

Rebecca Long Bailey MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
5th August 2020

Miss Sarah Allen
United Utilities
Thirlmere House
Lingley Mere Business Park
Lingley Green Avenue
Great Sankey
WA5 3LP

BY EMAIL

RE: Planning application - 20/75576/FUL – Proposed installation at Three Sisters nature reserve, Chatsworth Road, Eccles

Dear Miss Allen,

I am writing in relation to the above matter as the MP for Salford and Eccles on behalf of a number of concerned constituents.

I understand that in order to alleviate the sewer flooding risk to a number of properties in the area United Utilities are proposing to install new sewers on Rutland Road, Sandwich Road and Westminster Road and install a below ground storm water detention tank, together with an associated valve chamber, control kiosk, pressure relief column and a series of pedestrian paths in part of the Three Sisters Nature Reserve. The footway running adjacent to the site would also be upgraded and the necessary service connections installed.

Whilst there is no question that my constituents would have no objection to the carrying out of any works required to protect homes in the area, the proposals outlined thus far have sadly not provided any reassurance that disruption to the nature reserve would be minimised, nor that any other viable options within the area have been considered.

You will no doubt be aware from your investigation of this site that it provides an important wildlife haven in the city and part of it is designated as a site of biological importance. Further an old Roman Road runs under the site which was once the main link between Manchester and Wigan. It is also a major local green space that plays its part in battling against the current climate and environmental crisis we face.

As a result there is huge concern as to the eradication of mature and diverse habitats which form part of the plans, not least plants, trees and the wildlife that has been spotted there and the replacement with young plants and saplings which will take many years to establish the same levels of density.

I note in that United Utilities' current environmental policy states that you will *"Protect and, where appropriate, enhance the natural environment and the value of services it provides, particularly with regard to areas of biodiversity and the spread of invasive species"* and as a result I am hopeful that you will want to demonstrate as much flexibility as possible to ensure that biodiversity at Three Sisters is protected.

I would be grateful if you would agree to meet with my constituents as a matter of urgency and I understand that our local councillors have made this request to you also.

In addition to this I would be grateful if you could respond to the following issues which have been raised with me:

1. Please could you provide details of any alternative sites and layouts which have been considered and the extent to which they would have mitigated or exacerbated disruption to the site, for example, enhancing existing sewer systems. Further, could you confirm the reasons for rejecting these locations whether that be as a result of financial or geological considerations.
2. The plans submitted show a large area of the nature reserve being used for a car park, compound and storage of materials in order to carry out works on the drains in the area, which I have been informed are not directly related to the actual installation of the storm tank. In order to mitigate unnecessary disruption to the site could you confirm if alternative storage compound locations have been considered, for example the large open area south of Wentworth or Wentworth High School site? If not would you be willing to consider examining these options?
3. I am informed that there are currently two examples of storm tanks in the area which have been installed under the road. It has been suggested to me that if the tank was under the road surface that would reduce the need to lay pipes along half of Rutland Road. One example given was at the intersection of Westminster and Rutland Road, with the unit located on the grass verge similar to the telecoms cabinet. Please would you confirm if this is something you will consider?
4. Concerns have been raised with me that the information provided to immediate residents during a door knocking consultation was in conflict with the application documents submitted, namely the size of the kiosk, the number of trees to be felled and the amount of disruption the works would cause. Further, whilst I appreciate that the COVID 19 crisis has limited the ability to hold resident meetings to a wider section of the community, could you confirm if you propose to hold a public briefing event in addition to meeting residents as requested above, so that the application can be clarified and concerns addressed directly.
5. I understand that the nature reserve is protected by virtue of the Unitary Development Plan and whilst as a utility provider you may wish to attempt to apply for permitted development on the non-external parts of the site, it was felt by my constituents that overall the site, including those external parts subject to the planning application, would not be appropriate for development. Not least because of the protected wildlife reported there and because of fears that eradicating large elements of well established biodiversity could result in paving the way for further development. Please could you provide your thoughts on this.
6. Concerns have been raised with me regarding the adequacy of Habitat and Archaeological reports. One example given to me was the protection of bats and a lack of detail in the

relevant report. I understand that bats could be negatively affected by the felling of trees which could interrupt their ability to guide themselves to their feeding area from the older buildings and trees where they roost outside of the reserve.

According to the Bat Conservation Trust the conservation of bats within the built environment is reliant on the delivery of three factors:

- a. the provision of roosting opportunities;
- b. the availability of foraging and commuting habitat; and
- c. the appropriate management / protection of existing roosts and areas.

There are fears that development at the site could result in a disruption of all three as well as other species that have been spotted such as herons, parquets, turtles and other reptiles and birds. I would be grateful for confirmation that these issues have been adequately addressed by way of extensive survey. Could you also confirm if a standalone bat survey has been commissioned?

You will no doubt understand how important this area is not just for biodiversity but also for the mental health and wellbeing of people right across Salford. As such I would be grateful if you would provide any assistance and flexibility that you can in addressing the concerns I have raised.

Yours Sincerely

Rebecca Long Bailey
Member of Parliament for Salford and Eccles