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Your ref: 14/02121/OUT



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**BY EMAIL ONLY**

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Dear Jenny

**Planning consultation:** OUTLINE - Development to provide up to 1,700 residential dwellings (Class C3), a retirement village (Class C2), flexible commercial floorspace (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1 and C1), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2FE) (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure and other operations (including demolition of farm buildings on Middleton Stoney Road)

**Location:** Proposed Himley Village North West Bicester Middleton Stoney Road Bicester Oxfordshire.

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 05 January 2015 which was received by Natural England on 05 January 2015.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

**Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)  
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006**

**Green Infrastructure potential**

The proposed development is within an area that Natural England considers could benefit from enhanced green infrastructure (GI) provision. It is noted in the application (Section 3.2.2) that 'at least 40% of the land at Himley Village is designated as Green Infrastructure'. As such, Natural England would encourage this incorporation of GI into the development.

Multi-functional green infrastructure can perform a range of functions including improved flood risk management, provision of accessible green space, climate change adaptation and biodiversity enhancement.

GI can be designed to maximise the benefits needed for this development. We strongly encourage you to share this advice with the applicant to maximise opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure during the development of the detailed proposal.

Additional evidence and case studies on green infrastructure, including the economic benefits of GI can be found on the Natural England [Green Infrastructure web pages](#).

## Soil and Agricultural Land Quality

Soil is a finite resource that fulfils many important functions and services (ecosystem services) for society, for example as a growing medium for food, timber and other crops, as a store for carbon and water, as a reservoir of biodiversity and as a buffer against pollution. It is therefore important that the soil resources are protected and used sustainably.

The application has designated a total of 1.5ha to allotments and the incorporation of orchards. Given that the application site is designated as moderate (20-60%) likelihood of best and most versatile agricultural land (BMV), Natural England supports the inclusion of allotments and productive sites within the application. Further creation and provision of these sites should be encouraged to ensure the land remains as productive as possible.

## Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and Water Management

It is noted that Thames Water have identified that the existing waste water and water supply infrastructure are insufficient to accommodate the additional demands associated with the application. The Design and Access Statement for the application (section 4.2.2) states that 'treating water on site is a key principle of the master plan' (including grey and blackwater). However, there are no details of how greywater and blackwater will be treated and disposed. Given the size of the proposal, and the inability of existing infrastructure to incorporate the associated increased water demands, Natural England considers that the application should specify how greywater and blackwater are to be treated and disposed of, and if this is to be onsite, paying particular attention to any potential effects on downstream Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's).

It is noted that detailed Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) techniques have been incorporated into the application for the onsite management of stormwater. Natural England recommends that the maintenance of SuDS infrastructure should be addressed to ensure that it remains efficient in future.

## Protected species

We have not assessed this application and associated documents for impacts on protected species.

Natural England has published [Standing Advice](#) on protected species. The Standing Advice includes a habitat decision tree which provides advice to planners on deciding if there is a 'reasonable likelihood' of protected species being present. It also provides detailed advice on the protected species most often affected by development, including flow charts for individual species to enable an assessment to be made of a protected species survey and mitigation strategy.

You should apply our Standing Advice to this application as it is a material consideration in the determination of applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation.

The Standing Advice should not be treated as giving any indication or providing any assurance in respect of European Protected Species (EPS) that the proposed development is unlikely to affect the EPS present on the site; nor should it be interpreted as meaning that Natural England has reached any views as to whether a licence is needed (which is the developer's responsibility) or may be granted.

If you have any specific questions on aspects that are not covered by our Standing Advice for European Protected Species or have difficulty in applying it to this application please contact us with details at [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk)

## Local wildlife sites

If the proposal site is on or adjacent to a local wildlife site, eg Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) or Local Nature Reserve (LNR) the authority should ensure it has sufficient

information to fully understand the impact of the proposal on the local wildlife site, and the importance of this in relation to development plan policies, before it determines the application.

### **Biodiversity enhancements**

This application may provide opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as the incorporation of roosting opportunities for bats or the installation of bird nest boxes. The authority should consider securing measures to enhance the biodiversity of the site from the applicant, if it is minded to grant permission for this application. This is in accordance with Paragraph 118 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Additionally, we would draw your attention to Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) which states that *'Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'*. Section 40(3) of the same Act also states that *'conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'*.

### **Landscape enhancements**

This application may provide opportunities to enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the surrounding natural and built environment; use natural resources more sustainably; and bring benefits for the local community, for example through green space provision and access to and contact with nature. Landscape characterisation and townscape assessments, and associated sensitivity and capacity assessments provide tools for planners and developers to consider new development and ensure that it makes a positive contribution in terms of design, form and location, to the character and functions of the landscape and avoids any unacceptable impacts.

We would be happy to comment further should the need arise but if in the meantime you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact us.

For any queries relating to the specific advice in this letter only please contact Elise Batelaan on [elise.batelaan@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:elise.batelaan@naturalengland.org.uk). For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:consultations@naturalengland.org.uk).

We really value your feedback to help us improve the service we offer. We have attached a feedback form to this letter and welcome any comments you might have about our service.

Yours sincerely

Elise Batelaan  
Thames Valley Team  
Sustainable Development and Regulation