



SKIMMINGDISH LANE,  
BICESTER

STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY  
INVOLVEMENT

May 2015

Our Ref: Q50411

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## Appendices

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) provides a summary of the community and stakeholder engagement carried out by Albion Land ('The Applicant'), in relation to the proposed development at Land to the North East of Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester ('The Site').

1.2 This SCI accompanies an outline planning application for the development of the Site for a flexible mix of Class B1c, B2, B8 and ancillary B1a uses.

1.3 This SCI outlines the process of consultation undertaken by the Applicant and how the outcomes of the consultation have been used to inform the outline planning proposals. This process of consultation has included:

- Formal pre-application engagement with Officers at Cherwell District Council; and
- Targeted letter drop and formal meetings with interested parties and key consultees.

1.4 The consultation process has assisted the Applicant in refining the proposed development and the illustrative masterplan for the site and where appropriate and possible queries or concerns of local stakeholders have been able to be accommodated through a process of iterative design review.

1.5 The outline planning application has now been submitted to Cherwell District Council who will carry out their own process of consultation on the application.

## **a) The Proposed Development**

1.6 The application seeks outline planning permission for the development of the Site for up to 48,308 sqm of flexible mix of Class B1c and/or B2 and/or B8 and/or B1a ancillary uses.

1.7 The layout of the buildings is set across the southern portion of the site, as is the point of access into the site from Skimmingdish Lane. All other matters are reserved for future approval.

1.8 Flexibility is sought within the outline planning permission in order to allow for the development to be marketed and 'tailored' to suit the requirements of potential occupiers through later reserved

matters application(s). However, in order to allow for a robust assessment to be carried out of the potential impact of the proposed development, a series of development parameters have been set including (i) the maximum floor space across the site (48,308 sqm); (ii) maximum building heights (AOD floor to ridge); (iii) Finishes Floor Levels (AOD); (iv) development areas and building zones; (v) beyond the building zones, a set of landscape zones; and (v) the area or tolerance zone within which the central access road and associated footways will be located.

- 1.9 Given the Site's proximity to the RAF Bicester Conservation Area, the Scheduled Ancient Monument and a care home (under construction), consideration has been given to the design principles that should be adopted through any reserved matters applications and a series of design codes have therefore been set within the application.
- 1.10 With the location of the buildings having been fixed across the southern portion of the Site, there is a need to divert a public footpath which currently runs through the centre of where the proposed buildings are to be located. The planning application is therefore accompanied by an application under Section 257 of the Planning Act to divert the footpath around the proposed development within an area of proposed landscaping to the south.
- 1.11 The site has longstanding recognition as an appropriate and sustainable location for a flexible mix of employment uses and is allocated for employment use (Policy Bicester 11) in the emerging Local Plan. As such the principle of the development has already been subject to significant consultation as part of the Local Plan process.
- 1.12 This pre-application consultation process has been targeted towards those stakeholders who would be most affected by development or have a particular interest in the site and its immediate surroundings.

**b) Policy Context**

*i. National Planning Policy Framework*

- 1.13 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) puts an onus on the applicant to engage in pre-application discussions with local planning officers prior to submitting a planning application.

- 1.14 Paragraph 66 of the NPPF states that *“applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community”*. Paragraph 66 then goes on to state that proposals for new development will be looked on more favourably should they demonstrate ongoing development of design through public consultation.
- 1.15 Paragraph 188 supports pre-application engagement and stipulates that *“early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties”*. It is not a requirement by Local Planning Authorities for developers to engage before submitting a planning application, however the process is encouraged and recognised to be beneficial.
- 1.16 Paragraph 190 goes on to state that *“the more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, the greater the benefits”*. The early consideration of fundamental issues that could arise in the future in respect of a proposed development is important and this should involve the *“participation of other consenting bodies in pre-application discussions”* (Paragraph 191).

ii. *Cherwell District Council Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)*

- 1.17 Cherwell District Council’s SCI (2006) encourages greater community involvement in the planning process and applicants to undertake community consultation exercises before submitting a planning application.
- 1.18 Applicants are also encouraged to engage in pre-application discussions with Planning Officers at the Council to fully understand any potential issues associated with the development with the aim of addressing these in advance of making an application.
- 1.19 The pre-application engagement exercise undertaken to inform these planning proposals has been carried out in accordance with the above objectives.

## 2 OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT

### a) Local Planning Authority

- 2.1 This consultation process has involved a formal pre-application process (LPA Consultation Reference: 14/00272/PREAPP) between the Project Team and Cherwell District Council Planning and Conservation Officers.
- 2.2 These pre-application discussions took the form of two formal pre-application meetings which were followed by two pre-application responses and an EIA screening.
- 2.3 The purpose of this pre-application process was to discuss the draft proposals and to seek Officers' feedback on form of the application including the setting of development parameters, the acceptability of the illustrative masterplan, the approach taken to community and stakeholder engagement and the scope of the planning submission.

### b) Stakeholder Consultation

- 2.4 A number of local stakeholders and consultees were identified and a letter informing them of the development proposals was issued on 13 February 2015 (see **Appendix 1** for copy of letter issued).
- 2.5 The consultees included adjacent land owners, neighbouring properties/businesses and other parties and political or community groups that were known to have an interest in the local area.
- 2.6 The aim of this engagement process was to notify those most affected by the development of the proposed scheme and to seek their feedback.
- 2.7 Those parties to whom a letter was issued included:
- Bicester Town Council;
  - Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers Association;
  - Launton Parish Council;

- Windrushers Gliding Club;
- Maria Mallaband Care Group; and
- Bicester Heritage.

2.8 Responses were received from Bicester Town Council, Launton Parish Council, Bicester Heritage and the Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers Association and meetings subsequently arranged (see section 3 for details). The Windrushers Gliding Club deferred comment to Bicester Heritage who are freeholder of the RAF site on which the Club are a tenant.

2.9 No response has been received to date from the Maria Mallaband Care Group, operators of the neighbouring care home (recently developed).

2.10 The feedback received from consultees is detailed in the following sections of this Report.

### 3 PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

#### a) Planning Officers

##### *i. 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014 Meeting with CDC*

- 3.1 An initial pre-application meeting took place between Quod, Chetwoods (architects), Mr Kelvin Pearce (Albion Land) and Cherwell District Council Officer, Mr Andrew Lewis on 12 November 2014.
- 3.2 The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the draft proposals and scheme parameters as well as to seek the Officer's feedback on the acceptability of the proposals in relation to the site's current and emerging Local Plan allocation. The scope of the outline planning application was also discussed and agreed upon.
- 3.3 A formal pre-application response was subsequently received from Cherwell District Council in which the proposals were considered to be largely compliant with the emerging Local Plan allocation.
- 3.4 Specific comments were made on how the development should respect the various Development Management principles set out in the draft Local Plan allocation (Policy Bicester 11). Further detail of how the design has responded positively to these principles is set out in Section 5 of this Report, and within the various technical Report's submitted in support of this application.

##### *ii. 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2015 Meeting with CDC*

- 3.5 A further meeting was held between Quod, Chetwoods (architects), Grover Lewis (heritage consultants), Mr Kelvin Pearce (Albion Land) and Cherwell District Council Officer's, Mr Andrew Lewis and Ms Rose Todd (Conservation Officer) on 3 February 2015.
- 3.6 Officers accepted the appropriateness of incorporating the land to the north of the site (within the Conservation Area), within the planning application, providing that no built development takes place within this area.
- 3.7 The principle of setting a series of development parameters was discussed, and accepted by officers as an appropriate means by which to control the potential impacts of the development.



- 3.8 The parameters were presented by the applicant team as being the development and landscaping areas, building heights and finished floor levels; and the access strategy and were agreed by officers to be appropriate controls.
- 3.9 Specific queries were raised over how the proposed development would relate to the Skimmingdish Lane frontage, and how structural landscaping could be used along the central spine road and around the proposed buildings. These principles have been considered and accommodated within the illustrative masterplan presented in the Design and Access Statement accompanying this proposal.
- 3.10 Officers agreed the applicant's proposed approach to stakeholder consultation to be beneficial to the planning application and that Bicester Town Council and the Ramblers Association were worthwhile engaging with.

## 4 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

### a) Bicester Heritage

- 4.1 A meeting was held between Quod and Dan Geoghegan, Dominic White and Adrian Gold of Bicester Heritage on the 3 March 2015.
- 4.2 Bicester Heritage are the owners of the former RAF site to the west of the proposed development, who have (since purchasing the site just under 2 years ago) invested in bringing the former RAF buildings on the site back into beneficial use (primarily to support small scale industrial and assembly uses associated with the classic car industry and the house the gliding and flying clubs that lease areas of the site from them).
- 4.3 Comments received from Bicester Heritage related primarily to whether the proposed development would prejudice their ongoing operations and aspirations to promote additional employment uses on site.
- 4.4 Questions were also raised over the potential impact of the proposed development on the RAF Bicester Conservation Area and Scheduled Ancient Monument (located within the RAF site) and the effect that the development could have on the Gliding Club.
- 4.5 These comments have been considered in the iterative design process and our response to these questions is provided in Section 5 of this Report and within the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

### b) Bicester Town Council

- 4.6 Quod presented the outline proposals for the proposed development to representatives of Bicester Town Council on 16 March 2015.
- 4.7 Recognition was given to the appropriateness of the site for employment uses as result of to its longstanding allocation within the Local Plan and its draft allocation within the Draft Local Plan.

4.8 The presentation was followed by a question and answer session in which members of the Town Council raised the following queries:

- Is the proposed Site (single) access appropriate for both cars and HGV's?
- Has consideration been given to the sustainability of the scheme and the potential to incorporate renewable technology?
- What impact will the scheme have on ecology and what mitigation would be provided?
- Are 24 hour operations on site appropriate?
- What impact will development have on the Windrushers Gliding Club?

4.9 These comments have been addressed within the planning application submission and a summary of the applicant team's comments is provided in Section 5.

c) **Launton Parish Council**

4.10 A meeting was held between Quod and representatives of Launton Parish Council, including the Chairman, Councillor Simon Turner, Parish Clerk, Niall Campbell and Councillors Chris Fox, Ed Sanders, Lesley Thompson and Wendy Foster on 16 March 2015.

4.11 The meeting was on the whole positive, with members welcoming the developer's intention to keep the floodplain free from built development. Appreciation was also given to the potential for existing landscaping between the village and the proposal site to screen views of the development.

4.12 Members were aware of the site's longstanding allocation for employment use and the job opportunities that would provide.

4.13 Questions raised by Members included:

- Would the development increase traffic through Launton village and on the surrounding road network?
- Would 24 hour operations increase noise levels during night time periods?

- Would the development create significant amounts of traffic and what effect would this have on the local road networks?
- How would the development be drained and would it be able to solve local drainage problems in the village?
- How would existing landscaping shield the proposed development from the village of Launton?

4.14 The applicant's response to these questions is summarised in the following section.

**d) Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers Association**

4.15 Quod met with David Godfrey, Footpath Secretary and Christine Tulloch, Local Footpath Officer for the Oxford Area of the Ramblers Association on 17 April 2015.

4.16 The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the principle of diverting the public footpath that runs through the centre of the site and to seek any feedback on the proposed diversion route and the scope of the order application.

4.17 Although not wishing to pre-determine their comments on the footpath diversion order application, both representatives agreed that the proposed footpath position did not diverge significantly from its current alignment and as such did not raise any significant concerns.

4.18 The representatives confirmed that in considering the order application consideration was to be given to two principle matters: whether it is necessary for the footpath to be diverted; and whether the new alignment allows for the route's continued 'enjoyment' or to the contrary whether users are to be 'disadvantaged' by its rerouting.

4.19 In terms of the later point it was requested that consideration be to the inclusion of landscaping between the proposed buildings and the new footpath as well as the potential surfacing of the path to ensure that it does not become severely waterlogged / boggy.

4.20 The project team's response to these comments is provided in the following section.

## 5 HOW THE SCHEME RESPONDS TO COMMENTS RECEIVED

- 6.1 The design proposals have been well received, with consultees recognising the need for employment development within Bicester and the appropriateness of the site for allocation in light of its Local Plan allocation. Recognition was given to the benefits that the development will bring to the local economy through job creation.
- 6.2 The attention paid by the applicant team to the relationship of the proposed development with adjacent ‘sensitive’ areas was welcomed and support offered to the use of landscaping and setting maximum development zones to assimilate development into the surroundings.
- 6.3 Where queries were raised through the consultation process these have been used to inform the iterative design process and the parameters plans and illustrative masterplan which accompany this application. The way in which the application has responded to these comments is summarised in the table below.

Feedback	Response
Landscaping and Flood Risk	
How would existing landscaping shield the proposed development from the village of Launton?	The parameters plans include for a significant landscaping buffer on the southern edge of the site which will act to ‘screen’ the proposed development from the south. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken of the site which demonstrates the ability of existing landscaping between the site and the village to effectively screen the development site and that the proposed landscaping would not result in a negligible visual and landscape impact on the village.
How would the development be drained and would it be able to solve local drainage problems in the village?	No built development to take place within flood zone. The incorporation of Sustainable Urban Drainage into the scheme will also help to mitigate against surface water flooding through delivering greenfield run-off rates. The proposed development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

	<p>The application is unable and is not required under this application to deal with existing drainage issues unrelated to the proposal.</p>
<p>Would 24 hour operations increase noise levels during night time periods?</p>	<p>Particular consideration has been given to the impact of the development on the amenity of residents of adjacent care home and to Launton village.</p> <p>Appropriate building set-back distances and structural landscaping is proposed along the boundary with the care home.</p> <p>There is also the potential to control noise levels through an Operational Management Plan which could be drawn up and agreed between the LPA and the operator of the site. Measures that could be set through the management plan may include, for example, limits on the use of reversing beepers during night-time periods.</p>
<p>What impact will the scheme have on ecology and what mitigation would be provided?</p>	<p>Ecological surveys of the site have indicated that the site is of limited ecological value. Those hedgerows that are of local ecological value will be replicated within the site and opportunities provided for biodiversity enhancement within the substantial areas of landscaping proposed on the site.</p>
<p>Design of Development</p>	
<p>What impact will development have on the Windrushers Gliding Club?</p>	<p>The heights parameters plans which forms part of the outline application fixes the maximum finished floor levels (FFL) across the site and the height of the buildings from FFL to ridge.</p> <p>The Design and Access Statement submitted with this application demonstrates that the presence of a significant tree belt to the north of the site and the direction of take-off and landing paths means that aircraft are already required to coming and take off and heights greater than the proposed buildings.</p>

Highways	
Would the development create significant amounts of traffic and what effect would this have on the local road networks?	The submitted Transport Assessment demonstrates that the development will cause no material adverse effect, in either capacity or safety terms, on the surrounding highway network.
Is the proposed single vehicular access into the site appropriate for both cars and HGV's?	Skimmingdish Lane forms the western boundary to the site and is from where the proposed vehicular and pedestrian/cycle access into the site is to be taken.  The access has been subject to a safety audit and is considered entirely appropriate for the proposed development and the level and mix of vehicles accessing the site.
Sustainability	
Has consideration been given to the sustainability of the scheme and the potential to incorporate renewable technology?	The scheme will be designed to BREEAM rating 'Very Good' in accordance with Cherwell's local planning policy. The details of how this could be achieved through the incorporation of various sustainable technologies is dealt with the Design and Access Statement and will be agreed at the detailed design stage.
Footpaths	
Is the diversion of the footpath necessary and appropriate?	The setting of building(s)' siting across the southern portion of the site means that it is necessary to divert the public footpath that currently runs through the centre of this area.  The proposed path provides a route of least divergence and its positioning to the south of a significant landscaping buffer will assisting assimilating it into its surroundings and providing a pleasant outlook for future users. Attention has been given to the treatment of the path to ensure that it is capable of draining efficiently.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.4 The proposed development has been the subject of an extensive consultation exercise with officers at the Council, local businesses and landowners and local interested parties.
- 6.5 The consultation process commenced at a very early stage of the design's evolution and as such has been used to inform an iterative process of consultation and scheme evolution which has led to a proposal which is both appropriate in planning terms and delivers the employment needs of Bicester.
- 6.6 In summary, stakeholders have recognised the suitability of the site for employment development within Bicester and the opportunities and benefits that such development will bring to the wider Bicester economy.
- 6.7 Where queries have been raised these have been effectively addressed within the planning submission documentation and where appropriate and necessary used to inform the outline planning application.





## **APPENDIX 1**

our ref: Q50411/hs/jn  
your ref:  
email: Hannah.smith@quod.com  
date: 13 February 2015



Mr B Pallett  
Bicester Heritage  
Buckingham Road  
Bicester  
Oxfordshire  
OX27 8AL

Dear Mr Pallett,

**LAND AT SKIMMINGDISH LANE, BICESTER**

You may be aware that Cherwell Council are allocating in their forthcoming Local Plan Land to the east of Skimmingdish Lane, Bicester for employment development. The allocation is for all forms of employment including office, industrial and warehousing (Class B1, B2 and B8 uses).

With the principle of development on site having been agreed, the site's promoters (Albion Land) are now wishing to bring forward a planning application in accordance with the draft allocation and have recently met with planning officers at the Council to discuss its scope and form.

Albion Land are appreciative that there are a number of interested parties around the site. More so, given its proximity to and inclusion in part, of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area as well as the visual and landscape character of the area and the location of some land to the far south within an area at risk of flooding there are a range of policy matters which are relevant to the site's development. All of these matters are currently being considered by our client's technical consultants and will inform the planning proposals.

The area that is considered suitable for allocation by both the Council and the site's promoters was agreed through the recent Local Plan Examination and is shown on the enclosed plan, albeit given the above sensitivities not all of the land within the redline will be developed – some areas will remain open and others could be used as new landscaping.

The site has been deemed appropriate for its proposed uses by the Council and will make an important contribution towards local employment requirements with the potential to deliver a significant number of new jobs to support the substantial local housing growth as well as to provide employment for existing residents (many of whom presently commute out of Bicester).

The site has been considered in depth by officers and consultees through the Local Plan process and through various technical assessments. It has been deemed a suitable and sustainable location for employment development. The site, through its development, has the potential to deliver significant wider benefits, including the creation of substantial new landscaping and habitat areas to the north and west of



the site to respect the setting of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area and to the south of the site to provide a high quality landscaped environment for walkers.

As part of this pre-application process Albion Land are wishing to seek the views of those with an interest in the site including town and parish councillors and parties that occupy or use the nearby land. As such, we would like to seek the opportunity to meet with you over the forthcoming weeks. We will be in touch over the next few days with regards to a potential meeting date but we are currently hoping to hold a series of bespoke round the table meetings during the two weeks commencing 23 February 2015.

We hope that you will be able to attend.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Smith  
Associate

**cc:** Mr K Pearce – Albion Land  
Enc: As noted

our ref: Q50411/hs/jn  
your ref:  
email: Hannah.smith@quod.com  
date: 13 February 2015



Mr B King  
Windrushers Gliding Club  
Bicester Airfield  
Skimmingdish Lane  
Bicester  
Oxfordshire  
OX26 5HA

Dear Mr B King,

**LAND AT SKIMMINGDISH LANE, BICESTER**

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benefits, including the creation of substantial new landscaping and habitat areas to the north and west of the site to respect the setting of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area and to the south of the site to provide a high quality landscaped environment for walkers.

As part of this pre-application process Albion Land are wishing to seek the views of those with an interest in the site including town and parish councillors and parties that occupy or use the nearby land.

As such, we would like to seek the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Club over the forthcoming weeks. We will be in touch over the next few days with regards to a potential meeting date but we are currently hoping to hold a series of bespoke round the table meetings during the two weeks commencing 23 February 2015.

We hope that you will be able to attend.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Smith  
Associate

**cc:** Mr K Pearce – Albion Land  
**Enc:** As noted

our ref: Q50411/hs/jn  
your ref:  
email: Hannah.smith@quod.com  
date: 13 February 2015



Ms S Mackrell  
Bicester Town Council  
The Garth  
Launton Road  
Bicester  
Oxfordshire  
OX26 6PS

Dear Ms S Mackrell,

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As part of this pre-application process Albion Land are wishing to seek the views of those with an interest in the site including Town and Parish Councillors and parties that occupy or use the nearby land. As such, we would be grateful if you could pass on this letter to Members of the Town Council and we would like to seek the opportunity to meet with you and your fellow Councillors over the forthcoming weeks.

We will be in touch over the next few days with regards to a potential meeting date but we are currently hoping to hold a series of bespoke round the table meetings during the two weeks commencing 23 February 2015.

We hope that you will be able to attend.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Hannah Smith", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Hannah Smith  
Associate

**cc:** Mr K Pearce – Albion Land  
Enc: As noted

our ref: Q50411/hs/jn  
your ref:  
email: Hannah.smith@quod.com  
date: 13 February 2015



FAO Ms M Gough  
Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers Association  
2nd Floor  
Camelford House  
87-90 Albert Embankment  
London  
SE1 7TW

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Hannah Smith  
Associate

**cc:** Mr K Pearce – Albion Land  
**Enc:** As noted

our ref: Q50411/hs/jn  
your ref:  
email: Hannah.smith@quod.com  
date: 13 February 2015



Mr K Dixon  
Launton Parish Council  
Bicester

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With the principle of development on site having been agreed, the site's promoters (Albion Land) are now wishing to bring forward a planning application in accordance with the draft allocation and have recently met with planning officers at the Council to discuss its scope and form.

Albion Land are appreciative that there are a number of interested parties around the site. More so, given its proximity to and inclusion in part, of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area as well as the visual and landscape character of the area and the location of some land to the far south within an area at risk of flooding there are a range of policy matters which are relevant to the site's development. All of these matters are currently being considered by our client's technical consultants and will inform the planning proposals.

The area that is considered suitable for allocation by both the Council and the site's promoters was agreed through the recent Local Plan Examination and is shown on the enclosed plan, albeit given the above sensitivities not all of the land within the redline will be developed – some areas will remain open and others could be used as new landscaping.

The site has been deemed appropriate for its proposed uses by the Council and will make an important contribution towards local employment requirements with the potential to deliver a significant number of new jobs to support the substantial local housing growth as well as to provide employment for existing residents (many of whom presently commute out of Bicester).

The site has been considered in depth by officers and consultees through the Local Plan process and through various technical assessments. It has been deemed a suitable and sustainable location for employment development. The site, through its development, has the potential to deliver significant wider benefits, including the creation of substantial new landscaping and habitat areas to the north and west of



the site to respect the setting of the RAF Bicester Conservation Area and to the south of the site to provide a high quality landscaped environment for walkers.

As part of this pre-application process Albion Land are wishing to seek the views of those with an interest in the site including Town and Parish Councillors and parties that occupy or use the nearby land. As such, we would be grateful if you could bring this letter to the attention of your Councillors and we would like to seek the opportunity to meet with the Parish Council over the forthcoming weeks.

We will be in touch over the next few days with regards to a potential meeting date but we are currently hoping to hold a series of bespoke round the table meetings during the two weeks commencing 23 February 2015.

We hope that you will be able to attend.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Smith  
Associate

**cc:** Mr K Pearce – Albion Land  
**Enc:** As noted