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4 ALTERNATIVES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 This chapter of the ES sets out the alternatives to Proposed Development that have been considered by the Applicant.

4.2 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

4.2.1 The EIA Regulations (Schedule 4, Part 2) require for inclusion in an ES:

"A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects"

4.2.2 The main alternatives to the Proposed Development which the Applicant has studies include:

- The 'No Development' Alternative; and
- Alternative Designs.

The 'No Development' Alternative

4.2.3 The 'No Development' Alternative refers to the option of leaving the Application Site in its current use and physical state.

4.2.4 Without development the land will remain in its current state, used for mainly arable purposes. Although this option would avoid the potential adverse effects associated with developing greenfield land such as the loss of agricultural land, it would also miss out on the opportunity to expand the employment opportunities within Cherwell District Council (and capture the related social benefits). The associated access, landscaping, biodiversity enhancement and open space areas and other infrastructure would also not be implemented.

Alternative Designs

4.2.5 The constraints and opportunities presented by the Site have been utilised to inform and structure the development proposals. The constraints and opportunities are as follows:

Constraints

- Loss of greenfield land;
- Existing hedgerows and trees;
- Existing site levels;
- Existing features of ecological interest and those acting as wildlife habitats including the existing trees and hedges along the Site boundaries; and
- Increase in traffic movements.

Opportunities

- Strategically important site as it is centrally located within the UK with very good road links to the major road networks;

- Similar successful developments in the area demonstrates the strength of this location as a major logistics and warehousing distribution centre;
- Area of land within the Application Site has no landscape or heritage designations;
- Retention and integration of existing vegetation;
- Enhance ecological habitats;
- Provide appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) and habitat creation within landscaped areas;
- Provision of appropriate landscape buffers and hedgerow reinforcements with adjacent land uses; and
- Existing plantation on the site offers established screening for any development.

4.2.6 The early designs have evolved with due regard to feedback received from consultation with Cherwell District Council and inputs from the various technical consultants. The elements that have fed into the evolution of the Proposed Development and main alternative designs in the formation of the Proposed Development are summarised in the **Design and Access Statement**.

4.2.7 Site specific requirements or modifications made to the design over the course of the design process as a result of technical consultants' feedback include:

- The retention of the existing trees and hedges on the boundaries ensure established enclosure of the Site is retained;
- The proposed building footprint is in the vale area of the Site, avoiding the ascending hill side landscape to the east and set back from boundaries and established internal green corridors allowing for space for enhanced mitigation planting to reduce potential visual effects from the outset;
- Limiting lower height of new built form to the Site margins adjoining open agricultural land;
- The landscape strategy uses retained natural features to create corridors of green infrastructure which contribute to both landscape and visual mitigation as well as provide a distinct sense of place to the future development;
- The provision of suitable landscaping, water attenuation and public open space to enhance accessibility to open space for users;
- All water courses and drainage ditches will be integrated into the Site's landscaping, with inclusion of SuDS in the form of detention basins, pond, swale and/or permeable paving to provide treatment to manage diffuse pollution;
- A foul treatment plant will be constructed within the Application Site to treat foul drainage prior to discharge into the local drainage system;
- Ecological survey work has identified ecological features on the site including trees and hedgerows. Existing areas of ecological value would be integrated and retained for their existing value. A number of protected species including bats and badgers will be fully safeguarded under the proposals, whilst habitat creation and enhancement will maintain, and in some cases improve, opportunities for protected species on-site;
- A range of habitats will be created that compliment the existing wildlife to add interest and diversity to the greenspace and green corridors. As well as enhancing the on-site hedgerows and grassland, new woodland, orchard and two separate wildlife ponds will be created to provide new opportunities for bats, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, birds and small mammals. New homes for wildlife will be provided within the Proposed Development, such as a range of bat and bird boxes;

- The proposals would provide areas of open space, trees and hedgerow reinforcements to provide an overall 'net gain' within the Site, soften the appearance of the proposed infrastructure and to promote visual screening;
- A circular access route within the Site will allow for buses to enter the Site and that will support the provision of a new bus route between the site and Banbury Town Centre / Railway Station. This could be an improvement to the existing 200 service or a wholly new shuttle service;
- The Site will also be compliant with EVI 8 of the Oxfordshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (adopted in 2021) which requires 25% of all new parking areas to be provided with EV Chargers; and
- Production of a Framework Travel Plan to promote sustainable travel patterns and behaviour – tailored to Site and surrounding context.

4.2.8 The above therefore illustrates an iterative approach to design, which has been incorporated into the Proposed Development as 'embedded mitigation' or 'mitigation by design'.

4.2.9 The Proposed Development conforms to the Development Parameters that have been subject to environmental impact assessment as reported in the Environmental Statement.