

Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017
Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement

Application name:	Camp Road, Upper Heyford
SoS case reference:	PCU/EIASCR/C3105/3292631
Schedule and category of development:	10(b)

Full statement of reasons as required by 5(5)(a) of the 2017 EIA Regulations including conclusions on likelihood of significant environmental effects.

The development proposed is for 230 dwellings and comprises of 11.69 ha of agricultural land known as Upper Heyford. The site fronts Camp Road on its southern boundary, its eastern boundary is Chilgrove Drive, its northern boundary is the edge of the former RAF Upper Heyford, and its western boundary appears to run along Sor Brook then to Heyford Grange and Letchmere Farm.

The site is not located in a sensitive area as defined by the 2017 EIA Regulations. However, the Secretary of State notes that the site abuts the RAF Heyford Conservation Area, the Ardley Conservation Area, the Ardley and Heyford Conservation Target Area and an Archaeological Alert Area. The site is also in close proximity to a Major Accident Hazard Area.

In this case, the developer has submitted an ES on 4/4/2022 to support the planning application. It states in the ES "in the interests of expediency, an EIA has been undertaken for the proposed development, considering the potential cumulative effects." Despite the submitted ES the developer still wishes for the SoS to issue a Direction. The Secretary of State notes that the ES concludes that it is not likely that the proposed development will result in significant effects, either in isolation or in cumulation with other development in the area.

The ES submitted to the council covers the following topics: Traffic, Ecology, Landscape and Visual impacts, Cultural Heritage, Archaeology, Water resources.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), through its indicative criteria and thresholds, states that for urban development projects, a significant environmental effect is more likely if the development includes more than 150 dwellings; or (iii) the overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares, or it would have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area (e.g., a new development of more than 1,000 dwellings). The main matters to be addressed would be the physical scale of such developments, potential increase in traffic, emissions, and noise.

The Secretary of State has screened the proposal having regard to this advice while noting the nature and characteristics of this project. For this project, in this location, cumulative effects arising from other built and approved developments in the vicinity is an important consideration.

Planning Practice Guidance requires the Secretary of State to take into account the potential cumulative impacts of a proposal. It states that each application (or request for a screening opinion) should be considered on its own merits. It goes on to state that there are occasions where other existing or approved development may be relevant in determining whether significant effects are likely as a consequence of a proposed development. Local planning authorities should always have regard to the possible cumulative effects arising from any existing or approved development.

The Secretary of State has considered the following committed developments in the vicinity in relation to potential cumulative impacts:

- 89 dwellings (Ref: 15/01357/F) -under consideration no ES submitted/required
- 31 dwellings (Ref: 21/03523/OUT) -under consideration no ES submitted/required
- 1,175 dwellings - masterplan application (Ref: 18/00825/HYBRID) on the former RAF base (Resolution to grant subject to a S106 – ES submitted).
- 296 dwellings (Ref: 16/02446/F -Permitted, ES submitted).
- The land to the east of Chilgrove Drive is currently agricultural in use but has been the subject of a recent Scoping Opinion on 424.52ha for a nationally significant infrastructure proposal - Oxfordshire Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (Ref: 21/02008/SCOP, which proposes a new rail freight interchange and 6.5m square feet of storage and distribution warehousing.

The Secretary of State has considered whether the above proposal is likely to have significant environmental effects. He has undertaken this screening taking into account the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. In doing so he considers the main matters to be addressed are the physical scale of such developments, potential increase in traffic, emissions, and noise.

The proposal for up to 230 dwellings on this site exceeds the indicative criteria and thresholds, for urban development projects, i.e., the development includes more than 150 dwellings. However, based on the information provided the proposal is unlikely to have a significant urbanising effect in a previously non-urbanised area.

The Secretary of State recognises that the development will inevitably comprise a physical change to the locality and cumulatively with other planned developments which is likely to lead to changes in the topography of land in the immediate and wider area. However, based on the information provided, the proposal of the 203 dwellings at this site is not considered to lead to likely significant effects.

The Secretary of State has consulted Natural England (NE). NE has advised the department that *"It is Natural England's advice, on the basis of the material supplied with the consultation, that there are no likely significant effects on statutorily designated nature conservation sites or landscapes and an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required."* It has further advised that *"the proposed development has the potential for adverse effects on the following designated nature conservation sites or designated landscapes:*

- *Weston Fen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)*

We consider that the proposed development is, not, however, likely to significantly affect the interest features for which the above sites are notified or the purposes of designation."

The Secretary of State concludes that based on the information provided by the council, developer, and Natural England. An environmental effect from the development is unlikely to be significant given the nature, scale, and characteristic of the proposed development on areas (or receptors) on or around the location which are protected under international or national or local legislation (including designations) for their ecological, landscape, cultural (including heritage).

Based on the information provided, the Secretary of State considers that during the construction phase of the development, it is likely that this development will generate movements of heavy goods vehicles to and from the site. On the completion of the development, the development will generate car and delivery service vehicle movements to and from the site, which may impact upon the surrounding area. Including the newly permitted residential development and the proposed master

plan area. However, based on the information provided it is not considered that it would be on such a scale to be considered as significant in terms of EIA.

Regarding emissions and noise effects, based on the information provided the Secretary of State considers that it is likely that during the construction phase there will be some noise and vibration impacts. However, once the development is completed this would not be over and above what would be expected in an urbanised area. Even if it does occur it is not likely to be on such a scale to be significant level that could be considered to require an EIA.

Furthermore, with regard potential pollution and nuisance from traffic emissions. The Secretary of State considers that due to the nature of the proposed use i.e., residential, there will be some pollution and nuisance from traffic emissions. However, the development proposed and resulting change to traffic movement, it is not considered to be at a level that could be considered to require an EIA.

The Secretary of State has concluded there are no other issues or factors in this case, in this specific location, that either in isolation, or cumulatively, indicate a likelihood of there being significant environmental effects from this proposal.

Based on the information available, the Secretary of State considers that any cumulative effects from this proposal, even at their highest level, in EIA terms would not be likely to be significant given the location, nature, scale, and characteristics of the proposed development. He considers these matters can be satisfactorily dealt with through the planning application process.

However, it is important to note that cumulative effects, will need to be re-considered with any further incremental development proposals in this area and the need for EIA may change depending on the circumstances of each case.

Is an Environmental Statement required?	No
---	----

Name	Michelle Peart
Date	9 May 2022