

3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The aim of this Chapter is to describe the site of the Proposed Development and its surroundings. The Application Site lies in North Yorkshire, approximately 15km west of Scarborough and 30km north-east of York. North Yorkshire is England's largest rural county with a population of approximately 599,000 covering 7,770sqkm. The County is characterised by a varied landscape which includes two National Parks and approximately 72km of coastline which borders the North Sea. Outside the major urban centres of York, Northallerton, Whitby and Harrogate, the County is predominantly rural and the local settlement pattern comprises a network of towns, villages, remote residential properties and farmhouses linked by A roads, minor roads and tracks.
- 3.2 The area in which the Ryedale Gas Project is proposed is predominately rural, comprising agricultural fields, a number of scattered residential properties, farm holdings and some commercial uses. The villages of Ebberston, Thornton-le-Dale, Wilton and Allerston, and the town of Pickering are located within the vicinity of the Proposed Development.
- 3.3 The Application Site covers a large geographical area, extending from the existing Ebberston Wellsite located near Ebberston Common Lane to the proposed Hurrell Lane Gas Processing Facility and the AGI to the south of New Ings Lane. The proposed pipeline route between the Wellsite and the Gas Processing Facility is approximately 8.6km; firstly, running west toward Dalby Forest and subsequently south-west along the edge of the Forest; then continuing eastwards to the north of Wilton through Wilton Heights; then continuing in a south-west direction through Thornton High Fields; and, finally, continuing south between the villages of Wilton and Thornton-le-Dale to the proposed Gas Processing Facility at Hurrell Lane.
- 3.4 The Proposed Development is situated in the administrative areas of Ryedale District Council (RDC), North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and the North York Moors National Park Authority (NYMNP).
- 3.5 As summarised above, the Proposed Development consists of five main elements as follows:
- Gas production from the existing Ebberston Wellsite;
 - The construction of two underground gas pipelines from the existing Ebberston Wellsite to a new Gas Processing Facility;
 - A new access road between the A170 and the proposed Gas Processing Facility;

- A Gas Processing Facility at Hurrell Lane, Thornton-le-Dale; and
- An Above Ground Installation (AGI) connection into the existing National Transmission System (NTS) pipeline to the south of the Gas Processing Facility on land off New Ings Lane.

3.6 The main elements of the site and their surroundings are described below. **Figure 3.1** shows the site and its surroundings and provides a context for the commentary.

Ebberston Wellsite

3.7 The existing Ebberston Wellsite is located approximately 6km to the north of the A170 Pickering to Scarborough Road. Planning permission for the site was granted in December 2007 (Decision Number NYM/2007/0901/FL) by the North York Moors National Park Authority.

3.8 The Wellsite forms a roughly square shaped area of land, approximately 1.61ha in extent. The site is separated from open farmland by a substantial hedgerow which aligns the North York Moors National Trail. Land to the south and south-east is primarily open farmland used for arable farming. Land to the north, west and south-west is forested. Access to the Wellsite is gained from a track off the metalled access road leading from the A170, to Givendale Head and High Scamridge Farms, and into Dalby Forest.

3.9 The site is enclosed by a 2m high post and wire fence. The top soil and sub soil has been scraped to a depth of approximately 1m where it has been used to form a 0.5m tall 'dust bund' surrounding the scraped area, and an earth bund approximately 2.5m tall aligning the eastern boundary adjacent to and inside the fence line. A number of shorter bunds of similar height have been formed in the north-western corner of the Wellsite. A geo-textile sheet has been spread across the Wellsite and covered by a thin layer of soil to secure it in place. This sheet overlaps drainage channels which form the edges of the scraped 'pan' aligning the earth bunds. Several short concrete pipe sections have been stored near the northern section of the Wellsite.

3.10 There is no significant vegetation within the Ebberston Wellsite, other than self-seeded weeds and grasses while the west-flanking earth bund features seeded grass cover. A narrow unmanaged grass strip approximately 10m wide separates the post and wire perimeter fence from the plantation to the east and north of the Wellsite. Scrub planting along the southern boundary separates the perimeter fence from the North

York Moors National Trail. To the west, a narrow gently undulating rectangular shaped field comprising crop planting separates the Wellsite from the metalled access road providing public access into Dalby Forest.

- 3.11 The existing Ebberston Wellsite lies on land at an elevation of approximately 220m AOD, which rises gradually to the west, to a height of 225m along the route of the proposed pipeline. Land to the north falls away sharply, although the perception of this is masked by the plantation of trees in this part of Dalby Forest. Land immediately to the south of the Wellsite extends for some 200m before dropping away to form a series of narrow valleys which extend down towards the A170.
- 3.12 There are no large settlements within 3km of the existing Ebberston Wellsite although several large working farms lie in close proximity, including Givendale Head Farm and High Scamridge Farm, approximately 900m to the north-west.

Pipeline Route

- 3.13 The proposed pipeline route, which comprises one 100mm diameter pipeline and one 300mm pipeline, runs from the Ebberston Wellsite to the proposed Gas Processing Facility at Hurrell Lane. It extends for 8.6km and would be accommodated in a 7.4m wide easement. The proposed route would traverse an area of predominantly agricultural land which extends from Dalby Forest southwards before dropping down an escarpment into an area typical of the Vale of Pickering. The proposed pipeline route will cross one main carriageway - the A170 - as well as a number of minor access roads and public rights of way. The route passes between two medium-sized settlements – Allerston and Thornton-le-Dale - as well as two farmsteads.
- 3.14 In respect of topography the proposed pipeline route extends to the west from the existing Ebberston Wellsite, crossing farmland which undulates between 210m and 225m AOD, across a shallow valley and rising up into the Dalby Forest. The proposed pipelines runs along a narrow ridge which extends south-west through Dalby Forest, gently sloping down to a height of approximately 200m AOD as it emerges from the forest. At this point the land drops steeply, creating an escarpment, the Wilton Heights, which aligns the Vale of Pickering running in an east-west direction and drops down towards the A170 which lies at a height of between 65m and 70m AOD. The proposed pipelines run west along the crest of the bluff before dropping down to cross the A170 between Wilton and Thornton-le Dale. The proposed pipelines then cross gently sloping farmland, dropping from 65m AOD to 25m AOD, to meet the valley floor, at 20m AOD.

Hurrell Lane Gas Processing Facility

- 3.15 The proposed Hurrell Lane Gas Processing Facility is located approximately 2km to the south-east of Thornton-le-Dale. This site, including the construction compound, is approximately 6.5ha in extent and is bounded by Hurrell Lane to the west and by New Ings Lane to the south. The A170, which passes through Allerston, Wilton and Thornton-le-Dale, is located approximately 1km to the north. A dismantled railway embankment, extending east-west, lies immediately to the north. Land surrounding the proposed Gas Processing Facility is in agricultural use, both for arable and pasture farming.
- 3.16 The site comprises a flat arable field surrounded by similar fields of arable farmland. There are few built influences in the immediate vicinity of the site. The northern boundary is formed by a dismantled railway embankment, approximately 5m in height. The southern boundary of the site is formed by a hedgerow which aligns New Ings Lane and partially along this Lane lies an old brick and tile barn. Hurrell Lane aligns the hedgerow along the western boundary of the site. There are a number of mature hedgerow trees in this area, seen both along the hedgerow aligning New Ings Lane and along the dismantled railway embankment. A copse of mature trees is situated opposite the site adjacent to Hurrell Lane.
- 3.17 The site at Hurrell Lane is located at an elevation of 20m AOD within farmland on the valley floor of the Vale of Pickering.

Surroundings

- 3.18 The surroundings are predominantly rural with an undulating landscape characterised by woodland and fields bounded by hedgerows. The landscape includes a number of villages, hamlets and scattered farm buildings and isolated houses. There are a number of areas of wildlife importance and features of historic or architectural importance in the area.
- 3.19 The majority of the Proposed Development is located within the National Character Area of the North Yorkshire Moors and Cleveland Hills (No. 25). This area is characterised by its upland plateau landscape and undulating land. That part of the Proposed Development which lies south of the A170, including the proposed Gas Processing Facility, is situated in the National Character Area of the Vale of Pickering (No. 26), which is described as gently undulating and low-lying flat Vale.

- 3.20 Vegetation surrounding the sites includes areas of plantation woodland within Dalby Forest surrounding the existing Ebberston Wellsite and the northern sections of the proposed pipeline route. These forested areas enclose the Wellsite acting as a visual screen between adjacent roads and properties. The middle section of the proposed pipeline route extends across open farmland where trimmed hedgerows up to approximately 1.8m in height form boundaries around fields of crops or grassland used for grazing. There are few hedgerow trees on the steeply sloping sides of the escarpment dropping down to the Vale of Pickering. The southern section of the proposed pipeline route, as it crosses the A170, runs through a landscape exhibiting a similar character of hedgerow bounded fields, however more hedgerow trees exist along these boundaries on the lower, gently sloping valley side landscape of the Vale of Pickering. Further south, beyond the Hurrell Lane Gas Processing Facility, where the land flattens out there are once again few hedgerow trees.
- 3.21 There are a number of areas of nature conservation importance in the area. At the point which the proposed pipeline passes through Wilton Heights, Nabgate SSSI is situated approximately 0.65km north and Ellerburn Bank SSSI is situated approximately 0.75km north. Nabgate SSSI consists of 6.7ha on Sand Dale, a north-facing slope on Corallian limestone, of significance for its species rich calcareous grassland. Part of this SSSI site, approximately 4.2ha, is also the Ellerswood and Sand Dale Special Area of Conservation, including bogs, marshes, fens, heath and grassland. Ellerburn Bank SSSI lies on Oolitic Limestone, of interest for its species rich calcareous grassland flora. Approximately 0.25km north of the existing Ebberston well-site lies Troutsdale and Rosekirk Dale Fens SSSI, consisting of 13.1ha broken up into four units, which include nationally rare fen systems.
- 3.22 Within the surrounding area there are several designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments, including a medieval settlement; several bowl barrows; the Scamridge Dikes and Oxmoor and Givendale Dikes; a medieval manorial centre; and lime kilns. Although there are no buildings listed of architectural or historic importance within the sites, there are a number within the wider landscape, generally located in the surrounding settlements of Allerston, Wilton and Thornton-le Dale. The Listed Buildings are identified on Figure 3.1. Those which are orientated towards the Proposed Development include:
- Scamridge Farm House, Grade II Listed (1490 metres from the proposed pipeline route);

- High Paper Mill Farmhouse and attached buildings, Grade II Listed (675m from the proposed pipeline route); and
- Prospect Farm House, Wilton, Grade II Listed, (675m from the proposed pipeline route).

3.23 There are a number of public footpaths and bridleways in the area. Public rights of way (PRsOW) in the locality of the Application Site are shown on Figure 8.1. The existing Ebberston Wellsite is located to the north of the North York Moors National Trail, a path which extends from PROW 30.21/1/2 into the Dalby Forest. The existing access track to the Wellsite and proposed pipeline runs parallel to the north of the National Trail as far as the access road to Givendale Head and High Scamridge Farms and the Dalby Forest. The proposed pipeline route crosses PROW 25.4/5/1 and then runs parallel, in a south-westerly direction, to PROW 25.4/6/1 and PROW 25.4/6/2, through an existing corridor within the Dalby Forest. The proposed pipeline, having emerged from the Dalby Forest, runs west across farmland, crossing PRsOW from Wilton over the Wilton Heights and up into the Dalby Forest, crossing 25.111/1/1 and 25.111/2/1, just north of PROW 25.111/11/2. To the north-west of the proposed pipeline, there is a network of PRsOW within the North York Moors National Park. However, these are enclosed generally enclosed by woodland and landform.

3.24 There is also a network of PRsOW crossing the lower slopes and valley floor of the Vale of Pickering in the vicinity of the southern end of the proposed pipeline and the proposed Hurrell Lane Gas Processing Facility Site. These include PRsOW 19.172, 197/6/1, 25.97/12/1, 25.97/15, 25.97/1/1, 25.97/18/1, 25.97/1/2, 25.97/13/1, 25.97/3/1, 25.4/8/1 and 25.111/4/1.

3.25 Further details and description of the site and surroundings is included within Chapter 7 (Ecology), Chapter 8 (Landscape and Visual Impact), and Chapter 13 (Archaeology and Cultural Heritage) of this ES.