

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2013

[REDACTED]  
Savills  
Unex House  
132-134 Hills Road  
CAMBRIDGE  
CB2 8PA

Your ref: CAPL/237361/A3/GH/MW

Our ref: UTT/13/0608/SCO

Please ask for [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)  
REGULATIONS 2011 (SI 2011/1824)  
SITE AT LAND TO WEST AND EAST OF B184 THAXTED ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN  
SCREENING OPINION**

Thank you for your letter dated 5 March 2013 requesting a screening opinion in respect of a development proposal on the above site. The proposal relates to a residential development of 300 dwellings to the north of Thaxted Road involving open space, landscaping designated play areas and associated roads; and an extension to the skate park adjacent to the Lord Butler Leisure Centre, also the provision of open space both to the south of Thaxted Road. The land comprises the proposed development would amount to approximately 19.42 Hectares (48 acres). This would equate to land parcel 1 to the north of Thaxted Road forming 11.77 hectares and parcel 2 to the south of Thaxted Road forming approximately 7.64 hectares. This letter provides a screening opinion for the above proposal under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (the EIA Regulations) under Regulation 5 of the stated Regulations.

Circular 02/99 - Environmental Impact Assessment provides guidance in regards to 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 propose development in the LPA's opinion.

Schedule 2 identifies 13 different categories, of which Class 10 is 'Infrastructure Projects' and the development proposed falls within the description of sub section - (b) 'Urban development projects'. The proposal exceeds the thresholds. The proposal is not, however located in wholly or partly within a 'sensitive area' as defined by the Regulations.

I conclude that the proposal does constitute 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 taken 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 I shall deal with each in turn.

#### 1) Characteristics of development

The proposals would introduce a significant element of built form on land currently used for agricultural purposes on the edge of the urban form of Saffron Walden. The site is located outside the development limits but the site identified for residential development lies in close proximity to existing residential development. The proposals would have an impact on the character of the area, particularly given the scale of the proposed development. The area of land identified for the skate park extension lies outside the development limits and would be extending existing leisure facilities into the open countryside.

The land identified for residential development is set within the valley and has existing residential development to the north and south. It is not overtly clear from the screening opinion request as to whether or not new landscaping would be introduced in order to mitigate potential impacts; however there is an indication on the accompanying plan that this would be the case. Nonetheless, should a planning application be submitted then this can be controlled through conditions should planning permission be granted and it is considered to be necessary. Therefore, it would be unreasonable on the evidence available at this stage to suggest that the likely effect on the environment would be 'significant' enough to justify the requirement of an EIA taking into account the characteristics of the development.

#### 2) Location of Development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development must be considered and in particular with reference to the following.

The site for residential development is located outside the development limits in close proximity to existing residential development. The site for the skate park extension is located outside the development limits and extends the leisure activities into existing agricultural land. Neither of the sites is statutorily designated for protection.

In summary, it would be unreasonable, therefore, on the evidence available at this stage to suggest that the likely effect on the environment would be 'significant' enough to justify the requirement of an EIA taking into account the location of the development.

#### 3) Characteristics of the potential development.

The Council has in making the above professional judgments, assessed the potential significant effects of the development having regard in particular to:

- a) the extent of the impact
- b) the transfrontier nature of the impact
- c) the magnitude and complexity of the impact
- d) the probability of the impact
- e) the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.

On the evaluation of the information submitted by the applicant, and the Council's knowledge of the local area and its environment, bearing in mind that it is not required to have full knowledge of every environmental effect, it is considered that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects on the environment. **An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is therefore not required for the proposed development shown on the submitted drawings by the applicant.**

On the basis of the above it is considered that an Environmental Statement is not required to be submitted with any planning application for the proposed development. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that the following documents have been submitted to support the application and the submission of these documents formulates the basis of this opinion:

- Planning Statement (Inc. justification of development within countryside both in terms of housing and industrial development);
- Five Year Housing Land Supply Assessment;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Tree Report);
- Landscape Assessment;
- Flood Risk Assessment;
- Affordable Housing Statement;
- Air Quality Assessment;
- Archaeological Statement;
- Ecological Statement;
- Services and Utilities Assessment;
- Site Waste Management Plan;
- Sustainability Statement;
- Transport Assessment;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- Draft Heads of Terms for S106 Agreement;
- Noise Impact Survey;
- Education contribution provision (to be discussed with Essex County Council);
- Lifetime homes/wheelchair accessible housing;
- Groundwater pollution control statement;
- Designing out crime/crime prevention measures;
- Plus any proposed External lighting and lighting pollution statement, more so the case with regards to the proposed footpaths and roads;

With regards to the above I have the following comments:

- The Air Quality Assessment would need to have an assessment of all of the AQMA areas within Saffron Walden.
- The ecological survey should be fully detailed. If further surveys are recommended these must be undertaken prior to the submission of the application. Failure to do so will result in the application being refused.
- Based on the size and scale of the proposed development a Flood Risk Assessment will need to be undertaken.
- I am of the opinion that a Contaminated Land Survey is also required. Our records indicate that historic land uses have been carried out on the site which may have resulted in contamination.
- The proposed development falls within building height restrictions, however relevant air authority bodies may need to be consulted of any landscaping or built form scheme so as to not impact upon airstrikes.

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Please do not hesitate to contact Miss Tourvas if you have any questions regarding above.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Taylor  
Assistant Director of Planning and Building Control