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2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 This chapter provides a general description of the Application Site and its immediate context. Where required, more detailed descriptions of the Site, its surroundings and specific features are offered within relevant topic chapters.

2.1.2 The chapter also provides a description of the Proposed Development, reports construction stage assumptions, the alternatives to the Proposed Development that have been considered and the approach to the assessment of cumulative effects that has been adopted.

2.2 APPLICATION SITE

Site Location

- 2.2.1 **Appendix 1.1** identifies the Application Site. The Site is some 52 hectares in extent, and comprises agricultural land and consists of 6 relatively large and regularly shaped arable fields.
- 2.2.2 The Site is located east of Bloxham Road (A361) and south of Salt Way, Banbury, within the Easington Ward. The site is located approximately 1.7km to the immediate south of Banbury centre and is accessed via the Bloxham Road (A361) which forms the western boundary of the Site.
- 2.2.3 To the immediate north of the Site lies the residential area of Easington, which provides a residential context. Banbury Academy and Blessed George Napier Catholic Schools sit to the immediate north of the site, separated by an attractive tree lined footpath and cycle way known as Salt Way. Planning permission has been granted for 145 residential dwellings on land at the northwestern edge of the site (12/00080/OUT), for which Morris Homes have submitted a reserved matters application, currently under consideration by the Council (14/01225/REM).
- 2.2.4 Bloxham Road (A361) forms the western edge of the site, and is a heavily tree lined road. Adjacent to the site along Bloxham Road are Crouch Cottages and Wykham Park Lodge. A small, triangular copse is located in the north western corner of the site.
- 2.2.5 Beyond the site area in the west and south is open countryside used primarily for agricultural uses. An outline application has been submitted by Mr Horgan and Barwood Strategic Land on land northern part of this land for 400 homes (14/01188/OUT), and is currently under consideration by the Council.

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- 2.2.6 The eastern boundary of the Site is formed by a field boundary, and further east is the village of Bodicote and Banbury Cricket ground. Further north east of the site are the town's two major employers, Horton General Hospital, along the Oxford Road and Cherwell District Council, in Bodicote.
- 2.2.7 The southern boundary is formed by a hedgerow, south of which lies Wykham Park Farm. Wykham Lane provides access between Bloxham Road and White Post Road which connects to the village of Bodicote and provides access to a number of residential properties that are located between the southern Site boundary and Wykham Lane. Beyond Wykham Lane is Tudor Hall School and land used primarily for agricultural uses.
- 2.2.8 The A361 is one of the main strategic routes into Banbury and sits to the west of the site. Junction 11 of the M40 is located some 3.5 km north east of the site, which provides access to Birmingham to the north and Oxford and London to the South.
- 2.2.9 Access to the Site is currently gained via field gates off the A361. This access will be retained to facilitate access to Wykham Park Farm and existing residential properties via the existing private drive.

Physical Characteristics

- 2.2.10 The site is currently predominately rural in character and is intensively cultivated arable and pasture agricultural land. The site consists of many tree species including sycamore, hawthorn, lime, ash and an oak spinney. They are generally mature and well established.
- 2.2.11 The site contains a network of hedgerows and associated ditches, woodland. Many of the hedges on the site containing a number of mature trees, of varying quality, tree species include ash, oak, sycamore, lime. A small area of semi-natural mixed woodland is located in the north-western corner of the site. Additionally, a narrow strip of mixed woodland plantation is located along the southern boundary of the site. A narrow strip of young mixed woodland plantation is also located along the footpath and bridleway leading to Wykham Farm Cottage.

- 2.2.12 There are no water features within the site. A dry drainage ditch runs in an easterly direction along the southern boundary of the site.
- 2.2.13 A footpath and a bridleway cross the eastern part of the site, in a north-south direction which connect Wykham Lane with Salt Way. A further footpath follows the western site boundary along the Bloxham Road.
- 2.2.14 Views into the site from the surrounding area and out of the site are minimal due to the topography and existing woodland, trees and hedgerow. Views of the site are most prominent from Crouch Hill, an elevated viewpoint north west of the Site.
- 2.2.15 The topography of the site is generally undulating with small shallow valleys running south towards the Sor Brook Valley, some 1.5km to the south of the site. Site levels vary from approximately 133m AOD at the highest point at the north western corner and towards a low point of approximately 125m AOD on the south eastern corner.
- 2.2.16 Bodicote is a village some 800 metres to the east of the site, accessed via Wykham Lane, a narrow rural road that connects the A361 to White Post Road, Bodicote. Bodicote is focused around a High Street around which it has organically expanded over time, the original core forming the Bodicote Conservation Area. Development is characterised by a pattern of streets and lanes closely fronted by terraced, stone built cottages.
- 2.2.17 The residential area of Easington provides the residential context north of the site, and is an estate development largely dating from the 1960's and early 1970's. Development is typical of this era with a mix of detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows fronting streets and cul-de-sacs.

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- 2.2.18 The settlement context within the immediate area is rapidly changing, with planning permission granted for land at the immediate north west edge of the site for 145 homes, as referred to at paragraph 2.2.3. Furthermore, outline proposals for land at Crouch Farm has been submitted for development of 400 homes, immediately west of Bloxham Road, referred to at paragraph 2.2.5.
- 2.2.19 The site is not situated within a landscape that it is afforded any statutory landscape quality protection or designation at an international, national, regional or local scale.
- 2.2.20 There are no scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, battlefields or conservation areas within the application site. There a number of listed buildings that sit within close proximity of the site. Church of St John the Baptist is located approximately 710 m to the south-east of the Site and is Grade II* Listed. A number of listed buildings are situated within the Bodicote Conservation Area, the boundary of which lies approximately 500m to the south-east of the Site at its closest extent. The nearest Listed Building to the Site is Wykham Farmhouse, situated approximately 150m to the south.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

2.3.1 The main modifications to the Cherwell Local Plan (2014) allocate land to the south west of Banbury for up to 1,495 dwellings together with associated retail, employment, education and leisure uses. This OPA comprises one of such development sites, to the east of Bloxham Road (A361) known as land at Wykham Park Farm, with all matters reserved except access.

2.3.2 The formal description of development, for which Outline Planning Permission is sought, is as follows:

“Outline Planning Permission, for development to the east of Bloxham Road (A361) and south of Salt Way of up to 1,000 dwellings together with a mixed use local centre [including A1 retail up to 1,000 m², financial services (A2), restaurants, pubs and takeaways (A3, A4, A5), community uses (D1)]; primary school; green infrastructure including formal (including playing fields) and informal open space, landscape and amenity space; changing and sports facilities (including D2); sustainable drainage systems; highway, cycle and pedestrian routes; car parking; infrastructure (including utilities); engineering works including ground remodelling; demolition, site reclamation and removal of structures; and the formation of a new access from the A361, Bloxham Road”.

2.3.3 The formal Development Framework Plan is presented at **Appendix 2.1** and has formed the basis for the EIA. The detailed design of the Proposed Development would be in accordance with this overarching development framework. This conformity would be secured by appropriate conditions attached to any grant of Outline Planning Permission.

Land Use

2.3.4 The Proposed Development comprises a residential-led scheme together with areas of mixed use, comprising supporting community, education and local retail uses, and formal and informal open space provision.

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2.3.5 The amount of development is set out below:

- up to 1,000 residential dwellings (class C3);
- mixed use space for local retail and other services including retail (comprising up to 1,000 m² of A1 floorspace), financial services (A2) and restaurants, pubs and takeaways (A3, A4, A5);
- land for a primary school (class D1);
- community and sport buildings (classes D1 and D2);
- green infrastructure including formal pitches, informal open space and landscape areas and children's play spaces;
- sustainable urban drainage systems, including attenuation basins and drainage channels;
- connections to the surrounding highway, footpath, cycleway and bridleway network;
- infrastructure and utilities provision, including car parking; and
- ground remodelling, engineering works and demolition.

Scale

2.3.6 The scale of the Proposed Development has regard to the existing context of the Site, its relationship to the local and wider landscape, its gentle topography, views and the nature of existing development. The existing development context is generally domestic in scale, with building heights generally ranging between one and a half and two and a half storeys in height (but allowing for some three storey), the majority being two storeys.

2.3.7 In terms of proposed building heights, development will be up to a maximum of 12.5 metres to ridge height, with the majority of buildings across the Site being 2 to 2.5 storeys in height. Building height will be measured against AOD across the Site. 12.5 metres will accommodate the more substantial floor to ceiling heights required by community and commercial development.

Layout

- 2.3.8 Development comprises of walkable residential neighbourhoods around distinct residential areas. Each neighbourhood benefits from access to key areas of formal and informal open space. The development will ensure the provision of clear and accessible links within and between the wider development area and to Banbury Town.
- 2.3.9 Up to 1,000 dwellings are proposed on Land at Wykham Park Farm, delivered in residential parcels informed by a series of strong green infrastructure links North-south and east-west across the site to include the retention of key areas of hedgerows and trees.
- 2.3.10 The layout of development is arranged with the local centre at its heart with streets, footpaths and green spaces radiating out towards the edges. The school is located near to the local centre, but at the northern edge of the site, where it will create positive links to the neighbouring Banbury Academy and Blessed George Napier Catholic School, with pedestrian access provided by Salt Way.
- 2.3.11 Development will be set back from Salt Way at varying distances, with informal green spaces and an area for children's play located along the northern edge of the development.
- 2.3.12 The majority of open space is provided at the eastern end of the site, where sports pitches to include an element of changing facilities can be created with limited ground recontouring.
- 2.3.13 A Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) is provided adjacent to sports pitches, which is anticipated to include a Multi-use games area for youth play. Two smaller, Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs), are located at the northern edge, adjacent to the school and a second at the western edge of the site, ensuring appropriate provision of play within 400 metres of each dwelling.
- 2.3.14 Allotments are provided at the south of the site, co-located with the existing allotments adjacent to Wykham Lane. Allotments will be accessed from the north.

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2.3.15 The Proposed Development layout and structure as a whole has been influenced by the landscape context and topographical features of the site. The arrangement of land parcels and their associated uses, form and type of open space and route ways are based on the established physical features within the site.

Proposed Access Strategy

2.3.16 The intention of the access strategy for the Proposed Development is to access the site from Bloxham Road (A361). To adequately accommodate the anticipated development traffic, it is proposed to create a new 4-arm roundabout on the A361. The junction has been designed in line with DMRB standards with sufficient capacity to accommodate not only the anticipated development traffic but also the background traffic growth and committed developments in the area.

2.3.17 The design allows for the retention of access to the existing properties, Crouch Cottages, along Bloxham Road, and can accommodate, if required, the proposed priority access junction to land immediately west of the site which is the subject of a planning application for 400 residential units (14/01188/OUT). The proposed roundabout will provide a natural point to start the urban 30mph limit reflecting the changing character for this length of Bloxham Road.

2.3.18 The proposals allow for any potential east-west link between Bloxham Road and White Post Road, Bodicote, for local traffic.

Green Infrastructure and Open Space

2.3.19 An inter-connected, multi-functional network of landscape and green infrastructure is proposed, consisting of some 18 ha or over 30% of the site. This would be based on existing environmental assets within the area, including areas of woodland planting and key hedgerows and trees. Within this network, environmental enhancement, outdoor recreation, pedestrian and access, surface water attenuation, biodiversity habitats and allotments will be provided for. The network will integrate with green corridors running east/west and north/south across the site, providing visual and physical linkages to Salt Way.

2.3.20 The provision and approach to GI is in accordance with Natural England's established guidance *Nature Nearby: Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance*

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(2010) which refers to accessibility to greenspace for new communities and delivering multifunctional landscapes.

2.3.21 The GI strategy includes the following key proposals:

- a green corridor, with new tree and shrub groups along the southern edge of Salt Way;
- retention, or re-provision of the three existing public footpath routes crossing the Site and their location within a new setting;
- new gateway planting at entrance points from Bloxham Road and Salt Way to create a sense of arrival;
- creation of informal parkland to the south-west, thereby respecting the setting of Tudor Hall School (Wykham Park);
- tree planting to enclose views of the proposals from elevated viewpoints on Crouch Hill to the north-west including larger trees along the spine road and at the entrance to the Site;
- retention and protection, where possible, of the majority of the existing trees and hedgerows, and their incorporation into the new housing development, supplemented with new structure and infill planting comprising native species;
- public open spaces, comprising informal tree planting, scrub, meadow grassland, wetland SUDs ponds (in part permanently wet) and informal seating areas;
- play areas (including two LEAPs, one NEAP), allotments and sports pitches;
- provision of walking, cycling and a new circular bridleway route through the Site, including links to Salt Way and other public footpaths; and
- a landscape management plan to be agreed with CDC.

2.3.22 The Proposed Development makes extensive provision of open space, both formal and informal and will incorporate play areas and formal pitch provision to serve the existing and new residents.

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Connections to and Relationship to the South West Banbury and Banbury Town Centre

- 2.3.23 The strategic A361 road corridor divides the eastern and western elements of the Banbury South West proposed allocation as set out in the proposed Main Modifications to the Cherwell Local Plan.
- 2.3.24 The development will promote accessibility to adjacent areas of development. A network for footpaths and cycleways will connect to existing routes within and adjoining the site. Where possible, the routes of Public Rights of Way within the site have been maintained along their existing course. The layout allows for a circular bridleway link between Salt Way and the southern edge of the site as referred to in the emerging site specific local plan policy.
- 2.3.25 The main route through the site will accommodate the bus route that will link the site to adjoining residential areas and onto Banbury town centre. Furthermore, the proposals demonstrate how the site could accommodate an eastern local traffic link beyond the site to connect to Bodicote as is being considered in the wider Banbury Movement Strategy.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

- 2.3.26 Due to the introduction of impermeable surfaces as a result of the Proposed Development, appropriate drainage arrangements are required to manage the increased surface water arising from the Site. A range of sustainable urban drainage solutions will be incorporated into both the built and green environments. SuDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) will be implemented in order to reduce flood risk, minimise pollution and provide landscape and wildlife benefits. Attenuation SuDS will be required to limit surface water runoff to current rates.

Sustainable Design and Renewable Energy

- 2.3.27 The Applicant is committed to delivering sustainable development, indeed, site sustainability has played a central role developing the application proposals. The site has been designed to give people the opportunity to choose a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle; for instance reducing the need to travel, establishing sustainable drainage systems and creating a place that engenders social connections.

Ecology

- 2.3.28 The most notable ecological features are the network of hedgerows and associated ditches, woodland and mature/semi-mature trees.
- 2.3.29 The habitats that have been identified on the Site are considered to have some potential for notable species of local importance such as breeding birds, bats, badgers and brown hare. As such, a series of ecological surveys have been undertaken and are reported in Chapter 9 of the ES. The landscape features of ecological value such as key hedgerows and mature trees will be retained where appropriate.
- 2.3.30 Enhancements to specific habitats will be delivered by the Proposed Development through the creation of further areas of planting and natural spaces within the GI framework.

Sustainable Transport

- 2.3.31 The Proposed Development will deliver a series of sustainable transport options providing viable and realistic alternatives to use of the private car. A high quality, frequent and reliable public transport system is important to support and enhance sustainable travel patterns. The public transport component of the transport strategy includes the expansion of current bus services and their rerouting into the Site.
- 2.3.32 The nearest bus stops are located on Bloxham Road served by the route 488/489 operated by Stagecoach offering hourly services to Banbury, Monday to Saturday between 06:30-19:05. In addition the B1 service can be found on Timms Road/Sycamore Drive in the residential estate to the north east of the development site, which operates 30 minute frequency service.
- 2.3.33 A Travel Plan Framework has also been prepared for the Proposed Development. A Framework Travel Plan provides measures to encourage more sustainable patterns of movement and travel by working in partnership with local schools and businesses.

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2.3.34 The Framework Travel Plan identifies both 'hard' and 'soft' measures to encourage sustainable travel choices. 'Hard' measures include, for example, the provision of safe cycling routes. 'Soft' measures include, for example, marketing and information packs to help inform travel decision-making.

Affordable Housing

2.3.35 Provision will be made for affordable housing, providing a mix of tenure to ensure delivery of a balanced community. The amount, type and tenures of affordable housing will be subject to subject of negotiation and discussions with Cherwell District Council and agreed in the light of the wider requirement for infrastructure delivery and other planning and design objectives. Draft Local Plan Policy BSC 3 seeks a target of up to 30% affordable homes, 70% of which to be social rented affordable rented dwellings and 30% as other forms of intermediate affordable homes.

Employment and Economy

2.3.36 The Proposed Development will include small scale retail/community uses within the local centre, comprising up to 1,000 m² of Use Class A1, and in addition, A2, A3, A4, and A5 uses, the precise uses will be determined at the reserved matters stage, but could include, for example, a small convenience store and other shops for 'top up' shopping, take-away, and cafes and food and drink outlets. These uses will predominantly serve the new resident population and will complement the range of existing facilities that currently serve the southern edge of Banbury.

"Production Processes"

2.3.37 The EIA Regulations require the main characteristics of any "production processes" to be described. The Proposed Development will not include any light industrial uses within (Class B1c), nor general industrial (Class B2) uses. As such, no "production processes" are proposed by the Development.

Residues and Emissions

2.3.38 The Regulations also require any residues and emissions to be identified and quantified. They would be limited to nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and noise

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arising from construction of the Proposed Development and from road traffic and other activity it would generate once operational. These matters are assessed in detail in chapters 6 and 7.

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2.4 CONSTRUCTION STAGE

2.4.1 The EIA assumes that the construction stage could last some 10 years. The Proposed Development comprises one of three sites that deliver housing South of Salt Way – East, of which 145 dwellings are already consented. The timetable for construction is likely to mirror that of the wider allocation, with the first housing constructions anticipated in 2015/16.

2.4.2 This assumption is appropriately conservative, resulting in a relatively prolonged construction period and thereby a robust assessment of impacts.

2.4.3 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is envisaged, to mitigate potential adverse environmental effects during the construction stage. Provision of the CEMP is expected to be secured by a condition on any grant of Outline permission, requiring the submission and approval of the CEMP prior to the commencement of development. Relevant details of the prospective CEMP are referred to in pertinent topic chapters.

2.5 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

- 2.5.1 The EIA Regulations require any alternatives to the Proposed Development that have been studied by the Applicant to be outlined and the reasons for their rejection set out.
- 2.4.4 The scope of any consideration of **alternative sites to the Proposed Development** is strongly influenced by the allocation of the Site as part of the proposed wider south west extension of Banbury, defined as South of Salt Way – East and South of Salt Way - West in the Cherwell Local Plan: Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the (Submission) Local Plan (August 2014) (see Chapter 3 of this ES). Given the Plan's evidence base which includes comparative site assessments for the district's growth, which include the Options for Growth Document (2008) and the Cherwell Local Plan SA Addendum for Main Modifications (2014) which underpin the proposals for Land at Wykham Park Farm, it is not necessary to consider potential alternative sites around the town in this EIA.
- 2.4.5 The Proposed Development is being brought forward to deliver up to 1,000 dwellings of the 1,345 allocation, South of Salt Way - East. The submission draft Cherwell Local Plan refers, at paragraph C.104, to Banbury as being tightly constrained by its landform include the River Cherwell valley to the east, the steep sided valley and villages to the west and rising landform and village conservation areas to the north. The alignment of the M40 also impacts on further eastern expansion.
- 2.4.6 The site represents a significant opportunity to provide a carefully designed urban extension of Banbury. The plateau landform within which the site falls provides an entirely appropriate and natural feature to accommodate the southwards growth of Banbury, which replicates the natural pattern of growth elsewhere in Banbury, where development extends across the plateau at the eastern and northern edges of the town.
- 2.4.7 In addition the 'greenfield' nature of the site has allowed the development proposals to be progressed without the need to consider factors commonly associated with brownfield redevelopment such as land contamination and soil remediation.

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2.5.2 In terms of potential **alternative designs of the Proposed Development**, these are limited by a range of existing Site constraints, which comprise:

Existing points of access: The location of the single point of access off A361 limit the consideration of alternative designs. A key design criterion has been to realign the Bloxham Road to provide appropriate access to the development, whilst ensuring retention of access to the existing properties, Crouch Cottages and Crouch Farm.

The setting of Salt Way: The sensitive approach to development adjacent to the Salt Way, and the requirement to preserve and enhance its character through the creation of a landscape buffer of some 15 metres in width provides a built development design fix at the northern extent of the Site.

View from and setting of Crouch Hill: The requirement for development to mitigate the impact of long-distance views from the elevated viewpoint at Crouch Hill at the southern edge of Banbury, looking south. Strategic corridors of open space and structural planting within the site provide distinction between development blocks and serves to break up the built form, to help soften long distance views towards the site from Crouch Hill.

Provision of Employment Uses: Land for employment uses could form part of the mix of uses for the Site, however such a use would need to be sited at the western edge of the Site to ensure prominent street presence, where it would impact the setting of Tudor Hall School. The strategic employment allocations are focused at the eastern edge of Banbury and therefore additional employment land is not considered necessary to provide as part of the mix of proposed uses.

Location of Local Centre: The location of the local centre could be sited at the Site entrance, adjacent to the Bloxham Road, therefore benefitting from passing trade. However, it is considered to be more sustainably located within the heart of the development, close to the primary school, to create a community focus for the development and to encourage linked trips.

2.6 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 2.6.1 This OPA seeks permission for up to 1,000 dwellings comprising the largest element of the South of Salt Way - East allocation that collectively delivers some 1,345 dwellings. In addition to this, a smaller allocation of some 150 dwellings is proposed at South of Salt Way – West.
- 2.6.2 Draft Policies Banbury 16 and 17 of the Cherwell Local Plan: Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications to the (Submission) Local Plan (August 2014), comprise the emerging policy framework for Banbury South West requires that each individual development site will provide the necessary infrastructure to support itself without placing any constraint or unreasonable burden upon either preceding or subsequent development sites that collectively comprise Banbury South West, so as to ensure that individual sites are capable of coming forward independently, yet in a complementary manner.
- 2.6.3 The OPA is submitted in this context and the application proposals demonstrate accordance with this approach.
- 2.6.4 The EIA has, had appropriate regard to the likely future existence of the wider South West Development Area. In particular, the transport assessment (chapter 5) takes account of modelling of the traffic effects of the Proposed Development in conjunction with other elements of the proposed South West Banbury allocations, such cumulative effects are also reported for instance, in the LVIA (chapter 8) and ecology assessment (chapter 9).