

**OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE
ERECTION OF UP TO 114 DWELLINGS, UP TO
2,000 SQM OF EMPLOYMENT SPACE (USE
CLASS B1, WITH UP TO ONE CLASS A1 UNIT),
VEHICULAR ACCESS POINTS AND
ASSOCIATED WORKS**

LAND SOUTH OF LOWER ROAD, STALBRIDGE

**PLANNING AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING
STATEMENT**

MARCH 2020



Grassroots Planning Ltd.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On behalf of our client, Land Value Alliances (LVA), Grass Roots Planning has been instructed to prepare and submit an outline planning application for the erection of up to 114 dwellings, up to 2,000sq.m employment land (primarily Use class B1, with up to one unit falling within Use Class A1) vehicular access and associated works, at land to the south of Lower Road, Stalbridge ("the site"). The site lies within the administrative boundary of Dorset Council (formerly North Dorset).

1.2 The scheme has been designed sensitively to preserve the character of this part of Lower Road and the wider area of Stalbridge and the countryside beyond.

1.3 We undertook a formal (EIA) Screening Opinion Request (LPA Ref: 2/2019/1586/SCREIA) and the Council has confirmed that an EIA is not required. We also submitted a request for pre-application advice to Dorset Council in November 2019 (Application Ref: PRE/2019/0282/PREAPP). Unfortunately, no response has been received from the Council, and given the 4-month delay, we have therefore been forced to submit an application without this advice.

1.4 The planning application is supported by a suite of technical documents and this Planning and Affordable Housing Statement should be read in conjunction with these:

- Design and Access Statement prepared by Urban Design Box;
- Agricultural Land Quality Assessment prepared by Soil Environment Services Ltd
- Ecological Assessment prepared by Grass Roots Ecology
- Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy, prepared by Vectos
- Ground Conditions Assessment prepared by Ruddlesdon
- Desk-based Archaeological Assessment prepared by Avon Archaeology
- Transport Assessment and Framework Travel Plan prepared by Vectos
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Tyler Grange
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment prepared by Bosky Trees
- Draft Heads of Terms prepared by Grass Roots Planning;
- Statement of Community Involvement prepared by Grass Roots Planning;
- Plans:
 - Site Location Plan (ref: LVA 101B)
 - Constraints and Opportunities Plan (ref: LVA101 2001B)
 - Concept masterplan (ref: LVA101 3202C)
 - Parameter Plan (ref: LVA101 3502C)

Structure of Report

1.5 The report is structured in the following way:

- Section 2.0: Site description
- Section 3.0: The proposed development
- Section 4.0: Planning status and site history
- Section 5.0: Planning policy
- Section 6.0: The main issues
- Section 7.0: Conclusion

2.0 THE SITE



Figure 1: Aerial view of the site, with site area identified in red and nearby consented schemes

- 2.1 The 5.67-hectare site is broadly triangular in shape, located to the south of Lower Road and currently comprises two agricultural fields. It is bounded on all sides by mature hedgerow, with a hedgerow running through the centre of the site, interspersed trees. A single-track lane runs along part of the western boundary, providing access to a residential property. A gas governor is located in the western corner of the site.
- 2.2 The ground rises gently from the south eastern corner towards to north-western corner. A public right of way runs along the site's south western boundary.
- 2.3 The site falls outside the settlement boundary of Stalbridge and is located within a rural priority area. It is located within the Blackmore Vale and Clay Vale Landscape Character Areas.
- 2.4 The main built up are of Stalbridge is located immediately to the north west of the site, with the areas closest to the site being predominantly two storey houses, with some bungalows. The immediate context of the site is informed by recent planning permissions on adjacent sites (see Figure 1 above), which has the effect of placing the site within a residential built context to the north and west. Construction is currently underway on the site to the north. Land to the south and east is currently undeveloped agricultural land in arable use.

3.0 **THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.1 Outline planning permission is sought for the redevelopment of the site with all matters, except for access, reserved for future consideration.
- 3.2 A concept masterplan is provided with the application, to show how the site could be developed. This application seeks planning permission for up to 114 dwellings, along with up to 2,000sq.m of employment floorspace.
- 3.3 The residential parcel of development would be accessed directly from Lower Road, with an internal loop road and residential development arranged in legible spaces. It is anticipated that the residential properties would comprise a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties, predominantly two-stories in height, but with the potential for additional rooms within the roof space. Up to 40% would be affordable housing, the exact mix and location to be determined at reserved matters stage.
- 3.4 Planning permission is also sought for a small employment hub comprising flexible employment uses, that will appeal to a wide range of local end users. It is anticipated that a variety of small employment spaces will be provided, which will attract a mixture of offices, small start-up businesses and light industrial uses (falling within Use Class B1) with up to one of the proposed units being provided in a form that would accommodate a small shop or café (Class A1).
- 3.5 The employment land is proposed in the north west corner of the site, with a dedicated vehicular access from Lower Road. Buildings are shown in an informal "courtyard" arrangement with parking well contained within the centre. Links are shown to pedestrian/cycle links and connectivity to the adjacent residential area.
- 3.6 An area of open space is retained along the northern boundary. Pedestrian links are proposed in the southern corner and along the western boundary, linking into the existing public right of way. Pedestrian/cycle points are also proposed along Lower Road, in the north west corner and further to the east, which link in with existing footpaths.
- 3.7 Existing trees and hedgerows are to be retained where possible particularly around the perimeter of the site and two mature trees within the site and incorporated into the illustrative layout, which will help provide a focal point to the public open space in the centre of the site.

3.8 SUDS and ecological areas are provided within areas of public open space along the site's eastern edge, providing a transition to the rural area beyond.

4.0 **PLANNING STATUS AND SITE HISTORY**

Planning Status and Site Designations

- 4.1 The site lies outside of the settlement boundary of Stalbridge; however, no other designations apply such as the Green Belt, AONB, SAC, SSSI, SPA, Conservation Area, nor do any listed buildings lie in proximity to the land. The site is located in Flood Zone 1.
- 4.2 The site lies within the National Character Area (NCA) 133 (Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour). At a County Level, 21 distinct Landscape Character Types (LCT) are identified. The site is located within the "Clay Vale" LCT and adjacent to the Limestone Hills LCT, which is located to the west. North Dorset defines 8 landscape character types (LCT) and 17 landscape character areas (LCA). The site is located with the wider Clay Vale LCT and the Blackmore Vale LCA. Further assessment of this is provided within the LVIA which accompanies the planning application.
- 4.3 A public right of way (ref: N51/39) runs along the site's western boundary.

Planning History

- 4.4 A pre-application enquiry was submitted in November 2019 (ref: PRE/2019/0282/PREAPP) seeking feedback on the redevelopment of the site to provide around 135 new homes. At the time, no employment land was proposed. Unfortunately, no response has been received from the Council, we have therefore been forced to submit an application without this advice, given the 4 month delay in waiting for this advice.
- 4.5 As the development comprises an urban development project under Schedule 2, category 10b of the EIA legislation, an EIA Screening Opinion Request (ref: 2/2019/1586/SCREIA) was submitted in November 2019. A formal response was received at the end of November, which confirmed that an EIA was not required.

Adjacent Sites

- 4.6 Outline planning permission for 60 houses was granted in March 2019 for the redevelopment of land to the west of the site (ref: 2/2017/1095/OUT).
- 4.7 To the north east of the site, on the opposite side of Lower Road, development is currently under construction by Bovis Homes for 120 new homes. Outline planning permission was

granted in October 2018 (LPA ref: 2/2017/0741/OUT) and reserved matters approval was given in August 2019.

- 4.8 The proximity of these development sites is shown in Figure 1 of this statement.
- 4.9 We are also aware of the refusal of outline planning application for 98 homes on land at Barrow Hill, to the west of Stalbridge (LPA ref: 2/2017/1094/OUT) and the subsequent appeal decision, which we refer to as "the Lightwood decision". We note that the Officer had originally recommended the application for approval, but the decision was overturned by Members at the North Dorset Planning Committee on 25th February 2018 primarily due to the impact on the Stalbridge Conservation Area. The main issue of this appeal was whether the less than substantial harm to the significance of the Stalbridge Conservation Area would be outweighed by the public benefits of the development and if so, whether this harm and any other adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole.

5.0 **PLANNING POLICY**

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 In this case the relevant development plan which applies to the application proposals is the following:

- North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 ("LPP1"), adopted in 2016; and the
- Saved policies contained within the North Dorset Local Plan ("NDLP"), adopted 2003

5.3 Following the merging of the Dorset Council's, work on producing a new North Dorset Local Plan has now been abandoned. Dorset Council is now instead in the process of preparing a local plan for the whole county area, but work has only recently commenced so it is at a very early stage.

5.4 The 'other material considerations' referred to in Section 38(6) of the Act would include the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), Planning Policy Statements (PPS), Planning Circulars, and relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) or Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) (emerging and adopted).

North Dorset Local Plan ("LPP1")

5.5 The site is not allocated in a current development plan document. It is situated just outside, but close to the edge of the settlement boundary.

5.6 Those policies of most relevance are summarised below:

- **Policy 1 (presumption in favour of sustainable development)** – it confirms that the council will take a positive approach to development proposals that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the NPPF. Where there are no policies, or relevant policies are out of date, then the council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:
 - i. Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or
 - ii. Specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

- **Policy 2 (Core Spatial Strategy)** – Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages have been identified as the focus for growth to meet the local needs outside the four main towns. Outside the defined boundaries of the main towns, Stalbridge and larger villages, the remainder of the District will be subject to countryside policies where development will be strictly controlled unless it is required to enable essential rural needs to be met. At Stalbridge, the focus will be on meeting local (rather than strategic) needs.
- **Policy 3 (Climate change)** – requires that development seeks to minimise the impacts of climate change.
- **Policy 4 (The Natural Environment)** – developments are expected to respect the natural environment. Developments which seek to conserve or enhance the natural environment should be permitted unless significant adverse social or environmental impacts are likely to arise.

The policy seeks to protect the landscape character through retention of features than characterise the area. where significant impact is likely, developers will be required to clearly demonstrate that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated and that important landscape features incorporated.

The best and most versatile agricultural land will be safeguarded from permanent loss, unless it can be demonstrated that there are no suitable alternative sites or the economic/social benefits outweigh the loss from agricultural use. Para 4.66 of the supporting text, confirms that the best and most versatile agricultural land, comprises grades 1, 2 and 3a land.

- **Policy 6 (Housing Distribution)** – at least 57,000 additional homes to be provided between 2011 and 2031, delivering an average of 285dpa. In the countryside, including Stalbridge, the level of housing and affordable housing provision will be the cumulative number of new homes delivered to contribute towards meeting identified local and essential rural needs. At least 825 dwellings will be provided in the countryside (including Stalbridge).
- **Policy 7 (Delivering Homes)** – all housing should contribute towards mixed and balanced communities. It provides an indication a starting point for negotiation on the mix of housing sizes on all sites where 10 or more dwellings are proposed.

The design and layout should make effective use of the site, respect the character and distinctiveness of the locality and be acceptable in design and amenity terms. High density housing (50dph and above) will only be permitted in certain areas.

- **Policy 8 (Affordable Housing)** – affordable housing will contribute 40% affordable housing. Where grant funding is secured, the percentage of affordable housing should be maximised. Where viability is an issue, an “open book” approach will be taken. 70-

80% of all affordable housing should be affordable rented/social rented. The remaining 15-30% should be provided as intermediate.

- **Policy 11 (The Economy)** – supports economic development in the countryside (and Stalbridge) by enabling rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs particularly through neighbourhood planning and countryside policies. It notes that 3,630 new jobs are projected by 2031 in North Dorset and 49.6ha of employment land is required over the plan period to deliver this job growth.
- **Policy 12 (Retail, Leisure and Other Commercial Developments)** – retail uses outside town centres, will need to comply with the sequential test and ensure there do not have a significant adverse impact on town centre vitality and viability.
- **Policy 13 (Grey Infrastructure)** – a more sustainable approach to transport will be developed, including providing and enhancing walking and cycling facilities. Sustainable drainage solutions should be incorporated and connect with the overall surface water management approach for the area.
- **Policy 14 (Social Infrastructure)** – maintenance and enhancement of existing social infrastructure, relating to education, health services, cultural facilities, recreation and sport and community facilities.
- **Policy 15 (Green Infrastructure)** – new development is required to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure on site.
- **Policy 20 (The Countryside)** – development outside defined settlement boundaries will only be permitted for certain development or if there is an “*overriding need*” for it to be located in the countryside.
- **Policy 23 (Parking)** – provision of vehicle and cycle parking is made in accordance with the Council’s parking standards, unless justified by local or site-specific circumstances. This should include motorcycle and parking for those with impaired mobility.
- **Policy 24 (Design)** – development should be design to improve the character and quality of the area. Mature trees, hedgerows and additional planting should be incorporated to integrate the development into its surroundings.
- **Policy 25 (Amenity)** – requires that the privacy of occupants and neighbours is protected, requires the provision of private open space, and that buildings and associated area receive adequate daylight and sunlight and that daylight/sunlight reaching neighbouring properties are not reduced below acceptable levels. Noise and unpleasant emissions must not have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties.

North Dorset Local Plan, 2003

5.7 Saved Policies contained within the Local Plan 2003, include:

- Settlement boundaries around the four main towns, Stalbridge and eighteen larger villages are retained and will continue to be used for development management purposes.
- Local Plan policy 1.20 (contaminated land) will be retained

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.8 The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF was revised in February 2019, following the initial July 2018 revision when a number of significant changes were made to the previous version, including the implementation of the standard method for calculating housing need ("the standard method"), the Housing Delivery Test, and differences in calculating five-year housing land supply.

5.9 Relevant paragraphs to the application's assessment from include the following:

- Paragraph 8 sets out the overarching objectives of sustainable development, which includes an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective.
- Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

"where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole".*

Footnote 7 clarifies that, for applications that this involving the provision of housing, this includes situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites; or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates

that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.

- Paragraph 59 notes that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed.
- Paragraph 73: LPA's should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement including the addition of an appropriate buffer.
- Paragraph 83 seeks to support a prosperous rural economy, confirming that decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas.
- Paragraph 103 states that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth and significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limited the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. [NB: the definition of deliverable sites is set out within the glossary of the NPPF].
- Paragraph 117 requires planning policies and decisions to promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses.
- Paragraph 122 confirms that planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land.
- Paragraph 123 states that where there is an existing, or anticipated, shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs, "*...it is especially important that planning policies and decisions avoid homes being built at low densities, and ensure that developments make optimal use of the potential of each site*".
- Paragraph 127 requires that planning policies and decisions ensure that developments are, inter alia, sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).

6.0 THE MAIN ISSUES

6.1 Considering the planning context in North Dorset, public consultation, and technical work undertaken, the main issues relating to the assessment of the application have been identified as follows:

1. Whether the principle of the proposed development is acceptable;
2. The benefits of delivering Open Market and Affordable housing;
3. Design, Layout and Landscape & Visual Impact of the proposals;
4. The potential impact on Neighbouring Amenity;
5. The impact on the Highways Network and Transport;
6. The impact on flood risk and drainage;
7. Other material considerations; and
8. Scheme benefits and the planning balance.

6.2 We will now go on to assess the main issues and benefits of the scheme.

Issue 1: The Principle of the Proposed Development

Housing Need

6.3 At the heart of the NPPF, is the presumption in favour of sustainable development and for decision-taking, this means approving development that accords with the Development Plan. Where there are no relevant Development Plan policies, or the policies which are most important are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless “...*any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits*”.

6.4 The NPPF requires that local planning authorities review their local plans to assess whether they need updating at least once every five years and “*reviews should be completed no later than five years from the adoption date of a plan*” (para 33). The North Dorset LPP1 was adopted in 2016 and therefore will need to be reviewed next year (i.e. 2021). North Dorset has recently become part of the newly formed Dorset Council, and a Local Plan for that area is at a very early stage of being progressed.

6.5 The LPP1 (policy 6) sets a requirement that *at least* (i.e. a minimum) of 57,000 new homes are provided over the plan period (2011-2031), which is an annual rate of 285 dwellings per annum (dpa). The policy identifies that *at least* 825 dwellings will be provided in ‘countryside’ locations (including Stalbridge and the villages) during the Plan period; this is a minimum

requirement and there is no cap on the number of dwellings that should be provided in the 'countryside'.

- 6.6 Paragraph 73 of the NPPF requires local authorities to identify and annually update a supply of deliverable sites to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement. Where an authority cannot do this, policies relating to housing supply cannot be considered to be "up-to-date".
- 6.7 The Council acknowledges that it cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply ("5YHLS"), confirming in its most recent Annual Monitoring Review (2019) that it has a land supply of just under 4 years. However, this is based on the 2011 SHMA for Dorset and the 2012 North Dorset update, which established an annual delivery target of 285dpa. It is clear from the more recent Eastern Dorset SHMA (2015), which included North Dorset, that the full objectively assessed need for North Dorset is in fact higher, at 330dpa. This gives a 5YHLS of 3.6 years, which is an even greater shortfall than that recognised by the Council. Future housing demand will need to be calculated as part of the Local Plan review, using the standard method approach.
- 6.8 Notwithstanding this, even where an authority *is* able to demonstrate a 5YHLS, it is clear from recent appeal and high court decisions, that the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development with respect to housing proposals, means that applications on unallocated land may be considered acceptable if they are sustainable. However, in this case, the Council cannot demonstrate a 5YHLS and therefore, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the relevant housing policies applicable to the proposed scheme are out-of-date. The "tilted balance" is therefore engaged and in accordance with the NPPF and any future planning application should be approved unless the adverse effects of doing so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 6.9 We note the principle of residential development outside the settlement boundary, on the edge of Stalbridge has recently been considered through the Lightwood Decision. Indeed, Officer's had noted that the additional supply of housing and the provision of public benefits to Stalbridge would override any material policy conflict in the context of the "tilted balance". The Officer's view was that the proposal represented a sustainable form of development with the benefits clearly outweighing the harm. Within the appeal decision, the Inspector noted that the proposals would increase the choice and supply of housing within the district and help to reduce the serious shortfall in supply. It was also noted that the affordable dwellings would assist in meeting housing need and would be conveniently located for services and facilities.

6.10 While there has been residential development permitted on nearby sites, the cumulative impact of that development and that which is subject to this application would only go some way (35%) to meeting the minimum requirement for 825 new dwellings in the countryside. At no point in the determination of these nearby and comparable sites has the question of whether Stalbridge is capable of accommodating growth to meet the land supply deficit and development plan targets been raised, and this remains the case.

6.11 It is clear that the proposed development would increase the choice and supply of housing and go some way to reducing the considerable shortfall in housing supply, as well as meeting the housing needs of local people in a location that offers everyday facilities within walking distance. The principle, of residential development should therefore be considered acceptable.

Employment Need

6.12 Policy 11 of the Local Plan supports economic development in the countryside and Stalbridge by enabling rural communities to plan to meet their own local needs. The policy notes that 3,630 new jobs are projected by 2031 in North Dorset and 49.6ha of employment land is required to deliver this growth over the plan period. The application proposes an employment hub of up to 2,000sq.m, which will comprise a number of small units, with the potential for one or more units to be merged for larger business if required, falling within Use Class B1 use. It is anticipated that up to one of the units would have the potential to accommodate a small shop or café, aimed at serving the local area.

6.13 The employment land has largely been included within the proposed development in response to the public consultation exercise, with a number of comments highlighting an issue with the lack of employment opportunities within and around Stalbridge and latent demand for employment land. The inclusion of an element of employment land is a clear benefit of the proposed development, which will support the local economy and provide space for a range of new and existing businesses, and may provide opportunities for those business located outside the area to relocate and/or expand. As the site is currently located outside the defined settlement boundary of Stalbridge, the site is located in the countryside, and it is noted that policy 11 supports such economic development. The NPPF is also supportive of a prosperous rural economy, confirming that decisions should enable the sustainable growth of business in such areas.

6.14 Therefore, it is clear that the provision of employment land on the application site is acceptable in principle as it is supported by both local and national planning policy.

Sustainable Development

- 6.15 LPP1 policy 2 confirms that Stalbridge (and other larger villages) have been identified as the focus for growth to meet the local needs outside the four main towns. Stalbridge is the largest settlement beyond the four main towns and is a sustainable market town, with good access to public transport, community facilities, shops and services. It has considerably better access to services and facilities, for example, than other settlements located in the countryside. It is inevitable therefore that Stalbridge will continue to be expected to make a substantial contribution towards meeting additional housing demand within the emerging Dorset-wide Local Plan.
- 6.16 The site is well related to the edge of the built-up area of Stalbridge and would represent a logical and well-related extension to Stalbridge. As mentioned above, there have been other recent planning permissions on immediately adjacent sites to the north west and west of the development, which have effectively extended the built-up area of Stalbridge (See figure 2 below). It is noted that the settlement boundary of Stalbridge has not been updated since the 2003 NDLP and it is inevitable that these recent planning permissions will need to be taken into account and be incorporated within the settlement boundary of Stalbridge when this matter is considered as part of the Local Plan Review. In light of this, the application site offers an obvious development site which will fit within the future "built-up" area of Stalbridge, and very likely within the future settlement boundary of Stalbridge. In essence, at present, the proposed development will "round off" the settlement boundary as extended by these recent permissions, as shown in Figure 2 below.

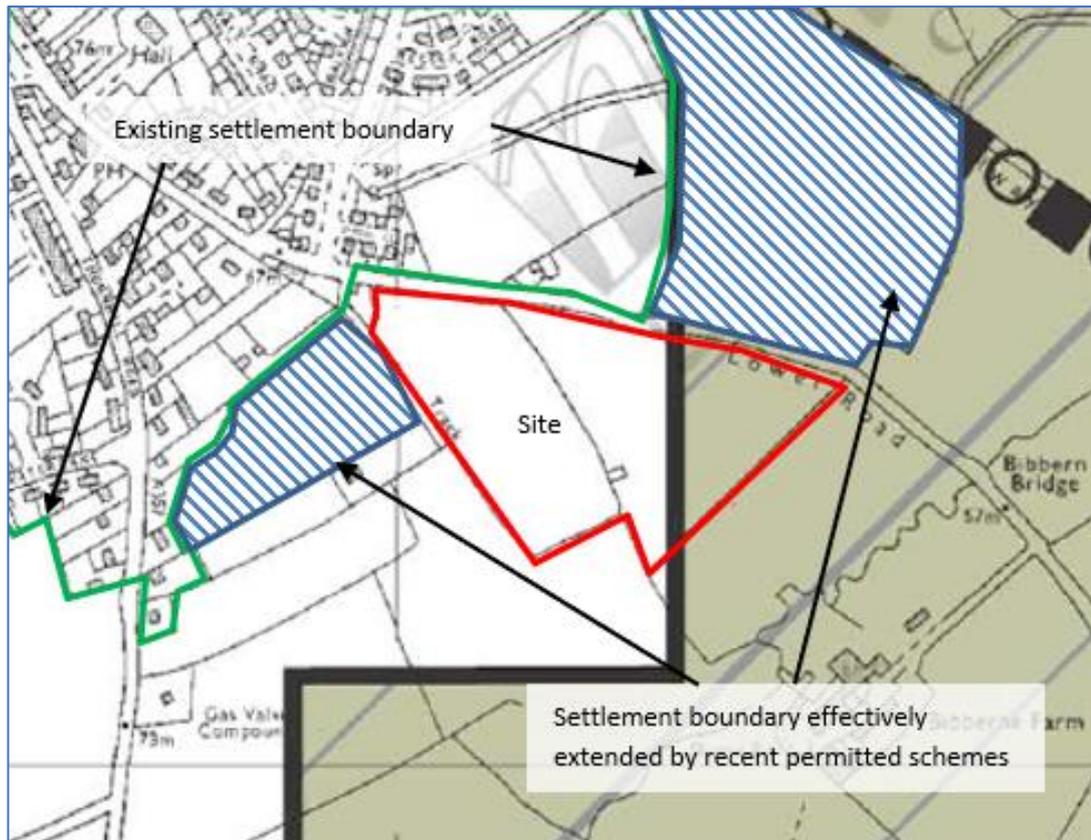


Figure 2: Existing settlement boundary in relation to recently permitted schemes

- 6.17 In addition to the above, the site is in a sustainable location. There are a number of key everyday facilities and services within Stalbridge as one of the largest settlements beyond the four main towns in the former administrative area of North Dorset. Facilities include a primary school, convenience stores (including Dike & Son superstore), a Post Office and other shops and services.
- 6.18 The closest north bound bus stop is situated on Lower Road, 50m from the site, and the closest southbound bus stop is 200m from the site, on Jarvis Way. These provide bus services between Yeovil, Sherborne, Sturminster Newton, Blandford Forum and Wincanton.
- 6.19 It is therefore clear that these key facilities lie well within the maximum 2km distance referred to in the *Manual for Streets Guidance* in which car trips are likely to be replaced by walking or cycling. Accordingly, the site is in a sustainable location.
- 6.20 In addition to this, Templecombe Railway station is approximately 7km away and can be easily accessed by sustainable methods of transport, namely cycling. It provides services to Exeter St David's, Yeovil and London Waterloo. Assuming an average cycling speed of 16km per hour, the rail station can be reached within less than 30 minutes from the proposal site.

Conclusion

- 6.21 As the Council is currently able to demonstrate a 5YHLS, paragraph 11 of the NPPF and the “tilted balance” is engaged and therefore planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- 6.22 It is clear that the proposed houses would make a significant contribution towards meeting a local need for market and affordable housing, as well as the wider strategic development needs of the District, in accordance with LPP1 policy 2. It is envisaged that the new homes could be brought forward within the next five years, which will go towards addressing the pressing issue regarding the District’s lack of a 5YHLS.
- 6.23 Stalbridge is a sustainable location for new development, having access to a range of shops, services and public transport and the site itself is located just outside the designated settlement boundary, and would in essence constitute the “rounding off” of the settlement. The provision of employment land will help support the local economy, providing employment facilities to serve the proposed development and wider Stalbridge area, and the provision of a small-scale shop or café will serve local needs.
- 6.24 It is clear that the proposed development will bring a number of benefits, and as we demonstrate below, there are no adverse impacts that would demonstrably outweigh these benefits.

Issue 2: The Benefits of Delivering Open Market and Affordable housing

- 6.25 As mentioned above, LPP1 policy 6 requires that *at least* 57,000 new homes are provided over the plan period, with *at least* 825 dwellings will be provided in ‘countryside’ locations. Across the former North Dorset area, this is an annual rate of 285 dwellings per annum (dpa).
- 6.26 In addition to this, LPP1 policy 8 requires that development outside settlement boundaries should contribute 40% affordable housing, with a tenure mix of 70%-80% affordable rent and the remaining 20-30% being intermediate housing.
- 6.27 Central Government has previously announced a focus on low cost home ownership and starter homes as the priority to deliver affordable housing. Consequently, the applicant will be entering into discussions with Dorset Council and its affordable housing team regarding the tenure and mix of affordable housing sought on site.

- 6.28 The proposed development will provide up to 114 dwellings in total, going some way to meeting the identified housing need. However, as the concept masterplan is only indicative at this stage, the overall quantum of development may change, which would impact on the amount and type of affordable housing provided on site. Notwithstanding this we consider that the illustrative layout presents a cogent and well thought out approach to the development of the site that demonstrates how 114 dwellings could be accommodated here.
- 6.29 We can confirm that the applicant is seeking a policy compliant level of affordable housing, so, based on the current masterplan, this would amount to the delivery of up to 46 new homes, which could be secured through a s106 agreement. The latest SHMA, which was published in 2015 identifies a need for 146 affordable dpa across Dorset. The HomeChoice data for Stalbridge and Stourton Caundle, obtained from the Council, indicates that there are 47 individuals, couples or families on the housing register requiring social housing within the immediate area and 1 requiring low cost housing. The development will therefore make an important contribution to meeting the need for affordable housing within North Dorset.
- 6.30 The outline nature of the application means that the exact number of affordable units and their locations cannot be established at this stage, but this would be determined as part of a future reserved matters application. Such an application would determine the size of each unit, the number of bedrooms and where they would be located. It is envisaged that affordable housing would be seamlessly integrated and distributed through the development and all affordable units would be constructed in a similar design and materials to the open market housing.

Issue 3: Design, Layout and Landscape & Visual Impact

- 6.31 Design is an integral aspect of sustainability according to the NPPF and this is reflected in a number of LPP1 policies, including policy 24.
- 6.32 While design and layout are reserved for future consideration, the illustrative Concept Masterplan, which accompanies this application, responds to detailed analysis and design development. It sets out how the site could accommodate a high-quality development, which sits comfortably within its landscape setting. The Design & Access Statement which accompanies the planning application sets out a more detailed review of the design aspirations for the site.
- 6.33 As the illustrative masterplan shows, it is proposed to retain the retention of existing hedgerows around the perimeter of the site and all mature trees within the site. This will add

a visual buffer and help soften and integrate the development into the landscape. Areas of public open space are proposed within the development, and along the eastern part of the site incorporate sustainable drainage and attenuation areas, will act as an ecological area and a Locally Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) is also proposed.

- 6.34 The residential element of the scheme will comprise up to 114 dwellings, across 3.5ha of the site along with associated open space, surface water attenuation and structural landscaping. The density across the site varies from 37 dwellings per hectare in the centre of the site, reducing to around 30 dwellings per hectare around the edges of the site. A range of dwelling types and sizes can be accommodated on site, with the masterplan showing the potential for detached, semi-detached and some terraced housing. It is anticipated that they would be 2-2.5 storey buildings. Where buildings are 2.5 storeys, it is anticipated that the roof space would be used with dormer windows, to ensure a similar roof height to 2-storey buildings, but create a varied roof form in key locations, such as on street corners. Houses will front onto streets to provide active frontages and good on-street surveillance.
- 6.35 Employment space is shown in the north western corner of the site (0.82ha) and will provide up to 2,000sq.m of employment floorspace, arranged in small barn-style structures set around a central courtyard, reflective of the site's edge of town location. It is anticipated that the employment buildings would be up to two storeys in height.
- 6.36 Materials used throughout the development will reflect those used on buildings within the wider Stalbridge area. This will ensure the new development complements and fits comfortably within the existing town.
- 6.37 From the outset, the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development was a key consideration. As set out within the LVIA, which accompanies the application, notes:
- The key characteristic features identified within the published assessments include the well-trimmed hedgerows and hedgerow Oaks, which have been retained within the layout where possible. The creation of field ponds have been identified as a management objective, and the scheme proposes a wildlife pond on its southern edge;
 - Open space is provided to the southern and eastern edges of the site which will soften the transition between Stalbridge and the wider landscape;
 - The boundary hedgerow to Lower Road will be retained and an offset provided between the hedgerow and the proposed built form, which will mirror the situation to the north of Lower road;

- While an adverse effect has been identified for the site-specific character and landscape features, this is localised to the site only and tree planting and choice of materials will assist in mitigating this effect; and
- The visual receptors have been identified as including users of the public rights of ways, views from private dwellings and views from local roads and this is assessed within the LVIA, concluding that while some adverse effects have been identified, these are localised to the site and its immediate surroundings. The proposed development does not introduce an element to these views which is “alien” or discordant with the surroundings and overall character of the area, and the layout seeks to limit these effects. Measures such as tree planting and materials will mitigate these effects. The visual effects are therefore localised in nature and not unacceptable given the local context and surroundings.

6.38 The proposed development inevitably will introduce changes to the area and have some urbanising effects. However, the site is well-located adjacent to the sites of other recently permitted schemes, and the development of this site will in effect, constitute the “rounding off” of the settlement boundary, thereby minimising any perceived encroachment into the open countryside.

6.39 In summary, the proposed development accords with design policies and the masterplan produced presents a well thought-out, high quality and responsive use of the site to create an environment which will reflect the semi-rural character of the local area. Accordingly, no significant and demonstrable adverse impacts in relation to design can be identified and the proposals accord with policy 24 and the advice contained within the NPPF.

Issue 4: Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

6.40 The closest existing neighbouring properties to new buildings shown on the illustrative masterplan is that accessed from Bibberne Row (approx. 59m) and those on the opposite side of Lower Road (approx. 30m). New homes in the approved adjacent development site to the west will also have a distance of at least 30m. In addition, these will be separated from the proposed development by either Lower Road or the existing access track and hedgerows. The distance from these properties is in excess of the 21m normally stipulated in Urban Design guidance as being an adequate separation distance between habitable room windows and this provides an acceptable separation distance which will ensure there is no loss of privacy or adverse impact on the amenity of these properties.

- 6.41 The proposed housing development would be unlikely to generate harmful levels of noise and disturbance that would affect the existing setting.
- 6.42 The employment land is located in the north west of the site, and again has a separation distance from the closest (proposed) residential properties of at least 30m. While the end users are not known at this stage, these units are relatively small scale and will be limited to uses falling within class B1 and other small scale uses and are therefore unlikely to generate significant levels of traffic or noise.
- 6.43 As such, the proposed development accords with LPP1 policy 25 and will not result in harmful adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Issue 5: Highways and Access

- 6.44 A Transport Assessment (TA) has been undertaken by Vectos to accompany the application. The TA confirms that the site is located in a sustainable location, with a wide range of facilities and amenities within easy walking distance and with walking and cycling representing a “...*realistic mode choice for a high proportion of journeys*”. Local active travel connections and car/cycle parking are proposed in line with the relevant standards.
- 6.45 The TA includes an analysis of both the proposed residential and employment site access junctions and confirms that both will operate well within capacity. It concludes that the impact of the proposed development on the pedestrian, cyclist and public transport networks is negligible. A Framework Travel Plan has been produced and is submitted along with this planning application.
- 6.46 Accordingly, no adverse impacts arising from transport issues and the development proposals therefore accords with LPP1 policies 13 and 23.

Issue 6: Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.47 The site lies entirely within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore not considered to be at significant risk of flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy accompanies this planning application which confirms that all sources of flooding have been assessed as having a negligible or low risk at the site and therefore no flood mitigation is considered to be required to protect the site from flooding.

- 6.48 Surface water will be discharged from the site to the Bibbern Brook, via a new surface water sewer, which will be achieved using two detention basins.
- 6.49 The surface water drainage strategy has been designed to accommodate the 1 in 100-year rainfall event and is based on the principles of sustainable drainage systems. It has been designed to ensure that there is no increase in the rate or volume of runoff discharged from the site following the proposed development.
- 6.50 Accordingly, the layout, design and proposed attenuation on the site will ensure that the proposed development does not result in demonstrable adverse impacts in respect to surface water flooding. The Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy undertaken by Vectos should be read in conjunction with this statement, and together we consider these documents establish that the proposals comply with LPP1 policies 3 and 13.

Issue 7: Other material considerations

Impact on Trees

- 6.51 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment accompanies the application and confirms that arboricultural advice was obtained at an early stage in the process to ensure that the best trees on site could be retained and incorporated into the scheme design.
- 6.52 It is necessary to remove one Category U tree, which has a low amenity value as well as a C-grade hedgerow and gaps in five other hedges to allow for access points. Tree planting is proposed to compensate for the loss of this tree and the hedgerows.
- 6.53 During construction, temporary fencing will be used to protect retained trees and hedgerows.
- 6.54 Overall, the proposed development seeks to maintain the vast majority of trees and hedgerows and accords with LPP1 policies 15 and 24.

Impact on Ecology

- 6.55 An Ecological Impact Assessment accompanies this application and confirms that the site is considered to be of low ecological value, principally comprised of hedgerows and occasional mature trees. The proposed development will maintain, if not enhance the biodiversity value

of the application site through the creation of new habitats. The development therefore accords with LPP1 policies 4 and 15.

6.56 *Archaeology and Heritage*

6.57 An Archaeological Desk Based Study has been undertaken by Avon Archaeology Ltd to establish whether there are any archaeological constraints to development, a copy of the Report is included with this pre-application submission.

6.58 In summary, the study finds that based on cartographic evidence, the site has had its current form since at least 1782 and has been under arable cultivation from the 20th century. Although medieval occupation could have been centred close to the site, there is a significant possibility that any archaeological remains would have been disturbed by modern ploughing techniques. There potential for in-situ archaeology therefore remains low.

6.59 The site is not located within, or close to a conservation area boundary and there are no listed buildings or other heritage assets close to the site which would be affected by the proposed development.

6.60 Overall, there are no constraints relating to heritage or archaeology and the proposals comply with LPP1 policy 5.

6.61 *Agricultural Land Quality*

6.62 Footnote 53 of the NPPF states '*where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality*'. Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land is identified as Grades 1, 2, and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. LPP1 policy 4 also confirms this position.

6.63 An agricultural land assessment accompanies this planning application, which confirms that the site is Grade 3b agricultural land. The site does not therefore constitute the BMV agricultural land and in policy terms is not required to be safeguarded from permanent loss.

6.64 *Ground Conditions*

6.65 A preliminary ground conditions assessment has been carried out, which confirms that there is the potential for sources of contamination to be present on site due to its use as agricultural land (fertiliser and pesticide use), although any contamination is likely to be localised. An

intrusive ground investigation is required for contamination assessment purposes, but it is anticipated that this could be dealt with by way of condition.

6.66 **Issue 9: Benefits of the Proposed Scheme and the Planning Balance**

6.67 Notwithstanding the compliance with the development plan, and the engagement of the “tilted balance”, weight needs be given to the various benefits and potential adverse effects of the proposed development.

6.68 Inevitably, the redevelopment of the site will change the character of the site and have a limited urbanising effect, however, through the retention of existing hedgerows and trees where possible, careful design and layout, we have demonstrated that any impact is minimised. The LVIA which accompanies the application confirms that the proposed development will not have unacceptable landscape and visual impacts.

6.69 In terms of biodiversity, the change from fields to housing, is likely to have a positive effect as the private gardens and open space will actually enhance the value of the site by introducing a much more diverse network of habitats, particularly as the majority of existing trees and hedges are to be retained.

6.70 In addition to this, a number of technical reports accompany this planning application, which demonstrate that there are no other unacceptable adverse impacts. As such, although there will be some visual change to the site, this would not result in significant and demonstrable harm.

6.71 It is clear that the proposed development will deliver a number of significant benefits. In the table below we have attributed weight to the various benefits and provided an explanation for their weighting in the planning balance.

Benefit	Sustainability Role	Weight	Comments
Delivery of market housing	Social/ Economic	Substantial	Assessed as substantial in light of Dorset’s Housing Need and its significant shortfall of a 5YHLS.
Delivery of affordable housing	Social/ Economic	Substantial	The development will provide up to 40% affordable housing (up to 46 units), which will make a substantial contribution to meeting the urgent need within North Dorset.

Economic development	Economic	Substantial	The development will provide substantial enhancements through the provision of the proposed employment hub. Housing development is also recognized as a key part of economic growth.
Providing development in a sustainable location	Social / Environmental	Moderate	Moderate in light of options for walking and cycling to key facilities in Stalbridge and access to public transport options.
Social cohesion	Social	Moderate	Contribute to creation of mixed and balanced communities. Provision of public open space will provide additional recreation opportunities. Good pedestrian/cycle connections to Stalbridge.
Use of land of lower agricultural quality (as opposed to use of higher quality agricultural land)	Economic / Environmental	Minor	Minor benefit because the site is low quality agricultural land and therefore should be used in preference to higher quality land.
Providing jobs in construction.	Economic	Minor	This benefit is self-explanatory and case law accepts it is a minor benefit of new development.
Improving the biodiversity value of the site.	Environmental	Minor	Given the retention of existing trees /hedgerows and extent of new planting proposed along with areas of public open space and new diverse planting in garden areas, this would be a minor benefit.

6.72 We note the Inspector's view within the Lightwood decision, that the proposals would increase the choice and supply of housing within the district and help reduce the serious shortfall in supply. In particular, it was noted that the affordable dwellings would assist in meeting the housing needs for those living within the area. When considering the less than substantial harm, the proposed new housing and especially the quantum of affordable dwellings, was considered to tip the balance in the appellants favour. These benefits will apply to the proposed development; albeit this scheme does not have the heritage or landscape character constraints associated with the Lightwood scheme.

6.73 It is clear that there are no impacts that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the substantial benefits of the proposed development. The development would make a significant

contribution to reducing the serious shortfall in housing, meeting local needs and would comprise sustainable development, in line with the NPPF. On this basis, planning permission should be granted.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 In conclusion, we consider that the proposals offer a highly sustainable development, in a suitable location, that accords with the core planning principles of the NPPF, and the adopted Development Plan.

7.2 We have identified that there is a need for both market and affordable housing in North Dorset and Stalbridge is identified, beyond the four main towns, as a focus for growth and is therefore appropriate for development.

7.3 There are significant benefits to the scheme which are summarised as follows:

- Addressing the need for market and affordable housing;
- Providing development in a sustainable location;
- Providing pedestrian/cycle links with Stalbridge;
- Utilising land that is not the best and most versatile in agricultural terms;
- Providing new a new community and residents, who would be likely to support local businesses and shops in Stalbridge;
- Provision of an employment hub on the edge of Stalbridge;
- Retaining existing hedgerows and mature trees
- Preserving and where possible, enhancing the ecological value of the site;
- Providing a range of tenure and type of housing to meet local needs.

7.4 Therefore, we conclude that the development proposed is inherently sustainable. The concept masterplan demonstrates that the site can be developed using high quality urban design that responds to the character of the surrounding area and the site's constraints and opportunities, and will bring benefits to existing and future residents of Stalbridge.

7.5 LVA and its consultants have undertaken extensive technical work to underpin a sensitive scheme that will bring significant benefits to Stalbridge. Issues such as highways, drainage, arboriculture, landscape, ecology, affordable housing, and design have been examined and the various assessments undertaken have found no adverse effects that would demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposals.

7.6 We therefore commend the application to the Council for approval.

APPENDIX A: EIA SCREENING OPINION



Development Management

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Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

Decision Statement

Application Number	2/2019/1586/SCREIA
Proposal:	Request for EIA Screening Opinion under Section 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 to develop land by the erection of up to 150 No. dwellings.
Location:	Land South Of The Paddocks, Lower Road, Stalbridge, Dorset,

Dear Ms Tyrer,

Thank you for your letter requesting that Dorset Council, as local planning authority, adopts an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion for the proposed development at Land South of the Paddocks, Stalbridge.

This response provides the EIA Screening Opinion adopted by the Council, and gives the main reasons for the decision in accordance with Regulation 5(5) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Regulations) 2017 ('the EIA regulations').

The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 of the EIA regulations but does fall within Paragraph 10(b) of Schedule 2 the EIA regulations, which is listed as 'urban development projects, including the construction of shopping centres and car parks...'.

The threshold for paragraph 10(b) development to qualify as Schedule 2 development is:

- The development includes more than 1 hectare (ha) of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development; or
- The development includes more than 150 dwellings; or
- The overall area of the development exceeds 5ha.

The proposed development would include up to 150 dwellings and occupy approximately 5.7ha, therefore exceeding the thresholds in Schedule 2 and qualifying as 'Schedule 2 development'.

It is therefore necessary at the EIA screening stage to consider whether or not the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. In coming to this judgement, Regulation 4(6) of the EIA Regulation requires the selection criteria for screening presented in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations to be taken into account, and includes:

1. Characteristics of development;

2. Location of development; and
3. Characteristics of the impact.

1. Characteristics of development

The proposed development is for up to 150 residential dwellings and open space, incorporating sustainable drainage and ecological areas.

The development would occupy an area of approximately 5.7ha.

There is a requirement to consider the cumulative effects of the development in accordance with Paragraph 1b of Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations. The impacts of the proposed development will be considered in combination with the existing and approved development in Stalbridge, including the following approved development:

- Land at Thornhill Road (2/2017/1095/OUT): 60 dwellings adjacent and to the west of the site; and
- Land north of Lower Road (2/2017/0741/OUT): 120 dwellings adjacent and to the north of the site.

The development is considered unlikely to use significant amounts of natural resources, cause nuisance or generate significant amounts of waste for the purposes of EIA, largely due to the scale and residential nature of the proposals.

In terms of the risk of accidents, it is considered that standard construction management procedures will be sufficient to prevent a significant risk of accidents during the construction phase of the development, in view of the residential nature and scale of the proposed development.

2. Location of development

The proposed development would occur on previously undeveloped, arable land.

The site is located immediately to the southeast of Stalbridge.

The site bound to the north by Lower Road with largely residential development beyond (both existing and approved (2/2017/0741/OUT)). The areas immediately to the east and southeast of the site are largely undeveloped, with some building beyond including those associated with Bibbern Farm approximately 180m to the east of the site. In addition, the Bibbern Brook runs in an approximately southwest to northeast orientation, approximately 90m to the southeast of the site at its nearest point. The land to the southwest and west of the site is occupied by development associated with the settlement of Stalbridge and approved development (2/2017/1095/OUT).

The EIA regulations define 'sensitive areas' in Regulation 2(1). An EIA is more likely to be required if the proposed development affects the features for which the sensitive area was designated. The site is not within a sensitive area.

Other environmental designations at or near to the site which are not defined as 'sensitive areas' but are nevertheless considered environmentally sensitive and relevant in determining whether EIA is required, include:

- Stalbridge Conservation Area located approximately 170m to the northwest of the site; and
- Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), which are local wildlife designations, including:

- 'Stalbridge' which is described as "A mosaic of habitats including, unimproved neutral grassland, dense scrub, semi-natural woodland, hedgerows & areas of Phragmites" approximately 235m to the north of the site; and
- 'Basel Bridge' which is described as "Semi-improved and unimproved neutral grassland, stream and area of tall herb" approximately 1km to the west of the site.

3. Characteristics of the impact

The Planning Practice Guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment ('the guidance') gives an indication of the key issues to consider for projects and an indicative threshold which can be used to help determine whether EIA is necessary.

The guidance advises that for sites have not previously been intensively developed, Environmental Impact Assessment is more likely to be required if:

- (i) area of the scheme is more than 5 hectares; or
- (ii) it would provide a total of more than 10,000 m² of new commercial floorspace; or
- (iii) the development would have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area (e.g. a new development of more than 1,000 dwellings).

The guidance also indicates that the key issues to consider are the physical scale of the development, and the potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise. Given the location of the development, the effects upon heritage assets and ecology are likely to be key issues also.

Traffic

The Transport Assessment for the proposed development concluded that the local junctions will have sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed development, taking into account the cumulative impact of the approved developments to the southeast of Stalbridge. Furthermore, there were no significant highways safety issues identified.

Emissions

The proposed development will be required to comply with Building Regulations (Part L) and the Council's planning policy on sustainable building design (Policy 24 of the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1), both of which will minimise the carbon emissions associated with proposed development.

In addition, the site is located close to the services and facilities in Stalbridge and therefore it is more likely that sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling will be used as opposed to motor vehicles, further reducing emissions.

Considering also the scale of the proposed development, the proposals are unlikely to result in significant emissions of greenhouse gases.

Noise

The potential impact as a result of nuisance from the proposed development during the construction phase of the development is likely to be from dust and noise, and is considered to be short term and temporary. The Construction and Environmental Management Plan is considered sufficient in addressing the potential impacts.

The potential for nuisance during the operational phase of the development is likely to be mainly from noise, and is not considered significant due to the scale and residential nature of the development.

Heritage Assets

The Stalbridge Conservation Area is located approximately 170m to the northwest of the site.

The proposed development, along with the other approved development to the north and south of the proposed development site, will extend the existing built form of Stalbridge to the southeast.

However, in terms of impacts on the Stalbridge Conservation Area, the existing development immediately to the west of the site and the existing vegetation on the site boundary is likely to screen the proposed development site from direct views from the Stalbridge Conservation Area.

Considering also the scale of the proposed development and its proximity from the Stalbridge Conservation Area, it is considered unlikely that significant impacts upon the Stalbridge Conservation Area will occur for the purposes of EIA.

Ecology

The wildlife designations in the areas surrounding the site include two Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), which are local wildlife designations. The nearest of these to the proposed development site is the Stalbridge SNCI which includes a mosaic of habitats including unimproved neutral grassland, dense scrub, semi-natural woodland, hedgerows & areas of Phragmites (large perennial grasses found in wetland areas) and is located approximately 235m to the north of the site. The other is the Basel Bridge SNCI, which is semi-improved and unimproved neutral grassland, stream and area of tall herb and is situated approximately 1km to the west of the site. The proposed development is considered unlikely to result in significant effects upon wildlife and habitats given the scale and residential nature of the development, the proximity of the SNCI from the proposed development site, and the local importance of the site for wildlife.

Records indicate that otter are present at the Bibberne Brook which is located approximately 90m to the east of the site. The proposed development will not result in the loss of habitat at the Brook or immediate surroundings and it is considered unlikely that significant effects upon the population will occur as a result of the proposed development.

Conclusion

Following consideration of the relevant selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development presented in Schedule 3 of the EIA regulations, the Planning Authority conclude that the proposed development is not likely to have significant environmental impacts. Therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Regulation 6(6) of the EIA Regulations, the Planning Authority hereby adopts a screening opinion that EIA is not required in this instance.

If you have any questions about the information submitted in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me,

Yours faithfully

