

## 5 Assessment of Vinci Ringway Capital Scheme Proposals: Solent & Southampton Water SPA/Ramsar

### 5.1 Review of effects on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA

#### ***Duver Road, St Helens***

5.1.1 The Screening Statement (UEEC, 2012) identified potential impacts on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar Site from;

- ▶ New drainage, potentially involving discharge to, or construction of outfall within, SPA/Ramsar; and
- ▶ Potential for construction disturbance to bird assemblage.

5.1.2 Vinci Ringway's current proposals do not include any proposals for new drainage. Potential disturbance to birds within the SPA/Ramsar site is therefore the only likely significant effect of this proposal. Piling is required both to support the reconstructed road and to create a short section of sheet piling. Piling operations can cause significant noise disturbance to birds.

5.1.3 The analysis of bird species and numbers present within the Bembridge Harbour and Brading Marshes WeBS core count area (section 3.1.4) show most waterfowl to be present in January and February with significant numbers present from November to March. Vinci Ringway propose that work on this scheme should be undertaken between October and November 2014.

5.1.4 Piling to support the road slab will be drilled using a hydraulically operated crawler mounted drilling rig. It is not known if the sheet piling will use percussion piling, vibro-piling or a combination of these two techniques.

#### ***Bouldnor Road, Yarmouth***

5.1.5 The Screening Statement identified potential impacts on the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and Ramsar Site from;

- ▶ New drainage, potentially involving discharge to, or construction of outfall within, SPA/Ramsar; and
- ▶ Potential for construction disturbance to bird assemblage.

5.1.6 Vinci Ringway's current proposals include the restoration of the existing drainage system that allows surface water from the road to discharge northwards to the sea. This will not have any effect on the SPA and Ramsar site which is located to the south of Bouldnor Road.

- 5.1.7 Potential disturbance to birds within the SPA/Ramsar site is therefore the only likely significant effect of this proposal. Piling is proposed between October and December 2014. Construction of the proposed sheet piling wall could cause disturbance to migratory waterfowl, affecting both species occurring in internationally important numbers (black tailed godwit and teal) and the internationally important assemblage of waterfowl.
- 5.1.8 Analysis of WeBS count data and other bird counts published in the Isle of Wight Bird Report (2010), suggest that significant numbers of black tailed godwit are present in Yar Estuary and potentially the Thorley Brook marshes throughout much of the year, in particular during the summer (July-September), autumn (October/November) and in late winter (February-March). Other waterfowl numbers reach a mid-winter peak building up from November to a peak in January and February and declining to March (Figure 3.4). There is no risk of disturbance to nesting Annex 1 birds from the SPA.
- 5.1.9 Installation of the proposed sheet piling wall is likely to be a potential source of disturbance. However, Vinci Ringway propose to use a 'silent piling technique' in which the piles are pushed into the ground rather than being driven with a percussion piling rig. If it is possible to use this technique then it is unlikely that there would be any disturbance to birds within the SPA. Experience from other piling operations in the Solent has shown that vibro-piling is not always able to sink piles through the heavy Tertiary clays found in the region and there is a risk that this method will not be viable in this situation. It is recommended that an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) is present during construction to supervise piling methods and advise on when and how alternative methods could be employed, if necessary, without adversely affecting the bird assemblage.

## **5.2 Assessment of Impacts on Solent and Southampton Water SPA against Conservation Objectives 1 - 3**

### ***Duver Road, St Helens***

- 5.2.1 Assuming that all piling operations can be undertaken without the use of percussion piling techniques, the level of disturbance will be minimal to the SPA and there would be no adverse effect on the population, range or habitat of the bird populations for which the SPA has been classified.

### ***Bouldnor Road, Yarmouth***

- 5.2.2 Assuming that all the sheet piling proposed can be installed using the 'silent' or vibro-piling technique, it can be concluded that there will be no adverse effect on the population, range or habitat of the bird populations for which the SPA has been classified.
- 5.2.3 There is a risk that percussion piling will be needed for part or all of the piling operation as a result of ground conditions, and great care will be needed in selecting an appropriate time of year for carrying out percussive piling in order to avoid disturbance to important bird populations within the SPA (see paragraph 5.1.9).

- 5.2.4 Percussion piling in mid- and late-summer (July-September) and autumn (October – November) could have adverse effects on black tailed godwits, particularly those associated with the flood plain of the Thorley Brook. Piling operations in winter between December and March could have adverse effects on a much wider range of species, both those occurring in internationally important numbers and those that contribute to the internationally important assemblage of wintering waterfowl.
- 5.2.5 Percussion piling between July and March could therefore have an adverse effect on Conservation Objective 2 (the range or distribution of birds for which the SPA has been classified) and Conservation Objective 3 (the extent of suitable habitat for these birds).
- 5.2.6 Percussion piling in spring and early summer (April – June) would have the least effect on bird populations for which the SPA has been classified. However, there could be disturbance to other nesting birds during this time of year, and this will need to be separately assessed.

### **5.3 Overall Assessment against Conservation Objectives 1 – 3**

- 5.3.1 It is concluded that, provided silent piling techniques can be used to install sheet piling at Bouldnor Road, Yarmouth and Duver Road, St Helens, then none of the capital schemes proposed by Vinci Ringway will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Solent and Southampton Water SPA and bird qualifying criteria of the Ramsar site. As a precautionary measure it is recommended that an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) is present during construction.

### **5.4 Assessment of Impacts on the Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site against Conservation Objectives 7 - 8**

#### ***Duver Road - St Helens***

- 5.4.1 No new drainage is proposed by Vinci Ringway for work on Duver Road and it can be concluded that there would be no adverse effect on Ramsar wetland habitats (Conservation Objective 7) or species (Conservation Objective 8) as a consequence of the proposals.

#### ***Bouldnor Road, Yarmouth***

- 5.4.2 No new drainage is proposed by Vinci Ringway for work on Bouldnor Road and it can be concluded that there would be no adverse effect on Ramsar wetland habitats (Conservation Objective 7) or species (Conservation Objective 8) as a consequence of the proposals.

### **5.5 Overall Assessment against Conservation Objectives 7 – 8**

- 5.5.1 It is concluded that none of the capital schemes proposed by Vinci Ringway will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the non-bird qualifying criteria of the Solent and Southampton Water Ramsar site.

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