

APPENDIX 6

Supplementary Statement relating to Environmental Matters

Proposed Development at Great Western Park, Didcot

Prepared by:



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Following recent discussions relating to the proposed development at Great Western Park (GWP), and in particular to section 106 matters, the planning authority have requested that RPS provide a supplementary note to record what changes may occur to the environment in light of the proposed increase of the number of dwellings proposed from 3,200 to 3,300 dwellings. Specifically, the planning authority wish to be aware of any changes that may be required to the Environmental Statement that accompanies the planning application currently before them. This report addresses this request.
- 1.2 For the avoidance of doubt the Environmental Statement which accompanied the current application proposals is that submitted to the authority dated November 2005. Following the submission of the Environmental Statement further requests of clarification have been sought from the planning authority. RPS has responded to these by letter dated 16 May 2006. In that letter clarification was provided specifically in relation to the traffic chapter of the ES and an enclosure was supplied dealing specifically with Harwell. In addition further clarification was provided in respect of noise, air quality, landscape and ecology, and archaeology. An email was also sent to the planning authorities expanding on air quality matters dated 24 May 2006.
- 1.3 In terms of the increase in the number of dwellings proposed, from 3,200 to 3,300, it is assumed for the purposes of this Supplementary Environmental note that the additional 100 houses can be accommodated on land within the application site, on land released by the most northern primary school site which is no longer required, and on land within any of the three district or neighbourhood centres. There is capacity within these centres to accommodate residential development without fundamental alteration to scale and layout. It is also intended that the additional 100 dwellings would be developed at an average net density of 40 dwellings per hectare. No additional public open space would be required. A further change relates to the percentage of the dwellings to be made available as affordable housing. This is intended to reduce from 40% affordable housing to 30% affordable housing. It is on these assumptions that this report is based.
- 1.4 The following chapters in this report follow the chapter headings set out in the Environmental Statement dated November 2005, and in each case comment and explanation is given relating to the anticipated effects, if any, arising from the increase in the number of dwellings proposed. Where, as a result of the increase in number of dwellings, the reported significance of effects in any chapter changes from that already reported in the ES, this is made clear under each heading.

2 Environmental Matters

Description of Development

2.1 Within the Environmental Statement the Description of Development is set out in chapter 2. The key changes made to this chapter therefore are the total number of dwellings assessed, the percentage of affordable housing now proposed and the plans on which the assessment was based.

2.2 The number of dwellings has increased by 100, which represents a very minor increase in percentage terms of just over 3%. This increase is not in itself regarded as significant in planning terms and indeed the description of development on the planning application form states that the application is for "approximately" 3,200 dwellings. In environmental terms, any significant effects arising from the increase in dwellings are considered below.

2.3 In terms of the plans that form the basis of the assessment, these would change only in so far as the northern most primary school and/or district/neighbourhood centre would now be shown to accommodate the additional dwellings. We do not anticipate any other knock on effects to the masterplan or related plans. Additional public open space would not be required. The additional 100 dwellings are intended to be provided at a density of 40 dwellings per hectare, resulting in a land take of approximately 2.5 hectares. The third primary school site is approximately 2.1 hectares, which means that the remaining number of dwellings would also need to be spread between the neighbourhood or district centres.

2.4 There would be no material change to the landscape and planting strategy, nor the drainage strategy. There would also be no material change to energy conservation and resource management. The transport infrastructure as reported in the ES would not change and the overall construction and phasing would also not change save for the spreading of the additional 100 units over the full construction period. Finally there would be no change in terms of the construction methodology in terms of approach to the provision of construction compounds, security, the code of construction practice and waste management measures.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

2.5 To the extent that the primary school site would be given over in large part to development, this would clearly dilute its function of providing an open area within other built development. As a consequence it would no longer contribute to the same extent to breaking up the massing of built development or providing variation to the skyline. The remaining proportion

of the dwellings to be located within the district or neighbourhood centres would have no discernable effect on the landscape and visual assessment provided.

2.6 Overall the displacement of the third primary school site to development in whole or in large part, would not affect the assessments made in the landscape chapter of the ES either in terms of effects on landscape character (currently reported as minor to moderate adverse significance in the long term overall) nor on visual impact (currently reported as minor to moderate adverse overall). There would be no change to the construction impacts (currently reported as minor to moderate adverse in significance).

Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology

2.7 To the extent that residential development could displace areas of open space and planting that would have been associated with the primary school, there would be a loss of this ecological resource. Whilst there is little ecological value to this part of the site at present, the opportunities for enhancing it by way of planting etc could potentially be lost in part by virtue of displacing this area and giving it over to residential development. Nevertheless, overall as the value of this part of the site is considered to be low, it is unlikely that the assessment of effects reported in chapter 5 of the Environmental Statement would change.

Soils and Agriculture

2.8 The loss of land within the masterplan area is reported in the soils and agriculture chapter of the Environmental Statement (chapter 6). The current change now envisaged to the masterplan would not alter the conclusions of the effects upon soils and agriculture.

Hydrology and Hydrogeology

2.9 The overall design approach to manage surface water drainage as set out in chapter 7 of the Environmental Statement together with the accompanying drainage proposals reports and plans would not alter significantly if the primary school site was given over for residential development in whole or in part. No change is therefore predicted.

Cultural Heritage

2.10 A comprehensive evaluation of the GWP site has been undertaken in close consultation with the county archaeologist. The primary school site under consideration has been the subject of walkover surveys and geotechnical work. This area has been identified as having low archaeological potential and thus no further evaluation (trenching) was required.

Development of the primary school site therefore would cause no change to the significance of effects reported within the Environmental Statement.

Population

- 2.11 Whilst there will be an increase in the overall numbers of dwellings provided, it is unlikely that any change will occur to the effects already reported within the ES. Whilst the prevention of affordable housing provision has reduced by 10% to 30%, this is still regarded as a major beneficial effect (as is currently reported within the ES).

Traffic

- 2.12 In light of the very minor increase in overall numbers of dwellings provided on site (an increase of 3% over up to 9 years), it is predicted that there will be no significant effect that would cause a change in the currently reported effects arising from traffic.

Noise and Vibration

- 2.13 In light of the very minor increase in overall numbers of dwellings provided on site, and no material change to the masterplan layout, it is predicted that there will be no change in the currently reported effects in the ES arising from noise and vibration.

Air Quality

- 2.14 In light of the very minor increase in overall numbers of dwellings provided on site, it is predicted that there will be no significant effect that would cause a change in the currently reported effects arising from air quality.

Natural Resources

- 2.15 In light of the very minor increase in overall numbers of dwellings provided on site, it is predicted that there will be no change in the reported effects arising in relation to natural resources.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Following an initial review of the likely effects arising from a limited increase in the number of dwellings at GWP, it is not considered likely that the currently reported effects and their significance would cause the ES or subsequent clarification statements to change.