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## CHAPTER 1

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared on behalf of Applegreen plc (the Applicant) to accompany an outline planning application, made to Harrogate Borough Council (HBC), for the development of a new Motorway Service Area (MSA) on land between Junctions 48 and 49 of the A1(M), north of the B6265. All matters, except for means of access, are reserved for consideration at a later date. The development is hereafter referred to as the 'Vale of York MSA'.

1.1.2 The ES has been prepared in accordance with the Town and County Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended), referred to hereafter as the EIA Regulations. It should be noted that in May 2017 the Town and County Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 came into force. Regulation 78 sets out the transitional provisions between the 2011 and 2017 Regulations. This sets out that the 2011 EIA Regulations will continue to apply where a scoping opinion for the project was requested before the commencement of the 2017 Regulations. As described in Chapter 2.0 a Scoping Request was submitted to HBC on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017. On this basis the ES has been prepared in accordance with the 2011 EIA Regulations.

1.1.3 The ES describes the Proposed Development and provides an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects that may arise from the construction and operation of the Proposed Development.

1.1.4 This chapter provides the general background to the Proposed Development, sets out an outline description of the proposal, describes the site location, provides details of the applicant and defines the structure of the ES.

### **1.2 Background**

1.2.1 Proposals for an MSA at this location, albeit materially different schemes to that now proposed, have been refused twice by the Secretary of State in 2005 and 2012 on the basis of a planning balance and when set against alternative competing schemes. However, since the 2012 decision was issued new government policy guidance<sup>1</sup> on the need for new MSAs has been released. The

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<sup>1</sup> *Department for Transport Circular 02/2013 – The Strategic Road network and the Delivery of Sustainable Development*

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new guidance makes it clear that the maximum distance between MSAs should be no more than 28 miles.

- 1.2.2 In the case of the stretch of the A1(M) running through the HBC administrative area, and on northwards through Hambleton District and Richmondshire etc., there are presently no full MSAs north of Wetherby Services until Durham MSA, a distance of over 60 miles. Even taking into account Leeming Bar Rest Area, that is understood to have an extant MSA planning permission, although would not meet the current signing requirements for an MSA as defined in the Circular, the distance from Wetherby MSA to Leeming Bar Rest Area is 28.8 miles. The Vale of York MSA located circa 13 miles north of Wetherby MSA and 15.8 miles south of Leeming Bar Rest Area, and is thus well situated to fill the gap between these services. Applegreen is therefore proposing to develop an MSA at this Site to meet the established need along this stretch of the A1(M).

### **1.3 The Site and Its Context**

- 1.3.1 The Site comprises approximately 19 ha of land immediately adjacent to the A1(M) and A168 road corridor, approximately 750m to the north-west of Kirby Hill. The Site location is shown on Figure 1.1.
- 1.3.2 The southern boundary of the Site is defined by the B6265. The eastern, northern and western boundaries fall within agricultural fields. The Site and most of the surrounding area is used for intensive arable farming.
- 1.3.3 An established hedgerow, punctuated by occasional mature trees, runs along the western boundary of the Site. The embankments of the B6265 adjacent to the Site are planted with semi-mature woodland, as is the land that lies between the A1(M) and the A168 on the eastern side of the Site.
- 1.3.4 The B6265 crosses the A1(M) on an overbridge and links into a roundabout junction with the A168 to the immediate east of the A1(M), which includes 10m high lighting columns. To the east of the roundabout the B6265 continues towards the village of Kirby Hill. The A168 runs parallel to the south bound carriageway of the A1(M).
- 1.3.5 The nearest settlement to the Site is Kirby Hill, 750m to the south-east. Skelton-On-Ure is located 2.2km to the south-west and Marton-le-Moor 1.6km to the north-east. Boroughbridge lies on the River Ure, 2.0km to the south and Ripon is located 7km to the west.

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- 1.3.6 The nearest residential properties comprise a number of houses sitting alongside the B6265 to the west of the Site, with the nearest dwelling (Dale View) circa 250m from the boundary of the Site. This linear ‘settlement’ also includes the Grade II listed Skelton Windmill, which is 630m from the boundary of the Site. The northern edge of Kirby Hill village comprises residential properties, a farm, a church (the Grade 1 listed Church of All Saints) and a caravan park.
- 1.3.7 Other nearby residential properties are located as follows:
- Properties along High Moor Road (High Moor Lodge - 250m to the south)
  - Property off Leaming Road (Providence Lodge - 340m to the south-east)
- 1.3.8 Approximately 500m north of the Site is the Highfields Lane overbridge and embankment. Further to the north lies RAF Dishforth, approximately 2.0km from the boundary of the Site.
- 1.3.9 The Site forms part of an open undulating agricultural landscape characterised by large fields of arable farmland, few hedgerows and trees and scattered farmsteads. The Site’s topography is variable. Ground levels on the area of the site to the west of the A1(M) are in the region of 34.0 to 49.1 metres Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) and generally fall from north-west to south-east. Ground levels on the area of the Site to the east of the A1(M) are in the region of 35.2 to 40.6 m AOD, falling to the east and south-east.
- 1.3.10 To the east of the A1(M) the low-lying gently rolling landscape stretches to the foot of the Hambleton Hills, circa 15km to the east. The land is punctuated by occasional knolls and ridges of higher ground such as at Kirby Hill (43m AOD) and immediately north-east of the Site adjacent to Highfields Lane and the motorway overbridge (40m). To the west of the A1(M) the land rises to 58m AOD behind Skelton Windmill, and to 47m AOD on Langthorpe Moor.
- 1.3.11 The Site is not constrained by any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations nor does it contain, or form part of, any designated heritage asset, such as scheduled monuments and listed buildings.

## **1.4 The Proposal**

- 1.4.1 The Applicant is proposing to develop a new on-line MSA. The MSA would be located entirely on the western side of the A1(M), away from the village of Kirby

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Hill, but would service both directions of travel on the motorway via a new, dedicated junction with slip roads and an overbridge. The slip roads and junction arrangement serving south bound traffic will necessitate a short realignment (to the east) of the existing A168. The scheme masterplan is illustrated on Figure 1.2 and a layout of the MSA is illustrated on Figure 1.3.

1.4.2 The planning application is made in outline for all matters bar means of access. However, it is supported by an Illustrative Masterplan which has been used to inform the scope of the EIA development for which planning permission is being sought.

1.4.3 The key components of the scheme comprise:

- an Amenity Building containing hot and cold food outlets, a shop, lavatories, shower and seating / resting areas. This building would have a gross external floor area of up to 4,800m<sup>2</sup> and would sit under an innovatively designed, sweeping green roof which would assist with assimilating the scheme into its setting;
- a Fuel Filling Station with 10 islands (20 filling points) for cars, vans and small commercial vehicles. This would be located immediately to the east of the Amenity Building, underneath the same green roof;
- a separate stand-alone Fuel Filling Station with 5 islands (6 filling points) for HGVs and coaches;
- a separate stand-alone Drive through Coffee Shop;
- parking space provision for 364 cars (including spaces for disabled users), 90 HGVs, 18 coaches, 11 caravans, and 11 motorcycles. The parking provision would include electric vehicle charging stations. All parking would be free of charge for a minimum of 2 hours and meets the relevant standards for an MSA in this location;
- a dedicated means of access from the A1(M). This would comprise new entry and exit slip roads for northbound and southbound traffic. The new slip roads would lead to a new grade separated dumbbell junction, which would comprise two roundabouts on the eastern and western side of the A1(M) connected by an overbridge spanning the A1(M);
- a dedicated mean of access from the B6265 that would be only used for staff and deliveries to the amenity building and coffee shop. The entrance would be controlled by an access barrier and there would be no access to the public;

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- realignment of c.650m of the A168 to the north of the roundabout junction with the B6265 to allow the construction of the southbound access and entry and exit slip roads to the MSA;
  - an Abnormal Load Bay;
  - surface water drainage infrastructure, forming part of a site-wide sustainable drainage system;
  - An extensive on-site hard and soft landscape scheme, together with earthworks across the site and the provision of screen mounding. The landscape areas would incorporate:
    - A Children's Play Area;
    - Dog Exercise Area; and
    - Driver Stretch / Exercise Area.
  - other associated infrastructure including fencing, lighting and signage etc.

1.4.4 The design proposed for the amenity building has been developed to help assimilate the development into the surrounding landscape and mitigate the landscape and visual concerns raised in relation to the previous applications at the Site. The innovative design manipulates current site levels and incorporates, amongst other things, a living green roof to reduce the impact of the scheme within the local landscape. Sections of the indicative design proposals are shown on Figures 1.4a-b. Further illustrative sketches and drawings are included within the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the Planning Application.

1.4.5 A comprehensive landscape scheme has been developed that involves manipulation of the ground levels within the Site and landscape planting to reduce the visual effects of the development. The sensitively designed landscape scheme reflects the relatively open nature of the local landscape character and maintains the extensive views across the local landscape.

1.4.6 The MSA would be open 24 hours a day, for 365 days of the year. On this basis, and in light of the provision outlined above, the scheme meets the relevant requirements for an MSA, necessary to qualify for signage on the motorway network.

1.4.7 A more detailed description of the Proposed Development, including the construction phase, is provided in Chapter 4.0.

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## **1.5 The Applicant**

1.5.1 Applegreen plc is a leading operator of service stations in Ireland, the United Kingdom and the USA and employs more than 3,000 people. Established over 25 years ago, Applegreen operate more than 243 locations throughout the UK, Ireland and the USA. Applegreen operate a dozen Motorway Service Areas (MSAs) in Ireland and Northern Ireland, where they are the number one service area operator by site number and market share. In England, in addition to the Vale of York MSA scheme, Applegreen is currently progressing proposals for new MSAs in Solihull (M42), Rotherham (M1) and Basingstoke (M3).

## **1.6 This Document**

1.6.1 This document is the Environmental Statement (ES), which has been prepared to support the planning application for the Proposed Development.

1.6.2 Chapter 2.0 of the ES outlines the approach to the assessment describing the scope and structure of the ES whilst Chapter 3.0 summarises the main alternatives studied by the applicant. Chapter 4.0 provides a detailed scheme description. Chapters 5.0 to 13.0 assess the likely significant environmental effects of the Proposed Development during the construction and operational phases. Finally Chapter 14.0 summarises the assessment findings.

## **1.7 The Assessment Team**

1.7.1 AXIS is an independent planning and environmental consultancy specialising in environmental impact assessment of major infrastructure projects. AXIS has acted as the project planners and lead consultant / author of this ES. AXIS has undertaken the landscape and visual assessments and the socio-economic assessment for the project and has managed a team of other specialist consultants that have assessed the potential likely significant environmental effects of the project in relation to their specific areas of expertise. Specialist consultants have provided expert assessment in respect of the following:

- AFL Architects – Design and Architecture
- Fira – Landscape Design
- AECOM – Traffic and Transportation
- Argus Ecology - Ecology & Nature Conservation
- NVC – Noise

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- Smith Grant – Air Quality
  - Weetwood – Flood Risk and Water Quality
  - Eastwoods – Drainage Design
  - Soil Environment Services – Agricultural Landuse
  - AOC – Cultural Heritage