

Ms Caroline Ford  
Cherwell District Council  
Bodicote House  
White Post Road  
Bodicote  
Banbury  
OX15 4AA

**Our ref:** WA/2014/118052/01-L01  
**Your ref:** 14/00005/SCOP  
**Date:** 8 July 2014

Dear Ms Ford

**SCOPING OPINION FOR DEVELOPMENT TO PROVIDE RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS, COMMERCIAL FLOORSPACE, LEISURE FACILITIES, SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES, A PRIMARY SCHOOL, EXTRA CARE HOUSING, WATER TREATMENT PLANT AND ENERGY CENTRE, AMENITY SPACE AND SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE.**

**NORTH WEST BICESTER ECO-TOWN.**

Thank you for consulting the Environment Agency on this EIA scoping opinion.

The 'EIA Topics and Scope' as set out in Table 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (Hyder, May 2014) forming part of this consultation are the same as for scoping opinion consultations 14/00007/SCOP and 14/00006/SCOP. Our comments are therefore the same for this consultation and for consultations 14/00007/SCOP and 14/00006/SCOP.

We are generally satisfied with the 'EIA Topics and Scope' as set out in Table 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report (Hyder, May 2014). However, we have a number of additional items we consider should be scoped into the EIA as detailed below.

**Table 2 'EIA Topics and Scope'**

- Given the scale and the potential impacts of the development on waterbodies on site and downstream, WFD compliance should be scoped in to the EIA assessment. A WFD Compliance Assessment would be one option to assess this. Section 3.2.10 'Flood risk and hydrology' could be expanded upon to consider the whole water environment and full WFD implications, including water quality and ecological status.

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- We also recommend that a 'light-touch' Ecosystem Services Assessment is undertaken as part of the EIA. This would allow for a review and stock-take of the overall impact on the environmental services provided by the site and any resultant losses and gains.
- A further emission of the EIA scope is consideration of foul water infrastructure capacity requirements of the development needed to protect and improve the environment. The development will represent a significant increased pressure on existing foul water infrastructure and new/improved infrastructure will be required. Potential impacts of this demand on the environment should be considered and mitigation identified as required.

#### Topic 3.2.7 Ecology:

- The 'existing site description' suggests that there is only one pond on the Masterplan site. This is not correct.
- It is suggested that no great crested newts were recorded on the site and that any breeding sites are sufficiently far removed to the minimise risk of their presence. However, they do breed in other ponds on the Masterplan site and we would suggest it is not correct to assume that they may not use other terrestrial habitats.
- The presence of bullhead on the site suggests that the watercourses do not quite fit the ephemeral description given to them.
- With respect to further data collection, it is suggested that none is planned. It should be clarified whether this refers to the preparation stage for the EIA and Environmental Statement only. There will be a requirement for further monitoring and assessment to inform stages of development over time.
- The 'mitigation and opportunities for enhancement' section suggests that new areas of open space will offset any adverse effects on invertebrates, reptiles and birds etc. This cannot be the case for all species. All of these mitigation proposals, which have been discussed in principle for some time, will need to be demonstrated in the outline and detailed designs at the appropriate times to show that they are achievable within the context of the infrastructure and uses of the site.
- The proposed assessment methodology makes no mention of the measures to demonstrate the achievement of a net gain for biodiversity. This is a requirement of the Eco Town Planning Policy Statement supplement and subject to considerable discussion with the developers. We are surprised that it has not been included as a measure of assessment and suggest that it should be included.

3.2.10 – Flood risk & hydrology – this section should be expanded to consider the impacts of the development on water resources. The development will represent a large potable water demand and impacts of this demand on the environment and the infrastructure required should be considered. The Eco Town Planning Policy Statement requires water demand management with an aspiration of achieving water neutrality once the development is complete.

3.2.11 Contaminated Land – in this section under the 'Mitigation and Opportunities for Enhancement' we expect that the development size could require some larger oil tanks for refueling etc. Oil storage on site may therefore need to be considered and should be in-line with best practice and if appropriate oil storage regulations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should I be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

**Miss Lesley Tims**

**Planning Specialist (Major Projects)**

Direct dial 01491 828486

Direct e-mail [planning-wallingford@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:planning-wallingford@environment-agency.gov.uk)

cc Hyder Consulting