

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4ER
Telephone (██████████)
Textphone Users ██████████
Email planning@uttlesford.gov.uk Website www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Woolf Bond Planning
The Mitfords
Basingstoke Road
Three Mile Cross
Reading
RG7 1AT

16th November 2022

Our ref: UTT/22/3002/SCO

Please ask for Mr Lindsay Trevillian on ██████████
email: ██████████

Dear Sir/Madam,

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2017.

PROPOSAL: Request for a Screening Opinion in relation to a proposed residential development.

SITE: Land to The West of Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden, Essex.

I write further to the request for a screening opinion in respect of a development proposal on the above site. The site comprises around 7.8ha of agricultural land. The proposal relates to the erection of up to 180 dwellings alongside associated works consisting of access landscaping. This letter provides a screening opinion for the above proposal under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the EIA Regulations).

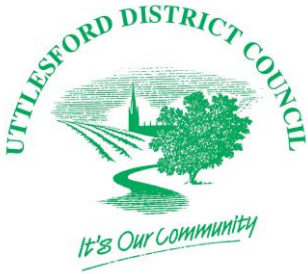
The 2017 Regulations provides guidance regarding procedures which are required in establishing whether an EIA is required. This guidance requires the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to consider whether the proposed development is described in Schedule 1 or 2 of the Regulations.

Schedule 1 identifies 20 different categories of development of which none relate to the proposed development in the LPA's opinion.

Schedule 2 identifies 13 different categories, of which as an urban development project (development type 10(b) the scheme is listed in the first column in Schedule 2.

The proposal exceeds the thresholds. The proposal is not, however located in wholly or partly within a 'sensitive area' as defined by the Regulations.

Uttlesford District Council as the Local Planning Authority conclude that the proposal constitutes a Schedule 2 form of development as defined by the Regulations. Under these circumstances it is necessary to establish whether or not the proposal is likely to give rise to 'significant effects' on the environment by virtue of its nature, size or location.



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Schedule 3 of the Regulations sets out selection criteria which must also be taking into account in determining whether the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. These criteria are identified under 3 separate headings, and these shall be considered in turn as per below.

Characteristics of development

The Council notes that the proposed development comprises of up to 180 residential dwellings vehicle access, parking, open space, and landscaping.

The application is accompanied by indicative parameter plans, which provides an indication of how such a quantum of development could be achieved on the site including in respect of layout.

The Council accepts that the proposal will use natural resources including the use of land, water, materials and energy and it will be expected to generate waste during construction and when the proposed development is complete. However, it is expected that any wastes generated from the construction of the proposed development will be transported off-site. It is also likely that the impacts from the proposed development, both during the construction and operational phases, will result in increased noise and vibration levels in addition to any significant increase in levels of lighting and heating.

Whilst there is always the possibility of accidents during the construction and operational phase of any development which might affect human health or the environment, there is no evidence to suggest that accidents are likely or that the impacts are likely to be significant.

The location of the site and the current use of the land and the proposals are likely to result in less than significant impacts in respect of biodiversity. However, it is noted that mature hedgerows and trees are position centrally within and along the boundaries of the site. The hedgerows bordering the arable fields are likely to meet the criteria for priority habitat.

In addition, landscape character assessments will also need to consider the existing the wider landscape impacts of the proposals and particularly for users of the public rights of way networks.

Location of development

The site is within a relatively densely populated area on the edge of Saffron Walden and is highly visible from the nearby residential developments within the adjacent streets including Tukes Way, Peal Road, the Glebe and Peaslands Road. There are no known public rights of way crossing the site, however, several PROWs are within the immediate vicinity in which the development will be seen from.

The land comprises around 7.8ha of open agricultural land containing three different fields of varying size interspersed with hedgerows and is free of any established built form. Whilst this proposed development will inevitably comprise a physical change to the locality, there will, in the Council's view, be a limited physical change in terms of the topography necessary to enable construction. Overall, the addition of this development in this location is not considered to have significant effects through the resulting physical change.



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The site is not located within or adjacent to a groundwater source protection zone and there is no evidence that the site contains any important, high quality or scarce resources. The site is also within Flood Zone 1 (the lowest risk of flooding). Whilst the site lies just outside an Air Quality Management Area, the Council are satisfied that, subject to an adequate Air Quality Assessment, the development is not likely to raise significant environmental effects. There is no evidence that there are any areas around the location which are already subject to significant levels of pollution or environmental damage.

The site is not subject to any statutory national or international designations. The site is not situated within or near a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In addition, the site is not within a Countryside Protection Zone or any other locally protected landscape designation.

The nearest protected feature to the site is a Grade II listed building - 'The Granary' – which is located approximately 250m to the southwest of the site. The impact of the proposal development on the setting and significance of the designated heritage asset will require a robust assessment. A detailed heritage impact assessment will be required to support the application.

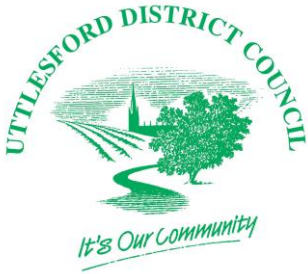
The Historic Environmental Record shows that the proposed development lies in a potentially sensitive area of archaeological deposits directly southeast of the historical settlement of Saffron Walden. Identified within the supporting Heritage Technical Note, excavations to the north found the remains of two Bronze Age barrows and other prehistoric features approximately 200m north of the site. If an application is submitted a programme of archaeological trenching followed by open area excavation will be recommended to ensure preservation of archaeological deposits of the site.

Types and characteristics of the potential impact

This proposal for the development of up to 180 residential units and the associated development will change the land use and cause physical changes through the construction of the dwellings. Whilst the project will result in the loss of agricultural land, it is noted that up to 2.8ha of the 7.8ha of the site will be used for public open space. The Council does not, however, conclude that the scale and characteristics of the proposed development will be likely to result in any significant loss of natural resources.

The construction and operations associated with the proposed development are not considered likely to lead to the significant release of any pollutants. Additionally, and whilst there is always the risk of pollution being generated on the site due to the proposed development, there is no evidence to suggest that this will be likely to lead to any significant risk of contamination. It is also expected that the site operators will ensure that all vehicles carrying any substances or materials considered harmful to human health and/or the environment will be strictly controlled by Health and Safety Legislation. For these reasons, it is concluded that this is unlikely to lead to a significant risk to human health during the construction and operational phases.

This proposed development will be likely to generate short term employment opportunities during the construction period. In addition, the proposed new dwellings have the potential to



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create demographic changes in the area. However, the Council concludes that the issues raised by this development on its own or in combination with the proposed new housing site are unlikely to create significant social or demographic changes.

The site is adjacent to existing residential housing, and buildings used for retail, commercial and leisure. However, whilst some changes affecting the flow of traffic may result from vehicles using the local road network, this is not considered likely to give rise to significant levels of traffic on its own. The proposed development will be expected to generate a modest number of new trips onto the Thaxted Road (B154) and on other surrounding highways leading into the town centre and, as such, will have the potential to increase congestion. Although there will be additional movements of vehicles and HGVs during the construction phase, these will be negligible in the context of the existing traffic and, in any event, short term in duration. On the evidence available, however, it is not considered that these issues amount to potentially significant environmental impacts.

The Council considers that the key issue relating to the potential impact of the proposal, both on site and in the vicinity, relates to its potential for cumulative impact particularly with the approved nearby residential developments that are either waiting to be constructed or are nearing completion.

The Council has carefully considered the evidence provided and although it is accepted that there will be some interaction of impact between the proposed site and the nearby residential and commercial developments, it is considered this site to be reasonably self-contained and standalone in nature.

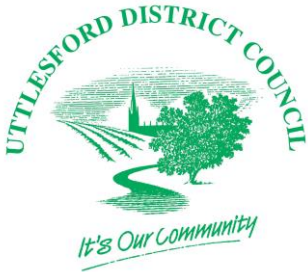
Whilst the issue of cumulation with the nearby sites granted planning permissions is certainly relevant, any cumulative effects from the proposals would not, in the Council's view, be likely to be significant. Furthermore, the Council considers that there is limited evidence of likely significant impacts on sensitive landscape, traffic, or historic/archaeological or nature conservation interests directly being caused by cumulation.

Understanding the interaction of multiple development types across large temporal and spatial scales is important for predicting how future developments may impact populations, communities, and the economy. Most development activities would typically have minor impacts individually, but collectively over time their impact on the environment is more substantial.

The Council suggests that a Cumulative Effects Assessment (CEA) is submitted in support of the application that clearly states that all 'other developments' which consent has been sought or granted, as well as those already in existence are considered as part of the identifying potential environmental effects with particular attention given to traffic and transportation and air quality. As a minimum, the cumulative effects should be assessed in other supporting documentation such as a Construction Traffic Management Plan, Transport Assessment, and an Air Quality Assessment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Council does not consider that the proposed development will result in any unusually complex and potentially hazardous environmental effects. The Council has



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carefully considered the potential for cumulative effects in this case and does not believe these, even at their highest level, would result in likely significant effects. In this view, there are no other factors in this case in this specific location, including urbanising effects, traffic, noise, and air quality effects, loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and effects on local receptors, that either in isolation or together, would necessitate an EIA. It is thereby concluded that an EIA is therefore not required.

Yours sincerely

Dean Hermitage
Director of Planning