

Our Ref: PJF/nss/PF/10557  
(Please reply to Banbury office)

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9<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Mr I Thompson  
Corporate Director, Planning, Growth and Sustainability  
Buckinghamshire Council  
The Gateway  
Gatehouse Road  
Aylesbury  
HP19 8FF

*FAO Steve Bambrick*

Dear Ian,

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990  
PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY  
RED FURLONG FARM, POUNDON**

I act for Flannery Plant Hire in respect of a development proposal that is particularly linked to the delivery of HS2 through Buckinghamshire, namely with the establishment of an Operator Skills Hub for training operatives of heavy construction plant and machinery including:

- Excavators
- Rollers
- Dozers
- Dump Trucks
- Dumpers
- Graders
- Telehandlers

Planning permission is sought for the temporary use of the land edged red for this purpose – for a period of 5 years.

As you will appreciate the construction of HS2 requires a substantial range of skilled personnel in the operation of both heavy plant and sophisticated machinery including GPS operated machinery and machinery used to detect the routes of conduits and services.

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EKFB CITB have trained over 500 candidates to date. This has been delivered in partnership with local training partners across the Bucks/Warwick region. The applicant is looking to replicate this with the Flannery centre – [www.ekfb.com/training](http://www.ekfb.com/training).

EKFB Civil Engineering and HS2 have made a commitment that 4% of the workforce on the project will be apprentices. This will be supported by supply chain partners such as Flannery.

To ensure the 4% commitment is made, EKFB have developed a local skills plan to support upskilling, local employment and the support of local businesses/communities. This is sought through working with supply chain partners to support the delivery with job opportunities, work placements and apprenticeships.

Currently (April 2021) EKFB requires approximately 1500 plant operators to support earthworks (over 300 Articulated Dump Truck (ADT) drivers at peak) and structures plant requirements. With further figures suggesting that at peak EKFB will need between 4,000 to 5,000 workers to support the delivery of the HS2 central section.

All operators are trained to pass the Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS), in effect a certificate of competence for operation of specialist plant. The test of competence includes a theory test, similar to the requirement for a driving licence. Operatives are firstly trained on 'plant' simulators – see enclosed schedule of photographs – and then are required to undertake practical experience with the large machines, excavating, moving soils and regrading soils.

This pre-application submission is supported by the EKFB Construction Skills Fund.

It is considered unrealistic to envisage that a site within the urban area can provide the facilities required for training, and an area of land for practical operation of large plant. The area cross-hatched at Red Furlong Farm has a lawful use for Class B1 development in part as a consequence of establishing lawfulness.

The site is located well to the HS2 infrastructure within the section between Birmingham and London. An Operators Hub has been granted at Dunton Wharf north east of Birmingham in the Green Belt by North Warwickshire Borough Council. This site also had an established planning history. I enclose a brochure which describes this established facility. I also enclose a copy of the Planning Permission and the Planning Officer's Report to the North Warwickshire Borough Council Planning Committee. I acknowledge that the site history of the Dunton Wharf site, and its location between strategic highway infrastructure is distinct from the proposed location.

The training scheme lasts four weeks of intensive learning. Flannery Plant Hire seek to provide on-site temporary accommodation for 40 personnel at any one time in modular accommodation, and use existing hard standing for the provision of up to ten touring caravans. The provision of skilled employment for HS2 is to be sourced at least county-wide. Hence the provision of onsite accommodation is significant in enabling trainees to be readily accessible to the operating centre, avoiding travel to and from the centre, and particularly ensuring the access to the training centre is not denied by the limited availability within the locality of short-term accommodation. It is envisaged that the provision of modular accommodation will achieve a more speedy and cost effective provision of accommodation then contemplating the re-use of existing buildings D.

The training centre would also be assembled as a modular unit with accommodation comprising:

- Simulator room
- Training room
- Theory test room – observed by CCTV to ensure no cheating
- Medical room

- Kitchen / dining room
- Mess facilities for changing
- Administration offices

It is of course acknowledged that this site is located within the open countryside. Nevertheless, that part of the site proposed for temporary built development and the stationing of touring caravans has an established lawful use for commercial development.

A planning condition may be imposed to secure the removal of all plant, machinery and structures at the end of the temporary period, and the restoration of the 'practical operational area' to agriculture.

I am advised that the establishment of a skills centre in Buckinghamshire has been discussed in principle by the LEP and the Government because of its significance to the delivery of HS2 in the provision of skilled operatives. Flannery and their partners in this development are in contact with Buckinghamshire College Group to promote pathways into careers with plant operation and civil engineering. The underlying intention is to upskill a workforce who can, with certificates of competency, be readily employed within massive civil engineering projects such as HS2. I attach details below of the number of apprentices anticipated during a year, and the number of operatives who will achieve upskilling certificates of competency.

	2023	2024	2025	Total
Plant Operator Apprentices	30	30	30	110
GPS	250	250	250	850
Adv. CPCS	60	60	60	205
Eco-Operators <sup>1</sup>	200	200	200	700
Compliance Plus <sup>2</sup>	300	300	300	1100
<b>Total</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>2925</b>

Credited environmental awareness

Days training for competence on car

It is of course recognised that the proposal introduces new built-form into the open countryside (initial discussion with the LEP considered the possibility of refurbishing existing buildings but this is not the desired approach in order to achieve the high-quality accommodation and speed of delivery), and that there will be an adverse visual impact to users of the PRoW which crosses the land. These are matters which go to a planning balance and should be weighed with the public benefits arising from this investment which is responsive to the economic need of HS2 (Framework 28). The request is for a short term duration of development which is essentially reversible.

I am instructing the undertaking of an ecological assessment and a noise assessment for the operation of the external plant. A Transport Statement will be prepared based on first principles for this proposal. I welcome your consideration as to whether any additional assessments will be required. The route of the PRoW would be protected during operation, with a crossing point provided for plant and machinery. This crossing point would be provided with a stone surface to avoid rutting of the path. A banksman arrangement would be operated when large machinery crosses the PRoW.

<sup>1</sup> These are trained operators to promote sustainable measures such as reducing fuel consumption.

<sup>2</sup> This is a certification of competence for 'entry' on to HS2.

I shall be pleased to discuss the principles with you.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature block]

[Redacted name block]

Enc: Location Plan  
Training Room Layout Plan  
Schedule of Photographs  
Dunton Wharf brochure  
Dunton Wharf Planning Permission  
Dunton Wharf Planning Officer's Report  
Fee

Cc: [Redacted] for monitoring