TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2011

SCREENING OPINION REQUEST IN RESPECT OF THE OLDHAM ROYTON INTEGRATED STRATEGY (PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE EXISTING WASTEWATER TREATMENT PROCESS TO ALLOW REGULATORY COMPLIANCE IN RIVER WATER QUALITY

The Local Planning Authority has undertaken a Screening Opinion in respect of the above proposal.

The Screening Opinion is based on the EIA Screening Opinion Request received on 23rd October 2013.

1. Characteristics of development

a) Size of development

The proposed scheme involves upgrading the wastewater treatment works at the Oldham WwTW site on United Utilities land. Flows to the existing Royton WwTW will be transferred to Oldham along a 4.3km long pipeline with an approximate diameter of 600mm. To further limit discharges to watercourses additional stormwater storage tanks will be constructed at both Oldham WwTW and Royton WwTW. On completion of the works much of Royton WwTW will be decommissioned, with only the inlet works, stormwater storage and a transfer pumping station remaining in operation at the site.

The development involves alterations to two existing wastewater treatment works, as defined in Schedule 2 11(c) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2011. The threshold applicable to this type of proposal is an area of works exceeding 1,000 square metres. In addition the pipeline development is classified as a “long distance aqueduct” as defined in Schedule 2 10(l) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2011. The threshold applicable to this type of proposal is an area of works exceeding 1 hectare.

The proposed works at Oldham WwTW are anticipated to be:
• Storm detention tanks with ancillary pumping station, valve chamber, kiosk and underground pipework;
• 1 no. Primary Settlement Tank;
• An Activated Sludge Plant unit with blower house and pumping station;
• 8 no. Final Settlement Tanks;
• 1 no. Rapid Gravity Filters;
• 2 no. sludge holding tanks;
• Polymer building;
• Thickener units;
• Various pumping stations, valve chambers and kiosks;
• Outfall to comprise of underground pipework connecting to the existing culverted Wince Brook at the same location as the existing outfall for the works;
• Various ancillary pipework, channels and chambers;
• Landscaping mound reusing surplus material; and,
• Decommissioning of redundant assets.

The proposed works at Royton WwTW are anticipated to be:
• Storm detention tanks with ancillary pumping station, valve chamber, kiosk and underground pipework;
• Bar screens on inlet works;
• Overflow / flow control chamber;
• Chamber for flow measurement;
• Transfer pumping station with valve chamber, kiosk and pipework;
• Underground emergency overflow/outfall pipe from storm detention tanks to culverted River Irk;
• Various ancillary pipework, channels and chambers; and,
• Decommissioning of redundant assets.

b) Cumulation with other development

It is not considered that this development raises any particular issues as a result of cumulation with other development. At the time of writing there are no approved developments in close proximity of the site that could give rise to significant cumulative impacts in conjunction with the proposed development.

c) Use of Natural Resources

The construction of the development would inevitably generate demand for energy, materials, water and other natural resources. However, the use of these resources can be minimised through construction site best practice and by maximising the amount of materials sent for re-use or re-cycling. The use of natural resources in the proposed construction and use of the development will not be unusual for this type of development.

d) Production of Waste

There is potential for surplus material to be generated by the implementation of works at Oldham WwTW. It is anticipated that this material will be utilised as mounding to enhance screening between the WwTW and Foxdenton Lane. Material will be spread across the open land, owned by United Utilities, to the northeast of the site. This will be formed into higher screening mounds closer to the operational site boundaries.

Overall it is not expected the proposed development will generate any significant environmental impacts due to generation of waste.

e) Pollution and Nuisances

With regard to noise and odour, pre-construction baseline surveys will be undertaken by the contractor to determine existing levels at any boundaries of the site shared with residential properties, and sufficient mitigation will be built into the design to ensure that during operation there will be no increase in noise levels or odour at the boundary of the site as a result of the development.

It is not considered that this development raises any significant issues in relation to pollution.

f) Transportation/Access

The transport implications are not considered unusual and will result only be short-term during the period of construction. On this basis, the submission of an ES is not required.
g) Risk of Accidents

The development is not considered to be unusually complex or potentially hazardous in terms of environmental effects.

Whilst inevitably there are risks during any construction project, it is not considered that these risks will be at an unacceptable level, given the health and safety protocols that will be adhered to.

2. Location of Development

a) Existing Land Uses

Oldham WwTW is situated to the south west of the town in close proximity to the M60. The site is bounded to the south by a retail park adjacent to Broadway, to the west by Broadway Business Park, to the north and east by an area of open green space beyond which are residential properties on Foxdenton Lane. Although the existing site covers a large footprint it is not overly imposing on the majority of adjacent areas. This is in part due to the green buffer zone, consisting of fields, plantations and scrub, which surrounds the main operational site. The WwTW is also situated on a number of levels, with some structures shielded by adjacent landforms. Many of the site’s structures and buildings are low, either partly buried or one-storey high. The majority of higher structures are located to the south of the site, adjacent to the old mill buildings.

Royton WwTW is situated to the northwest of Oldham adjacent to the A627(M). The site is bounded to the south by the A627(M) and Elk Mill Retail Park, to the west and north by Middleton Road and to the east by open green space beyond which is residential housing. The WwTW access also runs adjacent to a number of residential houses situated to the western corner of the site. The majority of the site is contained and screened by mature boundary planting. The site also benefits from extensive screening to the south formed by the raised motorway embankment and associated woodland plantations. The majority of existing site structures are low and enclosed by mature trees, the tallest structures are located at the rear of the retail park.

The majority of the pipeline will be within the highway and will be routed to avoid, where possible, mature landscape features such as street trees. In addition the positioning of the pipeline within the carriageway will be considered to minimize the potential impact on street trees. One section of the pipeline route follows a linear green space, adjacent to Chadderton Cemetery, continuing through a sports field and land associated to North Chadderton School.

b) Relative Abundance, Quality and Regenerative Capacity of Natural Resources

The proposal is likely to have a neutral impact upon flood risk and surface water drainage.

c) Absorption Capacity of the Natural Environment

The EIA regulations states that particular attention should be paid to wetlands; coastal zones; mountain and forest areas; nature reserves or parks; areas designated under EU directives on the conservation of wild birds, natural habitats, flora and fauna; areas in which environmental standards have been exceeded;
densely populated areas; or landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance. The site possesses none of these characteristics and is therefore considered to possess sufficient absorption capacity to allow development to proceed.

The proposed pipeline route is predominantly located within road except for a few areas which go through public open space, including along a dismantled railway and open space adjacent to Chadderton Cemetery. There is also a small section of the pipeline that passes through land which is part of Chadderton Hall Junior and Secondary School and a football pitch. The pipeline passes through Flood Zones; Green Belt; passes through Green Corridor and Link; along a Recreational Route (RR6); through other protected open land (OPOL4) and borders other protected open land (OPOL2). The pipeline crosses two main rivers - the River Irk and Wince Brook, with the River Irk needing to be crossed twice. These sections of the rivers are not subject to any environmental designations. It is currently thought that a pipebridge will be required to cross the River Irk along Street Bridge Road/Mill Brow, however, this would be constructed above or level with the soffit of the bridge deck and, therefore, is not anticipated to affect the flow or capacity of the watercourse. For the other two remaining watercourse crossings it is anticipated that they will be crossed underground either above or below the existing culvert. Further discussions will be carried out with the Environment Agency regarding the designs and any required consents will be applied for in due course.

3. Characteristics of the Potential Impact

The potential effects of the development have been considered in relation to the criteria set out under sections 1 and 2 above, and have had particular regard to:

a) Extent of Impact

Transportation

The full impact and traffic generation associated with the demolition is likely to be local in its extent and only of a moderate nature. As such, an ES is not required on this basis.

Noise, dust and vibration

It is anticipated that the pipeline route will have an approximate working easement of up to 20m. Compounds will comprise cabins to accommodate welfare facilities and offices plus an area for pipe and materials storage. The final locations for proposed compounds are yet to be finalised but they are expected to be located at Oldham WwTW and Royton WwTW. In addition, smaller satellite compounds located along and adjacent to the transfer pipeline for durations to suit construction progress will also be required. It is anticipated that construction works will commence in March 2015 and will last for approximately 2 years. Site set up and enabling works may begin before March 2015.

There will be some impact upon adjacent residential and employment properties as a result of the construction and traffic generated. However this is for a limited period during the construction programme and beyond the immediate locality, no impact will result.
With regard to noise, pre-construction baseline noise surveys will be undertaken by the contractor to determine existing ambient decibel levels at any boundaries of the site shared with residential properties. Sufficient mitigation will be built into the design to ensure that during operation there will be no increase in noise levels at the boundary of the site as a result of the development.

Pre-construction baseline odour surveys will be undertaken by the contractor to determine existing odour levels at any boundaries of the site shared with residential properties. Sufficient mitigation will be built into the design to ensure that during operation there will be no increase in odour at the boundary of the site as a result of the development.

Accordingly, the submission of an ES is not required on this basis.

Air Quality

It is not anticipated that there will be any significant impact upon air quality and therefore, an ES is not required on this basis.

Drainage/Flood Risk

The pipeline passes through one area at risk of flooding as it crosses the River Irk south west of the A627 (M). Currently it is unknown whether a trenchless method will be possible under the watercourse. This may necessitate the construction of a pipebridge which would be located at the same height as the bridge deck. If the pipebridge falls within Flood Zone 2 or 3 a Flood Risk Assessment will be produced to accompany the planning application. A Flood Risk Assessment will also be produced for the Oldham WwTW site as the proposed works are over 1 hectare and will include consideration of the increased discharge to Wince Brook from Oldham WwTW.

Landscape

None of the proposals fall within landscape character areas defined by the Oldham Landscape Character Assessment 2009.

Although the proposed development is of a substantial footprint, the size and scale of proposed structures are similar to those found on the existing WwTW. In addition the development will cover existing operational areas and will replace some existing structures.

The nature of this type of development (i.e. a below ground pipeline) means that its operation will have limited impact upon the landscape. After restoration of the landscape the only visible surface elements will be occasional manholes and valve kiosks. The precise location and design of kiosks will be carefully considered to minimise adverse impact on the existing landscape. At completion of the pipeline construction there will be an interim period whilst the landscape is restored. The length of this period will vary depending upon the type of restoration required. Other than the introduction of kiosks and man-holes there is unlikely to be any permanent landscape changes arising from the proposed pipeline.

Ecology
Extended Phase 1 habitat surveys have been undertaken for the proposed development areas at Oldham WwTW and Royton WwTW. The pipeline route has been the subject of an Ecological Walkover Survey.

The habitats recorded within the study area of Oldham WwTW and Royton WwTW are of limited botanical value, containing a low diversity of common and widespread plant species. Pond 2 is located within the Oldham WwTW boundary and has been described fully within the Extended Phase 1 habitat report.

The habitats recorded within the study area for the proposed pipeline route are also of limited botanical value and the majority of the proposed pipeline works will take place within the carriageway in areas surrounded by residential housing with occasional grass verges and mature trees.

One designated site, the Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI, is located adjacent to Oldham WwTW however it is understood that Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI is not connected to the site via an ecological pathway. An outfall from Oldham WwTW leads to Wince Brook however this is culverted beneath the canal and therefore it is unlikely that any significant impacts on Rochdale SAC/SSSI and its qualifying features would result from the proposed works.

No protected species or habitats have been identified to date. Further surveys are proposed for amphibians and badger along the disused railway line and an assessment for bat roost potential within the road bridge crossing the River Irk. Invasive species method statements will be developed for locations where Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed have been identified. Works to potential nesting bird habitat will be timed to avoid the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive); where this is not possible pre-construction work surveys will be undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist. In the event that any protected species are identified further surveys will be undertaken. Where necessary (as identified by the further surveys that have been proposed) appropriate mitigation strategies will be implemented and licensed in order to ensure there are no significant impacts, that compliance with all relevant UK legislation is achieved and that there is fulfilment of national and local planning policy.

The development at Oldham WwTW will require the removal of some areas of regenerative scrub. It is intended to minimise removal of trees at Royton WwTW thereby retaining the existing screening of the site. Trees and woodland have been avoided where possible when selecting the pipeline route. An arboricultural survey will be completed to confirm the location and quality of trees and define their Root Protection Areas (RPA). A Tree Protection and Removal Plan showing the RPAs will subsequently be produced by United Utilities to detail working areas and contractual tree protection requirements.

Archaeology and Heritage

United Utilities has consulted Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service, who confirm that there are no archaeological implications for the scheme.

The pipeline runs adjacent to the Church of Saint Matthew Grade II Listed Building however the building or curtilage of the building will not be impacted by the pipeline route. The pipeline also runs adjacent to Chadderton Cemetery designated as a Grade II Registered Park and Gardens, however, again the pipeline will not impact the designated feature.
The permanent boundary of Oldham Waste Water Treatment Works will not change as a result of the development and therefore will not encroach any closer to Foxdenton Hall or Foxdenton Farmhouse (Grade II*/II listed buildings). The site will remain an operational treatment works and the general characteristics of the site will not change. All new above ground structures are likely to be several hundred metres from the curtilage of the listed buildings and beyond existing structures within the works. The closest element to the listed buildings will be the landscape mounds which will be implemented with sensitivity to the setting of the listed buildings and through agreement with the Council via a planning application. The overall intention is to retain and enhance the existing green buffer zone between the operational site and Foxdenton Hall and Foxdenton Farmhouse. There would be a temporary adverse visual impact during the formation of the earth mounds along the operational boundary. However, once these areas are reinstated and planting established the Hall and surrounding gardens and Farmhouse are likely to benefit from the enhanced WwTW boundary screening. It is therefore not expected that there will be any significant long term impact of the works on the setting of Foxdenton Hall or Farmhouse (Grade II*/II listed buildings).

No significant impact upon archaeology or heritage assets is likely to result.

Contamination

Preliminary Risk Assessments have been undertaken for each of the Oldham WwTW, Royton WwTW and the transfer pipeline route. Ground investigation works are currently being undertaken at Oldham WwTW and Royton WwTW, with works due to commence along the transfer pipeline route in October-November 2013. The ground investigation works will be factually reported by the ground investigation contractor and the information passed to a Design and Build contractor to undertake necessary risk assessments in accordance with UK standards and best practice. As such, an ES is not required on this basis.

Crime prevention

The proposals do not raise any significant issues in relation to crime prevention.

b) Transfrontier Impacts

The proposals will not result in any transfrontier impacts.

c) Magnitude and Complexity of Impacts

Whilst the issues raised above will result in some impact, none are of such significance in their own right to require the submission of an ES. The inter-relationship between these issues is not considered to be complex, and the total impact is not significant enough to warrant an Environment Impact Assessment.

d) Probability of Impact

Whilst the issues raised above will result in some impact, none are of such significance in their own right to require the submission of an ES. The inter-relationship between these issues is not considered to be complex, and the total impact is not significant enough to warrant an Environment Impact Assessment.

e) Duration, Frequency and Reversibility of Impacts
The majority of the impacts will only occur during the period of construction. During construction, the works will be designed to be carried out in short sections with reinstatement being completed before works progress to the next section to limit the impact and allow access for emergency services. Works in the highway will be undertaken in line with current legislation and take into consideration the requirements of the local Highways Authority. Works will be planned in advance, allowing reasonable time for notifications and permits to be put in place. As far as possible, road closures will be avoided, and other traffic management techniques will be adopted to cause least disruption. All road users will be considered including those with disabilities, and pedestrian access will be maintained throughout.

**Conclusion**

There will be temporary impacts on linear green space, a sports field and land associated to North Chadderton School but no statutory designated sites will be affected by the pipeline route. With specific reference to the pipeline route, the explanatory text in Circular 02/99: Environmental Impact Assessment paragraph A28 advises, amongst other things, that an EIA is more likely to be required for any pipeline over 5km long (the proposed pipeline route is approximately 4.3km in length) and that an EIA is unlikely to be required for pipelines laid underneath a road.

The characteristics and location of the development in terms of size and scale, cumulative impact, potential for pollution generation and its neutral impact upon sensitive areas, are not considered extensive enough to warrant the submission of an EIA as required by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.

**Recommendation**

An Environmental Impact Assessment will not be required.

Signed……………………………………….. Date………………………………………..

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