

Application for a rail aggregate depot, concrete batching plant and ancillary facilities at Thorney Mill Sidings, Thorney Mill Road, Iver – Reference CM/19/17

Summary points to be made by the Applicant at committee on 23 July 2018

- The site has a long history of rail related uses including the import and onward distribution of aggregates, the secondary processing of aggregates as well as waste related activities.
- The site is allocated as a Safeguarded rail aggregates depot in the current version of the Minerals Plan. It is also in Green Belt but related activities on the site have previously been considered favourably in this regard.
- Network Rail, the land owner, has a mandate to operate the rail infrastructure within the UK and they are extremely keen to see the site brought back into productive use, hence the application being considered. Network Rail has statutory powers which it is likely to rely on to get the site operational, should this application fail.
- While the application has to be considered on its own merits, in reaching a decision, thought needs to be given to the historic and potential uses and the 'fallback position' or baseline. While it is not entirely clear what the fallback position is, it is nevertheless likely to be significant in terms of trading levels.
- This is important, as it has a material bearing on how we consider the impacts of the development. In effect, the presence of a baseline reduces any potential impacts.
- The key issue with the application appears to be HGV related and stems primarily from representations made by Slough Borough Council which refuses to accept the fallback position. As a consequence, they have variously sought a range of contributions from the applicant for highway improvement works and air quality mitigation. We are of the opinion that there is no basis for these demands, neither have Slough provided a consistent mechanism for those demands.
- The applicant has proposed financial contributions to overcome the impasse which more fairly reflects the potential impacts of the development (having regard to the baseline) and which are consistent with planning policy. Other measures, such as a routing agreement will be adopted.
- With respect to other development impacts, appropriate mitigation measures are proposed where the impacts are such that mitigation is required.
- The proposal is consistent with planning policy and the application should be approved given that there are no overriding material considerations which would dictate otherwise.