

4.0 ALTERNATIVES & DESIGN EVOLUTION

Introduction

4.1 Regulation 18 and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations require an applicant to provide:

“a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment”.

4.2 This chapter of the ES identifies the main alternatives to the Development which have been considered by the Applicant and describes the main reasons for the choices made.

Alternatives

4.3 Alternative options typically comprise:

- The 'Do Nothing' alternative, where the Development is not progressed;
- Consideration of Alternative Locations or Uses; and
- Consideration of Alternative Designs.

The 'Do Nothing' Alternative

4.4 The 'Do Nothing' alternative means leaving the Site in its current use. The beneficial and adverse effects outlined in this ES would not occur. There would be a loss of the opportunity to provide up to 530 new homes, in accordance with local planning policy (Policy Bicester 1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031¹). The 'Do Nothing' alternative would avoid the temporary effects associated with the construction of the Development and the permanent effects associated with the completed Development; however, given the Site has been allocated for development by Cherwell District Council, it can reasonably be expected that the Site is unlikely to remain undeveloped in the longer term. The Applicant's aim is to create a Development which optimises lifestyle, wellbeing and prosperity whilst generating employment for the local area. Therefore, the do-nothing option was not considered by the Applicant.

Alternative Sites

4.5 The Site forms part of a strategic allocation for 6,000 dwellings at North West Bicester

within Policy Bicester 1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031. A Design and Access Statement (DAS) has been submitted in support of the planning application. The DAS presents an explanation of the Development, including how the proposals have been conceived, the design principles, and how the Development is influenced by its context. The DAS also explains the Applicant's approach and how relevant local policies have been taken into account. The Applicant has identified and addressed any specific issues which might affect access to the Site and the DAS outlines the considerations that have been taken into account to ensure the suitability of the Site for the Development. Accordingly, alternative sites were not considered by the Applicant.

Alternative Designs

4.6 As an outline planning application, permission for detailed design is not being sought at this stage, and as discussed in Chapter 3, parameter plans rather than detailed scheme plans have been prepared. The extents and types of use within a site (e.g. residential) are fixed within parameter plans but the layout of the streets and houses are not. Parameter plans for assessment in an ES are generally not produced until the site constraints have been established and a masterplanning exercise undertaken accordingly alternative designs have not been considered. However, information on the evolution of the illustrative masterplan is provided in the DAS accompanying the planning application (with an extract on design evolution provided in Figure 4.1). A review of that information has identified the following key considerations:

- The early design concept focussed around providing a green infrastructure network including buffers and two key areas of multifunctional open space with play and an interconnected network of swales;
- Following a Site workshop walk, additional areas of multi-functional open space were established in the woodland, as well as a western green edge and a central 'village green' into the core development area of the Site;
- Following pre-application discussions with officers in November 2020, the sustainable drainage strategy evolved and the masterplan was refined to include additional basins and swales integrated into the Development area rather than having larger basins on the edges of the Site;
- A study of Landscape and Heritage character also informed the design evolution and resulted in a viewing corridor to the Church of St Laurence being incorporated into the layout as well as the character of Home Farm into the eastern parcels of the Site; and
- Additional pedestrian and cycle connections were included within the masterplan.

Conclusion

- 4.7 The final illustrative masterplan for the Development has evolved as a result of this process and it is from this masterplan the Development parameters, assessed within this ES and shown on Figures 3.1 to 3.3, have been established. As outlined above, the Site is allocated for residential development within Policy Bicester 1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan. No other alternatives were considered by the Applicant as part of this planning application.

REFERENCES

ⁱ <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/83/local-plans/376/adopted-cherwell-local-plan-2011-2031-part-1>