

Statutory Consultation 2022

# **Preliminary Environmental Information Report**

Volume 3: Appendix 14.9

**Chilterns AONB Sensitivity Test**



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 The Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB) made an application in 2013 (Ref. 1) to extend the boundaries of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), in particular to include an area south of the A505 within North Hertfordshire and Central Bedfordshire. In June 2021 Natural England announced proposals to consider an extension to the Chilterns AONB.
- 1.1.2 The Conservation Board's 2013 application covers a broad area of search, as shown on **Figure 14.7** in Volume 4 of this PEIR, and the application recognises at paragraph 16 that a more in depth assessment would be needed to determine the most appropriate boundary should the Chilterns be selected by Natural England as an AONB for further boundary review work.
- 1.1.3 The Planning Inspectorate's Scoping Opinion (Scoping ID 4.13.5) commented that *'the boundary of the Chilterns AONB is the subject of a request for its extension'* and that *'the assessment in the ES should take into account the proposed designation and any significant effects that may occur.'*
- 1.1.4 Although the application to extend the AONB is at a very early stage, this report provides a qualitative assessment of any likely changes to the conclusions of the assessment reported in **Chapter 14** in Volume 2 of this PEIR, in the event that such an extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB is realised.

## 2 POTENTIAL IMPACT AND CHANGE

### 2.1 Landscape Assessment

- 2.1.1 The significance of a landscape effect is assessed through professional judgement, combining the sensitivity of a landscape receptor with the magnitude of impact. Extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB would not typically impact judgements of magnitude of impact resulting from the Proposed Development but may impact judgements on sensitivity of a landscape receptor and in turn the significance of an effect.
- 2.1.2 As its physical limitations would be affected in this scenario however, it is considered that the aesthetic and perceptual characteristics of the landscape within the Chilterns AONB landscape receptor is an exception to this and is considered to have potential to change judgements on magnitude of impact.

#### Changes to Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

- 2.1.3 The sensitivity of a landscape receptor is determined through the combination of judgements regarding susceptibility to change and value, see also **Appendix 14.1** in Volume 3 of this PEIR.
- 2.1.4 Susceptibility to change means the ability of a landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular area, or individual element and/or feature) to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of the landscape planning policies and strategies. Value of a

landscape receptor means the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.

- 2.1.5 Whilst some receptors would fall under the AONB Management Plan, it is assessed that an extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB would not materially impact judgements on susceptibility to change for any of the identified landscape receptors. It is determined however that the value of some landscape receptors would increase to high should the boundary of the Chilterns AONB be amended as advised, specifically:
- a. the landform east of the airport;
  - b. the narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks east of the airport;
  - c. the outlying cottages and scattered farmsteads east of the airport; and
  - d. the network of PRow east of the airport.
- 2.1.6 And that the value of the following landscape receptors would potentially increase to very high should the boundary of the Chilterns AONB be amended as advised:
- a. HLCA Area 200 – Peters Green Plateau;
  - b. HLCA Area 201 – Kimpton and Whiteway Bottom;
  - c. HLCA Area 202 – Breachwood Green Ridge;
  - d. HLCA Area 203 – Whitwell Valley; and
  - e. HLCA Area 211 – Offley and St. Paul’s Walden.
- 2.1.7 This would potentially increase the sensitivity of the outlying cottages and scattered farmsteads east of the airport to medium and the following receptors to high:
- a. the landform east of the airport;
  - b. the narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks east of the airport;
  - c. the network of PRow east of the airport;
  - d. HLCA Area 200 – Peters Green Plateau;
  - e. HLCA Area 201 – Kimpton and Whiteway Bottom;
  - f. HLCA Area 202 – Breachwood Green Ridge;
  - g. HLCA Area 203 – Whitwell Valley; and
  - h. HLCA Area 211 – Offley and St. Paul’s Walden.
- 2.1.8 These increases to sensitivity are assessed to potentially result in the changes identified in **Table 2.1** below to the significance of landscape effect assessed and reported at **Section 14.9** in **Chapter 14** in Volume 2 of this PEIR.

Table 2.1: Potential changes to significance of landscape effect

| <b>Receptor</b>   | <b>Phase 1</b>                    | <b>Phase 2a</b>                      | <b>Phase 2b</b>                      | <b>Max. ATM Capacity</b>             | <b>Design Year</b>                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| The landform east of the airport  | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| The narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks east of the airport | Increased to <b>minor adverse</b> | Increased to <b>minor beneficial</b> | Increased to <b>minor beneficial</b> | Increased to <b>minor beneficial</b> | Increased to <b>minor beneficial</b> |
| The outlying cottages and scattered farmsteads east of the airport      | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| The network of PRow east of the airport                                 | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| HLCA Area 200 – Peters Green Plateau                                    | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| HLCA Area 201 – Kimpton and Whiteway Bottom                             | No change                         | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | No change                            | No change                            |
| HLCA Area 202 – Breachwood Green Ridge                                  | No change                         | No change                            | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> |
| HLCA Area 203 – Whitwell Valley   | Increased to <b>minor adverse</b> | Increased to <b>minor adverse</b>    | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> |
| HLCA Area 211 – Offley and St. Paul's Walden                            | No change                         | No change                            | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> |

2.1.9 These increases to sensitivity are assessed to potentially result in the changes identified in **Table 2.2** below to the residual significance of landscape effect assessed and reported at **Section 14.11** in **Chapter 14** in Volume 2 of this PEIR.

Table 2.2: Potential changes to residual significance of landscape effect

| <b>Receptor</b>   | <b>Phase 1</b>                    | <b>Phase 2a</b>                      | <b>Phase 2b</b>                      | <b>Max. ATM Capacity</b>             | <b>Design Year</b>                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| The landform east of the airport  | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| The narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks east of the airport | Increased to <b>minor adverse</b> | Increased to <b>minor beneficial</b> | Increased to <b>minor beneficial</b> | Increased to <b>minor beneficial</b> | Increased to <b>minor beneficial</b> |
| The outlying cottages and scattered farmsteads east of the airport      | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| The network of PRow east of the airport                                 | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| HLCA Area 200 – Peters Green Plateau                                    | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| HLCA Area 201 – Kimpton and Whiteway Bottom                             | No change                         | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | No change                            | No change                            |
| HLCA Area 202 – Breachwood Green Ridge                                  | No change                         | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            | No change                            |
| HLCA Area 203 – Whitwell Valley   | Increased to <b>minor adverse</b> | Increased to <b>minor adverse</b>    | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> |
| HLCA Area 211 – Offley and St. Paul's Walden                            | No change                         | No change                            | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> | Increased to <b>moderate adverse</b> |

### **Changes to Magnitude of Impact on the aesthetic and perceptual characteristics of the landscape within the Chilterns AONB landscape receptor**

2.1.10 The Proposed Development would introduce construction activities and would increase ATMs over an extended Chilterns AONB. Such an extension would however be granted in context with an existing airport operating at up to 18 mppa. Accordingly, those undertaking recreational activities within this extended

portion of the AONB would already experience diminished tranquillity to some extent.

- 2.1.11 The construction activities and further increase to ATMs over this extended portion of the AONB would further deteriorate aesthetic and perceptual qualities experienced by those in this extended portion of the AONB.
- 2.1.12 It is considered that these changes would further increase the judgement on magnitude of impact in Phase 2a for the aesthetic and perceptual characteristics of the landscape within the Chilterns AONB landscape receptor from very low to low, which would in turn increase the significance of effect on this landscape receptor assessed and recorded in **Section 14.9** in **Chapter 14** in Volume 2 of this PEIR in this period from minor adverse to **moderate adverse**, which is **significant**.
- 2.1.13 It is considered that the changes would not further increase judgements on magnitude or sensitivity for the aesthetic and perceptual characteristics of the landscape within the Chilterns AONB landscape receptor assessed and recorded in **Section 14.9** in **Chapter 14** in Volume 2 of this PEIR at any other assessment stage.

## 2.2 Visual Assessment

- 2.2.1 The significance of a visual effect is assessed through professional judgement, combining the sensitivity of a visual receptor with the magnitude of impact, see also **Appendix 14.1** in Volume 3 of this PEIR.
- 2.2.2 Extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB would neither change judgements of magnitude of impact resulting from the Proposed Development nor judgements on sensitivity of a visual receptor. This is because judgements on sensitivity are a product of the activity one is performing when experiencing a view and the extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and visual amenity they experience (susceptibility) and the value attached to the views themselves, neither of which would be altered by the future designation of this land.

## 3 SUMMARY

- 3.1.1 Extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB is assessed to potentially increase the residual construction stage significance of effect assessed and reported in on landscape receptor HLCA Area 201 – Kimpton and Whiteway Bottom in Phases 2a and 2b from minor adverse to **moderate adverse**, which is **significant**.
- 3.1.2 Extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB is assessed also to potentially increase the residual significance of effect on landscape receptor the aesthetic and perceptual characteristics of the landscape within the Chilterns AONB in Phase 2a; and on landscape receptors HLCA Area 203 – Whitwell Valley Bottom and HLCA Area 211 – Offley and St. Paul's Walden in Phase 2b, at the year of maximum passenger capacity and at the design year from minor adverse to **moderate adverse**, which is **significant**.

- 3.1.3 Extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB is additionally assessed to potentially increase the significance of effect, before additional mitigation, on landscape receptor HLCA Area 202 – Breachwood Green Ridge in Phase 2b, at the year of maximum passenger capacity and at the design year from minor adverse to **moderate adverse**, which is **significant**.
- 3.1.4 Extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB is assessed either to not increase the significance of effect experienced by all other landscape receptors, or to only increase that effect to a **not significant** level.
- 3.1.5 Extension to the boundary of the Chilterns AONB is assessed not to increase the significance of effect on any visual receptors.

## REFERENCES

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Ref. 1 Chilterns Conservation Board (2013) The Case for Reviewing the Boundary of the AONB