

LAND AT OAKLEY FARM, BATTLEDOWN, CHELTENHAM

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ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY



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Introduction

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) summarises the findings of the Environmental Statement (ES) which has been prepared to accompany a planning application for development of up to 250 residential dwellings with associated public open space, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), access and infrastructure (the “Proposed Development”) on land at Oakley Farm, Cheltenham (the “Application Site” or “Site”).

The Application Site is situated within the administrative area of Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC). The location of the Application Site is shown on **Figure 1** of this NTS.

The ES comprises a series of studies which have been commissioned to address the environmental issues which are considered pertinent to the construction and operational phase of the Proposed Development.

The full findings of these studies and planning application documents will be available to view at the Council’s offices and via Cheltenham Borough Council’s website once the planning application has been registered. For details of where and when it can be viewed please contact -

Planning
Cheltenham Borough Council
Municipal Offices
Promenade
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL50 9SA

Or via their website which has an online enquiries form.

Additional copies of the NTS (no charge), ES Volumes 1 (Main Report) and ES Volume 2 (Figures and Appendices) (£120) are available from Pegasus Group. The complete ES can also be obtained in digital CD format for £10. Postage is payable upon all orders. For copies of any of these please contact Pegasus Group, Pegasus House, Querns Business Centre, Whitworth Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1RT. Tel: 01285 641717, Email: Cirencester@pegasusgroup.co.uk. When ordering, please quote reference P18-0847.

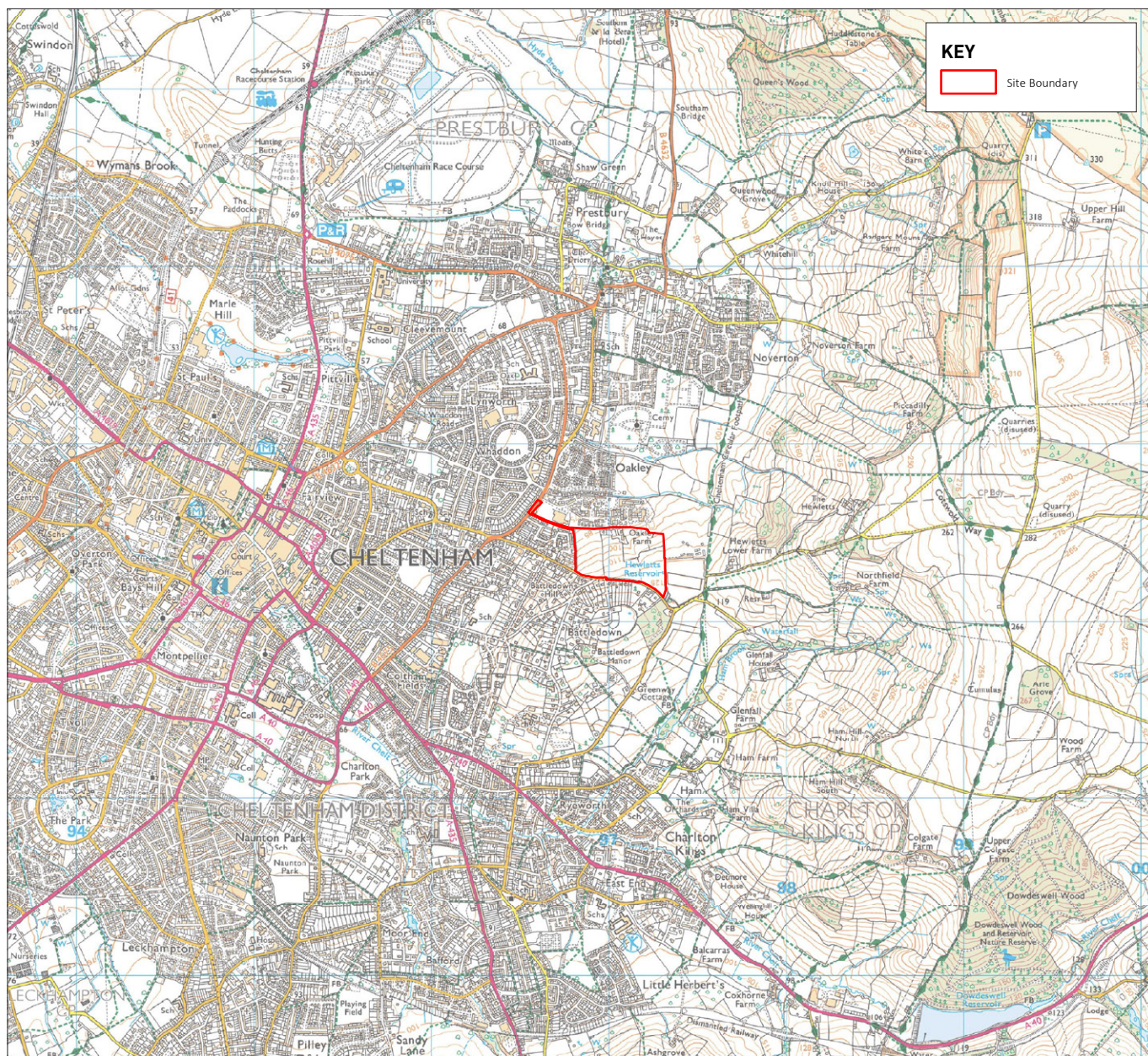


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION PLAN

Application Site & Context

The Site comprises 15.29 hectares of predominantly agricultural land and a series of six open fields that are bounded by hedgerows and mature trees. The former farmstead of Oakley Farm is located towards the northern boundary of the Site and is accessed by a single track from the west.

To the east the site is bound by Hewlett's Reservoir. The Site is bound to the south by Harp Hill Road and to the west by Wessex Drive both of which are established residential areas. The Site is bounded to the north by the former GCHQ Oakley site which has recently been redeveloped for residential purposes with Pillowell Close, Brockweir Close and Fairford Road situated adjacent to the northern boundary of the Site and Bream Court and Birdlip Road to the north east of the site.

The location the Application Site is shown on **Figures 1** and the planning application boundary is shown on **Figure 2**.

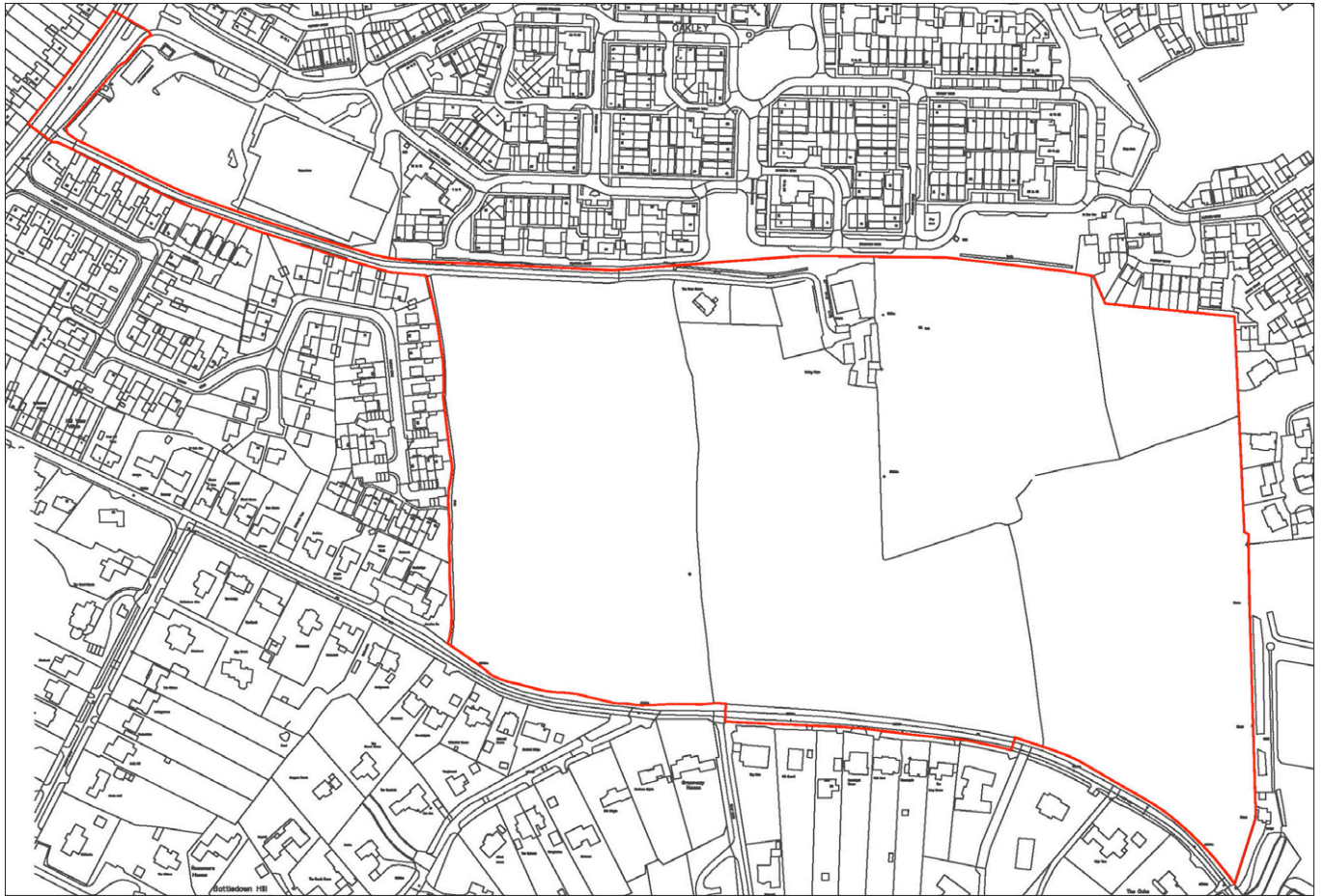


FIGURE 2: APPLICATION SITE BOUNDARY

The Proposed Development

The outline planning application is for up to 250 residential dwellings with vehicular access from Harp Hill. The Proposed Development is shown on the Parameter Plans at **Figures 3 to 6**

Alternatives

The ES identifies the main alternatives to the Proposed Development that have been considered and the reasons for selecting the chosen option. This includes consideration of the 'no development scenario' and alternative designs. It is also noted that the 'No Development' alternative would result in a loss of opportunity for providing much needed residential development and affordable housing provision within Cheltenham

The constraints and opportunities presented by the Application Site have been utilised to inform and structure the development proposals. The constraints and opportunities are as follows:

Constraints

- Main vehicular access from Harp Hill;
- Existing hedgerows and trees;
- Adjacent residential amenities and listed structures;
- Existing site levels;
- Retain existing significant and specimen trees, hedgerows and other landscape features;
- Provide a landscape buffer along the southern slopes of the site to protect long distant views from the Cotswold escarpment and views from dwellings on Harp Hill;

- Protect and maintain the routes of the existing public rights of way running along the boundaries of the site;
- Maintain views across the scheme from Harp Hill towards the Cotswold Escarpment; and
- Contain built development within the northern portion of the site where the topography is lower.

Opportunities

- Provision of sustainable development which can accommodate up to 250 dwellings (including affordable housing) supported by amenity space and new infrastructure;
- Enhance footpaths and cycleways within the Application Site and provide linkages with existing routes;
- Enhance ecological habitats;
- Provision of amenity green space, informal open space and play areas;
- Provide appropriate Sustainable Drainage Systems and attenuation areas;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions through location of residential development near to existing services that reduce the need to travel, promotion of sustainable transport options and cycle / pedestrian linkages, and consideration of green infrastructure, ecological enhancements and SuDs to provide resilience to climate change.
- Make use of efficient use of land through the application of appropriate densities;

- Create quality architecture that takes cues from locally desirable vernacular, considers local design guidance and responds positively to the surrounding character of adjacent built form and its AONB location;
- Provide green infrastructure enhancements that build positively upon the local character and existing landscape structures and integral part of the development;
- Provide new connections including pedestrian access points and new footpath routes that provide access to land that was not previously publicly accessible;
- Create a new woodland belt that will provide biodiversity enhancements and improvements to the local Green Infrastructure Network; and
- Create publicly accessible playspaces for the benefit of new and existing residents within the local community.



FIGURE 3: LAND USE PARAMETER PLAN

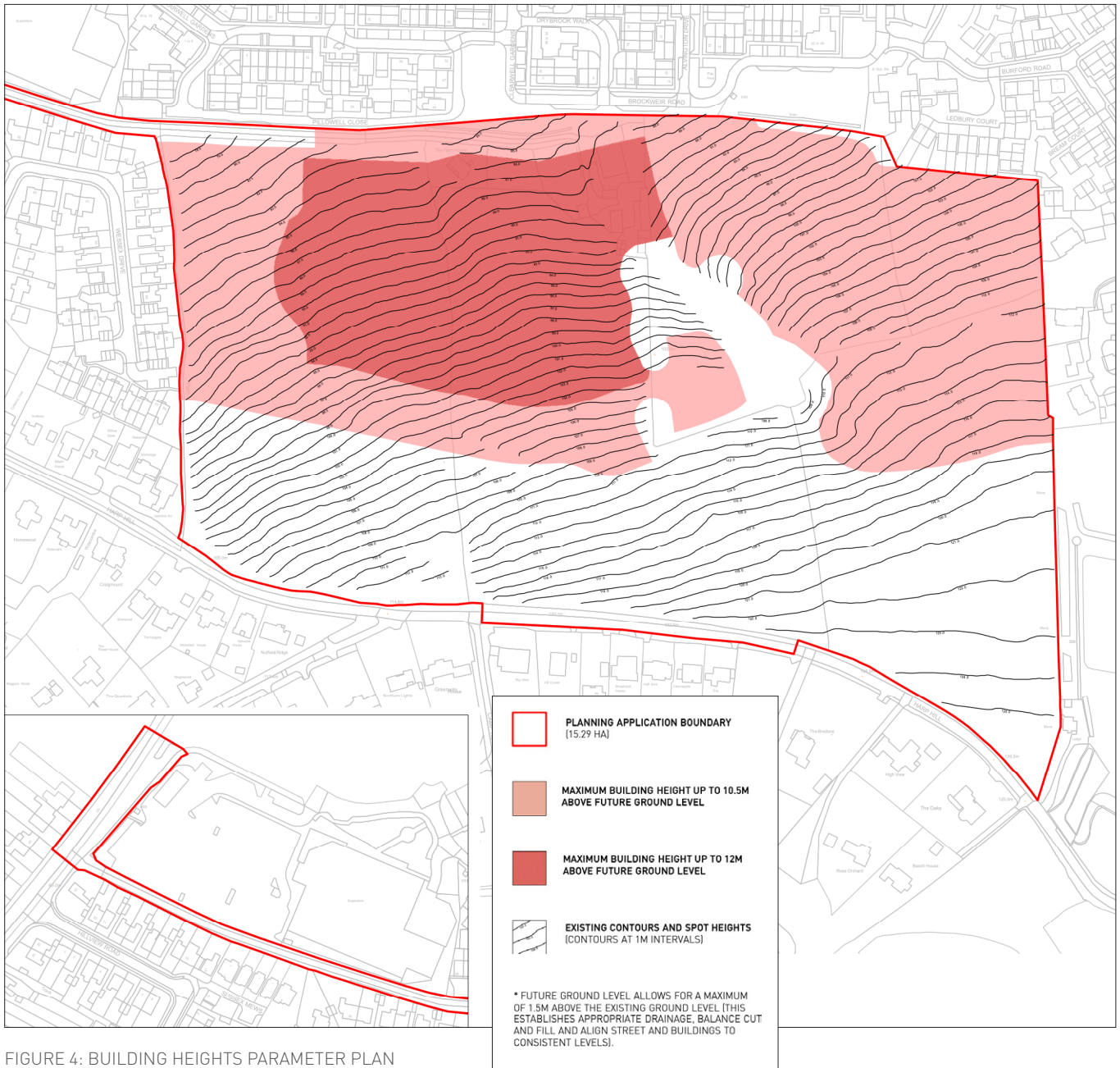


FIGURE 4: BUILDING HEIGHTS PARAMETER PLAN



FIGURE 5: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PARAMETER PLAN

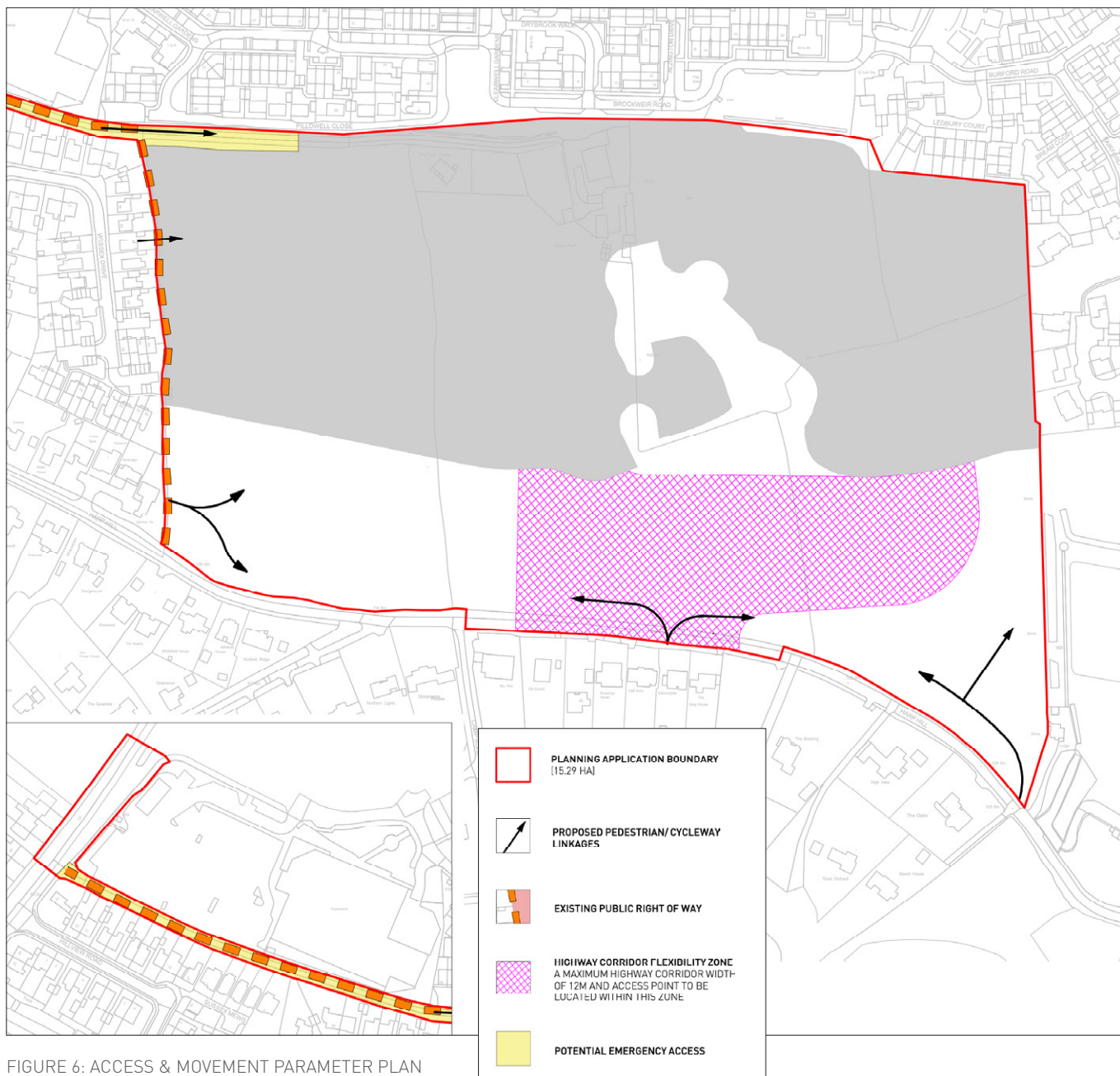


FIGURE 6: ACCESS & MOVEMENT PARAMETER PLAN

Environmental Assessment

The following sections provide non-technical summaries of the various studies which have been undertaken as part of the EIA.

SOCIO ECONOMICS

Baseline Conditions

Cheltenham is expected to experience a population growth. It is expected to see a stronger growth in the ageing population than it is noted nationally, coupled with a notable decrease in working age population.

The proposed development will provide a housing to accommodate future population growth as well as stimulate local economic activity.

There is currently sufficient educational and medical capacity to serve the existing community. Upon delivering this development, it is likely that the area will be able to accommodate the population growth arising from the proposal. There is capacity across both primary and secondary schools in the statutory distance from the site and also capacity within GP surgeries.

Likely Significant Effects

The socio-economic effects of the Proposed Development can be summarised as follows:

- Provision of 250 residential units, demolition of existing buildings, vehicular access from Harp Hill and open space and landscaping
- Provision of approximately 91 additional jobs, with additional 64 indirect jobs and 36 induced

jobs during the construction phase in the construction sector;

- Accommodation for a population of circa 568 people, of which 199 are estimated to be new to the area;
- New houses and services within the area to address the existing deprivation;
- Provision of planned housing (including affordable housing) of a range of types, sizes and tenures to meet local and district-wide housing needs;
- A £7.8M of gross income, of which £2.7M is likely to be new to the area, which will support local services;
- An increase in the local economy;
- An overall provision of 8.8 ha of green space.

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL

The site consists of a north sloping area of former agricultural land on the existing settlement edge of Cheltenham.

There is no public access to the land although a public right of way is located along the entire western site boundary linking Harp Hill to Priors Road.

Site features consist of sloping former pasture, derelict former farmstead, established hedgerows, hedges and a number of mature trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The sloping topography is also a distinctive feature of the study site which forms part of the northern lower slope to Battledown Hill.

The landscape and visual effects of the development proposals will result in the loss of sloping pasture which makes a contribution to local landscape character and visual amenity. The harm will be limited by the extent to which the area is already influenced by existing development, mitigation through retained vegetation and natural topography and the separation of the study site from the wider escarpment landscape and wider Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The development proposals retain the features which make the greatest contribution and have the highest sensitivity, limiting potential adverse impacts. This confirms that the study site has capacity to accommodate development whilst conserving the wider landscape character and scenic beauty of the AONB.

BIODIVERSITY

Ecological surveys have been undertaken at the Application Site, between January 2018 and October 2019

The Application Site comprises six semi-improved grassland fields, which are separated by woodland and hedgerow. There are a series of old farm buildings on the Site, with one of these buildings being demolished in October 2019.

There are no statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest located within or immediately adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory designated

site is Cleeve Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that lies approximately 2.7km north-east of the Application Site and is designated, as it is one of the most extensive areas of limestone grassland in the Cotswolds. It is of importance both for its grassland, and for its geological and physiographical features. This statutory designated site is separated from the Application Site by residential development and extensive areas of open countryside and agricultural land.

The Proposed Development will not effect any of these statutory or non-statutory designated sites.

Effects on Habitats

The development proposals will lead to the loss of semi improved grass land and sections of hedgerow from the landscape. However, the loss to habitat will be more than offset through the creation of habitats of equal or greater value, included within areas of open green space, and planted with species of known value to wildlife.

There will be losses to the hedgerows to allow access roads and the new homes and some of these are considered to be 'important' under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. However, the majority of the existing hedgerows will remain. There is one mature Oak tree with an occasionally used summer day roost used by a single Noctule bat. This tree is to be retained within the Proposed Development.

Effects on Fauna

Bats – Considerable levels of bat surveys have taken place on the Site over the past 12 months to determine if they are present and how they use the Site. This survey work has resulted in the following findings.

1. None of the buildings on the site were used as bat roosts
2. Only one old oak tree has been used a bat roost for Nocule Bats. This tree is being retained in the design of the Site
3. There is evidence of Common Pipistelles, Soprano Pipistrells and rarer bat species using the site to forage. These species are mainly using the woodland areas within the site, which are on the whole being retained as green corridors within the Proposed Development.

Badgers – there are no badger setts on the Site. There is evidence that badgers use the fields to feed and travel to other areas. The presence of the proposed housing will not stop badgers being able to move about the local area, and the Site is surrounded by other agricultural land so food resources will not diminish for the local badger population.

Birds – There was no especially notable bird use of the site. The loss of land will reduce the breeding area for local bird populations but will not effect the bird populations.

Invertebrates – there will be a loss of habitats for the local invertebrate population, but the majority of the woodland and the southern areas of the semi grassland are to be retained in the proposed development therefore resulting in a minimal effect on the local population.

Mitigation and Enhancement

Although this Proposed Development will result in loss of areas of semi improved grassland, the majority of the woodland, hedgerow and trees are being retained within the final design of the Site. Areas of grassland that are being left will be enhanced with various species planting that offer a greater ecological diversity.

Summary

Where it is considered that there is a reduction in potential habitat for protected species, the development proposals will ensure that these are compensated for by replacement habitat of equal size and greater quality.

Following mitigation and enhancement measures, overall impacts are considered to be positive at the site to European level and will ensure no net loss in biodiversity terms.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

There are six listed buildings close to the site:

- No 1 Reservoir (Grade II listed, HB1)
- No 2 Reservoir (Grade II listed, HB2)
- Pavilion at Hewlett's Reservoir (Grade II listed, HB3)
- Gates, Gatepiers and Boundary Walls at Hewlett's Reservoir (Grade II listed, HB4)
- Stone Lodge at Hewlett's Reservoir (Non-designated Heritage Asset, HB5)
- Agricultural Buildings at Oakley Farm (Non-designated Heritage Asset, HB6)

The archaeological assets considered were:

- Battledown Camp (Scheduled Monument, ARCH1)
- A single probable Prehistoric feature (Non-designated asset, ARCH2)
- Three small pits, undated (Non-designated asset, ARCH3)
- Ditch, probably Post-Medieval (Non-designated asset, ARCH4)
- Shallow linear feature, probably a furrow (Non-designated asset, ARCH5)

Likely Effects

There will be a change to the setting of the identified built heritage resources in the Construction Phase. For the listed buildings near the site this change will not be significant, as the interest of these assets is derived principally from them being feats of architecture and engineering in the nineteenth century, and from their group value. The effects will all be temporary in nature at the Construction Phase. The effect to the Stone Lodge at Hewlett's Reservoir will not be significant.

The total demolition of the Agricultural Buildings at Oakley Farm during the Construction Phase will affect the assets, however due to the low value of these buildings this will not be significant.

During the Operational Phase the setting of the listed buildings will be permanently altered, due to the further loss of their rural setting causing an effect to the listed buildings. However, given that the buildings principally derive their value from their architecture and engineering, in addition to their group value, this will not cause a significant effect. As with the Construction Phase of development, the effect on the non-designated Stone Lodge at Hewlett's Reservoir will not be significant. The Operation Phase of the Proposed Development will not cause any further effects to the Agricultural Buildings at Oakley Farm as their loss will only be during the Construction Phase.

The setting of the Battledown Camp Scheduled Monument will be affected to a very minor extent during the Construction Phase and will also be

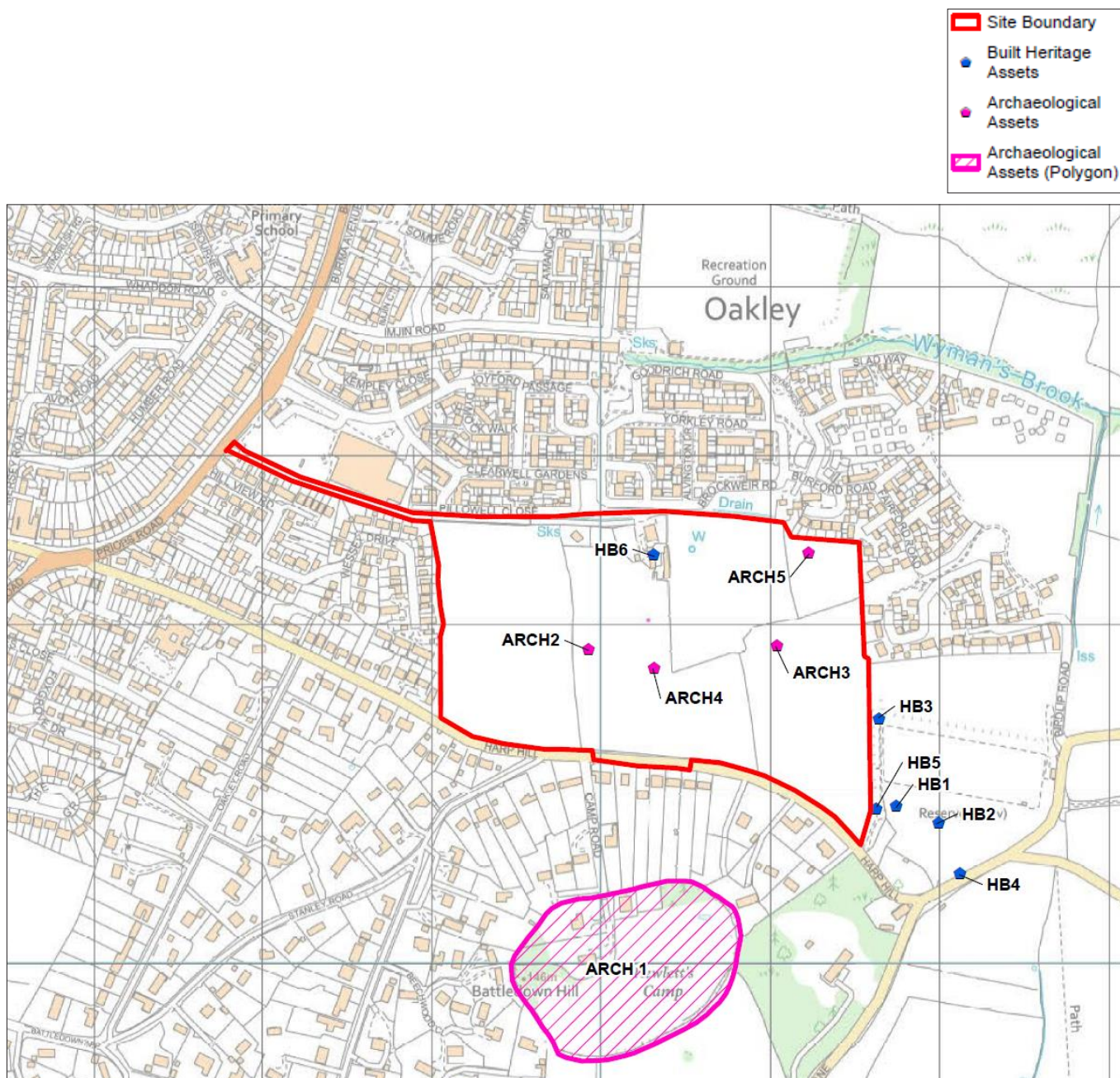


FIGURE 7: HERITAGE ASSETS

affected during the Operational Phase. The extent of this change will, however, be negligible in terms of affecting the heritage significance of the monument.

All effects on the buried archaeological assets will take place during the Construction Phase. Any archaeological assets are likely to be destroyed by the construction process, but the assets are considered to be of low to negligible sensitivity on account of their state of preservation, lack of dating evidence, and lack of interpretation.

Mitigation and Enhancement

Mitigation has already been designed into the Proposed Development, with there being a buffer of open space proposed between the listed buildings and the edge of built development. This has already been considered in relation to the effects on the asset.

A programme of building recording for the Agricultural Buildings at Oakley Farm would record their importance and would help to reduce the effects.

The low level of effect on the Battledown Camp Scheduled Monument indicates that no mitigation is required.

The very limited buried archaeological resource identified within the Application Site, and its identified low significance, indicates that further mitigation is not required.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

The Application Site is located north of Harp Hill, approximately 3km east of Cheltenham town centre. Cheltenham Footpath 86, a Public Right of Way, routes along the western boundary connecting Harp Hill with the B4075 Priors Road, via the existing farm access. The farm access extends eastwards from the B4075 Priors Road along the northern extent of the Application Site.

Collision data have been obtained from Gloucestershire County Council for the roads in the vicinity of the Application Site over a 5-year period. There were no collisions recorded within the study area over the five year assessment period, which includes Harp Hill, the B4075 Priors Road in the vicinity of the Application Site, and the B4075 Priors Road / Hales Road / Harp Hill / Hewlett Road Double Mini Roundabout.

The nearest bus stops are located to the north west of the Application Site in the vicinity of Sainsburys on Priors Road and in the vicinity of the Community Centre on Whaddon Road. Cheltenham Spa Railway Station is located approximately 4.6km from the centre of the Application Site and provides a variety of rail links to destinations across the country.

Likely Significant Effects

Construction activities will include the building of the residential dwellings plus the civil engineering works associated with the construction of the new infrastructure, including the new site access junction and internal development roads, cycling and walking links, drainage attenuation features, and landscaping. It is estimated that on a typical day there may be in the order of 7 HGV trips per day (14 two-way HGV vehicle movements).

The effect of the Proposed Development in 2024 with 250 dwellings occupied has been assessed, including on Harp Hill and the B4075 Priors Road / Hales Road / Harp Hill / Hewlett Road Double Mini Roundabout. Where necessary mitigation for these highways linkages are included as part of the Proposed Development as described below.

Mitigation and Enhancement

Mitigation measures will be implemented during construction in the form of controls imposed by planning conditions, health and safety legislation requirements and good construction site practices. As part of a Construction Management Plan, a construction vehicle routing regime for access to the construction site will be identified and agreed with the local highway authority to ensure that drivers of construction related vehicles do not use inappropriate routes.

The new site access junction on Harp Hill and the potential emergency access on the B4075 Priors Road will be designed in accordance with current standards and guidance to ensure that it is safe

and suitable. Other mitigation and enhancement measures proposed as part of the design of the Proposed Development include:

- A shared pedestrian / cycleway link between the Proposed Development and Priors Road along the route of the existing farm access. Further pedestrian linkages are proposed to Harp Hill with cycle linkages to Harp Hill proposed via the new site access junction.
- A financial contribution towards the introduction of an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing facility on Harp Hill and a controlled Toucan crossing facility and a new section of shared footway/ cycleway on Priors Road.
- An Interim Residential Travel Plan to encourage travel by sustainable modes.

It is considered that these proposed measures would result in a Minor –Moderate Beneficial and Moderate – Major Beneficial effect, respectively, in terms of pedestrian and cycle movements on Harp Hill and Priors Road.

If required, a proportionate contribution will be made towards enhancement to bus services in the area.

With mitigation, the change on the Harp Hill approach to the B4075 Priors Road / Hales Road / Harp Hill / Hewlett Road Double Mini Roundabout reduces from High to Negligible in the AM peak hour and remains Low in the PM peak hour. The effect on this junction with mitigation would be Negligible in the AM peak hour and Minor to Moderate Beneficial in the PM peak hour.

Conclusion

It is concluded that with the implementation of the mitigation and enhancement measures outlined, including the Interim Residential Travel Plan aimed at encouraging travel by sustainable modes, the additional traffic demand would be safely and satisfactorily accommodated on the local transport network.

The overall residual effect of the Proposed Development in transport terms is likely to be generally Minor to Moderate Beneficial.

AIR QUALITY

The Application Site lies within the borough-wide Air Quality Management Area declared by CBC for exceedances of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide objective. Monitoring undertaken by the Council shows that concentrations of nitrogen dioxide within the study area have been below the objective in recent years.

Likely Significant Effects

Construction activities were shown to be associated with a High risk of dust impacts, without mitigation but with the proposed mitigations in place dust is no longer an issue.

The assessment showed that the effect of additional road traffic emissions on air quality at existing residential properties is 'not significant' and is therefore acceptable; air quality for future residents of the Proposed Development was also shown to be acceptable.

Mitigation and Enhancement

A Dust Management Plan (DMP) will be implemented at the Application Site during construction to minimise emissions. The DMP will be integrated into a Code of Construction Practice or the Construction Environmental Management Plan. This will be secured by planning conditions and may require monitoring.

The assessment has demonstrated that the overall effect of additional road traffic emissions generated by the Proposed Development will be 'not significant'. Specific mitigation measures are not therefore required. The Proposed Development will, however, include a number of design features and enhancements to encourage future residents to make sustainable and lower emission travel choices, and these will provide further benefits for local air quality. Best practice and design features include:

- Setting back of the proposed properties from roads by at least 7m;
- Provision of a Travel Information Pack to all new residents of the development setting out information on walking and cycling routes, local cycle hire schemes, bus and rail timetables, car sharing schemes, along with details of how to claim for the purchase of a monthly bus ticket or towards the purchase of a bicycle or cycle safety equipment; and
- Provision of pedestrian and cycle access to the new development, including secure cycle parking for each dwelling.

Conclusion

Overall, the effects of the Proposed Development on local air quality have been found to be 'not significant'.

NOISE AND VIBRATION

Baseline Conditions

A series of noise surveys were carried out to ascertain the noise levels around the Application Site, which have been used as the basis of the current assessment to identify potential effects.

Noise levels within the Proposed Development were generally low and principally influenced by distant road traffic travelling along surrounding roads and occasional light aircraft operating into Gloucestershire Airport during daytime periods.

Likely Significant Effects

The construction of the Proposed Development has the potential to give rise to short term adverse effects upon existing noise sensitive receptors surrounding the site. Appropriate mitigation and control measures will be adopted during construction to ensure any potential effects were minimised.

Road traffic on the roads within and surrounding the Proposed Development will change as a result of the occupation and operation of the completed scheme and other committed developments in the surrounding area. The assessment indicates that the additional road traffic would result in no significant adverse effects.

Mitigation and Enhancement

No additional noise mitigation measures have been identified in addition to those which would be incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development and considered at detail design stage.

Conclusion

In summary, with appropriate mitigation and control measures adopted during the construction of the Proposed Development, potential noise and vibration effects would be reduced to an acceptable level, thus ensuring the Application Site is suitable for a residential development.

HYDROLOGY, FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

The Application Site is considered to be in an area of low to moderate sensitivity in terms of the water environment. The entirety of the Application Site is located in Flood Zone 1 (lowest risk of fluvial flooding).

The construction of the Proposed Development will generally have a negligible effect on the water environment however during construction in the short-term there is a possible risk of temporary minor adverse effects on water quality.

The Proposed Development will be safe from flooding, that flood risk will not be increased downstream, and overall flood risk in the area will be reduced.

The use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will manage and reduce flood risk and will ensure

that there is no adverse effect on water quality. The effects of the Proposed Development on flooding and surface water drainage are considered to be minor beneficial.

The foul sewage from the development can be accommodated, subject to confirmation from Severn Trent Water of any improvements required which will be secured by the Applicant and Severn Trent Water. The effect of the development on the existing foul sewerage infrastructure is therefore considered to be negligible.

The cumulative effect of existing, approved, and proposed development in the area has been assessed and is considered to have a negligible to minor beneficial effect on Hydrology, Drainage, and Flood Risk.

Overall the development is considered to have a negligible to minor beneficial effect on Hydrology, Drainage and Flood Risk.

GROUND CONDITIONS AND CONTAMINATION

Various environmental issues have been considered and assessed in terms of their likely impact upon human health, controlled waters and the surrounding ecosystem. The risks have been assessed by consideration of the “source-pathway-receptor” concept, the behaviour of potential contaminants within the environment, current and foreseeable legislation, and the views of and good practices expected by the environmental regulators.

A single potential impact and risk to human health has been identified relating to both construction (development) and operational (completed development) phases (asbestos associated with the former farm buildings). There are not considered to be any cumulative effects relating to contaminated land arising from the Proposed Development and other known cumulative sites in the vicinity.

Pre-mitigation effects have been assessed and the type and description of an appropriate mitigation strategy outlined, again relating to the construction and operation phases of the development. On the basis that the required mitigation strategy is complied with, all potential impacts are considered to be ‘insignificant’. There are not considered to be any residual impacts.

Should any additional impacts come to light during the construction process, then these should be assessed accordingly by this Practice and appropriate mitigation measures delineated and undertaken, subject to Local Authority approval.

Summary

The ES demonstrates that there are no overriding environmental constraints which would preclude the Proposed Development on the Application Site.

The design of the Proposed Development has taken account of the likely significant environmental effects (alone and in-combination with other cumulative sites) and where necessary, mitigation measures form an integral part of the Proposed Development to ensure that the environment is suitably protected.

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