

Our ref. TE/B00114/21

17 December 2021

Planning Department
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

By email only

Dear Sir/Madam

Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations Screening Opinion

Land north of Camp Road, Heyford Park

Construction of up to 230 dwellings including affordable housing; provision of public open space; new access roads; hard and soft landscaping; enabling works.

On behalf of my clients Richborough Estates and Lone Star Land Ltd, I write to request an EIA Screening Opinion in respect of a detailed outline planning application for the construction of up to 230 new residential dwellings at land north of Camp Road, Upper Heyford. Proposals will be submitted in the form of an outline planning application.

Please find enclosed red line plan location plan and the latest Framework Masterplan. The scheme has been the subject of a separate pre-application enquiry which you have seen, and for which a meeting with Mr Andrew Lewis was undertaken but a written response has yet to be received.

We write to establish whether or not these development proposals should, in the Local Planning Authority's opinion, be treated as EIA Development. An "Urban Development Project" on a site exceeding 0.5 hectares could potentially be classed as EIA development under Section 10(b) of Schedule 2 of the Regulations.

I enclose herewith the following drawings in respect of the above proposals:

- Red Line Location Plan (ref: L01)
- Latest Framework Masterplan (ref. P06)



This screening opinion request provides the relevant information for the authority to adopt a screening opinion in line with Regulation 6(2) of the EIA Regulations, namely:

- a) *a plan sufficient to identify the land*
- b) *a description of the development, including in particular:*
 - i. *a description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works;*
 - ii. *a description of the location of the development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected;*
- c) *a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;*
- d) *to the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from:*
 - i. *the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and*
 - ii. *the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity; and*
- e) *such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the proposed development or any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment*

Accordingly, this letter sets out details of the site concerned, the nature and purpose of the proposed development and an assessment against the screening criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations and expanded in the NPPG.

We consider that any impact of the development can be successfully mitigated and would not have a significant effect on the environment. It is our view that the development does not constitute EIA development and therefore an Environmental Statement is not required to accompany any subsequent application.

Site Location and Context

The application site lies to the north of Camp Road, on the eastern edge of Upper Heyford. The site is 11.69ha in area, and is currently in agricultural use. It is not publicly accessible.

To the west of the site lies a field which has a resolution to grant planning consent for 79 dwellings. To the north-west lies Letchmere Farm, and north-east of the site is the RAF airfield. To the south the site is bounded by an arable field, woodland, and some static park homes.

The site is greenfield land and sits outside the conservation area.

Proposed Development

The scheme was discussed in a pre-application meeting with the Council on 24 June 2021.

For completeness, we also resubmit information previously seen by the Council at the May 2021 pre-application enquiry, albeit the proposals have been developed further since then as an application is prepared.

The current proposal is for the erection of up to 230 residential dwellings, with a provision of public open space and affordable housing. The proposal includes new access roads and all other enabling works.



The proposed layout of the site reflects the historic character and its history as an airbase.

The development will consist of a mix of housing densities and tenures, and affordable housing will make up approximately 35% of the development.

EIA Screening Requirement

The proposal does not comprise Schedule 1 development.

The site has a site area of 11.69ha and the proposal is for up to 230 new homes.

Since the site area is more than 0.5 hectares, it could potentially fall within Section 10(b) of Schedule 2 of the Regulations, namely an “Urban Development Project”.

The proposals therefore need to be considered against the selection criteria in Schedule 3. The criteria are 1) the characteristics of the development, 2) the location of the development, and 3) the characteristics of the potential impact.

However, the guidance states that only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 development will require an assessment. The NPPG Annex states:

“Environmental Impact Assessment is unlikely to be required for the redevelopment of land unless the new development is on a significantly greater scale than the previous use, or the types of impact are of a markedly different nature or there is a high level of contamination.”

Assessment

It is necessary for the development proposals to be assessed against the following criteria in order to determine whether the application proposals are EIA development:

- i. The characteristics of the development;
- ii. The location of the development; and
- iii. Any potential impacts

Characteristics of the development

The whole site is approximately 11.69ha in area, however the developable area is significantly smaller than this due to the proposed landscaping and areas of public open space.

The scheme is a landscape-led wholly residential development providing up to 230 new homes across a mix of dwellings and apartments in both market and affordable tenures.

Given the location of the site on the edge of Upper Heyford, physically adjoining the former RAF base, and against the context of the wider aspirations for the settlement to provide an additional 1,600 dwellings, it is considered that the scale of development and the proposed dwelling mix – coupled with the landscape-led masterplan featuring open space, pedestrian routes and circular walks, and a wet landscape corridor – will be in keeping with the surrounding area and an EIA would not be required.

The layout has been designed around landscaping, green spaces, linkages and the wet corridor running north-south along the entire western edge of the site.



Residential development is focused in central and eastern parts of the site, with access roads running north from Camp Road.

The site is vacant greenfield land which lies adjacent to a built up area including the former military airfield. The development will not generate significant levels of pollution or waste beyond that expected of the redevelopment of a typical greenfield site for housing.

Location of Development

The site is located on the southern and eastern edge of the former RAF military base, and represents the development of a greenfield site physically adjoining the built up area.

The Former RAF Upper Heyford is designated as a new settlement to provide an additional 1,600 dwellings (over and above the 761 that have already secured planning permission). This designation also includes the provision of supporting infrastructure such as schools, recreational space and community facilities.

The policy includes the allocation of greenfield sites in order to fulfil the designation, such as the site that is the subject of this EIA Screening Opinion.

The site's northern boundary is defined by the edge of the former RAF base. The western edge of the site is a field that forms part of the strategic allocation. Beyond this is the existing former military base. The eastern boundary of the site is defined by Chilgrove Drive, a single track country lane which provided access to the airfield. The southern edge of the site is formed by Camp Road.

Agricultural fields extend east and south. To the north and west is previously developed land, being redeveloped as part of the new strategic allocation.

It is a sustainable location which is with walking distance of local shops and services, all newly constructed as part of the new settlement being created. The site's sustainability credentials will continue to grow as more shops, services, and public transport links are provided. It enjoys direct vehicular access to Camp road, which in turn links up with the B430 and the M40.

Characteristics of the potential impacts

Any impacts of the development are considered to be minor in nature and localised, and would be part of the wider development of the Heyford Park masterplan.

(i) Heritage and Conservation Area Impact

The site does not lie in a conservation area. The RAF Upper Heyford Conservation Area borders the site to the north and west.

From all parts of the site the former air base is described by the Conservation Area Appraisal as having a high visual and landscape impact – the airbase is a dominant visual element.

There are no listed buildings on the site or near to the site. There are a number of “non-listed buildings of local significance” located near to the northern boundary of the site within the former air base, these are aircraft hangers.



The layout of the site and scale and massing of the development including extensive landscaping buffers and green links ensures it would have no adverse impact on long range views towards the site. It will be read as part of the wider allocation for a new settlement and the new development associated with this growth. There is an area of woodland providing significant vegetation and screening immediately to the south east of the site, which the proposed development will sit 'behind'.

However, for the purposes of this Screening Opinion request, no development is proposed within a conservation area or affecting any listed buildings.

Therefore, although there are constraints associated with the statutory designations adjacent to the site, these should not mean that the development would need EIA.

(ii) Transport and Parking

The proposed development will increase trips by private car to and from the site, increase pedestrian trips, and increase bus trips. However this impact should be considered within the context of the wider masterplan for the local area and the new settlement being created.

A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan will be submitted with the application to demonstrate that the proposed access would be safe, and that there would be no adverse impact on traffic or highway safety, particularly having regard to the sustainable location of the site that will be within walking distance to the new local service centre.

(iii) Ecology

The masterplan shows how significant areas of the site are retained as ponds, watercourses, and green linkages. Existing habitats are retained and enhanced, and these will be integral to the landscape-led design approach towards the masterplan that has been adopted. Development is set 50m back from existing ponds to avoid impact upon protected species.

The application will be accompanied by a Phase I Ecological Survey which will set out the ecological issues associated with the site. Any mitigation measures required can be covered by appropriately worded planning conditions.

(iv) Flooding and Drainage

The site lies within Flood Zone I, the lowest risk of flooding.

The planning application will be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (only required due to the size of the site being more than 1ha) and a separate Outline Drainage Strategy which will include details of sustainable urban drainage which will be integrated with the wider landscaping and green infrastructure across the site.

(v) Ground Conditions

The planning application will be accompanied by a Phase I Site Investigation Report, however there are no known contamination risks at the site. It is a green field site that is not publicly accessible.



Conclusion

Having regard to the information set out in this letter and the key criteria for assessing whether development proposals should be subject to EIA, it is not considered the proposal will have significant effects on the environment.

There is therefore no requirement for an EIA.

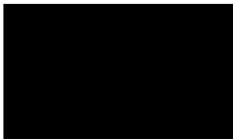
In accordance with Regulation 6(6)(a) we await notification of your Screening Opinion within 21 days of the date of this request.

It is acknowledged that the proposed outline application will need to be accompanied by a suite of documents dealing with a range of issues, and these have been agreed with the Council at the conclusion of the pre-application enquiry.

If you require any further information or have any queries in respect of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



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