

Environmental Statement: Non-Technical Summary

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Appendix A: Plans

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document summarises the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment ("EIA") of residential development on land north of Gavray Drive, Bicester ("the Proposed Development").
- 1.2 The purpose of an EIA is to assess the likely significant environmental effects of a development proposal. These effects have been assessed as "adverse" or "beneficial"; and of "major", "moderate", "minor" or "negligible" significance, in accordance with recognised EIA methodology and applying professional judgement.
- 1.3 The "significance" of each effect takes into account both its "magnitude" and the "sensitivity" of the receptor affected. For example, a change of "large" magnitude affecting a receptor of "high" sensitivity would generally result in an effect of "major" significance. Conversely, a change of "small" magnitude affecting a receptor of "low" sensitivity would generally result in an effect of "minor" significance.
- 1.4 The scope of this EIA has been agreed by Cherwell District Council (CDC) through its adoption of a formal Scoping Opinion in November 2020. That Scoping Opinion takes account of a Scoping Report submitted on behalf of L&Q Estates in September 2020 and containing a proposed scope for the EIA.
- 1.5 The full findings of this EIA are reported in an Environmental Statement (ES). The ES is available on Cherwell District Council's website along with a hard copy which can be viewed on appointment at the Council offices at Bodicote. A digital copy of the ES can be made available on request from:

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- 1.6 This concise document summarises the main findings of the ES in non-technical language, for a wide readership.
- 1.7 The ES supports an Outline Planning Application (OPA) to CDC for the Proposed Development. Comments on it should therefore be directed to CDC, as part of its consideration of the OPA.

2. THE SITE AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The application site, which extends to 22.49 hectares (55.5 acres), is located in the south eastern quarter of Bicester, bounded by Gavray Drive to the south, beyond which lies the residential area of Langford Village, the Birmingham to Marylebone rail line (Chiltern Line) to the north, the Oxford to Bletchley rail line to the west (East-West Rail) and Bicester's eastern bypass to the east (Charbridge Lane, A4421). North of the site is Bicester Distribution Park, which provides a large footprint of distribution units. Bicester town centre is located approximately 1.3km to the west of the site offering a full range of retail, commercial, employment and residential uses.

2.2 A water course, Langford Brook, flows through the middle of the site. Land to the east of the brook is largely covered by a Local Wildlife Site designation characterised by pasture, small linear field compartments and tall, mature boundary hedgerows. The dominant, physical elements within the site are the mature standard oak trees. In addition, a wider area falls within the River Ray Conservation Target Area. Land to the west of Langford Brook is agricultural in use. Two public rights of way cross the site, linking Langford Village with Launton and Bicester Distribution Park. There are no designated heritage assets within or adjoining the site and no built structures on the land.

2.3 The Proposed Development comprises:

Residential development for up to 250 dwellings including affordable housing and ancillary uses including retained Local Wildlife Site, public open space, play areas, localised land remodelling, compensatory flood storage, structural planting and access.

2.4 Plans showing the Site and the Proposed Development are included in an appendix to this document. These plans have formed the basis for the EIA. The detailed design of the Proposed Development would be in accordance with those plans. This would be secured by conditions attached to any grant of planning permission.

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- 2.5 A 4 year construction period is assumed in the EIA, extending from 2023/24 until 2026/27. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which would be agreed with Cherwell District Council, would minimise environmental impacts during this period.
- 2.6 The EIA Regulations require any alternatives to the Proposed Development that have been studied by the Applicant to be outlined and the reasons for their rejection set out. Alternative sites for the Proposed Development have not been considered, due to the site's inclusion in the Adopted Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031 (re-adopted on the 19 December 2016) under Policy Bicester 13, which allocates the Site for the Proposed Development. For the same reason and given the specificity of that Plan's proposals for the Site, alternative land uses to those proposed have not been studied. Alternative designs are limited by a range of physical and environmental considerations, as detailed in Chapter 2 of the ES and the Design and Access Statement.
- 2.7 The EIA includes an assessment of the likely environmental effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other nearby reasonably foreseeable development proposals, as proposed in the Local Plan or planning applications. The transport, air quality and noise assessments have taken account of a wider range of other development proposals, including those for other sites identified in the Local Plan.
- 2.8 As set out in the Design Evolution section of the *Design and Access Statement* submitted with the application, the form, amount and land uses of the Proposed Development has evolved through consultation and technical assessment.
- 2.9 Outline Planning Permission is sought at this stage with access details included. Other detailed design matters are reserved for later agreement with Cherwell District Council.

3. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The planning application is being submitted against the backdrop of strong support for increased housing delivery in the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF; 2019), as well as the allocation of the Site for the Proposed Development in the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031 (re-adopted in 2016).
- 3.2 The planning application and the EIA have also had regard to relevant saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996, as well as relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance adopted by the Council.

4. TRANSPORT

- 4.1 The assessment of the environmental effects of the Proposed Development in respect of transport has covered the following specific matters:
- Temporary generation of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) during the construction works;
 - Effects of the development on accessibility by sustainable modes; and
 - Effects of the development on traffic flows and capacities of the local highway network.
- 4.2 A comprehensive Transport Assessment has also been undertaken and an Overarching Travel Plan for the Proposed Development has been produced, setting out a framework for managing the demand for travel arising from the Proposed Development and encouraging movement by modes other than the private car.
- 4.3 Taking into account the future Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which would regulate the routeing of construction traffic, minor, temporary adverse effects are predicted to arise during the construction of the Proposed Development.
- 4.4 The Travel Plan measures will seek to ensure there is no increase in the number of vehicle movements to/from the Site as well as well as encouraging modal shift. In particular, single occupancy vehicle trips will be discouraged in favour of promoting more sustainable modes of travel. The residual effects following completion are expected to be minor, long term and adverse.

5. ECOLOGY

- 5.1 The ecological impact assessment has considered the effects of the Proposed Development which includes those on the Local Wildlife Site and Conservation Target Area within the application site, local wildlife habitats and particular species. Extensive survey work has supplemented desk study over many years.
- 5.2 The proposals include retention of the Local Wildlife Site and Conservation Target Area with no built development in either. With mitigation measures, effects on important ecological features generally are not considered to be significant. The only exception to this is the rare arable weed flora associated with the arable farmland to the west of Langford Brook. Where not directly lost to the development, it is unlikely that these species can be retained in the public open space since they rely on annual ploughing/ground disturbance. It is therefore concluded that there will be a residual adverse effect which is significant at a Local level.
- 5.3 Habitat creation, restoration and long term management will result in a beneficial effect. Measures to avoid or mitigate ecological impacts, and to restore and enhance the site's ecological interest to achieve a net gain in biodiversity, will be secured through the following mechanisms:
- Inherent mitigation embedded in the site layout;
 - Ecological Construction Method Statement (ECMS);
 - Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP);
 - Wildlife sensitive lighting strategy;
 - Ecological Management Plan (EMP); and
 - Detailed soft landscaping proposals.

6. CULTURAL HERITAGE

- 6.1 The assessment of the effects of the Proposed Development on cultural heritage has included an analysis of its effects on below ground archaeology and on built heritage.
- 6.2 The archaeological assessment has involved desk-based study, a geophysical survey of the Site and targeted trial trenching. A Specification for Archaeological Mitigation is proposed which includes further trenching and archaeological ground monitoring to record any remains found prior to construction. Its implementation will result in there being only negligible or minor adverse effects.

7. WATER RESOURCES

- 7.1 The layout of the Proposed Development avoids those areas of the Application Site assessed to be at most risk of flooding from Langford Brook. In addition, where ground levels are proposed to be raised within the floodplain of Langford Brook, a scheme of floodplain compensation is to be undertaken as part of the Proposed Development. Such works comprise the lowering of ground levels elsewhere within the Application Site to provide an equal volume of flood plain storage to that lost as a result of the proposed ground raising.
- 7.2 Application of measures within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will mitigate the potential adverse effects identified in relation to flood risk, surface water drainage and surface water quality during the construction of the Proposed Development. A surface water drainage system entails the discharge of surface water run-off from the Application Site to Langford Brook and the existing Thames Water public surface water sewer system. In addition, water quality treatment through implementation of SuDS (Sustainable urban Drainage Systems) based mitigation methods will result in high levels of water treatment and quality at discharge. A foul water drainage system will provide for the discharge of foul water from the Application Site to the existing Thames Water public foul water sewer system along Gavray Drive.
- 7.3 Based on the additional mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures recommended, the potential effects identified pre-mitigation are all concluded to be retained or reduced to a status of posing 'very little change' from the baseline condition, and effectively presenting no demonstrable effect. Accordingly, all residual water resource environmental effects are concluded to have a 'negligible' magnitude of effect, and therefore not be considered 'significant'.

8. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 8.1 Landscape effects would be experienced within the site area, through the change of land use from a greenfield / agricultural site to an urban one. These direct effects would be at worst minor/negligible adverse and not significant. The most elevated visual effects would be experienced on footpaths within the site and would be at worst major/moderate adverse and significant. Effects on designated landscape resources, conservation areas, Public Rights of Way outside of the site and surrounding settlements and residences are not considered to be of sufficient

magnitude to lead to effects which are significant in EIA terms, due to them being largely temporary and reversible in nature and as proposed landscaping matures.

- 8.2 A mitigation strategy has been identified to offset or reduce impacts through proactive management (during the construction stage by way of a CEMP), the application of best national practice and inherent mitigation by design of housing layout, open space provision, retained and proposed vegetation. What indirect effects are experienced are predicted to diminish over the time of the proposed development through the maturity of the site setting and the effectiveness of mitigation measures. Long term effect will reduce and will not be significant in EIA terms over the lifetime of the proposed scheme.

9. AIR QUALITY

- 9.1 The construction dust risk assessment shows that the Application Site is Medium Risk for adverse impacts during construction, as a worst-case, in the absence of mitigation. Results of the assessment of the post-completion stage of the Proposed Development found that the impact it would have upon air quality would be negligible.

- 9.2 To effectively reduce the risk of impacts to negligible, appropriate mitigation measures include the use of a CEMP including controlling dust and emissions during construction promoting sustainable travel measures by way of a Travel Plan. The overall impact is predicted to be negligible and Not Significant, both during construction and once the Proposed Development is completed.

10. NOISE

- 10.1 Assessment of noise impacts include those associated with construction, road and rail impacts. With the inclusion of mitigation measures including those set out in a CEMP, noise associated with construction of the Proposed Development is likely to result in negligible effects, although there is potential for short-term moderate adverse effects when construction takes place close to the site boundaries. With the inclusion of mitigation measures, vibration associated with the construction of the Proposed Development is also likely to result in negligible effects.

- 10.2 The assessment of development generated road traffic associated with the Site indicates that associated noise effects will be negligible el. With the inclusion of 2m

high garden wall/fencing, together with the glazing and ventilation strategy residual effects at proposed residential dwellings will be minor adverse.

11. CLIMATE CHANGE

- 11.1 Collectively, across the construction and operational phase, the Proposed Development is expected to result in the equivalent of 23,054 tonnes of carbon dioxide. The significance of effect is however considered to be negligible following mitigation.
- 11.2 During the design phase an assessment will be carried out of the embodied carbon of new buildings to identify potential materials and measures to reduce the embodied carbon of the Proposed Development. Additionally during the construction phase a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will be prepared in order to reduce general construction waste arising and limit Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions.
- 11.3 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be provided in order to manage general environmental effects during the construction phase. The CEMP is inclusive of measures to reduce GHG emissions during construction, including the monitoring, management and dissemination of energy consumption tracking emissions.
- 11.4 The Proposed Development will be built in line with the latest Building Regulations. Energy efficiency measures including 100% low energy (LED) lighting and high efficiency heating systems will be incorporated to reduce operational energy demand.
- 11.5 The results of the Future Homes Standard (FHS) announced in January 2021 set out a pathway for an update to the Building Regulations in 2021 which will require homes from June 2022 to achieve a 31% carbon reduction above the current 2013 Regulations. It is anticipated this will require increased fabric performance and use of low carbon renewable energy technologies to reduce emissions.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 The EIA has assessed the effects of the proposed development having regard to the existing baseline conditions.

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- 12.2 It sets out the mitigation measures incorporated in or proposed as part of the application proposals including extensive green infrastructure provision, measures to enhance biodiversity, a sustainable urban drainage system designed to reduce surface water run-off from the site, a Travel Plan to promote sustainable transport choices, and appropriate highway measures.
- 12.3 The Assessment has found that the proposed development would have few residual effects that are not capable of being appropriately mitigated and few effects of more than minor significance, whether adverse or beneficial, following appropriate mitigation. This is particularly the case after the construction phases of the development. Major or moderate, significant adverse effects are limited to ecology and landscape and visual impacts.
- 12.4 Most notably, the ecological effects are generally found to be positive. Habitat creation, restoration and long term management will result in a beneficial effect, including restoring and enhancing the site's ecological interest to achieve a net gain in biodiversity. The only exception to this is the rare arable weed flora associated with the arable farmland to the west of Langford Brook. Where not directly lost to the development, it is unlikely that these species can be retained in the public open space since they rely on annual ploughing/ground disturbance. It is therefore concluded that there will be a residual adverse effect which is significant at a Local level.
- 12.5 Visual effects are identified on the existing footpaths through the site with their setting ultimately changing with an urban form being developed, though their alignment will be retained. Effects will be mitigated through design, open space and planting.
- 12.6 All other effects have been assessed as either minor (whether beneficial or adverse) or negligible, taking into account the mitigation measures that are proposed.
- 12.7 Temporary visual effects during construction in combination with development at South East Bicester have been identified. No significant long term effects of the Proposed Development in combination with other development proposals are predicted.

Appendix A: Application Plans





