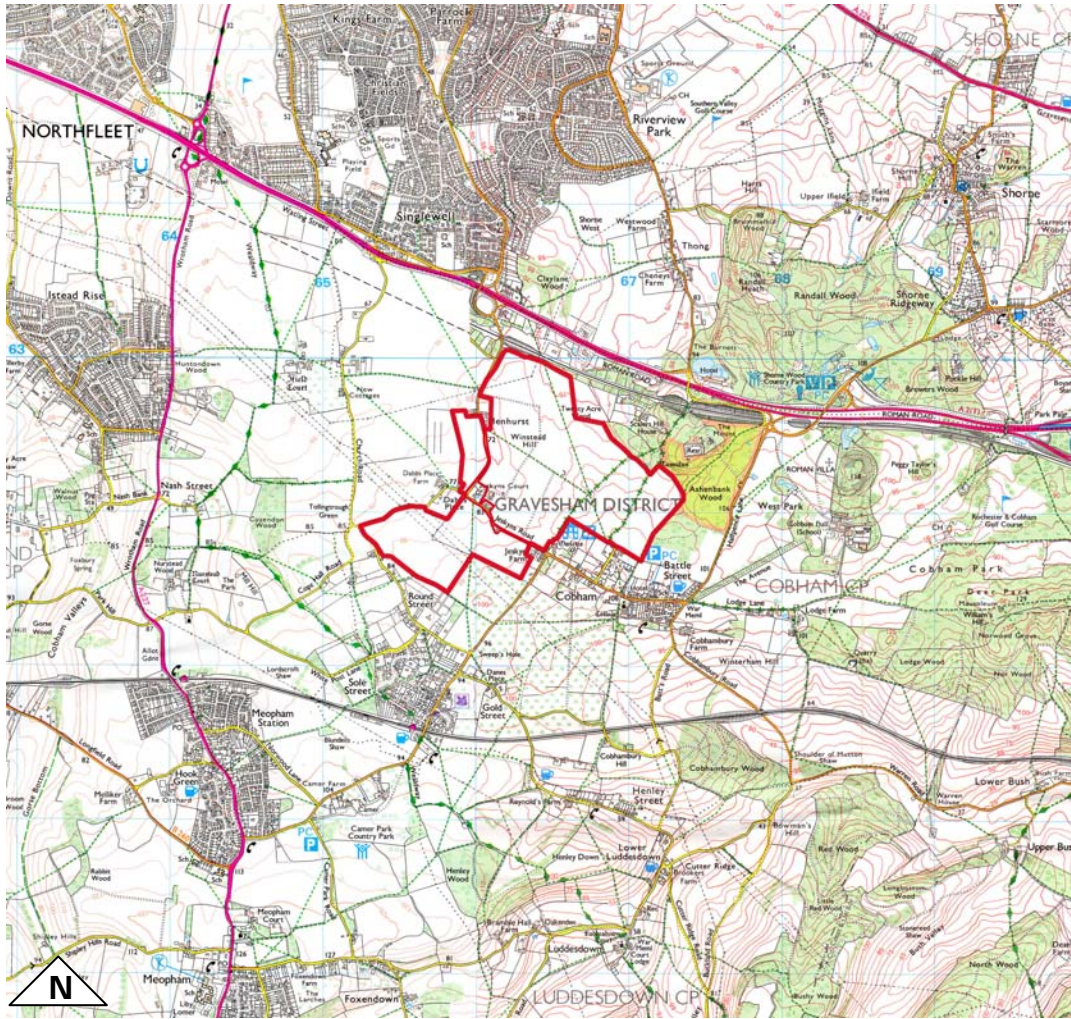


1.0.3 In 2005, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister asked FCE to explore opportunities to create community woodlands to assist in the Thames Gateway programme. As a result, Jeskyns Farm comprising 147 hectares of land south of the A2 and Channel Tunnel Rail link and to the west of Cobham Village, Gravesend was acquired. (The site location and site context are illustrated on figures 1 and 2 respectively). Opportunities to create a community greenspace are being explored. The objective of the project and proposed elements are highlighted below.

Objective of the Jeskyns project	
to create accessible, open green space that is enjoyable to use as a community resource and enhances levels of biodiversity through the site and adjacent areas.	
Project elements	
Habitats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland, • Community orchards, • Grassland, • Wildflower meadows, • Shrubs and hedgerows 	Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footpaths • Horse tracks • Car park • Seating • Interpretation

1.0.4 The management of the site and the development of proposals is being carried out by the Thames Chase Team which is part of the East England Forest District based at Thetford hereafter referred to as the **'Applicant'**.

1.0.5 The assessment of the proposals in respect of the Environmental Impact Assessment Forestry Regulations is being undertaken by South East England Conservancy staff of the Forestry Commission acting on behalf of the Forestry Commissioners (hereafter referred to as the **'Regulator'**) and supported by the FC's independent Regional Advisory Committee.



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Figure 1: Site location and context



Figure 2: The Site
Source: Getmapping. Not to scale

Introduction

Screening

1.0.6 The Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 [SI 1999/2228] require anyone who wishes to carry out a relevant project (i.e. deforestation, afforestation, forest road works or forest quarry works that might have a significant effect on the environment) to obtain consent for the work from the Forestry Commissioners. 'Screening' is the term used to identify whether a project is 'relevant' and requires an EIA.

1.0.7 A formal 'screening meeting' was held on the 23rd May 2005 with key stakeholders with an interest in the project. Following this the Regulator determined that proposals to afforest all or part of the site were likely to have a significant impact on the environment particularly in respect of the following factors:

Human beings - through the direct impact on local residents and the indirect impact on people using the site;

Flora and fauna - resulting from the change in land use;

Landscape - the direct impact of the scheme on the landscape;

Soils and land-use – the change in land use from agriculture to forestry

Cultural heritage - both the direct impact on archaeology which may be present on the site and in respect of the wider cultural heritage of the area ; and

Through the interaction between these factors

As such it was considered that the scheme represented a relevant project as defined by the Regulations. The letter from the Regulator confirming the screening opinion is provided in Appendix 1.

Scoping

- 1.0.8 The EIA Regulations require the Applicant to submit an application for consent to the Regulator and this should be accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) which provides an unbiased assessment of the significant impacts, positive and negative, of the proposals on the environment, including an explanation of any mitigation proposed.
- 1.0.9 The first step in producing the ES is to identify the main factors which need to be considered, what is referred to as the 'scope' of the ES. To assist in doing this the Applicant circulated a questionnaire and held a series of events during autumn 2005 to seek information from anyone with an interest in, or specialist knowledge about, the site. These events are summarised in table 2 below and full details of the consultation exercise are available in separate reports (Jeskyms Farm community consultation, February 2006, Thames Chase and The Stakeholder Consultation Day Report, McGeeney, A. 2005).

Community consultation techniques used for Jeskyms (summer and autumn 2005)
Questionnaires
Guided walks
Public 'drop-in' sessions
School projects
Stakeholder consultation day

Table 2: Community consultation techniques

continued overleaf



View to Ashenbank Wood along the western edge of Scotland Lane

- 1.0.10 This document provides:
- a) a summary of both the issues raised during these meetings and issues identified by the Regulator and The Landscape Partnership;
 - b) an assessment of the importance of these issues in respect of their likely level of significance: high, medium or low and an explanation of this judgement; and
 - c) an explanation of how these factors will be assessed (for instance specialist advice will be required on some factors).
- 1.0.11 This document has been prepared for the Applicant by The Landscape Partnership.

Public consultation event (Oct 2005)



2.0 Scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment

2.0.1 The EIA will be an objective assessment of the potential direct and indirect; secondary; cumulative; short, medium and long-term; permanent and temporary; positive and negative effects of the proposed community greenspace at Jeskyns Farm on the environmental topics noted below. Where appropriate, mitigation measures will be designed to negate, or minimise to within acceptable thresholds, any adverse impacts arising from the greenspace proposals and to maximise potential positive impacts.

2.0.2

The Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 [SI 1999/2228] requires an assessment of the impacts of a project on 'the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project, including, in particular:

- population
- fauna
- flora
- soil
- water
- air
- climatic factors
- material assets including the architectural and archaeological heritage
- landscape
- and the interrelationship between these factors.

Table 3: Aspects of the environment likely to be affected by the project



2.0.3 The EIA for Jeskyns will consider each of the aspects identified in table 3 above. The level of assessment for each of these aspects has been categorised as low, medium or high depending on the level of assessment required:

Levels of assessment	
<i>Low</i>	Issues which are likely to have a minimal impact or no impact. These will be considered briefly within the ES.
<i>Medium</i>	Issues which could have impacts of moderate significance and which will receive thorough consideration within the ES
<i>High</i>	Issues which could have impacts of high significance and which will receive detailed consideration within the ES by a specialist

Table 4: Levels of assessment

2.0.4 The EIA will be co-ordinated by The Landscape Partnership using a team of independent specialist consultants to provide detailed assessments of the issues considered to be of potentially high significance. The team of assessors comprises:

The Landscape Partnership – co-ordinators of the ES and providing specialist input on ecology and landscape and visual matters

Odyssey Consulting Engineers – Traffic and highways consultants

Gifford – Archaeological consultants

Land Research Associates – Soils and agriculture consultants

2.0.5 Sections 2.1 to 2.9 below consider each of the broad issues identified above. The issues that will be covered within the ES are identified and an assessment made of their likely significance and the level of assessment that will be made. The proposed approach for each of these assessments is also outlined.

2.1 Impacts on population

Key issues

Potential impacts on population will be considered in two parts.

1. Impacts on local communities: will consider:

- impact on accessibility to the countryside
- health and fitness of the local population
- amenity and security of adjacent properties and nearby settlements
- character of local settlements and
- impact on local facilities (including schools).

The assessment will consider these impacts on the local settlements of Cobham, Henhurst, Round Street and settlements further afield including Sole Street, Thong, Singlewell and Gravesend.

2. Impacts on traffic and highways: will consider the impacts of the likely increase in traffic flows arising from the scheme both during the construction period and when the site is open to the public. Issues to be covered include:

- impacts on road safety
- traffic flows to the south of Henhurst road and through Cobham
- traffic flows at the new round-about junction between Henhurst Road and the A2
- impacts of the proposed site access
- impacts on public rights of way
- impact of on-site parking.

Significance

Impacts on local communities will range from low to high significance for the different issues considered. The level of assessment that will be undertaken for these aspects will therefore range between **Low and High**.

Traffic and highways impacts are considered to be issues of potentially high significance as they could have a significant impact on the amenity of the local area. The level of assessment that will be undertaken for these aspects is therefore **High**.

2.2 Impacts on flora and fauna

Key issues

The flora and fauna assessment will consider the potential impact of the project on the biodiversity and ecology of the site and the immediate environs. The assessment will consider the impact of the proposed scheme on:

- Birds
- Mammals
- Invertebrates
- Reptiles
- Amphibians

Habitats:

- Wetland habitat
- Hedgerow habitat
- Scrub habitat
- Grassland habitat
- Woodland habitat (including impact on adjacent SSSI)

Significance

The site comprises a series of arable fields and grassland which are partially hedged and partially fenced. A number of the hedgerows are ancient and species rich and are considered to be BAP Priority Habitat. The site is adjacent to Shorne and Ashenbank Woods SSSI. Part of this woodland is known to be ancient woodland and the site is also a BAP Priority Habitat. It is considered that flora and fauna are issues of high significance and the level of assessment undertaken for these issues will be **High**.



Dormouse

2.3 Impacts on soil and land use

<i>Key issues</i>
<p>The assessment will consider the impact of the proposed scheme on the soils and land-use of the site and the surrounding areas. The key issues to be considered will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact of loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land, particularly grade 1 land • potential to restore the site to productive agriculture in the future • impact of the scheme on agricultural activities in the local area • impact of the proposed change in use on soil function and quality
<i>Significance</i>
<p>The creation of ponds, tracks and a car park will involve disturbance of soil and deep cultivation for new plantings could result in loss or dilution of topsoil. Conversely the change from arable agriculture to other vegetated uses could improve other aspects of soil quality such as permeability and biodiversity.</p> <p>The impact of loss of the best and most versatile grade 1 agricultural land and the loss of agricultural activities within a predominantly agricultural area is considered to be of potentially high significance and will be given a High level of assessment within the ES by a specialist consultant.</p>

View north to Shorne Wood from the east of Scotland Lane



2.4 Impacts on water quality and hydrology

<i>Key issues</i>
<p>There are no watercourses within or in close vicinity to the site and the site is free draining. The key issue relating to water quality and hydrology is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • potential water usage on the site and its likely impact on aquifer recharge.
<i>Significance</i>
<p>The potential impact on water quality and hydrology is likely to be small. It is expected that impacts will be of low significance and the level of assessment that will be undertaken for these aspects will therefore be Low.</p>

2.5 Impacts on air quality

<i>Key issues</i>
<p>Air quality issues were not raised during the scoping and screening exercises. However, the adjacent A2 provides a source of air pollutants in the local area and the proposed tree planting may provide a minor positive improvement on air quality by filtering pollutants.</p>
<i>Significance</i>
<p>The potential impact on air quality is likely to be small. It is expected that impacts will be of low significance and the level of assessment that will be undertaken for these aspects will therefore be Low.</p>

2.6 Impacts on climate

<i>Key issues</i>
The project may have a very slight positive impact on local climate by providing shelter and in the long term could have a minor positive contribution to slowing climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and acting as a carbon sink. (The impact of climate change on species choice and plant provenance for the site will be reviewed within the description of proposals in the ES).
<i>Significance</i>
The potential impact on climate is likely to be very small. It is expected that impacts will be of low significance and the level of assessment that will be undertaken for these aspects will therefore be Low .

2.7 Impacts on material assets including the architectural and archaeological heritage

<i>Key issues</i>
An assessment will be made of the potential impacts on potential archaeological remains that may occur as a result of the planting regime and other groundworks (e.g. Car parking, ponds and new paths) proposed for the site.
<i>Significance</i>
There is potential that the site could contain significant archaeological remains and impacts could therefore be of high significance. The level of assessment that will be undertaken for these aspects will therefore be High and will be undertaken by a specialist archaeological consultant.

View towards Gravesend from Scotland Lane



2.8 Landscape and Visual Environment

<i>Key issues</i>
An assessment will be made of the impact on the character and quality of the landscape with particular reference to the impact on the North Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the North Downs Special Landscape Area and Metropolitan Green Belt. This will include the impact on landscape features on the site such as hedgerows and veteran trees. The impact on the character and quality of existing views to and from the site will also be considered (particularly from adjacent properties, the A2 and the CTRL)
<i>Significance</i>
The site is covered by national and local landscape designations and consultation identified that views to and from the site were highly valued. The potential impact on the landscape and visual environment is therefore considered to be of high importance and will be given a High level assessment by a chartered landscape architect from The Landscape Partnership.

2.9 Policy review

<i>Key issues</i>
<p>The ES will include a review of policy of relevance to the project. Consideration will be given to how the proposed scheme would satisfy the following designations, policies and planning guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • international designations/policies • national designations/policies/PPGs • Regional Planning Guidance • FC policy • structure plan policies • local plan policies

3.0 Structure and approach of the Environmental Statement

3.1 Structure of the Environmental Statement

The ES will be divided into four volumes:

Volume I
<p>Section 1: Introduction – the background to the site at Jeskyns Farm, a brief description of the proposed scheme, the justification for the project and a description of the alternative options considered for the project</p> <p>Section 2: The proposed design plan – a description of the proposed scheme, including the works necessary to implement and manage it</p> <p>Section 3: Planning policy context – a description of the policy context of the proposed project</p> <p>Section 4: The assessment – a baseline study of the site and its environs, and an assessment of the likely impacts of the project on the environment, a description of proposed mitigation measures and an assessment of the significance of the residual impacts.</p> <p>Section 5: Summary of the significant impacts</p>
Volume II
<p>Figures, drawings and photographs relating to the ES</p>
Volume III
<p>Appendices relating to the ES. This will include a summary of the consultations undertaken with the public, and statutory and non-statutory bodies</p>
Volume IV
<p>Non-technical Summary</p>

3.2 Approach to preparing the Environmental Statement

3.2.1 In accordance with current guidelines, The EIA will be an objective assessment of the likely positive and negative impacts of the Jeskyns Farm project. It will be undertaken by a team of independent consultants and will provide an unbiased assessment of the scheme. Its purpose is to ensure that the potential impacts of the project are fully understood before commencing the project and to maximise the potential positive impacts of the scheme.

3.3 Alternative options

3.3.1 The ES will provide an objective assessment of the likely positive and negative impacts of the Jeskyns Farm proposals. It will be undertaken by a team of independent consultants and provide an unbiased assessment of these proposals. Its purpose is to ensure that the potential impacts of the proposals are fully understood.

3.3.2 The ES will also provide details of alternative options considered for the site in terms of varying degrees of woodland cover.

3.3.3 Each of the assessments within the ES will include a consideration of the likely impacts if the scheme is not implemented and the site were to remain in agricultural use. This will provide a baseline against which the predicted impacts of the scheme can be assessed.

View towards Ashenbank Wood



4.0 The next steps

4.1 Preparation of the Environmental Statement

4.1.1 The environmental impact assessment will be undertaken by the team of specialist consultants during February and March 2006. This is an iterative process and the proposed design plan for the community greenspace will be reviewed and amended as the assessments are main in order to maximise the potential positive impacts of the scheme and minimise any potential negative impacts.

4.2 Application to the Regulator

4.2.1 When the ES is complete an application will be made to the Regulator for consent to implement the proposed scheme. The application will comprise a plan illustrating the proposed scheme, a detailed description of the proposed scheme, the environmental statement and a copy of the notice to be published in local newspapers providing notification of the application.

4.3 Consultation on the Application

4.3.1 Public notices will be placed in local newspapers when the application has been made inviting comments to be sent to the regulator. This is likely to be at the end of March/early April 2006 and a period of 28 days will be allowed for responses. Copies of the proposals and the Environmental Statement will be made available on the Jeskyns website and 'hard copies' will be available at: Gravesham Borough Council offices, Shorne Wood Country Park, the Forestry Commission's South East England Conservancy office and Gravesham public library.

4.3.2 Comments on the proposed scheme and the environmental statement will be welcomed and should be addressed to:

The Conservator
 Forestry Commission South East England Conservancy
 Alice Holt
 Wrecclesham
 Farnham
 Surrey
 GU10 4LF

or sent by email to: fc.seeng.cons@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

All comments should be made within 28 days of the formal notice.

4.4 Decision on the Application

4.4.1 The Regulator will review all the responses to the application made during the consultation period. Following this, a decision will be made to approve or refuse the application in whole or part. If the application is approved, conditions may be applied.

4.4.2 Details of the decision will be summarised in a public notice which will be placed in local newspapers. Details of the decision and the reasons for it will be sent to all statutory consultees, all those who comment on the proposals and copies will be made available for public inspection at the same locations as listed in paragraph 4.3.1.

4.5 Planning application

4.5.1 At the same time as the application to the Regulator is made, a planning application for the project will be submitted to Gravesham Borough Council.

4.6 Implementation

4.6.1 If the application for the project is approved by the Regulator and by Gravesham Borough Council, the project will be implemented by the Applicant. The proposed programme for implementation is:

Hardworks (paths, car park, signs etc) - Summer 2006

Seeding – Autumn 2006

Tree and shrub planting – Autumn 2006/Winter 2007

Project implementation complete by end March 2007

Consultation walk (August 2005)





Forestry Commission
England

**South East England
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09 June 2005

Our Ref: EIA 019900234

Dear Alex

**Jeskyns Farm – proposal to create a community woodland
Environmental Impact Assessment (Forestry)(England and Wales) Regulations 1999**

I refer to your application for our opinion as whether the work you are proposing at Jeskyns farm will require our consent.

I can confirm that the work you propose will require our consent for the following reasons:

The afforestation of parts of the site will have a significant impact on the environment particularly in respect of the following factors:

- *Human beings* - through the direct impact on local residents and the indirect impact on people using the site;
- *Flora and fauna* - resulting from the change in land use;
- *Landscape* - the direct impact of the woodland on the landscape;
- *The material assets of the site* - the change in land use from agriculture to forestry
- *Cultural heritage* - both the direct impact on archaeology which may be present on the site and in respect of the wider cultural heritage of the area ; and
- *Through the interaction between these factors*

This decision is valid for only 5 years from the date of this letter and shall cease to have effect beyond 9 June 2010. If you do not apply for and receive our consent before 9 June 2010 and you still wish to carry out the work you propose in your application, then you must inform us beforehand and we will check for you whether our consent is still required.

If you now wish to make an application for consent you must send us the following documents. Please let us have two copies of each one.

- a) a map to clearly show the area where the proposed work will take place;
- b) a full description of the nature of the proposed work; and
- c) an environmental statement for the work (a booklet offering advice about how to prepare an environmental statement is available on the FC website).

Yours sincerely

Matthew Woodcock
Operations Manager

Protecting and expanding England's forests and woodlands, and increasing their value to society and the environment.
www.forestry.gov.uk/england



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Appendix A: Screening opinion