

Vitacress Salads Limited
Lower Link Farm
Lower Link
St Mary Bourne
Andover
Hampshire
SP11 6DB

Our ref: P.5767/H/95/V001 &
P.5768/H/95/V001
Your ref:

Date: 25 April 2024

Dear Mrs Mathias-Collins

We need more information about your application

Application reference: P.5767/H/95/V001 & P.5768/H/95/V001

Operator: Vitacress Salads Limited

Facility: Vitacress Salads Limited, Lower Link Farm, Lower Link, St Mary Bourne, Andover, Hampshire, SP11 6DB

Thank you for your application received on 02/02/2024.

We have undertaken a preliminary review of the permit variation application and supporting information and consider there is a lack of clarity in some of the key information and that insufficient raw data is provided.

In providing feedback it is an opportunity for Vitacress Salads Limited (VSL) to improve and add to your submission and address our questions.

Please be aware that further questions are likely to arise when we are formally determining a revised application.

Please note that our determination of this permit variation will relate to the existing activities taking place at the site. We will assess the impact of the proposed introduction of ozone treatment on the quality of the final effluent as part of your intended future variation application.

Please provide the following information:

1. All raw data in Excel format. This should include data for other (non-pesticide) substances sampled in the effluent e.g. potassium, phosphorus, suspended solids. For the “002 *Hydrogeological Risk Assessment (HRA)*” please also supply the graphs presented in Excel format, as well as all raw data, to ensure we can fully interpret the results. Please include the limit of detection for each substance and whether the limit of detection changed during the sampling period.
2. The passive sampling results should be provided and discussed. Passive sampling is referred to in some of the supporting documents, but the data has not been included.

3. Site plans so the text is legible if printed at A3. Ensure the key clarifies if boreholes or pump houses are labelled.
4. Clarification on the number of activities, origin of the effluent, the associated discharge volume for each activity, discharge locations and sample points, including an explanation on the inlet borehole/sample point choice. All discharge points should clearly explain the area of the site drained and the related activity. Add clarification of the terminology used to number discharge points particularly with reference to those quoted in the "002 HRA" and the "009 EMS" Environmental Management Plan.
5. A H1 screening assessment for all substances where results were obtained following the Pesticide Sampling Plan as well as any other relevant non-pesticides. The H1 submitted has only screened for substances with an EQS, it also needs to be undertaken for substances with a PNEC. Please provide the calculations to show how the Q_{95} of $0.286\text{m}^3/\text{s}$ used in the H1 screening was derived for the Bourne Rivulet at the confluence with the Eastern Channel and any evidence to support the flow regime of the Bourne Rivulet. Please also clarify the mean and Q_{95} effluent flow data in the context of the response to Question 4 above.
6. An updated list clarifying which pesticides are currently approved for use, which were previously approved and when they had this approval withdrawn. Please also indicate the type of analytical technique used to measure the concentrations reported for each pesticide – are these from LCMS, GCMS or fully quantitative tests?

This is required because the information presented is not always sufficiently clear and can sometimes contradict information between supporting documents, for example:

- Flonicamid is listed as approved for use in Section 5.2 of the "005 VSL Pesticide Sampling Plan V6.0" but shown as withdrawn on the Prevent & Limit tab on "004 VSL Pesticide Assessment & Analysis".
- Emamectin – Column N on the "Prevent & Limit" tab on "004" states it is no longer used but it is listed in Section 5.2 of the "005 Pesticide Sampling Plan" as currently approved for use.
- Etofenprox – Column G on the "Prevent & Limit" tab on "004" states it is on the PPPL but it is not on the list in Section 5.2 of "005".

Please check information in the supporting documents is consistent and correct e.g. EQSs.

7. A summary of any degradation products for the pesticides approved for use.
8. Additional text to explain why a traceability exercise has not been undertaken.
9. Please include a review of the total pesticide concentrations per sample in the factory wash water with respect to the groundwater threshold values for both individual and total pesticides.

The Environment Agency set groundwater threshold values as:

- a. 30% of the DWS for individual pesticides of $0.1\mu\text{g}/\text{l} = 0.03\mu\text{g}/\text{l}$
- b. 30% of the DWS for total pesticides of $0.5\mu\text{g}/\text{l} = 0.15\mu\text{g}/\text{l}$

10. A "Prevent & Limit Assessment" as a separate summary drawing together information presented in supporting documents "004" and "005 VSL Pesticide Sampling Plan" and referring to how VSL's have addressed measures outlined in the Agency's letter of 24 July 2020 plus any additional measures VSL have put in place.



11. Reasons why the leakage from Block D can be used to apply to the other beds, specifically Beds B11 and 12? When was Block D cleaned prior to the test on 23 September 2023? How will the operation and cleaning of Beds B11 and B12 vary from those being used to grow watercress? Please add explanatory text to the HRA.
12. Any updates resulting from a check of the "004" Pesticide Raw Data with the "002 HRA". For example, Azoxystrobin results are all <0.01 for the River US sample point on the "Pesticide Raw Data" table in "004" but in Table K of the "002 HRA" the max concentration for Azoxystrobin for "River US" is reported as 0.013ug/l – the only report of this concentration in "004" is for the East sample point.
13. A response to Question 3d in Part C2, an explanation for the start date of 31/12/2024 in response to Question 2a in Part C6, and clarification on the responses to Questions 7b-d in Part C6 for P.5767/H/95.

Once we have received clarification on the number of activities, we will confirm the application fee and the additional fee will be due. Please note that as the application requires an assessment under the Habitats Regulations, the charge for this assessment is £779 and is not included in the baseline application charge.

Please send the information, quoting the above application reference, **within 5 working days of this letter**.

You should send the information by email to [REDACTED].

When we receive the requested information and the additional fee, we'll continue to check your application. We'll check to see if there's enough information for the application to be 'duly made'. Duly made means that we have all the information we need to begin determination. Determination is where we assess your application and decide if we can allow what you've asked for.

We'll let you know whether your application can be duly made. If it can't be duly made, we must return your application to you.

If we return your application to you, we'll send you a partial refund of your application payment. We'll retain 20% of the application charge to cover our costs in reviewing your application and requesting information. The maximum amount we'll retain is capped at £1,500. Further information on charging can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-permitting-ep-charges-scheme>

If you have any questions, please phone me on [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Senior Permitting Officer