

J & D Skinner, 'White Mills Marina'

Pastures Farm

Grendon

Northampton

NN7 1JD

Environmental Statement (ES) Volume 1 – Non Technical Summary (NTS)

for Proposed 141 Berth Inland Waterways Marina with ancillary minerals
extraction

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1. Introduction

1.1 A planning application has been submitted to Northamptonshire County Council by John and Debbie Skinner trading as J & D Skinner. The application seeks consent under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for the construction and operation of a new inland waterways marina with associated access road, parking facilities and improved landscaping as well as the ancillary extraction of minerals. The development would be located on land adjacent to Station Road, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire.

1.2 The planning application is accompanied by the following documents:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Environmental Statement
- Sequential Test
- Waste Management Facility Strategy

1.3 The Environmental Statement (ES) presents the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) that has been undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. The ES is presented in four volumes:

- Volume 1: Non Technical Summary – summary of the proposal and key conclusions of the EIA.
- Volume 2: Environmental Statement including detailed assessments – a full description of the proposal, consultation process, planning policy context and the EIA.
- Volume 3: Figures and drawings – the figures and drawings used to illustrate the EIA.
- Volume 4: Technical Appendices – the technical reports and supporting information referred to in the planning application documents and EIA.

- 1.4 This document is the Non Technical Summary (NTS).
- 1.5 A full copy of the planning application including ES, Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Sequential Test and Waste Management Facilities Strategy have been submitted to Northamptonshire County Council.

2. The Applicant

- 2.1 The applicants, John and Debbie Skinner, are farmers who trade as J & D Skinner, farming land at Pastures Farm and the surrounding area. Their farming business has operated at Pastures Farm since 1984, prior to that Mr Skinners father farmed the land.
- 2.2 The farm extends to approximately 250 acres of land of which approximately 180 acres is arable, 40 acres grass and 35 acres grass/reed bed. It is a family run farm and the applicants have diversified in a number of ways including the provision of bed and breakfast in the farmhouse and by converting a number of redundant agricultural buildings in the farmyard to commercial use.
- 2.3 The applicants were aware of the River Nene Regional Park and the objectives to increase the number of recreational facilities associated with the River Nene and in 2009 started to work on the concept for the marina development at White Mills.

3. The Application Site

- 3.1 The application site is located on the western side of Station Road between Earls Barton and Grendon. It is centred on grid reference 485747, 262060.
- 3.2 Although it lies within the district of the Borough Council of Wellingborough, the planning application has been submitted to Northamptonshire County Council as the proposal involves the extraction of a small amount of minerals.
- 3.3 The marina will be located in a grass field immediately adjacent to the River Nene on its northern bank. The field is level and bounded on the eastern boundary with a mature hedge, the southern boundary by the river, on the western boundary a stock proof fence

and on the northern boundary a mixture of semi mature trees and steel palisade fence surrounding the adjacent commercial site.

- 3.4 The location plan SkinWM-001-Site Loc Plan and the site plan SkinWM-6108-01E Prop Site Plan detail the location of the proposed development and its layout. The application site and surrounding area are described in more detail in ES Chapters 3, 5-11.

4. The Application

- 4.1 The White Mills marina development is a proposal for an offline recreational marina, associated facilities building, car parking, highways and river access and ancillary extraction of minerals all of which would be located on agricultural land forming part of Pastures Farm.

5. The Proposed Development

- 5.1 The proposed development comprises a marina basin attached to the River Nene providing 141 berths for recreational river craft. The construction of the marina basin involves the extraction of approximately 20,000 tonnes of minerals all of which would be exported off site in an unprocessed state.
- 5.2 The marina basin will be formed using steel piles to minimise the volume of the development within identified flood plain.
- 5.3 A new highways access would be constructed to provide access to the marina and facilities building.
- 5.4 The moorings would be provided through the installation of floating walkways and jetties which would rise and fall with the river level and provide safe access and egress to the boats even during flood events.
- 5.5 The development will incorporate renewable energy generation in the form of a water source heat pump for the provision of heat and solar photovoltaic panels for the generation of electricity.

6. Iterative EIA/Design Process

- 6.1 In order to minimise any possible environmental effects of this proposed development a thorough assessment of site suitability including a scoping consultation exercise and iterative design and assessment process has been undertaken. The process has advised the applicant and their advisers on the most suitable design for the marina in order to accommodate a number of constraints and to mitigate where possible any significant adverse effects identified during the EIA process.
- 6.2 At an early stage in the scoping it was identified that the site lies within Flood Zone 3. The scheme has therefore been designed to ensure that this water compatible development has as little impact as possible on the identified flood zone.
- 6.3 The applicants and their agents also undertook a significant amount of correspondence and negotiation with the Environment Agency to ensure that all of their concerns were incorporated within the scheme design.
- 6.4 The scoping also identified that the site lies in close proximity to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits (Special Protection Area).
- 6.5 The applicants and their agents undertook a detailed scoping exercise with Northamptonshire County Council, Natural England and the RSPB to identify the extent of the Ecological Assessment that would have to be undertaken to advise the design of the proposed development to ensure that it, wherever possible, minimised the adverse impact and provided ecological enhancement.
- 6.6 These were the two primary areas that were considered in great detail by the applicants however the Environmental Impact Assessment also included extensive assessments on other criteria.

7. Consultations

7.1 The applicant has undertaken an extensive consultation exercise with statutory consultees and the Local Planning Authority.

7.2 They have also consulted the local community through the local Parish Council.

8. EIA Assessments

8.1 A full copy of all the EIA Assessments undertaken for this proposed development are included in Chapters 5-11 (ES Volume 2) with the supporting illustrations and figures in ES Volume 3 and Technical Appendices in ES Volume 4.

8.2 A summary of these assessments and key findings are provided below.

8.3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

8.3.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the proposed development has been completed in accordance with accepted guidance.

8.3.2 An assessment of landscape and visual components of the application site and the wider LVIA study area was undertaken through desktop and field study. This identified the main landscape character areas, types and visual receptors, and resulted in a baseline appraisal in the context of which landscape and visual impacts could be assessed.

8.3.3 The main landscape and visual implications of the proposed development and the potential impacts were identified and mitigation developed to minimise these impacts, where possible. Comparing the sensitivity of each receptor to the magnitude of predicted impact enabled the significance of the residual impacts to be assessed.

8.3.4 **Landscape Assessment** - The proposed development is located within the National Character Area 89 Northampton Vale, Landscape Character Type Broad River Valley Floodplain and Landscape Character Area - The Nene – Billing Wharf to Woodford Mill LCA 18d. There are a number of nature and heritage designations within the LVIA study area, all of which are outside the application site boundary.

- 8.3.5 The residual landscape effects from the proposed development are very localised in scale and restricted to the agricultural land within the site and its immediate surroundings. The construction and operation of the proposed development would cause some adverse effects on the landscape character and setting, however, those effects would not be significant. The alterations would reflect features that already exist within the study area, but on a larger scale. In the context of the overall study area, the impact – although adverse – would be relatively low. The significance of landscape effect has been assessed as being moderate adverse (not significant) and temporary during construction, and minor adverse (not significant) on completion. Effects on designated areas would be negligible (not significant).
- 8.3.6 **Visual Assessment** - Twelve viewpoints have been selected to represent the overall visibility and various types of views for the surrounding receptors. Following the implementation of mitigation measures, there would be effects on receptors represented by Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 and 10. The proposed development would not be visible from any other viewpoint identified in the visual baseline section due to landform, existing vegetation and built form around the application site. The development would not be distinguishable in the long distance due to the nature and low height of the development and its scale on relation to the wider landscape. Therefore there would be no impact on receptors represented by Viewpoints 5, 6, 8, 9, 11 and 12.
- 8.3.7 The application site has very limited visibility in the surrounding landscape. The only receptors that would experience moderate to major (significant) adverse change in views would be users of PRoW in the immediate vicinity of the site, to the south, west and east and the users of the River Nene, represented by Viewpoints 1, 2, and 3. Other nearby receptors, such as residents on the site that was formally used as an overwintering site for a fairground operation and nearby settlement edges would experience negligible/minor adverse change in views. Due to the nature of the proposed development, its relatively low height, existing and proposed screening around its boundary within the flat landscape, the vast majority of people within the study area would remain unaffected.
- 8.3.8 The majority of visual effects due to the proposed development would be not significant.

8.3.9 **Cumulative Assessment** - The combined effect of the proposed development and the Mineral and Waste extraction sites within the study area during construction and upon completion would not increase the assessed residual effects. The only potential increase in landscape and visual impact would potentially be to the combination of the Earls Barton Extension West allocation which incorporates the application site.

8.3.10 The scale of activity could vary significantly from the proportion of land allocated within the Development Plan Document. The low inter-visibility negates the overall impact as well. The potential combined visual effects of the proposed development and MA5, MA6 and MA12 allocations would be minor/moderate (not significant).

8.4 **Ecological Assessment**

8.4.1 The Ecological Assessment includes the following

- Extended Phase 1 Ecological Assessment and Report
- Habitat Regulations Assessment – Statement to Inform an Appropriate Assessment
- Otter and Water Vole Survey and Report
- Ecological Assessment Chapter within the ES summarising the Potential Impact and Proposals for Mitigation and Enhancement

8.4.2 The Habitat Regulations Assessment – Statement to Inform an Appropriate Assessment is an important document. This report examines the possible direct or indirect impacts that could arise from a development close to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area both during the construction and operational phases. It considers the nature of the proposals, pathways for impacts and the significance of any impacts which could arise.

8.4.3 An assessment of the likelihood or severity of impacts has concluded that the creation of a marina would not adversely affect the integrity of the SPA. This conclusion is based on the results of a wintering bird's survey, the information contained in the Environmental Statements for two neighbouring projects (Earls Barton Quarry Western Expansion and

Earls Barton Spinney) and the information contained in two of Northamptonshire's MWDF documents about local projects.

- 8.4.4 The Local Planning Authority agreed that an Appropriate Assessment in its pure form was not required but that further assessment and surveys may be required in order to inform whether the development has an adverse impact on the SPA.
- 8.4.5 The Chapter within the ES summarises the mitigation required and the potential longer term residual effects.
- 8.4.6 Habitat enhancements will involve the creation of reed beds surrounding the marina berths. These will shield activities within the marina and complement the restoration as proposed as part of the Spinney and Western Extension Quarries. Indeed the Earls Barton Spinney Quarry Environmental Statement cites the UK BAP and lists reed beds as a priority habitat type. Therefore the creation of reed beds at the marina will increase the amount of this priority habitat type within the local area and expand on the areas created by the two neighbouring quarries. Based on the receptors at the site, the background records detailing the species present in the area, creation of reed beds was considered the most appropriate enhancement at the marina site. The marina proposals will also create an area of standing water which may be used by birds from within the SPA. Although it is acknowledged that in the context of the local landscape this area of water is small, despite this, standing water is considered to be a more beneficial habitat for bird species than the closely grazed grassland currently present. A Habitat Management Plan will be produced in consultation with the County Ecologist and adopted to ensure the long term management of the enhancements on the marina site.
- 8.4.7 After implementation of all the mitigation measures there will still be a loss of 2 hectares of unimproved and semi improved neutral grassland. This will be replaced with open water and the marina berths. Around this area, the remaining circa 1 hectare of spare land will be enhanced by the creation of reed beds.
- 8.4.8 Mineral extraction projects surrounding the development site are also incorporating similar habitat enhancement measures. It is certain that the creation of the marina will encourage

boats to stop within the area. However it is unknown if this will lead to increased recreational pressure within the SPA or increase the total number of boats on the river at this location. It should be noted that water bodies of key ornithological interest are circa 1km from the marina. As such people moored at the marina would need to travel quite a distance from their boat to get to any sensitive areas of the SPA. In addition when considering areas outside of the marina, boats already use the River Nene and this has not resulted in a noticeable increase in recreational pressure or disturbance effects, as boats regularly move along the river as evidenced by the continued use of the SPA by significant bird assemblages. It is also predicted that the use of the marina will be seasonal, with greatest use during the spring and summer months. This would mean reduced numbers of boats and people in the winter when the SPA is at its most sensitive. Therefore it is considered unlikely that the marina would result in increased recreational pressures upon the SPA.

8.4.9 As such the report concludes there would be no residual impacts on the SPA or the integrity of the SPA.

8.5 **Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Assessment**

8.5.1 Prior to the preparation of the full Archaeological and Heritage Asset Assessment a desk based assessment was undertaken. The purpose of the desk based assessment was to identify whether the development may have an adverse impact on archaeological and heritage assets and therefore whether a field scale evaluation was required.

8.5.2 The archaeological desk based heritage assessment concluded that there are no designated assets within or adjacent to the site although a number are located within the wider search area including the Grade I Registered Park of Castle Ashby 800 metres to the south.

8.5.3 Extensive activity has been recorded on the light, free draining soils of the Nene Valley and significant areas have been excavated in advance of quarrying including the Neolithic and Bronze Age funerary complex at Grendon and Iron Age and Roman activity to the west, in part investigated at Clay Lane. However, much of this activity is located on the first gravel

terrace overlooking the River Nene, while the site lies on alluvial deposits of the valley bottom.

- 8.5.4 A water mill, latterly known as White Mills, may have had its origins in the medieval period and was located south of the site.
- 8.5.5 It is considered that there is a low potential for environmental remains from the Palaeolithic period and Neolithic or Bronze Age funerary monuments. The site was likely to have been marginal land from the Iron Age period and it is considered that there is a low/moderate potential for below ground archaeological remains of local significance.
- 8.5.6 The development will require a mitigation strategy to be formulated by the Archaeological Adviser for Northamptonshire County Council for the archaeological investigation, analysis and publication of any below ground heritage assets within the site. This will be applied as a condition of any planning permission for the proposed development. The mitigation strategy will be incorporated into the pre construction and construction phases of the proposed development and will be formulated to be accommodated within the set development parameters. It is considered that the archaeological evidence would be most likely to comprise palaeochannels associated with the Nene. Archaeological features predating the medieval period may also be present and are likely to be buried beneath alluvial deposits which appear to cover much of the site.
- 8.5.7 Evaluating the site's potential is problematic given the likely depth of alluvium over much of the site. The excavation of a small number of evaluation trenches set at 90 degrees to the river prior to the commencement of ground works would enable the deposit sequence to be calculated and a robust deposit model to be formulated. A more detailed archaeological strategy could then be implemented during the construction phase.
- 8.5.8 Implementation of a scheme of phased archaeological investigation will mean that the construction of the proposed development will have a minor impact on below ground archaeological remains. The residual impact of the proposed development will be that any archaeological and palaeoenvironmental remains impacted by the construction of infrastructure, excavation, landscaping and landforming, will have been excavated,

recorded and published. There will be no long term effects within the application site itself once the excavation and recording of the archaeological remains have been completed. The impact of the proposed development will be offset by the benefit accruing from the investigation into and the dissemination of the results of excavations and/or watching briefs of remains that may be present within the application site. The results of any archaeological investigation will have the potential to address national and regional research agendas and will add to the corpus of archaeological data for this part of the Nene Valley.

8.5.9 There will be negligible residual impact on the setting of any identified cultural assets.

8.6 **Transport Assessment**

8.6.1 A Transport Statement has been prepared to review the transportation and highways implications of the proposed development. The report concludes the following:

- The A45 is less than 500m from the marina site and this provides a convenient link to the wider strategic highway network.
- The site access junction will be via a simple priority junction at Station Road. Visibility from the site access junction meets the requirements of Manual for Streets.
- The 5 year personal injury accident data shows that there is no accident problem on Station Road and no example of accident involving traffic movement within the vicinity of the nearby proposed site access location.
- The impact of the marina during the peak summer months will involve an increase in traffic flows of around 7% on Station Road. This would have no material impact on the operation of the A45.
- The mineral extraction would take place over a short period of time and would not result in a significant number of HGV movements. The extraction material would be transported less than 1km from the site.

8.6.2 It is therefore concluded, for the reasons set out in the Transport Statement, that the proposed scheme will not have a severe traffic or highway safety impact and that there are no highways grounds sufficient for the refusal of the application.

8.7 **Flood Risk Assessment**

8.7.1 The Flood Risk Assessment was carried out following extensive consultation with the Environment Agency to establish the issues which needed to be considered relating to flood risk.

8.7.2 The Flood Risk Assessment was carried out in compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework Technical Guidance published in March 2012.

8.7.3 The site falls within Flood Zone 3 which is described as having a high probability of flooding. The development however is identified as a water compatible development within Table 2 of the NPPF Technical Guidance. Using the Sequential Test set out in the NPPF water compatible uses are permitted in Flood Zones 3A and 3B and therefore the development site complies with planning policy and the Sequential Test.

8.7.4 The marina has been designed to minimise the impact of the development within the flood plain, however the proposed earth embankment adjacent to the sheet piling will displace part of the flood plain and could exacerbate flooding offsite. In order to mitigate against this, flood compensation is proposed on a level for level basis.

8.7.5 The flood compensation proposals were presented to the Environment Agency who approved the scheme.

8.7.6 The FRA concludes that the proposed development complies with the requirements of the Sequential Test set out in the NPPF Technical Guidance.

8.7.7 The site will be constructed so that the proposed building would be protected from flooding and that there is a safe evacuation route offsite from the marina.

8.7.8 Flood compensation will be provided to ensure that there will be no net loss of flood plain storage.

8.7.9 A Flood Management Plan will be put in place to ensure that the site can be operated safely during flooding.

8.8 **Hydrogeological Assessment**

8.8.1 A Hydrogeological Assessment has been carried out to assess whether the proposed development will have an adverse impact on the extant water environment via reference to baseline data and the application of a series of matrices to ensure a rigorous and consistent approach.

8.8.2 A number of criteria were identified to guide the analysis of the sensitivity of the local baseline hydrological, hydrogeological and water quality environment.

8.8.3 The water environment within the Application Area and its environs has been investigated by reference to published and unpublished data. Detailed information relating to the near surface geology exists in the form of trial pits and mineral evaluation boreholes.

8.8.4 The marina is located immediately to the north of the River Nene, and a connection to the river will be provided. A 9-10 m standoff will remain between the southern boundary of the marina and the river bank.

8.8.5 The landform and hydrology of the valley of the River Nene in the vicinity of the Application Area has been modified significantly due to historic and current mineral extraction. The closest such feature to the Application Area is Earls Barton Quarry, which is located to the southeast.

8.8.6 The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 60 m east of the Application Area. The majority of the SSSI within 2 km of the site is located on the opposing southern bank of the River Nene. However, 20.4 Ha of the SSSI is located on the north bank east of the Application Area. The Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits is also designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site. The SPAs and Ramsar Areas within 2 km of the site comprise the areas on the southern bank of the River Nene and cover 124.5 Ha.

- 8.8.7 The geology comprises a variety of superficial deposits situated above the laterally extensive Whitby Mudstone Formation. The superficial deposits comprise Alluvium which consists of clays, silts, sands and gravels.
- 8.8.8 The superficial deposits are designated by the Environment Agency as a Secondary A Aquifer. The underlying Whitby Formation is designated as Unproductive Strata.
- 8.8.9 An indication of groundwater levels can be gained from data within some of the borehole logs discussed above. Water strikes were recorded whilst drilling boreholes 01/09 and 02/09 at depths of 1.1 m below ground level (mbgl), at each site. Comparison of the groundwater levels and geology shown on the borehole logs indicates that the sand and gravel is fully saturated and this was assumed for the purposes of calculations.
- 8.8.10 Details of licensed abstractions within a 2 km radius of the centre of the Application Area were determined from Envirocheck data. Four such licences were identified and their details obtained. There are no unlicensed water abstractions within a 2 km radius of the Application Area.
- 8.8.11 To allow safe and efficient excavation, the superficial deposits will be dewatered. The water ingressing to the site will be derived from groundwater inflow as well as rainfall, both from the footprint of the site itself and its surface water catchment.
- 8.8.12 Water will be discharged to the adjacent River Nene, following settlement to ensure that its quality complies with the likely conditions stipulated on an Environmental Permit, which need to be requested from the Environment Agency.
- 8.8.13 The potential impacts of the proposed development, both during construction and operational phases have been considered. A series of tables have been used so that the impact magnitude and its significance is assumed in a systematic manner. None of the identified potential impacts require specific mitigation measures other than the adoption of standard good-practice methods relating to storage of contaminants and fuelling and maintenance of mobile plant.

8.9 **Soils and Agricultural Land Classification Assessment**

- 8.9.1 The applicants did not commission a separate Agricultural Land Classification Survey. The land is identified as Grade 4 agricultural land as it is prone to regional flooding.
- 8.9.2 The development of the marina would not result in the loss of good quality agricultural land.

9. **Summary and Conclusions**

- 9.1 The proposed marina at White Mills helps to address the shortfall in mooring provision on the River Nene between Peterborough and Northampton.
- 9.2 The development provides not only safe secure offline moorings for river craft using the River Nene but also associated infrastructure including chemical toilet disposal, refuse disposal, pump out, water, electric and refuelling.
- 9.3 The design of the marina provides a facility that combines the functionality of berths, parking and associated facilities with enhanced habitats for biodiversity action plan species and will complement mitigation enhancements that are also planned for adjacent mineral extraction developments.
- 9.4 Although the development is located within identified Flood Zone 3 it is designated as water compatible development, furthermore the marina has been designed to ensure that there is no net loss of operational flood plain.
- 9.5 Approximately 1 hectare of land surrounding the marina basin, car parking and facilities building will be used for the creation of a reed bed which will provide a significant and valuable ecological enhancement to the area.
- 9.6 A thorough Ecological Assessment has been carried out and concludes that the development will not have an adverse impact on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area.

- 9.7 The development will provide a valuable recreational facility within the region and will help to deliver some of the 1,000 additional berths that have been identified by the River Nene Regional Park as required on the River Nene between Peterborough and Northampton.
- 9.8 The development will require the creation of at least one permanent full time and two part time jobs and will create the opportunity for other service businesses in the area to benefit from an increase in visitor and tourist numbers.
- 9.9 Hire boats will be provided as part of the development which will allow customers to enjoy the River Nene without having to own their own boat.
- 9.10 The operation of the marina will contribute to the farm income for the landowner and help to sustain the family farm through the creation of another diversification project that does not rely on agricultural income for its economic viability.
- 9.11 The construction of the marina will require the extraction of minerals to prevent their sterilisation. The amount of mineral to be extracted is small in relative terms when compared to the total tonnage of mineral to be extracted from the region from identified mineral deposit sites.
- 9.12 The mineral extraction phase will be completed within nine months.
- 9.13 The minerals will be transported offsite in an unprocessed state to a nearby processing plant.
- 9.14 The temporary nature of the construction period means that the environmental impacts will be short lived. There will be no aspects of the project that will have a significant adverse impact on local residents, highways network or the natural ecological and archaeological environments.
- 9.15 The construction and operation of the marina with associated mineral extraction comply with planning policy.