

Development Management Team
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
White Post Road
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Banbury
OX15 4AA

4th July 2024

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Dear Sir / Madam.

LAND EAST OF SOUTH NEWINGTON ROAD, BLOXHAM: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) SCREENING REQUEST IN RELATION TO THE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 165 DWELLINGS, ALONGSIDE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, A PLAY AREA, SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE AND OTHER SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

I write on behalf of William Davis Homes (WDH) to seek an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (referred to as "the EIA Regulations"). This EIA screening opinion request relates to the residential development of up to 165 dwellings, alongside public open space, a play area, sustainable drainage, and other supporting infrastructure (referred to as "the proposed development") at Land East of South Newington Road, Bloxham (referred to as "the site").

It follows the submission of a formal pre-application advice request on 17th April 2024. WDH intend to submit an outline planning application (OPA) for the residential development of up to 165 dwellings in the coming months. It will, therefore, shortly be undertaking a public consultation in relation to the proposals, to allow the public to input into the proposals. This EIA screening opinion request forms part of the preparation of the OPA.

In that context, the purpose of this letter is to provide the pertinent background information relating to the site and proposed development to allow the Council to provide the requested advice. In doing so, it summarises the suite of technical and environmental site assessments that have informed the refinement of the scheme proposals as presented in the emerging Masterplan, which is submitted alongside the Site Location Plan to assist the Council's consideration of this matter.

1. THE SITE & CONTEXT

The Site:

The site, which is c. 7.8ha in size, is located on the southern edge of Bloxham, adjacent to the existing residential built form, and comprises three broadly rectangular-shaped fields which are bisected by hedgerows and trees, with two ponds situated alongside the corridors. The site has no public access, with no rights of ways traversing the site. Its boundaries are delineated by South Newington Road to the west, the rear boundaries of residential properties to the north and east, and a robust partly tree-lined hedgerow to the south.

The site is well-related to Bloxham. Adjacent land uses to the north and east are primarily residential, and a recreation ground is located to the west of South Newington Road (on the opposite side to the

site). That incorporates playing pitches and an equipped play area. The site would, therefore, be a logical extension to the built form and would be contained by residential development on two sides and an existing A-road on another.

The village centre is located c. 600m to the north of the site, and therefore the site benefits from direct and convenient access to the range of services and facilities that are available therein, with the adjacent South Newington Road providing connections by foot, bicycle, bus and car. As below, both the extant and emerging local plans identify Bloxham as a larger village, reflecting that convenience stores, a petrol station, a post office, a doctor's surgery, a pharmacy, a dentist, a primary school, a secondary school, and places of worship are all present in the village. It also benefits from a number of pubs, bars, restaurants, takeaways and cafes, as well as a good range of recreational / sports facilities including a Sports Centre with adjacent playing pitches, a separate multi-use games area and cricket pitch, the aforementioned recreation ground and play area, a pitch and putt golf course, and a network of public rights of way connecting the settlement to the wider countryside.

The site and settlement are also well-connected to nearby higher-order settlements. The 488 bus service that travels through Bloxham along the A361 (South Newington Road / High Street / Bloxham Road) provides hourly services on weekdays and Saturdays to Chipping Norton, Hook Norton and Banbury. That provides access to the services, facilities and key employment opportunities within those settlements (particularly Banbury), and also provides an opportunity for multi-modal journeys, with Banbury Bus and Train Stations providing access to the wider region.

The site is, therefore, located in an entirely sustainable location for growth and can make a valuable contribution to bolstering the District's supply of housing in short term.

Environmental Context:

Moreover, the site and the surrounding area are not environmentally sensitive, as set out in further detail in the remainder of this letter.

The site has no planning application history, having been utilised only for agricultural purposes, with no history of built development within the site. Preceding planning applications for residential development of this scale in the area have not been adjudged to be EIA development, reflecting that there are no existing environmental sensitivities in the area.

There are no statutory or non-statutory designations within the site. Likewise, there are very few designations in the surrounding area, limited to Bloxham Conservation Area and its associated listed buildings to the north, and The Slade Local Natural Reserve that is located to the west / north-west of the site. Even then, the site shares no relationship with the designations (from a physical, visual or functional perspective, as appropriate), and therefore the site's development is not expected to give rise to any environmental impacts, as demonstrated in further detail below. All other designations are located at such a distance that the proposed development cannot be considered to have any impacts that are worthy of consideration through a formal EIA.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

The Adopted Local Plan:

The Development Plan for Cherwell District Council (CDC) comprises the Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) that was adopted in July 2015. It contains strategic planning policies for development, allocations to meet the District's housing needs at that time, and development management policies. The Local Plan Part 1 Partial Review was then prepared specifically to respond to the unmet housing needs arising from neighbouring Oxford City Council (OCC). The Part 1 Partial Review was adopted in September 2020, and identified additional allocations to specifically contribute towards meeting those unmet needs.

There are also a number of saved policies from the Cherwell Local Plan (“the 1996 LP”), although that was adopted over 27 years ago in November 1996. The Bloxham Neighbourhood Plan was also adopted in December 2016, but is not subject to the protection of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 14 given its age.

LPP1 identifies Bloxham as a Category A Village, which are defined as “*service centres*” that play a key role in supporting surrounding “*satellite villages*” by providing day-to-day services and facilities. The identification of Bloxham as a larger village reflects that there are a range of services and facilities available in the village, and that it is well-connected to higher order settlements via sustainable modes of transport.

The site is not allocated for residential development in the extant Development Plan, and therefore is considered to be within the open countryside.

The Emerging Plan:

However, both the LPP1 and the 1996 LP are over five years old. Moreover, recent appeal decisions in the District have established that CDC cannot demonstrate a five year supply of housing, highlighting that the development plan is not effective in that it does not facilitate the delivery of a sufficient supply of housing. Therefore, the adopted local plan is out-of-date in NPPF terms.

In that context, CDC is undertaking a review of its Local Plan. That is currently at an early stage, with CDC having consulted on the Regulation 18 emerging Local Plan (eLP) between September and November 2023. CDC’s September 2023 LDS suggests that the eLP will be adopted by December 2025 subject to examination. However, our view is that the eLP will be adopted much later than that, given its size and complexity. WDH consider that it is more likely that the plan will be adopted in 2026 at the earliest. Critically, that means that CDC will be without an up-to-date local plan that would identify new allocations to address the existing housing shortfall in the District for at least 2 years.

The Regulation 18 eLP did not identify all of the allocations required to address the draft housing requirement in full, and notably did not identify any allocations in the larger villages such as Bloxham. That is expected at the next stage of the eLP’s consultation.

3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The emerging Masterplan as submitted alongside this EIA screening opinion request has evolved to respond to the assessments of the site as summarised below. The proposals will be refined ahead of the OPA’s submission (including to reflect the findings of the public consultation process), but given that they are informed by those detailed site assessments, they are a robust reflection of the site’s context. They respond to the minimal constraints associated with it, whilst maximising the benefits associated with the development. Therefore, the submitted Masterplan clearly demonstrates the site’s suitability and its capacity to deliver up to 165 dwellings in a high-quality and well-connected new development.

The Masterplan proposes new vehicular and pedestrian access from South Newington Road. It also incorporates a new pedestrian crossing point across South Newington Road, and a new footpath that will travel northwards towards the village centre. A pedestrian / cycle link is also proposed at the south east of the site, which would provide safe and convenient to the village, and a connection to the National Cycle Network Route 5 (NCNR5).

The Masterplan identifies a net developable area of c. 4.7 hectares, including the access roads. Based on a net density of 35 dwellings per hectare (dph), the proposed residential capacity is up to 165 homes, though the exact number of dwellings will be identified at the detailed design stage.

Residential development will be set out in perimeter blocks that will secure rear boundaries (including existing properties at the east and north), whilst also providing an active development frontage and natural surveillance over streets and open spaces. Development along South Newington Road has been designed to sensitively respond to the Conservation Area to the north (within the village centre). Therefore, the single block of development that will be delivered on this frontage is set back from the western boundary, and an area of open space is proposed to the south-west (incorporating drainage features). The built form is, therefore, largely located towards the east of the site where it is closely related to the existing built form. Longer gardens are proposed to development blocks at the north and east of the site, adjacent to the rear gardens of existing homes.

The built form is proposed to be sub-divided by two vegetated green corridors focussed on the north to south hedgerows that currently run through the site. They will ensure that residents have direct access to green spaces in close proximity to their homes, and will also soften the appearance of the development in the limited views that will be available of it from the wider countryside. The green corridors will incorporate existing and new planting, public open space, a centrally located play area, and footpath links that will connect new homes with the surrounding built form by providing direct and convenient routes towards the adjacent recreation ground and the village centre.

A significant landscaped buffer is also proposed at the southern boundary, and will incorporate buffer planting to further filter views of the development from the south. An attenuation pond designed to accommodate surface water runoff will be located at the south-western corner, at the site's lowest point. That will also have ecological benefits, and will be set within a wider area of public open space.

4. EIA REGULATIONS

An examination of the EIA Regulations confirms that the proposed development does **not** constitute a Schedule 1 development that would automatically require an EIA.

However, as the site exceeds 5ha and 150 dwellings, it constitutes a Schedule 2 development under Category 10(b) – Urban development projects. As a result, therefore, the Council must reach a view as to whether a full EIA is required. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that a Schedule 2 development will require an EIA if it is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its size, nature or location. In making this assessment, it is necessary to consider the selection criteria in Schedule 3, relating to the characteristics of the development, its location, and the characteristics of its potential impact.

The PPG states that, in reaching that view, *"each case should be considered on its own merits in a balanced way"* and that this should take account of measures that are envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment (i.e. mitigation), in accordance with Regulation 5 of the 2017 EIA Regulations.

The PPG highlights that "only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 development will require an Environmental Impact Assessment." It also recognises that, as each case should be considered on its own merit, it is not possible to formulate criteria or thresholds which will provide a universal test of whether or not an assessment is required. The PPG does, however, provide indicative thresholds and criteria to assist in determining whether a project is likely to have significant environmental effects. For residential development, that includes sites where the developable area exceeds 5 hectares, and

proposals that are likely to have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area. The PPG indicatively defines the latter as being developments of 1,000+ dwellings.

The proposed development falls below each of those indicative thresholds. The net developable area associated with the proposed development is c. 4.7ha, with the remaining 3.1ha (40% of the site's total area) comprising green and blue infrastructure, including new tree and hedgerow planting, public open space, footpath links, drainage, and associated infrastructure. The scale of residential development, at up to 165 homes, also falls significantly below the 1,000 home indicative figure that would constitute a significantly urbanising effect. Moreover, the nature of the site, which is well contained visually and physically, means that its development would form a logical extension to the settlement and, as such, the development would not be perceived as having a significantly urbanising effect on Bloxham.

It is recognised that the EIA Regulations state that the cumulative effects of developments should be taken into account when screening development proposals. However, there are no existing allocation sites in the settlement, with the adopted Local Plan not having specifically identified development sites in Bloxham. The eLP is also yet to consider that matter, with the closest proposed allocation located over 2 miles to the site's north (adjacent to Banbury). Moreover, the site at Ells Lane that was recently granted planning permission at appeal (Appeal Ref. 3327581) and the pending appeal site at Quarry Close (Appeal Ref. 3329533) are not related to the site, located on the northern and westernmost extents of Bloxham respectively. There are, therefore, no sites that could result in cumulative environmental effects.

Therefore, from a review of the EIA Regulations it is clear that the proposed development is some way short of being of the scale of development that would be expected to require an EIA, and that there are no other relevant sites that would cumulatively reach that scale of development.

However, WDH recognise that smaller sites can be required to undertake an EIA due to environmental sensitivities. Therefore, the following letter provides an analysis of the site and proposed development to assist the Council in their consideration of this request. This letter considers the evidence and findings from the technical and environmental site assessments that have been undertaken to date. It confirms that, in taking account of the selection criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations, the site is not environmentally sensitive and that the likely effects of the development would not be significant. As such, the letter clearly demonstrates that an EIA is **not** required.

5. SITE APPRAISAL

Access and Highways:

A Transport Assessment (TA) has been prepared to support the OPA on the basis of a scoping exercise with Oxfordshire County Council Highways (OCCH).

The TA appends detailed plans relating to the proposed access from South Newington Road, which have evolved to reflect OCCH's response to ensure that they are compliant in terms of junction size, footway provision, crossing design and the provision of emergency access, should this be deemed necessary by OCCH. Primary access will be provided via a priority controlled T-junction access from South Newington Road, with associated pedestrian crossings. If required, a 4m wide emergency access point could be delivered further to the north-east, and would also provide cycle / pedestrians links. The existing 4m wide right of access at the south-east of the site will also be improved to accommodate pedestrian and cyclist access to the east.

The TA confirms that the site is accessible by a variety of sustainable modes of transport, and can be considered to be a suitable location in terms of sustainability; though financial contributions may be sought in relation to bus provision, which will be considered through the determination of the OPA.

Moreover, the proposed development will deliver a pedestrian / cycle link at the south east of the site, which would provide safe and convenient to the village, and a connection to the NCNR5. That will, in turn, promote journeys by an active and sustainable mode of travel. The TA also confirms that the existing level of pedestrian infrastructure in proximity to the site can reasonably accommodate a potential uplift in trips without undue capacity or safety concerns.

An audit of accident records has also been undertaken. On that basis, the TA confirms that there are no significant existing highway safety issues in any specific location within the study area or along the site frontage, and therefore no further detailed safety assessment or amends are necessary.

The TA also presents an assessment of the potential change in traffic conditions associated with the development, taking account of the junctions that were identified by OCCH through the TA scoping exercise. On that basis, it confirms that the proposed development will not have any severe impacts on the immediate highway network, surrounding cycling / pedestrian infrastructure or public transport capacity, and that there is therefore no requirement for off-site improvements to the highway network.

It is evident, therefore, that the proposed development is well-connected in highways and movement terms, and that there are clear strategic benefits for the site's development; notably in terms of the enhancements that will be realised to connectivity and the resultant promotion of active / sustainable forms of travel. Moreover, the development will not have significant impacts on the surrounding highway network. Therefore, it is clear that no individual or cumulative environmental effects will arise as a result of the proposed development.

Flood Risk and Drainage:

A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy (FRADS) has been prepared to support the OPA. It confirms that there are two small dry ponds within the site that are located adjacent to the existing hedgerows. It is understood that the ponds outfall into two shallow land drains / ditches before falling into an ordinary watercourse that runs along the site's southern boundary. The FRADS also confirms that the site is located in flood zone 1, and that the risk of flooding from all sources is low, aside from some very minor areas that are at higher risk from surface water flooding. However, those areas are limited to the site's western margins, where built development is not proposed.

The FRADS presents a drainage strategy in relation to the site, proposing that surface water run-off is drained under gravity to a new detention basin that will be located at the south-western corner of the site. Surface water will discharge into a swale before outfalling to the existing ordinary watercourse located on the western corner of the site. The use of filter drains, swales, and the detention basin will also offer water quality improvements and add biodiversity and amenity benefits. A pumping station will transport foul and sewage to an existing sewer connection on South Newington Road.

In that regard, it is clear that the risk of flooding is very limited for the vast majority of site, that areas at higher risk of flooding are limited to very small areas at the site's margins, and that those areas of flood risk can be accommodated within the green infrastructure corridor, with surface water drained efficiently through the proposed SuDS features.

Given the above, no individual or cumulative environmental effects are expected to arise as a result of the proposal.

Ecology:

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been prepared to support the OPA. It confirms that there are no statutory designations covering the site, that there are no international statutory designations within 10km of the site, and that there are no national statutory designations within 3km of the site.

As set out above, The Slade LNR (a local designation) is located north-west of the site, but is separated from the site by South Newington Road, the Recreation Ground, and an additional agricultural field. Moreover, the PEA highlights that the LNR is managed by the Parish Council who have specific regard to public access and recreational pressures and that, as the development will deliver open space and a play area, the development is not anticipated to give rise to additional recreational pressure.

The PEA also confirms that, subject to the implementation of its recommendations (which relate to appropriate mitigation and offsetting measures that have been incorporated within the Masterplan), the proposed development will respond sensitively to non-statutory designations.

The PEA confirms that the site itself predominantly comprises cattle grazed modified grassland fields that are bound by mainly native hedgerows that vary in management, with some mature trees present. A small area of broadleaved woodland is located at the south-western corner of the site, and there are some small areas of dense scrub that are largely located at the margins of the individual fields. As set out above, two small ponds are present on-site, with a third adjacent to the southern boundary, but all were dry at the time of the survey.

On that basis, the PEA confirms that the habitats within the site are largely common and widespread, with the greatest ecological interest associated with the small woodland at the site's south-western corner, the native species hedgerows present at the boundaries, and the mature trees. The Masterplan retains those features, integrating them into open space corridors as per the PEA's recommendations.

The PEA states that there is potential for some protected species to be present on site, and as such additional surveys will be provided to support any future outline planning application. However, the PEA confirms that they will not pose an over-riding constraint to the site's development. Indeed, and as set out above, the Masterplan incorporates a significant area of green and blue infrastructure that will be beneficial in supporting any species by creating new habitats. That will also support a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, which will be delivered in line with the BNG Hierarchy.

Therefore, it is clear that the site is not sensitive in ecological terms, and that the proposed development can avoid significant adverse effects (either alone or cumulative) through the primary mitigation that is embedded in the emerging Masterplan; which will provide significant areas of green and blue infrastructure that will create new habitats for species and realise the required net gain to biodiversity.

Arboriculture:

An Arboricultural Survey Report has been prepared to support the OPA.

It identifies two trees with features that are deemed worthy of veteran status, one of which is located on the eastern of the two north-south corridors that run through the centre of the site, and the other which is located on the site's southern boundary. In accordance with the Natural England and Forestry Commission standing advice, the Masterplan has incorporated veteran tree buffers to those qualifying trees in the Masterplan. A Tree Preservation Order (TPO) protects three trees within the site, all of which are located on the western of the north-south corridors that run through the site. The Masterplan demonstrates that those trees will be retained with appropriate development offsets.

The Masterplan pursues a landscape-led approach that seeks to retain all trees and hedgerows, save for minor removal to facilitate site access and internal movement. The Masterplan recognises that the trees and hedgerows located on the periphery of the site offer a mature landscape that will filter views of the site, contain the built form, and integrate the development with the surrounding landscape. The corridors that bisect the site, containing both hedgerows and trees, will also be retained and will guide the location of the built form. Those tree / hedgerow corridors will, therefore, positively contribute to

the creation of open space / movement corridors throughout the site. That will further enhance the landscape-led approach to the Masterplan, which also incorporates significant tree planting through the site; thus increasing canopy cover across the site.

Therefore, it is clear that there are no insurmountable arboricultural constraints to development and that therefore there will be no significant adverse effects. Rather, the Masterplan will deliver benefits in arboricultural terms in the form of additional tree planting.

Landscape and Visual Impact:

An initial landscape and visual appraisal has been undertaken to inform the Masterplan, and will form the basis of the more detailed landscape and visual appraisal that will be submitted alongside the OPA.

It is recognised that the 1996 LP previously identified vast swathes of land within the District as 'areas of high landscape value', including the site. However, Policy ESD 13 of LPP1 no longer identifies such areas, instead seeking to "*conserve and enhance the distinctive and highly valued local character of the entire District*" through a character-based approach. That aligns with the tests of the NPPF which state that planning policies and decisions should "*recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*", rather than seeking to apply a blanket protection to the countryside for its own sake.

In the context of CDC's Landscape Assessment (1995), the site is found to have associations with the adjoining character sub-type 'R4b – Small-scale rolling farmland with strong field pattern'. It consists of small, gently sloping fields in pastoral use, which are enclosed by strong hedgerows and mature trees. This is in direct contrast with the landscape further to the south, which is more open given the larger, arable fields with little tree cover.

The appraisal has found that the site itself is also largely visually contained from publicly accessible locations, with views of the site generally limited to the immediate surrounding area to the west and southwest. This is mainly due to the screening that is provided by the surrounding landform, the settlement, and the layering of vegetation both within the site and in the surrounding landscape.

In the context of the site, some filtered views of the existing settlement edge at Barford Road, immediately to the east of the site, are available from publicly accessible locations around 1.5km away on the low hills to the west. Glimpse views of these dwellings, which sit on higher ground, are sometimes also achieved from Bloxham Road and public rights of way to the west and South Newington Road up to a distance of around 1km away. However, these views are largely limited to glimpse views of roofs over hedgerow / tree vegetation, and experienced in the context of the more visible existing settlement edge beyond the site, to the west. Therefore, development will be well concealed by the overlapping patchwork of trees and hedgerows and broken up by the proposed green corridors through the centre of the site, and would be experienced in the context of the existing built form.

Further views from the south of the site are restricted by landform and vegetation, which will be strengthened through the additional planting that is proposed in the Masterplan; addressing matters raised in the most recent HELAA (Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) appraisal of the site (2017). The settlement itself will conceal views of the site from the north and the east.

In reflection of the HELAA's findings, the Masterplan has also paid particular attention to retaining the uninterrupted views of the Church Spire, particularly on the approach into the village from the south along South Newington Road. To achieve that, development has been set back from the site's western boundary, and additional tree planting has been placed along the southern edge.

Therefore, no significant long-term adverse effects on landscape and visual receptors are expected, particularly given the proposed landscaping.

Built Heritage and Archaeology:

A Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (HEDBA) has been prepared to support the OPA. It confirms that the site is not located within the Bloxham Conservation Area, and that there are not any designated or locally listed buildings within the site.

The HEDBA highlights that the edge of Bloxham Conservation Area and two Grade II Listed Buildings lie within 100m of the site to its north. However, as the site does not have any significant intervisibility or historic links with the nearby Conservation Area, the HEDBA finds that the proposed development would not result in any harm to the significance of any designated heritage assets (which is not the case for a number of sites in the settlement). In any case, the Masterplan incorporates a development offset from the north-western boundary, in favour of an open space corridor, which will retain views towards St Mary's Church.

The HEDBA also concludes that the site is considered to have low archaeological potential for all periods, with the exception of remains that may be associated with medieval cultivation; which are of low archaeological significance in any case.

Therefore, there are no constraints to the site's development from an archaeological or built heritage perspective, and it is not expected that the site's development will result in significant environmental effects in that regard.

Noise:

There are no significant noise sources in vicinity of the site, and in any case the Masterplan allows for an offset from the western boundary with South Newington Road.

Air Quality:

There are no significant sources of air pollution in proximity to the site, and it is not located within or near to an Air Quality Management Area.

Ground Conditions, Stability and Minerals:

As the site is undeveloped and has been used only for agricultural purposes, there are no apparent ground stability or contamination issues associated with it.

A Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Assessment (Phase 1 GEA) has been prepared. It highlights that made ground is not indicated within the site, that the underlying bedrock geology of the Marlstone Rock Formation has been designated as a Secondary Aquifer (A), and that the site is not located within or in 500m of a Source Protection Zone. It states, therefore, that the environmental sensitivity of the site is considered to be low.

As part of the Phase 1 GEA, a Preliminary Conceptual Site Model has been prepared. It concludes that there is low / medium risk associated with the site's on-site agricultural use, and low / moderate and moderate risks associated with some off-site features. Further intrusive investigations will be undertaken to verify the findings in that regard, as is often the case for sites.

The Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2017) confirms that the site is not located within a Mineral Safeguarding Area or a Mineral Strategic Resource Area within, and the Phase 1 GEA confirms that superficial deposits are not expected within the site.

Therefore, no individual or cumulative environmental effects are expected to arise as a result of the proposal.

Socio-economic impacts:

The proposed development will deliver much-needed market and affordable housing in a sustainable location in order to meet the local housing needs that arising in the District and Bloxham specifically. It will deliver a range of housing sizes, types and tenures, potentially including bungalows and accessible dwellings to address specialist housing needs (subject to public consultation and detailed design). The delivery of a range of houses will realise positive socio-economic impacts by supporting newly forming households and ensuring that local residents can access properties within the village; allowing them to remain in, or return to, Bloxham.

There will also be benefits from an environmental perspective. As above, the delivery of a landscape-led development will provide accessible and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure, including public open space and a play area that will be utilised by new and existing residents. That will achieve a 10% net gain to biodiversity, in line with the BNG Hierarchy. Moreover, all dwellings will be constructed to the latest sustainable construction standards, though William Davis Homes currently places 50% more cavity wall insulation in properties than is required to maximise energy efficiency; to the benefit of residents.

The development will also realise benefits to the local economy. The construction process will support local employment and supply chains in the short term, and residents of the new development will support local businesses, services and facilities through their expenditure.

It is considered the cumulative impact from a development of up to 165 dwellings on local healthcare, education and services will be minimal. However, a compliant level of financial contributions will be considered through the application process and secured through a Section 106 agreement upon the grant of planning approval. The forthcoming public consultation will also seek community feedback regarding the infrastructure that requires support in the village, with a particular focus on the adjacent Recreation Ground.

It is anticipated that a Construction Method Statement, Construction and Environmental Management Plan, and a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan will be secured by condition. The approval of proposed measures (in consultation with CDC and OCCH as appropriate) and their subsequent implementation will limit / avoid potential environmental impacts associated with the construction process.

Summary:

As demonstrated, there are no clear constraints to the development of the site that warrant EIA scoping, nor is the site environmentally sensitive. Therefore, whilst the development of a greenfield site will inevitably result in some harm (as is the case with all greenfield developments), that will be very limited. That is particularly the case due to the iterative assessment and design process, which has ensured that the required primary mitigation is incorporated into a landscape-led scheme that will realise clear socio-economic and environmental benefits.

6. CONCLUSION

As stated above, the key matter to consider in determining whether the proposed development requires an EIA is whether it is likely to result in significant effects on the environment. It is apparent from the above analysis that:

- The site is in a suitable location for residential development. It is well-connected to Bloxham village centre and the key services and facilities that are located therein via active and sustainable modes of transport. It also benefits from good accessibility to

higher order settlements such as Banbury via bus. Therefore, residents will have very good access to a wide range of services, facilities and employment opportunities that will meet their day-to-day needs. The site is, therefore, a suitable location for growth and would form a logical extension to Bloxham.

- The site itself is not sensitive in environmental terms;
- The proposed development is unlikely to give rise to any significant environmental impacts. However, any environmental impacts that may occur will be readily mitigated through the primary mitigation that is embedded into the Masterplan (i.e. the site layout, the proposed scale of development, distribution of uses, landscape proposals, etc.).
- The site's development will realise clear socio-economic and environmental benefits in terms of the delivery of sustainably constructed, high-quality housing (including affordable housing), provision of new, accessible green infrastructure and open space, local employment and spending, and the delivery of net gains to biodiversity.

Therefore, the forthcoming OPA for the site's development should not require an EIA.

I trust that the above analysis reassures you that the environmental considerations associated with the development are being appropriately dealt with, and the ongoing assessments that are referred to above will be submitted alongside the OPA for the Council's consideration.

In light of the above I look forward to receiving your formal screening opinion within the 3 week period prescribed by Regulation 6(6) of the EIA Regulations.

Yours sincerely



Sam Perkins
Senior Planner

Encs