



PERIODIC REVIEW OF MINING SITES

**SECTION 96 OF SCHEDULE 14 TO THE ENVIRONMENT
ACT 1995**

**PLANNING PERMISSIONS W.87/002/84, W.87/437/87,
W.87/689/90, W.87/818/96**

AT

**THE SITE KNOWN AS WELTON A,
SUSBROOKE ROAD, SCOTHERN
LINCOLNSHIRE.**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Star Energy Oil & Gas Limited (The Company) is part of the Star Energy Group, one of the major onshore oil producers in the UK. The company has considerable experience in prospecting for and producing oil from land based oil and gas reservoirs and operates such facilities in six counties in the UK including Lincolnshire.

Oil and Gas are currently extracted from the Welton oilfield via four unmanned well sites which are connected to the Welton Gathering Centre (WGC) by underground pipelines. The four sites operate under separate planning permissions and, during January 2011, the company was served with notice that, in accordance with the Environment Act 1995, the permissions relating to Welton A were to be subject to a periodic review.

The site is roughly rectangular in shape and, including the access road and areas of screen planting, extends to some 3.4ha. Within this, the operational area extends to approximately 2.0ha. Significant established trees surround the site on all sides and effectively minimise views of the operations.

Plant and equipment on the site comprises principally the nodding donkeys and associated pipework, manifolds and a water injection pumping unit. There are no oil storage facilities at the site, with all oil being pumped, via Welton B site, to the Gathering Centre.

In addition to the wells and pipework, the site contains two principal buildings which house the electrical switchgear. The operational area is securely fenced and adequate car parking is provided immediately adjacent to the site entrance.

Previous operational experience has demonstrated that the site can operate with minimal environmental impact and, as all oil is removed from the site via the pipeline, traffic movements associated with the operations are minimal.

The operational area of the site is underlain by a geosynthetic membrane which allows the passage of clean water but retains any other fluids which are then removed from the site for processing at the Gathering Centre. All operational areas are maintained free of vegetation.

A noise assessment has confirmed that the site operates within published guidelines and the activities undertaken on site do not generate significant quantities of dust.

No additional development is planned outside of the existing operational area, therefore the site's potential for ecological impact is minimal and there will be no impact on any potential archaeological resource.

Upon the permanent cessation of operations all plant and machinery will be removed and the site restored to a condition suitable for agriculture/amenity use.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. The Application

Oil and Gas are currently extracted from the Welton oilfield via four unmanned well sites which are connected to the Welton Gathering Centre (WGC) by underground pipelines. The four well sites, Welton A, B, C and Nettleham, are shown on drawing number WLTB-04B and operate under separate planning permissions granted by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) as the appropriate Mineral Planning Authority (MPA).

The Welton A site operates under Planning permissions W.87/002/84, W.87/437/87, W.87/689/90 and W.87/818/96. The company was served with a notice dated 14th January 2011 by LCC that, in accordance with the Environment Act 1995, the site was to be subject to a periodic review. This notice, along with the current planning permissions covering the site, is reproduced at Appendix 3.

On receipt of the Notice the Company entered into discussions with the MPA and a formal screening request was made in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 as to whether the site would be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) during the periodic review.

The decision was that the proposed development does not constitute an EIA development and therefore this application is not accompanied by an Environmental Statement. This Screening Opinion is reproduced at Appendix 3.

Notwithstanding this, a comprehensive range of environmental issues have been considered in assessment of the site. The proposed new planning conditions for consideration by LCC are attached at Appendix 6.

2.2. The Applicant

Star Energy Oil & Gas Limited is part of the Star Energy Group, an integrated energy company that produces oil, gas and electricity from a large number of onshore oilfields in the United Kingdom. Its principal operations are focused on oil and gas fields in Hampshire, Surrey, West Sussex, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. The company employs some 80 staff in the East Midlands Area and spends in excess of £1m annually on taking services from local companies to support its operations.

Locally the company has recently taken on four apprentices for long term training, which includes regular attendance at Lincoln College. It is envisaged that these apprentices will replace staff due for retirement in the near future.

3. SITE DETAILS

3.1. Location

Welton Wellsite A (centred at NGR TF 036 768) lies approximately 1,000 metres to the north and 600 metres to the south of Sudbrooke and Scothern village centres respectively. It is located to the east of Sudbrooke Road, 1.6 kilometres to the north of the A158 (Wragby Road) and is accessed by a metalled roadway running east from the public highway.

For further details of the site's location and boundaries, see drawing numbers WLTA-04B and WLTA-05B, reproduced at Appendix 1.

3.2. Description

The overall site is roughly rectangular in shape and, including the access road and areas of screen planting, extends to some 3.4ha. Within this, the operational area, which is delineated by a 2.4m high security fence, extends to approximately 2.0ha.

The site is surrounded by productive agricultural land on all sides, with the closest residential dwelling being situated 210m to the northwest. Ellison Boulters Primary School lies approximately 300m to the north of the site, with the village lying beyond this to the north. To the southeast lies Sudbrooke Park, a former military base which now contains mature woodland, open grassland and a lake. The closest residential properties to the south lie over 450m from the site, on the northern fringe of Sudbrooke village.

The site is accessed via its southwestern corner and a designated car parking area is located immediately to the west of the operational area. A secondary access exists close to the southeastern corner of the site but its use is restricted to emergency purposes.

The site is well screened on all sides, with a substantial bund and established tree planting running the length of the northern, eastern and western boundaries. The southern boundary is marked by further established planting and normal site operations are effectively screened from all directions.

The site and its layout are shown in the context of their immediate surroundings in drawing numbers WLTA-05B and WLTA-06A, both reproduced at Appendix 1, and in photographs reproduced at Appendix 2.

4. OPERATIONAL DETAILS

4.1. General

Welton Wellsite A forms part of the Welton Oilfield, which comprises of WGC and four outlying oil well sites, namely Welton A, Welton B, Welton C and Nettleham, connected by underground pipeline to WGC. The Welton well sites (A, B and C) are located in the vicinity of Sudbrooke Park whilst the Nettleham site is located off the A46 to the north east of Lincoln.

4.2. Oil Extraction

Crude oil is extracted at the Welton A site from an underground oil-bearing reservoir and delivered to WGC by underground pipeline. Oil is extracted from three horizons within the Carboniferous system, notably the Brinsley Abdy, the Upper Succession and the Basal Succession, which lie at depths of between 1,200 to 1,500 metres below ground level.

Oil is currently produced from eleven wells and is pumped directly by pipeline to the Gathering Centre. In recent years production from the site has been in the region of 19,200 tonnes per annum however it is anticipated that production will gradually decline as the reservoir is slowly depleted.

The well site processes are limited to extraction of oil, with direct transfer by pipeline off-site, and activities relating to maintenance of the pipelines (pigging) and the wells. No oil storage or processing facilities exist on the site. Produced water is stored at WGC pending re-injection to either Welton A, Welton B or Welton C sites depending on reservoir management.

The pipelines between the site and the Gathering Centre are buried to a minimum depth of 1.2 metres and are of mild steel, welded, construction with no sectioning valves. Isolation of the pipelines is achieved by above ground, banded valves on each of the sites. The pipelines are protected from external corrosion by a cathodic protection system. Possible corrosion of the pipelines is monitored by regular planned maintenance inspections.

The oil is brought to the surface by the use of a beam pump commonly known as a nodding donkey, which consists of an electric motor, which is in turn attached to a system of cranks and arms which converts the rotary mechanism of the motor to a vertical reciprocating motion to drive the pump shaft.

The pump itself is located at the bottom of each borehole and consists of a series of valves which pump the oil which collects into the bottom of the borehole through perforations in the borehole casing. The speed and travel of the pump controls the amount of fluids that are pumped. The nodding donkeys generally operate 24 hours per day 365 days per year apart from routine or breakdown maintenance. It should however be noted that the management of the oil reservoir is complex and some wells operate intermittently in order to maximise oil production and minimise water production.

The nodding donkeys are mounted on a concrete plinth over a sump of concrete construction that is referred to as a well cellar and houses the oil well head and isolation valves. The well cellars are of impervious construction and are designed to provide spill containment during well head maintenance operations. The wells are designed with three concentric casings of different diameters to address bursting, collapse, buckling and tensile loading, with a safety factor designed in for each. The casing design is based on site sub-surface data collected from geological surveys and this helps determine the size, strength and setting depths of the casing.

The area comprising the well cellars, pipeline channel and termination area is of concrete construction and bunded to retain any oil spillage. The wider operational area is surfaced with compacted hardcore underlain by a geosynthetic membrane layer which allows the passage of clean rainwater but retains other fluids.

4.3. Production Rates

Production from the Welton field peaked in the early 1990s at some 150,000 tonnes per annum however this figure has steadily declined since 1998 and currently stands at around 30,000 tonnes per annum. The Welton A site contributes approximately 19,200 tonnes each year.

4.4. Site Monitoring

Site production is monitored remotely from the WGC control room, with instrumentation systems monitoring high and low wellhead pressure, electrical failure and fire detection. An alarm/trip action is initiated in the event of abnormal operation.

In the event of an emergency, systems on the well site can be shut-down remotely from WGC. In addition, an operator visits each of the well sites, in rotation, to ensure correct operation/security of the installation.

4.5. Plant

The plant and equipment present on the site is shown on drawing number WLTA-06A, reproduced at Appendix 1 and comprises principally of the nodding donkeys associated with the extraction of oil. Within the site boundaries the oil is carried to a central pipeline manifold in above ground pipelines and is exported to the Gathering centre via an underground pipeline.

In addition the site includes two produced water storage tanks and a pumping unit to facilitate the re-injection of produced water to the reservoir.

Electrical power is provided by means of a mains connection with a small substation situated close to the southern site boundary. Electrical switchgear is housed in two single storey brick buildings as shown on drawing number WLTA-06A.

4.6. Surface Water and Waste Disposal

Rainwater collecting in the sumps is periodically pumped to a road tanker for transport to WGC for processing. Foul water from the site facilities is dealt with by a septic tank and no trade effluent drains exist on the site. All waste materials are removed from site and transported to WGC for collection and appropriate off-site recovery or disposal.

The wider operational areas of the site are underlain by a geosynthetic membrane which allows rainwater to pass through whilst retaining any other fluids. These fluids are collected in a sump which runs close to the northern security fence and any fluids collecting in the sump are periodically pumped to a road tanker for transport to WGC for processing and there are no rainwater or effluent discharges from the site.

All waste materials arising from maintenance operations are removed from site and transported to the WGC for collection and appropriate off-site recovery or disposal.

4.7. Site Maintenance

Vegetation growth within the operational areas is kept to a minimum by means of the spot applications of herbicides and all working areas are subject to regular inspections in accordance with Star Energy's preventative maintenance system.

Wax deposits can accumulate in the inter-well site oil pipelines, which can reduce the pressure and ease of flow of the oil between the sites. These deposits are therefore removed regularly to improve operating efficiency by "pigging" the line. This involves a tight fitting plug known as the "pig" being inserted to the pipeline at a "pig launcher" and then forced through the pipeline by the pressure of the oil behind it. At the pipeline terminals "pig receivers" catch the pigs allowing the oil to pass through the pipeline to the next stage in the treatment process.

The well site is unmanned but receives regular, scheduled visits. Unauthorised access to the sites is prevented by security fencing, with the main gates being of sufficient size to allow access by HGVs for maintenance purposes.

4.8. Environmental Permitting

The site is subject to a permit issued by the Environment Agency. The Permit, number WP3531LU, relates to; *“The loading, unloading or handling of, the storage of, or the physical, chemical or thermal treatment of crude oil”*. The Permit is regularly updated resulting from minor site changes and through compliance notices and there is a full audit, including site inspections, at least once a year.

4.9. Restoration

Upon the permanent cessation of operations all plant and machinery will be removed and the site restored to a suitable condition. Where possible all established woodland planting will remain and, given the established nature of the surrounding vegetation, coupled with neighbouring land uses, it is considered likely that the restoration may be based on an amenity afteruse. Detailed restoration plans will be submitted to the MPA within six months of the cessation of operations at the site.

5. TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAYS

5.1. General

The site is accessed by a private metalled roadway which runs eastwards from Sudbrooke Road. Given that all oil and associated fluids produced from the site are transported to WGC by underground pipeline, the number of vehicles accessing the site is limited to those associated with well and site maintenance. During normal operations there would be an average of 20 light van movements (10 in and 10 out) per day and 4/6 HGV movements per week. During well maintenance operations the number of HGVs visiting the site may increase but this will be of limited duration.

All HGVs accessing the site are restricted to that section of Sudbrooke Road between the site entrance and the A158. All HGV drivers accessing the site are informed of these arrangements and appropriate signage is in place at the site exit to remind drivers to turn left.

On weekends during normal operations there will be 4 light van movements per day for morning and evening inspections.

5.2. Maintenance

The only additional vehicle activity occurs when the wells require maintenance and involves either a work-over rig, a crane for removing the drill string or tankers for carrying out a hot wash to remove wax deposits that build up in the oil well. The HGV movements associated with maintenance are usually limited to one movement in at the commencement of operation and one movement out on completion.

Workover operations typically take up to a week and are carried out during the normal site working hours. It can be anticipated that movements would increase up to a maximum of 30 movements per day (that is 15 in and 15 out) and comprise mostly of light vans. These movements will be for limited durations, not generally exceeding 5 working days

A hot wash is carried out by a tanker and a pump truck, being a specialised road going lorry and essentially involves an oil tanker being brought to site with water at circa 90°C. The water is transferred to the pump truck which forces the water down the casing and this is picked up by the pump and pumped up the tubing and collected in the normal site tanks. The heat from the hot water melts any wax accumulations, which occur naturally in the oil, and flow is maintained through the tubing. Such operations are generally undertaken every six to eight weeks.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ANCILLARY CONCERNS

6.1. Noise

A Noise Impact Assessment was carried out in accordance with the methodology outlined in BS4142 by Scott Wilson during August 2011 and the report is reproduced in full at Appendix 4. The assessment considered the impact of operational noise from the existing plant. The nearest receptors were visited during the daytime period and, as a result of background noise levels, no noise specifically attributable to the site was audible. It is concluded that noise from the site during the daytime period is therefore considered to be acceptable.

The resulting noise levels during the night time period have been measured and predicted under downwind propagation. This is considered to be representative of the typical worst case noise level that may arise. The measured and predicted noise levels at the nearest receptors show good agreement, and a noise level from site operations is no more than 38.5 dB(A) at the closest receptor.

The predicted absolute noise levels at all locations are below the night time threshold criteria given within MPS 2 of 42 dB(A) free-field. Consequently, the resulting noise levels from site are considered to be below the Government guidance on noise from mineral extraction operations and are therefore considered to be acceptable.

Similarly the noise level is below the absolute criteria given within the Environment Agency Horizontal Guidance for night time periods (42 dB(A) rated free-field). The night time noise level is below the level stated in the WHO (42 dB(A)) and WHO-NNG level of 40 dB(A) night outside as averaged over the year.

Assuming an open window provides at least 10 dB(A) attenuation, the resulting internal noise levels within all neighbouring homes is predicted to be below 30 dB(A). British Standard 8233 considers that the resulting noise level will all achieve the 'good' standard for resting and sleeping conditions.

The night time noise levels are below the Lowest Observable Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL). Consequently the guidance given Noise Policy Statement for England suggests that no further reduction of the night time noise level is required. The Site and operations are therefore considered to be compliant with this policy.

An assessment using British Standard 4142 indicates that at worst case the rated noise is 9dB(A) above the prevailing background at the nearest property and 5 dB(A) at the properties to the north in Scothern and 3 dB(A) at properties on the northern fringes of Sudbrooke. This indicates that the noise from the site is below the level at which and complaints are likely (+10 dBA).

The levels of site noise are considered to be compliant with the relevant guidance and consideration of the absolute noise level is shown to not result in any measureable effect during the night time period.

Condition 12 of the latest planning permission for the site (Ref. W87/818/97) states that *'The level of noise emitted from the site shall not exceed 40db between 21:00 hours to 07:00 hours and 45db at any other time as measured on the southern façade of the primary school to the north of the site'*

Both the predicted and measured noise levels have been demonstrated to be below 40dB at receptors significantly closer than the school and therefore it is concluded that the site is capable of operating in accordance with Condition 12.

6.2. Dust

The activities carried out at the site do not give rise to significant levels of dust and operational experience throughout the United Kingdom has shown that plant identical to that installed at the site can operate in close proximity to sensitive receptors without cause for concern.

The only potential for dust nuisance is from vehicles accessing the site however the potential for dust generation is minimised by maintaining all areas accessible by vehicles in an appropriate condition.

6.3. Flood Risk

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and as such is considered to be at minimal risk of flooding, being assessed as having less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding in any year (<0.1%).

Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk) states that all land uses are appropriate in this zone however, as the site covers an area in excess of one hectare; a suitable Flood Risk Assessment is required. This report is reproduced in full at Appendix 5.

This Assessment has identified no significant potential sources of flooding and concludes that the continuation of operations does not increase any flood risk either for the site or any third party properties.

6.4. Ecology

Operational areas of the wellsite are surfaced with aggregate, which is maintained free of vegetation and are consequently of negligible ecological value. Peripheral grassed areas are maintained at least annually or more frequently if required.

No further development in these peripheral areas is envisaged and as such the site's impact upon any habitats or wildlife is minimal.

6.5. Archaeology

The application does not call for any additional built development and therefore there will be no impact upon any archaeological resource.

6.6. Visual Amenity

The site lies in the Lincoln Fringes landscape character area as defined by West Lindsey District Council's (WLDC's) Landscape Character Assessment. The Lincoln Fringes area is characterised by a relatively flat, agricultural landscape influenced by sub-urban development. Fields are generally medium sized with hawthorn hedgerows boundaries and ash and oak hedgerow trees.

Whilst much of the local landscape is characterised by long, relatively open views, the wellsite is well screened by a mixture of bunding, hedgerows and established screen planting and WLDC's Landscape Character Assessment notes that '*...the oil well at Sudbrooke Park and the housing area nearby are generally well hidden by blocks of mixed woodland and boundary tree planting*'.

Longer distance views of the site are prevented by the subtle topographical variation and mature hedgerows bounding agricultural fields, which are typical of the surrounding area, and long distance views from the southeast are effectively screened by established woodland.

The photographs reproduced at Appendix 2 show the site in the context of its surroundings, with the locations of the viewpoints shown on drawing WLTA-07B. They identify key viewpoints and highlight visual mitigation introduced by a combination of topography, hedgerows and woodland planting.

6.7. Statutory Designations

A search of the MAGIC database confirms no statutorily designated sites within 2,000m of the site.

6.8. Public Rights of Way

A public footpath runs close to the eastern boundary of the site, as shown on drawing numbers WLTA-04B and WLTA-06A. Views into the site are limited to that of the eastern emergency entrance and the remainder of the site is screened by a combination of bunds and established planting.

The day to day operations at the site do not have any discernable impact upon the footpath and no future development is planned which may have any direct impact upon this right of way. The approximate route of the footpath is shown. Having regard to the fact that the site has been in operation for in excess of 25 years and is surrounded by mature trees, it is considered that the impact on this footpath is negligible.

Views of the site from the footpath/cycle path adjacent to Sudbrooke Road to limited by the boundary hedgerows and the only part of the site remaining visible are the entrance gates, some 200m from the footpath. Signage warning vehicles of the footpath/cycle path is in place at the site exit and cyclists are instructed to give way to vehicles exiting the site by markings and signage placed on the path by LCC.

7. PLANNING POLICY

7.1. Policy Framework

Whilst the site lies within the West Lindsey District, the competent authority in determining this application is LCC as the appropriate MPA.

At County level preparation of the Lincolnshire Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF) is now under way with adoption scheduled in 2012. Until that date however the saved policies contained in the Minerals Local Plan (MLP) remain in place and represent the most relevant development policies relating to this application.

In addition to the above, there are numerous Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) which may include relevant policies or guidance. Given that the site is an active mineral site, numerous mineral planning guidance documents also include relevant guidance.

7.2. Lincolnshire Minerals Local Plan

The Minerals Local Plan was adopted in 1991 and was due to be reviewed in 2001. Under the new planning system policies in the MLP could only be saved beyond 4th December 2008 if directed by the Secretary of State. Following a submission by the County Council, the Secretary of State directed that, notified policies within the MLP would be saved until replaced by new MWDF documents. Table 1 details the saved policies which relate to oil and gas developments.

M21	Deep Exploratory Drilling for Oil and Gas
M22	Planning Applications for Oil and Gas – Supporting Information
M23	Requirement to Submit an Overall Development Scheme for the Exploration of a Commercial Field
M24	Oil and Gas Development
M25	Oil and Gas Field, provision for Central Gathering Facility
M26	Central Collection Facilities in Predominantly Rural Areas
M27	Underground Pipelines

Table 1. Saved Oil and Gas Policies from the Lincolnshire MLP.

Clearly the bulk of these policies relate to new applications and as such have limited relevance to this application. Information required under Policy M22 has, where applicable, been included in this application.

7.3. Emerging Policy

LCC is currently preparing their MWDF, which will replace existing Minerals and Waste Local Plans and better address issues for future minerals and waste activities in Lincolnshire.

At present work is progressing on the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies - Preferred Minerals and Waste Strategies. The Preferred Strategies document follows on from the Revised Issues and Options consultation carried out in late 2009 and sets out the Council's Preferred Strategy in respect of future minerals and waste development.

As such there are no specific policies emerging from the process that would have relevance to this application.

7.4. West Lindsey Local Plan

The West Lindsey Local Plan 2006 included policies for the West Lindsey District, although no specific Policies are in place in relation to the site. The Site lies outside of the village envelopes of both Scothern and Sudbrooke.

The northern arm of New Ten Acre Covert extends to within 50m of the site and is covered by Policy NB12 – Development Affecting Locally Designated Nature Conservation Sites and Ancient Woodlands. This policy seeks to ensure that developments are not allowed that would adversely affect sites of nature importance or ancient woodland. Although the site lies within 50m of woodland, operations are wholly contained within the site's boundaries and therefore there is no discernable impact on the surrounding woodland.

POLICY NBE12 DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING LOCALLY DESIGNATED NATURE CONSERVATION SITES AND ANCIENT WOODLANDS, states that:

Development will not be permitted which would adversely affect any of the following, unless there is a demonstrable overriding regional or local need for the development which can not be accommodated elsewhere and the reason for the development clearly outweighs the need to safeguard the substantive nature conservation value of the site:

- i) Site of Nature Conservation Importance*
- ii) A local Nature Reserve*
- iii) A Lincolnshire Trust Nature Reserve*
- iv) A regionally important Geological or Geomorphological Site:*
- v) Ancient Woodlands*
- vi) Any species of animal or plant, or its habitat, protected under British or European Law.*

Where development is permitted planning conditions will be imposed which will require:

- a) That adequate opportunity is provided to enable proper recording of the site;*
- b) That before development commences measures are agreed with the Council and taken by the Developer which mitigates the effects of the development on the site, the woodland and the wildlife, and compensates for any potential loss, in order to recognise and preserve the conservation interest.*

Having regard to the date of the Local Plan the Welton A well-site would have been in existence at the time the policies were adopted and therefore their relevance is somewhat debateable. Notwithstanding this, the impact of the Welton A site on nearby woodland is negligible and the peripheral planting helps to provide a corridor for the movement of wildlife between nearby habitats.

Sudbrooke Park was a former military base with most of the buildings being removed in the early 1960s and the area now contains mature woodland, open grass areas, which are farmed and a lake. The Welton A site is contained within and surrounded by mature screen planting and established hedgerows, the site is not visible from Sudbrooke Park.

POLICY NBE8 HISTORIC PARKS AND GARDENS, states that:

Development will not be permitted which would harm the character, appearance, setting or features of:

- i) The historic parks and gardens within the list compiled by English Heritage***
- ii) Other parks, garden and formally laid out areas identified by the Local Planning Authority as being worthy of protection***

Given that the development pre-dates this policy, the extensive screen planting and bunding which combine to limit views of the site, and the fact that operations have been undertaken for in excess of twenty five years without detrimental impact upon the Park, it is considered that any impact upon the Park is minimal and therefore is in compliance with Policy NBE8.

The site is an existing operational site which predates these policies and there are no proposals under the Review of Mineral Planning Permission to extend the area of the operations.

Access to and from the site is outside the designated policy areas and traffic movements to and from the site are generally low and overall will have no impact on Sudbrooke Park. The continuance of operations at this site will have no impact on the policies contained within and retained within the framework of the Local Plan.

7.5. Planning Policy Statement (PPS)1

PPS 1 'Delivering Sustainable Development' (2005) sets out the overarching planning principles on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. It sets out the Government's key aims for sustainable development, and goes on to state in paragraph 23 of PPS 1 that when weighing up economic, social and environmental impacts of a proposal and its contribution to sustainable development that planning authorities should:

"Recognise the wider sub-regional or national benefits of economic development and consider these alongside any adverse impacts"

It is considered that this application does not conflict with the Government's approach to sustainable development set out in PPS 1, given that the operations are temporary, are a necessary stage in onshore oil and gas development and contribute to the UK economy, reducing reliance on imported energy resources.

7.6. Mineral Planning Statement (MPS) 1

Paragraph 2.1 of Annex 4 of MPS 1 identifies that part of the Government's energy policy is to aim to *"maximise the potential of the UK's conventional oil and gas reserves in an environmentally acceptable manner"*.

The Welton wellsites have been in production for a considerable period of time, and whilst it was expected that the reserves would be depleted sooner, reserves within the oilfield have been greater than originally anticipated. Production is still economically viable and whilst the rates of recovery are slowing down, with the infrastructure in place and the environmental and amenity impacts associated with the operations and equipment minimal, it is sustainable to maximise recovery from this reserve.

Annex 4 paragraph 2.2 discusses need for oil and gas supplies and identifies that in the short to medium-term, its aim is to maximise the potential of the UK's conventional oil and gas reserves in an environmentally acceptable manner. In the 2003 White Paper - Our Energy Future the Government states that it is committed to maintaining an active oil and gas industry in the UK and identifies that there is a need to prolong self sufficiency for oil and gas from UK reserves. The continued operations at Welton would help to contribute, in a small way, to the Government's need for UK oil and gas supplies.

7.7. Noise Related Policies

Planning Policy Guidance 24 (PPG24): Planning and Noise (1994), guides local authorities in England on the use of their planning powers to minimise the adverse impact of noise. It outlines the considerations to be taken into account in determining planning applications both for noise-sensitive developments and for those activities which generate noise.

The Government sets out more specific detailed guidance in relation to noise generated from mineral workings in Annex 2 of MPS2 - Controlling and Mitigating the Environmental Effects of Mineral Working Extraction in England. In paragraph 19 of MPS2 the Government supports the use of planning conditions as a tool for controlling environmental effects. It states:

"The use of appropriate planning conditions may sufficiently mitigate any environmental effects so as to enable development to proceed where it might otherwise be necessary to refuse planning permission. The sensitive use of appropriate conditions, which address known and anticipated problems and concerns, can provide important environmental safeguards."

As has been demonstrated by the appended Noise Assessment (Appendix 4), production operations at Welton A create little noise. The beam pumps are powered by electricity and are not normally audible at any sensitive locations.

Background noise levels are dominated by traffic noise from the A158 and more local roads. Occasional maintenance works are periods of possible increased noise, but these are limited and temporary events and except in emergencies are limited to the daytime.

Accordingly it is not anticipated that noise generated from the site will lead to any of the indicative noise levels contained within MPS 2 being breached.

APPENDIX 1

Plans