Gate three query process

Strategic solution(s)	LWR
Query number	LWR015
Date sent to company	28/01/2025
Response due by	30/01/2025

Query

Environmental Impact and Mitigation

- Explain any residual concerns from discussions with the nature organisations with an interest in the Hams Lands Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and functionally linked special areas of conservation.
- Provide more detail on the proposed use of *…exclusion zones around suitable habitat and/or translocation of deadwood habitats. It is considered that this mitigation would be sufficient to avoid adverse effects to the integrity of the site.* Please detail how this is currently proposed to work in practice.

Solution owner response

This response has been written in line with the requirements of the RAPID Gate 3 Guidance and to comply with the regulatory process pursuant to Thames Water's statutory duties. The information presented relates to material or data which is still in the course of completion. Should the solution presented be taken forward, Thames Water will be subject to the statutory duties pursuant to the necessary consenting process, including environmental assessment and consultation as required. This response should be read with those duties in mind.

Q1: Explain any residual concerns from discussions with the nature organisations with an interest in the Hams Lands Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and functionally linked special areas of conservation.

R1: Ham Lands Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) provides suitable habitat for stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus)* which is the qualifying feature of Richmond Park Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Ham Lands SINC (and Local Nature Reserve (LNR)) is therefore considered to be functionally linked land as the habitats may be frequently used by stag beetle and will help to support the functionality and integrity of the designated site.

Stakeholder engagement is ongoing with the EA and the LPAs and will include discussion about Ham Lands SINC through 2025.

Through 2024 Thames Water has engaged with NE regarding the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Stage 1 Screening and Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment for the Project. We provided a HRA screening assessment to PINS as part of seeking an EIA scoping opinion; see – HRA Screening for TDRA.pdf. Discussions have been held around proposed mitigation for the potential loss of functionally linked stag beetle habitat. The mitigation strategy will be outlined in the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment prepared later this year. Following engagement sessions, Natural England has indicated no residual concerns about the SINC.

Q2: Provide more detail on the proposed use of …*exclusion zones around suitable habitat and/or translocation of deadwood habitats*. *It is considered that this mitigation would be sufficient to avoid adverse effects to the integrity of the site.* Please detail how this is currently proposed to work in practice.

R2: It is proposed that any habitat considered to be suitable for stag beetle such as deadwood piles and decaying tree stumps would be retained on site where feasible. A supervising ecologist would work with the site contractor to install an appropriate works exclusion zone around these habitats to be retained wherever practical. The works exclusion zone should be no less than 5m but where feasible, a larger exclusion zone will be installed. Within this exclusion zone there would be no site works, storage of plant or machinery, no fires and no loitering of staff. The works exclusion zone would be fenced off appropriately with either hazard tape or Heras fencing (or similar).

It should also be noted that suitable stag beetle habitat should not be left isolated from other nearby habitats such as scrub or woodland. Isolating these habitats could lead to greater levels of predation from a lack of cover for example. Where a deadwood habitat could be retained but where it would be left isolated from other nearby suitable habitat or where there will be

unavoidable impacts to the habitat, the ecologist will recommend that the habitat be translocated to a more suitable area of the site.

Translocation of deadwood habitat will be supervised by a suitably experienced and competent ecologist. The habitat will be carefully dismantled by hand, where feasible, and relocated to a suitable area of retained and undisturbed habitat nearby.

Confirmation of our mitigation will be outlined in a draft Code of Construction Practice which will be prepared for the DCO application.

If you require any further information, please contact the strategic solution contact below

Date of response to RAPID	30/01/2025