



ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT: NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY  
NOVEMBER 2014

# WOODSTOCK EAST



**West Waddy ADP**

The Malthouse  
60 East St Helen Street  
Abingdon  
Oxfordshire  
OX14 5EB

t: 01235 523139

f: 01235 521662

e: enquiries@westwaddy-adp.co.uk

**Environmental Statement: Non-Technical Summary  
Woodstock East  
November 2014**

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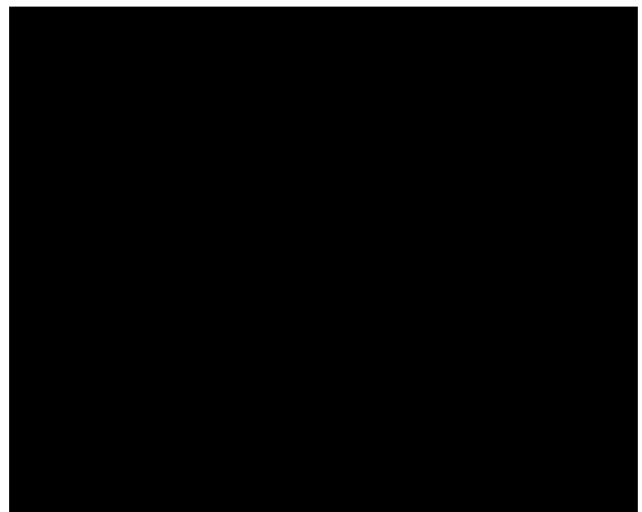
**Prepared by:**

Steve Pickles, Senior Town Planner

Susie Byrne, Graduate Town Planner

**Checked by:**

Alan Divall, Associate Town Planner



PREPARED BY

LEAD CONSULTANT + PLANNING + URBAN DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE + HERITAGE

ARCHITECTS AND TOWN PLANNERS  
**westwaddy ADP**



CONTRIBUTIONS INCLUDED WITHIN THIS DOCUMENT

FOR

DEVELOPER

Vanbrugh Unit Trust



DEVELOPER

**PYE** Homes

IN CONSULTATION WITH

CONTAMINATION



LANDSCAPE + ARBORICULTURE



TRANSPORT



ECOLOGY



WASTE MANAGEMENT + UTILITIES



CFSH STRATEGY, ENERGY + AIR QUALITY



ARCHAEOLOGY



NOISE



AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY



RETAIL, VIABILITY + ECONOMIC



LIGHTING



CONSULTATION



DRAINAGE



CARE VILLAGE DESIGN



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Pye Homes Ltd and the Vanbrugh Unit Trust have submitted a hybrid planning application for a residential led mixed use development for up to 1,500 homes on land to the south east of Woodstock (now known as Woodstock East).
- 1.1.2 This application is submitted against a background of Government policy and public need to see more homes to meet household demand. The application falls across the boundary of two Oxfordshire District planning authorities: West Oxfordshire and Cherwell. The 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has identified a need for up to 106,560 homes in Oxfordshire over the period to 2031. Both Districts need to respond to this need.
- 1.1.3 Cherwell is expected to plan for up to 23,800 and West Oxfordshire for up to 13,700, to fulfil their objectively assessed housing need identified by the SHMA.
- 1.1.4 Woodstock East can make a significant and sustainable contribution to meeting the urgent identified housing need of the County. The site is situated outside of Oxford Green Belt and outside Oxfordshire's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, yet it is well connected to proposed employment growth on the north side of Oxford, and close to the amenities of Woodstock and the wider area.
- 1.1.5 West Oxfordshire District Council identify Woodstock as a key service centre and is positioned third in West Oxfordshire's Settlement Sustainability Matrix, with only Witney and Carterton being higher. The proposal is of a scale that can make a significant contribution to infrastructure provision to meet the needs of the new population, and support the viability of existing services and facilities in the Town.
- 1.1.6 Development of the Masterplan for the Woodstock East site has been informed particularly by the special qualities of its context sitting as it does, close by to the grounds of Blenheim Palace. All the environmental components of the site and its' context are assessed in detail in this Environmental Statement.

## 2 THE PROPOSALS

### 2.1 Site Context

- 2.1.1 Woodstock lies some 13km north of Oxford City Centre, and The Site lies to the south east of Woodstock immediately abutting the residential edge of the town. The Site comprises around 75hectares of level but gently sloping agricultural land, and school playing fields divided into a series of fields bounded by established hedgerows.
- 2.1.2 The site is bounded by:
- Residential dwellings and school playing fields forming part of Woodstock town on its northwest side
  - Shipton Road and agricultural fields on the north east side
  - The A4095 (Upper Campsfield Road) on the south east, beyond which lies Kidlington/Oxford airport, and;
  - The A44 (Oxford Road) on the south west side beyond which is a caravan club, offices, and Campsfield Wood. Further beyond this are the grounds of Blenheim Palace.
- 2.1.3 Blenheim Palace is designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, which taken together with Woodstock town centre, form a particularly important context for the Woodstock East development.
- 2.1.4 Whilst comprising mainly agricultural land, there are notable landscape, heritage, and other features within the site which contribute to its qualities and need to be properly take into account:
- The site contains the buried remains of a Roman Villa, which is designated as a Scheduled Monument,
  - A public footpath runs north south through the site from the adjacent residential estate, across the Caravan Park towards Bladon
  - A complex of historic buildings known as The Pest House is located north of the centre of the site
  - There is an area of Common Land in the north eastern corner of the site
  - Some hedgerows provide ecological habitat
  - Tree copses and hedgerows around much of the site boundaries both have intrinsic value and obscure large areas of the site from their surroundings
- 2.1.5 The Environmental Impact Assessment considers the impacts of the development proposed in the context of these features and all aspects of the site. The features and the findings of this Assessment, have helped to inform the design of the scheme now proposed.

### 2.2 The Development

- 2.2.1 The development description is:

*Hybrid Planning Application for a mixed-use development comprising: Outline Planning Application for up to 1,500 dwellings, including affordable housing and up to a 150 unit care village (C2) with associated publicly accessible ancillary facilities; site for a new primary school; up to 930sqm of retail space; up to 7,500sqm locally led employment (B1/B2/B8) including link and ride; site for a Football Association step 5 football facility with publicly accessible ancillary facilities; public open space; associated infrastructure, engineering and ancillary works, (all matters reserved except for means of access to the development); and Full planning application for the development of Phase 1 at the south western corner of the site for the erection of 29 residential dwellings (29 of the 1,500 described above) with associated open space, parking and landscaping; with vehicular access provided from Upper Campsfield Road (A4095), Shipton Road and Oxford Road (A44).*

## **3 APPROACH TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

### **3.1 EIA Regulations**

- 3.1.1 The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 2011 set out when an EIA is required. The proposed development meets the criteria for an EIA to be undertaken in that the area of the site is more than 5 hectares and includes up to 1,500 dwellings on previously undeveloped land.
- 3.1.2 Formal scoping requests were made to West Oxfordshire (WODC) and Cherwell (CDC) District Councils in August 2014. The Councils then consulted a number of statutory consultees in line with Government guidelines before making a fully informed response to West Waddy ADP as the agent.
- 3.1.3 The formal Scoping responses provided by both District Councils have been carefully considered in preparing this Environmental Statement. The aim has been to provide an assessment document that is proportionate to the importance of the potential impacts, and responsive to those matters of importance both to specialist consultees and to local representatives.

### **3.2 Methodology**

- 3.2.1 This Environmental Statement has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations and Good Practice Guidance in relation to each of the topics assessed. It assesses the likely significant environmental effects of the planning application for the development here described. This includes the effects of the development in the context of the site and its' surroundings, it takes account of potential cumulative effects of other committed development in Woodstock and also considers a 'do nothing' scenario (i.e. no new development in Woodstock).

### **3.3 Alternatives**

- 3.3.1 EIA Regulations require an the applicant to indicate alternatives to the application proposals, and reasons for the choice made. The alternative that has been considered in this Environmental Statement is providing no development on the site at Woodstock East.
- 3.3.2 The applicant does not have options relating to sufficient other areas of developable land to provide the proposed level of development and so would not be able to provide an equivalent scheme on another site or combination of sites within the vicinity.
- 3.3.3 A development of the scale proposed for Woodstock East is unlikely to be achievable elsewhere in the vicinity of Woodstock either as a single development, or as a series of smaller developments. The alternative option to Woodstock East to consider in this assessment therefore is a 'no development' scenario.

### **3.4 Plans and Policies**

- 3.4.1 Planning applications should be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.4.2 The Development Plan for the site consists of the Saved Policies of the West Oxfordshire District Local Plan 2011 and the Saved Policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996.
- 3.4.3 The Government's more recently published National Planning Policy Framework carries significant weight in the determination of planning proposals; and there are also a number of District level policy documents that are material to various aspects of this development.
- 3.4.4 Planning policy has therefore been individually addressed within each chapter of the Environmental Statement.



## 4 COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC AND RETAIL

### 4.1 Community Impacts

- 4.1.1 The proposal to provide up to 1,500 new dwellings at Woodstock East will have some significant impacts on the community facilities and services available to the people of Woodstock and the surrounding communities.
- 4.1.2 Woodstock is in many ways a sustainable town with a broad range of services that in part serves a wider rural hinterland; though some of its services do not meet the standard or quality that residents might expect. Preservation and enhancement of its' service provision is therefore important for the wider community. Government policy seeks to support the achievement of strong and vibrant communities with good access to local services. This is supported by local planning policy that requires that new development should provide the necessary infrastructure to mitigate adverse impacts.
- 4.1.3 The new development at Woodstock East provides a unique opportunity to support and enhance the viability of local services for the local population, increase choice and improve the quality of the facilities that people use.
- 4.1.4 At present, Woodstock has a healthy, but ageing population; there are low levels of deprivation, good housing and low unemployment. Education attainment is high with below District average people with no qualifications and above the average with degree level qualifications. House purchase and rental prices are slightly above average for West Oxfordshire, there are relatively good public transport connections for a rural town, but the private car remains the main choice for journeys to work.
- 4.1.5 Woodstock has doctor and dentist surgeries, primary and secondary schools, a library and a range of community halls. It has a scout hall and a youth club, but this club resides in a building that is in a poor state. Woodstock's leisure facilities are limited to activities such as those offered at Marlborough Secondary School, a bowls and tennis club, and the Old Woodstock Town Football Club, the latter of which would benefit from a floodlit pitch and new changing facilities.
- 4.1.6 The Town has good levels of open space provision that includes Informal playing pitches and children's play areas. There is access to Blenheim Park (part of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site), footpaths and bridleways and an off road cycle route which links runs from Oxford to Banbury. Emergency services are all located close by.
- 4.1.7 A mixed use development including 1,500 new dwellings will impact on all the facilities and services described above. There is in general only limited spare capacity within the existing infrastructure to accommodate the population generated by the proposal.
- 4.1.8 In response to this situation, doctor and dentist services will need to be expanded. A new 3-form entry primary school with nursery places will need to be provided on site alongside considerable expansion and improvement of the existing Marlborough Secondary School accommodation. The new development will need recreation and open space to meet prescribed standards. The development will need to contribute to community facilities in terms of community halls, youth centre and day care facilities.
- 4.1.9 These needs will be provided for as part of the Woodstock East development.
- 4.1.10 It is proposed to include a care village of up to 150 units for older people; this will offer some leisure facilities that will have some public access for the wider community. A new football pitch is proposed for Old Woodstock Town FC together with clubhouse and changing facilities and a further multi-purpose pitch for public use. There will be community hall provision and a new local centre will afford opportunities for other public services to be established such as a dental practice.
- 4.1.11 Extensive public space is proposed in the form of children's play areas, amenity space and natural green space. This will meet District Council and Sport England standards.

- 4.1.12 The Environmental Statement analyses the positive and negative impacts of the development proposed. It explains that the development will add to demand for some services for which some infrastructure/service provision such as a new health centre and primary aged special education needs will be supported on a pro rata basis. Other types of facility will be provided on site in their totality. This will include a new football club facility and a new primary school and leisure facilities (including those offered through the care village).
- 4.1.13 The assessment identifies the range of impacts of the development on individual service provision ranging from minor/moderate negatives, to major positives. It concludes overall that the new development together with the infrastructure proposed, will result in a **moderate to major positive** impact for Woodstock and its service catchment.

## **4.2 Economic Impacts**

- 4.2.1 This chapter assesses the likely significant economic effects of the proposed development that will arise from the associated proposed housing, the proposed retail and employment uses.
- 4.2.2 The proposed development is to develop up to 1,500 new homes, including a 150 unit care village, affordable housing, 7, 500sqm of employment floorspace and retail provision of up to 930sqm.
- 4.2.3 The proposal will have some impact on the town of Woodstock and its economic offer and growth.
- 4.2.4 Woodstock is a sustainable town with local services that service the existing local population of around 3, 000 people and the high number of visitors that are attracted to the area due to the world heritage site. The main employer in the town is Mumford Owen, a medical technology company.
- 4.2.5 Within the wider area there are large employment areas including Oxford City Airport which lies directly to the south of the site; the Begbroke Estate a high-tech innovation park linked to Oxford University; further afield business premises and offices can be found in the towns of Kidlington, Witney and Bicester, where the first phase of the Eco Town development are being progressed.
- 4.2.6 The area has low unemployment, with a higher than average economically active population, most of whom work within the managerial and professional sector. The majority of housing is owner occupied with a very low level of affordable accommodation.
- 4.2.7 The proposed development will deliver up to 1,500 homes which will result in a population increase of 3, 247people. The proposed new dwellings will provide a positive effect on the provision of housing, both market and affordable both meeting the local and area demand for housing and providing additional housing for those wanting to work in the area. The increase in the population will also aid Woodstock in becoming a more sustainable settlement, providing additional housing and services, reducing the need to travel.
- 4.2.8 The employment effects associated with the proposed development in both the construction and permanent phases of the scheme offer the opportunity for positive effects on local employment opportunities, with the completed employment floorspace could provide an additional 160 jobs in the area.
- 4.2.9 In addition the retail space within the development could provide an additional 55 job opportunities, and increases the services to support the local population, both existing and proposed through the development with a supermarket retail offer that would reduce the need to travel.
- 4.2.10 Woodstock does receive high numbers of visitors linked to its proximity to a World Heritage site and the Cotswolds. However, the proposal is not considered to deter nor attract visitors and therefore the proposed development is considered to have a neutral effect on tourism in the area.
- 4.2.11 The economic effects of the development are considered to be positive, enabling the creation of a more sustainable area and meets policy and identified demand for additional employment opportunities, housing and an expanded retail offer.

	<b>Effect analysis</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Residual effects</b>
<b>Construction</b>	Minor/ moderate over medium to long term	Minimise leakage of construction jobs	Moderately positive effect
<b>Employment -</b> Generation of potentially up to 160 jobs based on 7,500sqm of floorspace	Moderate positive effect over the long term	None required	Major positive effect
<b>Retail –</b> generation of potentially up to 55 jobs	Moderate positive effect over the long term	None required	Moderately positive effect
<b>Housing –</b> delivery of up 1, 500 new homes, including affordable housing	Moderate positive effect over the long term	None required	Moderately positive effect

### 4.3 Retail Impacts

- 4.3.1 This chapter assesses the likely significant retail effects of the proposed development known as Woodstock East. The proposal includes up to 1,500 new homes, a care village, employment floor space and retail provision.
- 4.3.2 The retail element will comprise up to 930sqm net sales taking the form of a single convenience store with associated car parking. Importantly, the proposal has been designed to supplement and support Woodstock's Town Centre. This study includes an assessment of the role, vitality and viability of the Town Centre and examines how this will be affected by the proposals.
- 4.3.3 The report concludes that the impact of the Woodstock East proposal will be to enhance Woodstock Town Centre's vitality and viability and result in an all-round improvement to the sustainability of the Town.
- 4.3.4 Woodstock is a small rural town with a town centre that should service the existing local population of around 3,000 and the local villages, together with the high number of visitors that are attracted to the area by the nearby Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site.
- 4.3.5 Whilst Woodstock Town Centre can be considered "healthy," this is heavily influenced by the town's heritage and leisure role. In reality, Woodstock fails to satisfactorily perform its local service function. Remarkably, at present, only £1 in every £10 of convenience (food) expenditure that arises in Woodstock is spent locally. Around 90% of food shopping trips that originate in Woodstock go to food-shops elsewhere. This is neither sensible nor sustainable.
- 4.3.6 Within the wider area there are several small villages and the larger retail centre of Kidlington (3 miles from the application site). The local retail hierarchy described in the Development Plan for West Oxfordshire identifies Witney as the principal town centre in the District and Bicester is similarly described as the nearby equivalent in Cherwell District. Oxford is the regional shopping centre, which lies only some 8 miles from Woodstock. Woodstock is described as a secondary town centre.
- 4.3.7 Woodstock Town Centre has the twin functions of local service centre and heritage and leisure destination. Of these, its primary business is derived from servicing and catering for a tourist and leisure trade attracted both to Blenheim Palace and the historic and attractive Town Centre. The Town Centre includes a number of hotels and a range of restaurants and pubs (offering food) to serve them and the day time visitor trade.
- 4.3.8 It's secondary business is derived from meeting the day to day shopping and service needs of the local population, a function that the Town Centre addresses only through the presence of a very

small Co-op convenience store (100sq m net sales), a bank, post office, chemist, dry cleaners, hardware store and a newsagents. The other convenience retail offering in the centre includes an artisan bakers, cake shop/tea room and delicatessen which are primarily driven by the leisure/visitor function rather than a local service function.

- 4.3.9 We have carried out a retail health check of the vitality and viability of Woodstock and overall our conclusions are that the Centre is healthy, albeit that it does not perform the local service function particularly well. Vacancies are low and the trade in the Centre is oriented towards tourist and visitor business. There has been a recent decline in the number and range of comparison shopping outlets in the Town and several shops and businesses have recently been converted into residential properties. The proposal will help to address these matters to the benefit of Woodstock and its residents.
- 4.3.10 An emphasis on integration and linkages, including a new bus link, dedicated Link and Ride and new and revitalised pedestrian and cycle links, will encourage new residents into Woodstock Town Centre. The release of Town Centre parking spaces, currently taken up by long stay commuters, will free up space for convenience visits, as well as for leisure visitors.
- 4.3.11 The proposed development will deliver a new convenience store that will cater for the day to day needs of both the existing population and the increased population driven by the additional housing provision. This will enable a significant improvement in expenditure retention in Woodstock and make the community more sustainable.
- 4.3.12 Provision of a small food-store at the proposal site will have a negligible impact on provision in the Town Centre (Co-op Store). Notably, the Town Centre store is significantly over-trading against company benchmark turnovers.
- 4.3.13 The increase in population in Woodstock will make other types of convenience and comparison retail and service provision more sustainable by providing a larger background population to support independent retailers and by growing the expenditure catchment for the Town Centre for service and day to day shopping.
- 4.3.14 In addition the retail space within the development could provide an additional 55 job opportunities, and increases the services to support the local population, both existing and proposed through the development with a supermarket retail offer that would reduce the need to travel.
- 4.3.15 The retail effects of the development are positive. They enable the creation of a more sustainable settlement where the needs of the local population are met locally whilst the critical mass of the settlement in terms of scale can support and underpin the health of the Town Centre. The proposal meets with policy considerations and satisfies an identified need to retain greater levels of expenditure within Woodstock.

## 5 TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

- 5.1.1 This Chapter has reviewed the highways and transport implications of the proposed residential-led mixed use development to the East of Woodstock.
- 5.1.2 There is a significant amount of development planned within Cherwell and West Oxfordshire and as a result of which there will be the potential for a significant impact on the transport system without appropriate strategies to deal with the additional demand.
- 5.1.3 The proposed development provides expanded employment and services for Woodstock including a new local centre and a primary school. These will minimize the need to travel and contribute to increased sustainability of the wider community. Overall it is concluded that the proposed development makes good use of existing infrastructure particularly the excellent existing bus services.
- 5.1.4 The proposed development however does represent a significant increase in size of the town of Woodstock. Forecasts of both wider growth and the development have been produced and a Transport Strategy has therefore been devised to address the cumulative impact in a cost effective manner. This includes enhancements to infrastructure and a rebalancing of the transport system to be more efficient and sustainable. This strategy has been developed to be consistent with current OCC policies and complementary with committed transport infrastructure schemes.
- 5.1.5 A key element is the public transport strategy for the site which develops existing direct bus services increasing demand through more development which is served directly and by the provision of a new interchange within the site which will be accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and car users. Car (circa 300 spaces) and cycle parking will be provided at this interchange.
- 5.1.6 Localised capacity improvements are planned for the local road network. These include works at Bladon Roundabout together with bus priority measures on the A44 corridor including reallocation of road space and junction improvement works at Loop Farm roundabout and Cassington Lane roundabout.
- 5.1.7 Works are already planned to the East of the A34 by Oxfordshire County Council and others and the developer will seek to work with OCC to ensure that a programme of works is coordinated to ensure that a high level of accessibility to Oxford is attained.
- 5.1.8 The above measures do directly address the forecast additional demand such that the residual demand is appropriately managed so that the residual impact will be negligible.
- 5.1.9 With respect to the planning policy requirements set out in NPPF, it is considered that the development is sustainable in transport terms. Specifically in terms of the requirements of paragraph 32 it has been demonstrated that safe and suitable access can be achieved moreover that the impacts of the development can be appropriately mitigated and that the residual impact will not be severe.

## **6 FLOOD RISK, DRAINAGE AND WATER RESOURCES**

- 6.1.1 Development by its nature usually has the potential to increase the impermeable area with a resultant increased risk of causing rapid surface water runoff to watercourses and sewers, thereby causing surcharging and potential flooding. There is also the potential for pollutants to be mobilised and consequently flushed into the receiving surface water system.
- 6.1.2 It is important, therefore that the proposed drainage strategy employed by the Woodstock East, development addresses these issues. Therefore the objectives of the surface water drainage strategy for the Woodstock East development site are that it will not increase the risk of flooding to either the development site itself or to areas outside the site.
- 6.1.3 This will be achieved by the implementation of Sustainable Drainage techniques (SuDS) which covers a range of approaches to manage surface water runoff so that surface water arising from a developed site can be managed in a sustainable manner to replicate as far as possible the surface water flows arising from the site prior to the proposed development. In doing so the strategy takes account of the implications of climate change in the future.
- 6.1.4 Generally, the site falls into two areas; the eastern half where infiltration techniques for surface water disposal are most effective, and the western site part where infiltration techniques are not so effective.
- 6.1.5 At present rainfall landing on the higher ground to the west would naturally migrate in both southerly and easterly directions, following the natural topography of the site towards both the existing ditch systems and the permeable strata associated with the western half of the site.
- 6.1.6 The development scheme seeks to utilise infiltration techniques as widely as possible to replicate the current green field regime for the site.

### **Attenuation Basin**

- 6.1.7 The proposed method of dealing with the surface water runoff from the western area is to collect water being shed off impermeable areas into piped systems which are routed into a detention/storage pond.
- 6.1.8 The stored water is released at a gradual greenfield runoff rate into the adjacent ditch running parallel to the A44 Oxford Road. This replicates the current surface water runoff rates for this section of the site and in doing so retains the base flow into the ditch system.
- 6.1.9 The majority of the necessary storage is provided within the proposed detention basin located close to the southern boundary of the site, which also corresponds to the low point of the western half of the site. The pond will be designed to be take into consideration and address safety concerns perceived with such features.
- 6.1.10 Unfortunately whilst permanent water features can be utilized to achieve ecological and recreational gain, consultation with the London Oxford Airport has identified that the use of open water features cannot be used as the provision of such open bodies of water has the potential to attract flocking waterfowl which may increase the likelihood of bird strikes to aircraft taking off.
- 6.1.11 As such the detention basin is designed to temporarily hold before draining down at greenfield runoff rates to achieve a dry state.

### **Swales**

- 6.1.12 These are wide shallow linear depressions, effectively shallow flat ditches that are usually located alongside the highway. They provide storage and maximize infiltration into the ground but also provide a route towards to feed the detention pond where required. In doing so the vegetation provides a level of biological treatment associated with runoff from the main road network.

## **Permeable pavements**

6.1.13 Where possible, the proposal is to utilise permeable pavement highways to allow surface water to infiltrate down into the underlying strata. This technique also has the potential to incorporate an element of microbial treatment to the surface water whilst passing through the stone sub base layers to improve the quality of the runoff from these trafficked areas.

## **Flood risk to the site**

6.1.14 The development site lies within land classified as flood zone 1, which is assessed as land at a low risk of flooding, and therefore appropriate for a development of this nature. Other forms of flood risk to the development site have also been assessed to confirm it is not considered at high risk from any other sources of flooding.

## **Foul Drainage**

6.1.15 Consultation with Thames Water has taken place with regards the development site, which has confirmed that the foul drainage sewer network currently serving the town of Woodstock insufficient capacity to serve the proposed.

6.1.16 These consultations have established that foul flows from the development site should be directed straight to the Woodstock Sewerage Treatment Plant located to the north of the town by a completely independent system therefore not directly discharging into or overloading the current network

6.1.17 An on-site adoptable pumping station will pump the foul water from the development directly in the existing sewage treatment works. Thames Water are assessing the sewerage treatment works to establish what upgrades will be required to accommodate the additional flows.

## 7 LIGHTING

- 7.1.1 The Lighting Impact Assessment considers potential light pollution and light trespass from the Development and its potential to cause a statutory nuisance.
- 7.1.2 Planning Practice Guidance states that *“Artificial light provides valuable benefits to society.....extending opportunities for sport and recreation, and can be essential to a new development. Equally, artificial light is not always necessary, (and) has the potential to become what is termed ‘light pollution’ or ‘obtrusive light’”*. Planning guidance also states that *“...not all modern lighting is suitable in all locations.”*
- 7.1.3 The existing site is used as farmland and is effectively a dark landscape. Woodstock town is predominantly illuminated with high pressure sodium lighting, as is the A44 Oxford Road on the southern boundary. The A4095 Upper Campsfield Road and Shipton Road to the north of the site are currently unlit.
- 7.1.4 All species of bat are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. Ecological surveys have identified parts of the site where there are foraging or ‘commuting’ bats. Electric light can cause disturbance to bats at roost and can also affect their feeding behaviour. Mitigation of the adverse effects of electric light should therefore be considered in the design of the development. Lighting should be designed in such a way as to avoid isolation of bat colonies. The proposals include a 25 metre wide dark zone for the protection of the nocturnal commuting behaviour of the existing bat population.
- 7.1.5 The proposed development includes residential dwellings, a primary school, retail facilities, sports facilities and a commercial area for small and medium sized businesses with *“Link & Ride”* transport interchange. Electric light is required for safety, security and general amenity.
- 7.1.6 The proposed development has considered the potential impact of electric light on the London Oxford Airport and the necessity to avoid lighting installations which could distract pilots or be mistaken for aeronautical ground lights. The Lighting Impact Assessment also details possible strategies for avoiding such confusion.
- 7.1.7 According to the methodology adopted for the Lighting Impact Assessment, the baseline perceived brightness of The Site overall is *“Dim”* the brightness of the proposed scheme is *“Bright”* therefore the magnitude of the change will be *“High”* and the lighting impacts *“Significant”*. The scheme will therefore require mitigation during the design stages of the project. If mitigation measures are followed the residual impact has been assessed as *“Not Significant”*.
- 7.1.8 The potentially adverse effects of electric light on the site can be mitigated during the design stages of the project by integrating architectural design, landscape design and lighting design elements. Best practice lighting guidelines should be adopted and the local context considered. The use of lighting controls and dimmable lighting sources can enable light intensities to be adjusted during the hours of darkness to mitigate the potentially adverse impacts. Once mitigation measures are in place there should be no residual impacts.



## 8 AIR QUALITY

- 8.1.1 This chapter presents the findings of the air quality assessment, and addresses the potential air quality impacts during both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. For both phases the type, source and significance of potential impacts were identified, and the measures that should be employed to minimise these impacts have been proposed. The methodology followed in this study was discussed and agreed with the Environmental Health Officers of West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Cherwell District Council (CDC).
- 8.1.2 The assessment of construction phase impacts associated with fugitive dust and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) emissions has been undertaken in line with the relevant Institute of Air Quality Management guidance. This identified that the Proposed Development is considered to be a High to Medium Risk Site for dust deposition and a Low Risk Site for PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations and ecological effects. However, through good site practice and the implementation of suitable mitigation measures, the effect of dust and PM<sub>10</sub> releases would be significantly reduced. The residual effects of the construction phase on air quality are therefore considered to be negligible.
- 8.1.3 The assessment of the potential air quality impacts associated with traffic generated by the operational phase of the proposed development, has been completed in line with published methodologies and technical guidance. The pollutants considered in this part of the assessment were nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and PM<sub>10</sub>.
- 8.1.4 The results show that the Proposed Development would cause an imperceptible to small increase in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations and an imperceptible increase in PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations, with effects being predicted as negligible to slight adverse for NO<sub>2</sub> and negligible for PM<sub>10</sub>. Transport related mitigation measures that are being provided as part of this development include a Travel Plan, public transport improvements, a Link and Ride service and a contribution to specific traffic management measures, which will all be of benefit to air quality, helping to reduce the number of private vehicle trips associated with the Proposed Development. According to the assessment significance criteria, the residual effects of the Proposed Development once mitigation is in place are considered to be negligible to slight adverse for NO<sub>2</sub> and negligible for PM<sub>10</sub>.
- 8.1.5 The impact of the increased traffic emissions on nearby sensitive ecological sites has also been considered in the assessment. There is the potential that current levels of nitrogen deposition may be having an adverse impact on the integrity of the Blenheim Park SSSI and Oxford Meadows SAC. The actual change in nitrogen deposition levels as a result of the Proposed Development is predicted to be relatively small on both ecological sites. Consequently, it is considered that the operation of the Proposed Development will not have a significant impact on Blenheim Park SSSI and Oxford Meadows SAC.
- 8.1.6 The assessment shows that for the Blenheim Park SSSI and Oxford Meadows SAC there will be exceedences of the annual mean NO<sub>x</sub> objective in the 2014 baseline scenario, as well as the opening year (2033) scenarios both with and without development, with imperceptible to medium increases in concentrations being observed at Blenheim Park SSSI and imperceptible to small increases at Oxford Meadows SAC, with no change predicted at receptors located on the A40 transect within the Oxford Meadows SAC. Therefore, the development is considered to have a negligible to slight adverse impact on annual mean NO<sub>x</sub> concentrations at the Blenheim Park SSSI and a negligible impact at the Oxford Meadows SAC.
- 8.1.7 Based on the assessment results, it is considered that the development proposals comply with national, regional and local policy for air quality.

## 9 NOISE AND VIBRATION

- 9.1.1 An unattended noise survey has been undertaken at various locations around the proposed development site, in order to quantify existing noise sources in the vicinity and to establish baseline noise conditions.
- 9.1.2 Assessments have been undertaken of various potential impacts associated with the Proposed Development, including the following:
- 9.1.3 To Existing Sensitivities
- Changes in noise levels due to traffic flows on the existing local road network
  - Construction noise and vibration
  - Noise from fixed plant items installed as part of the application scheme
- 9.1.4 To Proposed Sensitivities
- Contributions of noise from local roads
  - Contributions of noise from London Oxford Airport
- 9.1.5 The nearest existing noise sensitivities to the development site are located in Woodstock to the west of the site. In addition to the larger residential area at Woodstock, a number of individual residences are located around the perimeter of the site.
- 9.1.6 Proposed sensitivities comprise a residential area of up to 1,500 dwellings, football club, primary school, local centre and care village.
- 9.1.7 The noise impact on existing sensitivities associated with changes in road traffic flow, as a result of the development, has been assessed as Negligible in the worst case. The assessment takes account of cumulative impacts as the result of a nearby committed development scheme called "Northern Gateway".
- 9.1.8 Where construction noise and vibration is concerned, impacts on existing sensitivities will be limited to Minor Adverse and they will be temporary and short term in nature. This will be achieved through agreement and implementation of a Code of Construction Practice, which will include noise and vibration action levels. At most locations the impact is expected to be Minor adverse or less and temporary.
- 9.1.9 Plant noise limits have been established which will apply to any plant equipment to be installed as part of the application scheme. This will ensure that mitigation measures are installed to control noise emissions and therefore the impact of said plant on existing sensitivities is Negligible.
- 9.1.10 Mitigation has been proposed to protect proposed sensitivities from noise, in the form of appropriate glazing and ventilation for proposed buildings, in order to ensure that suitable conditions are provided for future residents. The consideration of the orientation of buildings that have garden areas near to local roads is important to ensure an amount of screening is provided to these external amenity spaces and this would need to be taken into consideration at the detailed design stage.
- 9.1.11 Noise associated with operations at London Oxford Airport has been assessed through the computation of contours for both airborne aircraft and engine ground running operations. The contours have been prepared using the current version of the FAA INM with inputs based on detailed movement and aircraft type information provided by London Oxford Airport.
- 9.1.12 A distinction has been made between the noise generated by fixed wing movements and that generated by helicopters, so that the relative contributions of each can be judged separately. However, the cumulative effects of all aircraft types operating together have also been taken into account so that the overall noise effects on the application site can be assessed.
- 9.1.13 So far as airborne operations are concerned, the level of present day activity is such that neither fixed wing nor helicopter movements generate noise at levels that require to be taken into

account when assessing the suitability of noise sensitive development at the site. Even when assessed together, aircraft noise levels are not above the Lowest Observable Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL) anywhere on the site.

- 9.1.14 In order to encapsulate a worst case possible operating scenario a sensitivity study was carried out which scaled up the present day operations to a number consistent with the maximum permissible annual movements as set out in the Section 106 Agreement between the Airport and Cherwell District Council. The 160,000 annual movements set out in that document increases the present day operations by a factor of around 4, equivalent to a 6dB increase in aircraft noise levels.
- 9.1.15 In this case, airborne aircraft noise levels above the LOAEL (54dB  $L_{Aeq,16h}$ ) do affect the north eastern sector of the site where residential development is currently proposed. If this sensitivity case is considered to be a representative description of the likely future noise levels, then dwellings in this area will require good quality thermal double glazing and a means of ventilation without windows needing to be opened to mitigate for noise impacts.
- 9.1.16 There is a small section of the site just to the west of the western end of the cross runway that is exposed to noise levels above 57dB  $L_{Aeq,16h}$ , although this is entirely taken up by parking and employment use buildings which are far less sensitive to environmental noise.
- 9.1.17 So far as engine ground running is concerned, those parts of the site identified for noise sensitive residential development are below the threshold (55dB  $L_{Aeq,16h}$ ) for which any mitigation is required. The very eastern part of the site designated for parking and employment use is identified as being exposed to noise above this level, but mitigation is not expected to be required to these areas or for these buildings. In fact, these buildings are expected to provide useful screening from this ground level source to the more sensitive residences, indicating that engine ground running levels may well be lower than are indicated in the contour plot to some residential areas.

## 10 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACTS

- 10.1.1 Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd is instructed by Pye Homes and The Vanbrugh Unit Trust to assess the landscape and visual issues arising from the proposed mixed use development at land east of Woodstock, Oxfordshire.
- 10.1.2 Aspect Landscape Planning Ltd has undertaken detailed desk studies and assessments in the field to identify and appraise the existing landscape character and key views within the localised and wider setting of the site. This has included a detailed review of landscape related planning policy.
- 10.1.3 The site currently comprises several large flat arable fields, located on the eastern edge of Woodstock. Internally, the field boundaries vary from managed hedgerows to tall, established hedges with hedgerow trees. The site reflects the general topography of the wider vale landscape, with little variation in the landform. The buried remains of a Roman villa lies centrally within the southern part of the site and is designated as a Scheduled Monument (SM), although its location is not readable to the eye.
- 10.1.4 The site itself is not subject to any landscape related designations, however, some of the landscape to the west of the A44, associated with Blenheim Palace is designated as a World Heritage Site. There are also two Conservation Areas within the wider setting associated with Woodstock and Bladon. The World Heritage Site Management Plan also identifies an important view towards the Victory Monument, within the Blenheim Palace parkland, from Woodstock.
- 10.1.5 The land to the east of the A4095 is designated within the Cherwell Local Plan as Green Belt. The Cotswolds AONB lies to the west of the Blenheim Palace estate, and approximately 2km to the west of the site. The Wychwood Forest Area extends beyond the AONB and encompasses the Blenheim Palace estate, but does not extend beyond the A44.
- 10.1.6 In terms of the landscape character, it is considered that the site lies within a localised sub-character area, referred to as the Woodstock Urban Fringe. The character of this area is informed by the road corridors which lie on three sides and the existing hard urban edge which exists to the north west. Other sub-character areas exist within the wider setting of the site. Established vegetation associated with the site's boundaries and immediate setting creates a degree of separation between the site and these neighbouring character areas. The application site abuts the urban area of Woodstock, however, the built form associated with the eastern edge of the settlement, formed by contemporary housing, creates separation between the urban fringe landscape and the more historic core of the settlement. A detailed landscape character assessment is included within this chapter.
- 10.1.7 In terms of views, the flat topography and extensive established vegetation cover which characterises the localised landscape setting, creates a high degree of visual containment, ensuring that views into the site are highly localised.
- 10.1.8 All development, in its very nature, has an effect upon landscape character. The 2 most important landscape considerations in this proposal are the proximity to the World Heritage Site (WHS) and the approach to the historic centre of Woodstock.
- 10.1.9 The scheme proposed will focus on enhancing the entrance into Woodstock by reinforcing the planting to the north east of the A44 to mirror and strengthen that to the south west. The planting will be to a depth through which the development will be barely visible, with only glimpses becoming apparent as you move north west and begin to merge with the existing settlement boundary. This will provide an enhanced rural setting and approach to the historic town centre.
- 10.1.10 It should be noted that the WHS is largely surrounded by a 4m high stone wall, views from within the park out along the A44 are therefore non-existent at ground level.
- 10.1.11 Within the site itself, the proposals retain the key areas of vegetation cover associated with the boundaries and internal field boundaries, ensuring that the landscape structure of the site is maintained. These landscape features will then be reinforced through the creation of an extensive network of greenspaces and a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which will complement the receiving landscape character and enhance the setting and approaches to Woodstock from the

south east along the A44 and Shipton Road. It is therefore considered that the proposals can be integrated without significant harm to the localised and wider landscape character in which the site is set.

- 10.1.12 In respect of the visual environment, the assessment identifies that it will be views immediately adjacent to the site, to the north, south west and west that experience the greatest degree of change. The proposals incorporate an extensive network of greenspaces and a comprehensive scheme of landscaping which will create an appropriate transition between these viewpoints and the proposed built form. The proposed landscape treatment will soften the perceived urban edge. It is acknowledged that the proposals represent a change to the existing conditions, however, the comprehensive scheme of mitigation proposed will assist the integration of the proposed development and ensure that the proposals will not give rise to any significant or demonstrable harm in terms of the localised visual environment. In the longer term, the positive attributes of the proposed woodland will complement the local setting and give rise to visual benefits when approaching Woodstock along the A44.
- 10.1.13 In terms of longer distance views, such as those from the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site, intervening vegetation, the 4m high park wall and distance will ensure that views of the proposals are contained and that these views are not adversely affected.
- 10.1.14 In terms of the effect of the proposals upon residential amenity, the assessment identifies that it will be those properties directly adjacent to the site which are most affected. It is considered that the properties which lie on the south eastern edge of Woodstock, to the east/south east of Plane Tree Way, Flemings Road and Hedge End, together with Honeystone Cottage and Cattery to the south east of the site, would experience a significant change once the proposals are complete, however, the introduction of a landscaped buffer between the existing and proposed properties will reduce the perception of the proposals and ensure that the development does not cause significant harm to the amenities of the existing properties. Properties to the north and north east of the site will not be significantly affected by the proposals due to the retention and reinforcement of the existing tree belt associated with the north eastern and south eastern boundaries.
- 10.1.15 With regard to the effect upon the landscape setting of the SM, it is considered that the generous open space framework in which the monument will be set significantly reduces the perceived effect of the proposed built environment, indeed it could be argued that the proposals set the SM in identifiable space, making a previously unidentifiable (to the layman) feature recognisable. The establishment of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping further integrates the built form, softening the built elevations and creating an appropriate transition between the heritage asset and the proposals. It is therefore considered that the proposals can be integrated without significant harm to the landscape setting of the SM.
- 10.1.16 It is considered that the proposals represent a number of benefits and enhancements in terms of landscape character, the visual environment and people's enjoyment of the site and its setting.
- 10.1.17 In summary, it is considered that the benefits associated with the proposals include:
- Creation of accessible public open space, comprising a variety of typologies and experiences;
  - Enhancements to the A44 approach to Woodstock from the south east, with new tree avenues set against a wooded backdrop. The proposed landscaping will complement the parkland to the south west and also create a robust and defensible edge to the urban area, ensuring an appropriate set back of development from the road corridor;
  - Creation of a high quality green space around the SM allowing public appreciation of the heritage asset and ensuring the proposed built environment is appropriately offset from the perceived setting;
  - Extensive new tree planting across the site. This planting will include appropriate native species which will reflect the local character and represent a biodiversity enhancement.

# 11 GROUND CONDITIONS

## 11.1 Agricultural Land Quality

- 11.1.1 To support a mixed use planning application West Waddy ADP requested that ADAS determine the Agricultural Land Classification of land at Woodstock. Of the approximately 70.4 ha of land an area of 48ha was surveyed. The remaining land had previously been classified by ADAS on behalf of MAFF (now Defra with reports available from Natural England).
- 11.1.2 The 1:250,000 scales Provisional Land Classification Map of the area shows the site as Grade 3. The area is underlain by limestone resulting in shallow soils and the detailed fieldwork undertaken for this study confirms the site as Subgrade 3b.
- 11.1.3 The loss of 59.74ha of Subgrade 3b land which contains areas of Grade 4 within it, will not have a significant effect on national agriculture but the cumulative effect of the loss of land from this and other development sites in the area will need to be considered.
- 11.1.4 Surplus soil could be used to restore other sites which are short of soil, to preserve the soil and retain soil functions such as water and carbon storage.

## 11.2 Contamination

- 11.2.1 A desk study and ground investigation have been completed at the site to the east of Woodstock. The desk study is included in another report referenced 14.08.005, dated August 2014. The purpose of this work was to consider the potential effects of the development of the site on soils, geology and groundwater. The desk study indicated that the site had mainly been agricultural in usage from at least 1880, with a few exceptions. There was an isolation hospital towards the north of the site around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and a small stone quarry to the northeast of the site before 1880. In addition, there were two off-site areas that may have led to migration on site of ground gas or polluted groundwater; one to the north and one to the southeast. No elevated levels of soil contamination or ground gas was encountered as part of this investigation.
- 11.2.2 With regard to ground conditions encountered, Topsoil was encountered at each location from ground level to depths ranging from 0.10m bgl to 0.50m bgl. This was underlain by Cornbrash Formations strata ranging from ground level down to 0.50m below ground level (bgl) towards the southwest of the site; to 4.90m bgl towards the east of the site. These strata consisted of rubbly to intact limestone that could not be penetrated by a JCB across the eastern half of the site. Forest Marble Formations strata were encountered where the Cornbrash could be penetrated, across the west of the site, and consisted of approximately 2-3m of stiff clay over interbedded limestone and clays.
- 11.2.3 Groundwater was not encountered in any of the exploratory holes during the fieldwork down to 5.00m depth below the existing ground level. Monitoring standpipes revealed standing groundwater levels within the natural deposits of between 4.31m and 9.53m below the existing ground level (or between 80.03mAOD and 88.31mAOD).
- 11.2.4 Potential pollution from all of these sources were investigated and no contamination was encountered at any of the locations or from random locations tested across the whole site area. As such, no elevated risk to end users, construction workers, Controlled Waters or nearby residents as a result of the proposals was established from the desk study and intrusive investigation. Therefore, no further intrusive works or remedial measures are considered necessary with regard to Human Health or Controlled Waters risk.

## 12 ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE


### 12.1 Archaeology

- 12.1.1 The archaeological impacts of the proposed development have been considered following study of pre-existing archaeological information for the Site backed up by the results of field survey, comprising geophysics and trial trenching.
- 12.1.2 Particular attention has been paid to the presence of a Scheduled Monument (a buried Roman villa) on the site, both in terms of its physical presence and its setting. The development proposal has evolved to incorporate the results of this work to mitigate the effects of development on heritage assets comprising a mixture of preservation in-situ with long term management and enhancement of the setting of a Scheduled Monument, with a combination of preservation in-situ and/or preservation by record of other heritage assets.
- 12.1.3 Most of the site, however, contains nothing of archaeological significance. The buried villa site is currently virtually unknown, it is not visible to the layman and its heritage potential is unrealised. Apart from ensuring its preservation and a sustainable future for the site, the proposal includes measures to raise public awareness of this important monument and thereby enhance its overall heritage value.

### 12.2 Cultural Heritage

- 12.2.1 The proposed development site has within its boundaries identified 'Heritage assets' (including 'designated heritage assets' under the relevant legislation) as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). As such they require specific consideration in the planning process. The potential impact of the proposed development of 'East Woodstock' on their significance has been assessed.
- 12.2.2 In addition the proposed site is in close proximity to the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site (BPWHS) and we have had regard for the attributes that support the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Blenheim Palace that support this designation. The Parkland within the BPWHS is also a Grade I Registered park and we have reviewed the impact (if any) on that status and designation. as set out below.
- 12.2.3 All the assets have been considered under their descriptions in the Oxfordshire Heritage Environment Record (HER) the development of Blenheim Palace and its parkland from its origins as a royal palace and deer park has been researched with reference to similar examples. The history of the area and of the role of the assets in it has been researched and described. The East Woodstock proposal site and its setting has been walked and the potential impact on the various assets has been assessed with the benefit of photographs.
- 12.2.4 With regard to the BPWHS, the location of the proposed development area away from the critical external areas as identified by the WHS Management Plan, the surviving and much-altered character of the park closest to it, the alignment of the WHS boundary in this location away from the main road and the insulating effect of the substantial park wall as noted by the Management Plan, effectively remove any harm to the WHS, as underlined by the presence of modern developments opposite the WHS which have become an accepted part of Woodstock. Other assets will be enhanced by greater accessibility with interpretation that can explain their role in local history to the public. Any harm to them, to their significance or to their settings is outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. With the structural planting proposed and consideration of the heights of buildings on the A44 frontage, the East Woodstock proposal will in its turn become a valuable addition to Woodstock's housing stock and facilities without any harm to the identified heritage assets. This development within their settings will enable their significance to be enhanced or to be better revealed, as set out in NPPF (paragraph 137).
- 12.2.5 Agreed proceeds from the development will be made available, if necessary through a legal agreement to help meet the management objectives and actions listed in part five of the Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site Management Plan.

## 13 ECOLOGY AND NATURE CONSERVATION

- 13.1.1 This report describes the nature conservation and legal implications associated with ecological features of the planning application area at Woodstock East. The objectives of the report are to assess the effects of the proposed development on ecology and nature conservation and identify mitigation measures.
- 13.1.2 In July 2014 BSG Ecology commenced a suite of ecological surveys of the proposed development area. This included an extended Phase 1 habitat survey, great crested newt survey, badger survey, dormouse survey, reptile survey, Roman snail survey, bat surveys and a characterisation of the breeding bird community. The information thus gained was used to inform the impact assessment of the planning application.
- 13.1.3 The main habitats found within the planning application area include arable fields, broadleaved semi natural woodland, hedgerows and field margins of semi-improved grassland.
- 13.1.4 
- 13.1.5 The proposed development area provides an important commuting route for a number of species of bat moving from areas north of the site to areas to south of the site.
- 13.1.6 The potential impacts of the development of the Site on the ecological resources present (including habitats, flora and fauna) have been identified and assessed. Appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures have been incorporated into the design of the proposed development to minimise the potential impacts upon ecological resources, during construction and operational phases of the development.
- 13.1.7 The creation of a Green Network throughout the development will result in the increase in a number of habitats of conservation value including woodland, hedgerows and grassland. Habitat creation outside the boundary and north of the proposed development will provide additional habitats of conservation value.
- 13.1.8 Through design mitigation and the adoption of suitable working practices, the proposed development will have an overall positive impact upon the habitats and wildlife within the area and provide a net gain in the biodiversity of The Site.



## 14 VIEWING THE ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Hard copies of the Environmental Statement may be inspected at:

- West Oxfordshire District Council Offices at Elmfield, New Yatt Road, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 1PB
- Cherwell District Council Offices at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX15 4AA

CD copies are available from West Waddy ADP for £5. Contact: Stephen Pickles, Senior Planner, West Waddy ADP, 60 East St Helen St, Abingdon, OX14 5EB tel: 01235 523139 E mail: [s.pickles@westwaddy-adp.co.uk](mailto:s.pickles@westwaddy-adp.co.uk)