Longbridge East : Site Wide and Phase One Development

Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement
August 2011

Introduction

St Modwen Developments Ltd intend to submit a new outline planning application for Longbridge East (‘Site Wide’ development) to provide a high quality and sustainable residential development with local community uses together with associated open space, highway infrastructure and access. In addition, St Modwen Developments Ltd and Persimmon Homes (South Midlands) Ltd (hereafter referred to as the Applicants) will submit a separate full application to bring forward the first phase of this development (‘Phase One’ development).

It is the intention that the previous outline planning application for the Longbridge East site (App. No. B/2008/0529) submitted in 2008 will be withdrawn. The remediation and reprofiling of Longbridge East was granted planning permission in 2009 (App. No. B/2008/0333).

The development proposed for Longbridge East falls within Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (as amended) (hereafter referred to as the ‘EIA Regulations’) by virtue of its size which exceeds 0.5 hectares. However, a Schedule 2 development only requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) if it is screened as being likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Whilst the proposed development for Longbridge East has not been formally screened, the Applicants are undertaking a voluntary EIA to ensure any potential significant impacts which may arise from the proposed works are identified and any required mitigation incorporated within the design of the new development.

This non-technical summary briefly describes both the Site Wide and Phase One developments and summarises the findings of the Environmental Statement (ES). This development forms part of one of the largest regeneration schemes in the West Midlands and is in line with and forms an integral part of the Longbridge Vision and planning policy for the site, as contained within the Longbridge Area Action Plan (AAP).

Figure 1: Site Location

The Site & Surrounding Area

The Longbridge East site is located in Longbridge, approximately 11km south east of Birmingham City Centre and approximately 9km north east of Bromsgrove Town Centre at National Grid Reference SP014749 (refer to Figure 1). The site lies on the urban edge of Longbridge, with largely employment and residential uses to the north and open countryside to the south and east.

The Lichfield to Redditch Cross City railway line delineates the eastern boundary beyond which lies a number of existing employment units to the north east. These units form part of the Cofton Centre, where works have commenced to bring forward additional and more varied employment space.
The River Arrow flows from Cofton Reservoir via a culvert across the main part of the site in a west to east direction. To the east of the site it flows out of culvert, beneath the railway, towards filter beds.

The Site Wide application site comprises approximately 22.3 hectares of former industrial land (Figure 2), which used to form part of the former MG Rover car manufacturing plant. Historically, the site comprised a number of large industrial buildings which were demolished in 2008 leaving only the front entrance building and gateway off Groveley Lane. The site now predominantly comprises flat hardstanding with vegetated embankments.

The Phase One application boundary comprises approximately 10.6 hectares in the central section of the Site Wide application boundary (refer to Figure 2) and comprises flat hardstanding with vegetated embankments.

The Proposals

The Longbridge Area Action Plan (2009) sets out local planning policy for the Longbridge East site. The proposed development will deliver the comprehensive redevelopment of the site comprising a high quality, sustainable residential development together with associated public open space, enhancements to the River Arrow and associated development infrastructure and access.

The Site Wide development (Figure 3) will provide:

- up to 725 dwellings (of which up to 125 units could be specialist elderly care accommodation);
- community uses;
- public open space;
- de-culverting and enhancement of part of the course of the River Arrow; and
- access and associated development infrastructure.

The Phase One development will provide:

- up to 229 dwellings;
- public open space;
- de-culverting and enhancement of part of the course of the River Arrow; and
- access and associated development infrastructure.

Figure 2: Application Site Boundary

Key

- Residential
- Arrow Park - Public Open Space
- Green Belt with Public access
- Banks
The development will require a series of works to prepare the sites for the new uses and activities. Some of this preparation works was granted consent in 2009 (App. No. B/2008/0333) and has started on site. These applications specifically require consent for re-profiling across the site to allow a development platform to be created.

This application also includes a number of improvements to the highway network surrounding the sites.

The following were the main issues raised during the event:
- Groveley Lane - the need for traffic calming measures.
- Bus Route - the idea of a bus route running through the site and onto Parsonage Drive was not welcomed.
- Community Facility - a majority of people identified the north site as the preferred location for the proposed community centre.
- Cofton Church Lane - concern over the footpath leading from the development onto Cofton Church Lane
- Local Services - general concern over the need for more schools and services to be in place for the new homes.

**Planning Policy Context**

The proposals sit within a highly positive planning policy framework. National planning policy encourages the re-use of previously developed land and the theme of ‘sustainability’ runs through national, regional and local level policy.

The proposed development embodies all of the key themes of national planning guidance. The proposals are highly sustainable, re-using previously developed land to a high standard of masterplanning design and layout. The proposals provide for a range of housing types and tenures to meet a range of housing needs supported by improvements to the local highway infrastructure and the provision of new existing local community services and amenities as well as open space. The proposed development will bring many opportunities to the existing community in terms of new high quality mixed tenure housing, significant environmental enhancement and equitable social growth.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the West Midlands was adopted in 2008. The proposals for Longbridge East positively embrace regional planning policy providing a sustainable development by redeveloping previously developed land for residential development in an area that is well served by public transport and employment opportunities. The high quality design of the scheme will ensure that it is well integrated into the surrounding area.

**The Environmental Assessment Process**

A Scoping request submitted to BDC submitted in May 2011 to accompany these two applications. Consultations were undertaken with various parties including but not limited to:

- Environment Agency;
- Severn Trent Water;
- Natural England; and,
- Highways Agency.

Key parties including BDC have been continually kept informed regarding the evolving masterplan through a series of meetings.

All technical chapters have been included with the scope of the assessment being agreed with the relevant consultees through a formal scoping request.

This ES will provide up to date assessment for the two planning applications by including details in relation to the increased certainty on building positioning on Phase One and open space provision. An updated Air quality and noise assessment based on updated traffic data.

Extensive public consultation with stakeholders informed the content, aims and objectives of the Area Action Plan for Longbridge. A specific public consultation was held on 19th May 2011 at the Cofton Hackett Hall as part of the on-going communications programme for Longbridge East.
The Bromsgrove District Local Plan was adopted in January 2004. The Longbridge East proposals help to meet the requirements of the Local Plan by provide some affordable housing provision and enhancement of the community facilities.

The Longbridge Area Action Plan (AAP) was adopted in April 2009. The Area Action Plan contains a number of relevant policies and proposals which have guided the form and content of the planning application proposals. The proposed development has sought to broadly conform to the requirements of the plan and the scale and nature of development which it proposes. For Longbridge East, the AAP envisages a new residential development for the site which will provide a mixed density residential scheme in a highly attractive environment adjacent to the Green Belt and with new local facilities, public open space and an enhanced River Arrow.

### Socio-Economic Effects

An assessment of the social and economic effects of the proposed development has considered the current policy context and profile of the area within which the Site Wide and Phase One development proposals are located.

Overall, the Site Wide proposals will result in major positive socio-economic impacts across the existing health and education facilities and will provide employment in both Bromsgrove and Birmingham areas, without meeting the capacity of the local health and education infrastructure.

Furthermore, there seems to be sufficient spare capacity within the education and health facilities to accommodate 115 unit residential development consented at Lickey Road and 40 apartments proposed at the new Longbridge Town Centre.

The Phase One proposals will not result in any detrimental effects on the existing health and education facilities in both Bromsgrove and Birmingham areas. It is shown that the local health and educational facilities can accommodate the extra residence without any loss in service.

The Phase One proposals will also result in improved employment opportunities locally created by the construction phase of Phase One.

The coordinated proposals of employment creation on Longbridge West and Town Centre (which lie within Birmingham’s administrative boundary) and the housing proposals on Longbridge East, together can improve the image of Longbridge as a desirable location to live and work.

### Biodiversity

An assessment of the biodiversity issues in respect of the Site Wide and Phase One developments has been undertaken. The site has been assessed through ecological survey work between 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2011 and background data searches in 2007 and 2011.

The ecological habitat features of interest on both the Site Wide and Phase One sites is assessed as being of and only have value in a local context. The protected species within and adjacent to the site, which are bats and badgers, are assessed as being no greater than local value. Impacts considered include those relating to loss and fragmentation of habitats and disturbance, both during construction and operational phases.

Site specific mitigation will be implemented to ensure that protected species, such as bats and badgers, and their habitats are conserved and where possible enhanced. The new alignment of the River Arrow will establish a new habitat corridor through de-culverting and opening up the channel thus providing additional habitat.

There is one statutory nature conservation site and four non-statutory nature conservation sites with the potential to be affected by the proposed development. These include Bittell Reservoirs Site of Special Scientific Interest, located 0.6km to the southeast of the Site Wide site. Potential impacts to these sites include pollution and an increase in suspended solids in waterbodies during construction. These impacts will be indirect and minimised or mitigated by employing good construction management practices and implementation of the relevant codes of practice for construction sites and any residual effects are unlikely and negligible.

Construction will be controlled by means of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will prevent damage to valuable habitats and prevent harm and disturbance to protected species. Where
protected species impacts have been identified. Mitigation will include method statements to be developed within Natural England license applications, where required, and the implementation of mitigation to minimise potential impacts. Management to deliver the long-term protection and maximise the wildlife and amenity benefits of habitats within the application site will be implemented as part of site wide ecological management plan as part of the CEMP. By these means the potential for significant adverse impacts to valuable resources such as protected sites and species will be avoided.

Provided the mitigation and compensation strategy is implemented, the scheme will avoid, mitigate or compensate for all potentially significant adverse impacts. There will be significant positive impacts as a result of de-culverting part of the River Arrow and the landscaping of its associated green space.

**Landscape & Visual**

An landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposed developments has been carried out. The assessment has considered the developments during construction, completion of the development at year 1 (i.e. first year as fully operational) and also the longer term effects at year 15.

The site is not of high landscape value forming part of the former car plant and is vacant land now with few existing features within the site such as vegetation and trees which are of value and warrant retention or protection.

During construction of the Site Wide development, some landscape / townscape features will experience adverse or negative impacts due to the direct effects of traffic on the surrounding road network, but the temporary nature of the construction activities, its containment generally within the site and because no key elements of landscape importance will be lost, the significance of this will be minor adverse. During construction of the Phase One development these landscape impacts will affect only the townscape in the north as the development will be barely perceived from the landscape in the south, being contained within the central portion of the site.

In the long-term the character of both the Site Wide site and the Phase One site will inevitably change but the overall character will remain urban creating a new townscape/landscape character type and elements which will replace the previous vacant land. The developments would introduce new areas of open space, public realm features and areas of new planting which would improve the local environment enhancing the street scene (Groveley Lane and new roads/streets within the development) and adding interest to the character of the surrounding area. There are some negative impacts that have been identified as indirect effects on the setting and tranquillity of the rural landscape to the south of the site. The effects of the development include bringing the urban built form up to the edge of the green belt.

In general the visual impacts of the phase one and site wide proposals during construction (and the first year of construction) will vary depending on the vantage point and type of receptors experiencing the effect. A number of houses and local views are predicted to experience some impacts during construction where the construction works will be prominent features in the local views albeit they are temporary in nature and seen in the context of the existing urban development. Mitigation will be provided in the form of hoardings to the construction site to obscure low level construction activities but mobile cranes will still be evident.

Some minor adverse visual impacts will be experienced from near distant receptors located within 1km of both the Site Wide site and the Phase One site where there are open views; mainly on Groveley Lane or more sensitive receptors such as the North Worcestershire Path (a recognised long distance recreational footpath) or the Lickey Hill Country Park where the development will be a prominent feature in the local views. However following the introduction, establishment and maturing of the landscape proposals in approximately 15 years' time the majority of impacts will be neutral or minor beneficial effects.

**Ground Conditions & Contamination**

The remediation and re-profiling of Longbridge East was granted planning permission in 2009. It was considered that following the implementation of the consented remedial approach for the East Works site (Application
site) the potential impacts from historical on site sources of contaminants would be negligible. Historical on-site sources of contamination have therefore not been considered as part of the assessment. Potential impacts were, however, identified in relation to the import of fill materials and the presence of a potential off-site source of contamination to the north of the Application site. The assessment therefore presents the anticipated mitigation measures and residual impacts for both the Site Wide and Phase One sites in relation to the impacts on soils and geology, human health, controlled waters and building fabric from the import of fill materials and the presence of an off-site contaminant source.

The main potential impacts of both the Site Wide and Phase One developments are likely to be associated with the presence of a dissolved phase hydrocarbon plume under the northern part of the site wide application site and the import of materials to form the development platform.

With the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures it is considered that the impacts relating to the dissolved phase hydrocarbon plume and the importation of materials to human health, controlled waters and building fabric will not be significant.

### Waste Management

An assessment has been undertaken to consider the effect of waste arising from the Site Wide and Phase One developments. The assessment methodology looks at the magnitude, nature of the impact, and the importance/sensitivity of the resource/receptor. It assesses the impact of potential waste arisings on the current local waste management infrastructure.

The developments will generate waste during the three phases of works, they are:

- Site development wastes (earthworks);
- Wastes produced during construction operations; and
- Wastes produced during the operational phase of the proposed development.

All waste arising from the development site for both Site Wide and Phase One will be managed in the most environmentally sound manner in compliance with relevant legislation, policies and guidance. Implementation of mitigation measures within the site preparation, construction and operation phases have led to the environmental impact of these phases being assessed as having no significant effect.

Site Operatives will be made aware of the mitigation required and legislation to be adhered to through the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

### Water Resources

The assessment of existing water resources relates to waterbodies within and surrounding the two application sites, including surface and ground water quality, groundwater recharge, drainage and flood risk. Water resources information for the site has been established from existing site survey data, drainage surveys, and site demolition and remediation information.

An assessment of the impacts of the proposed developments on the water resources of the Site Wide and Phase One sites undertaken in 2008 highlighted no significant impact to the water resources post construction with all impacts either being neutral or beneficial. The assessment presented in this ES therefore scoped out the need to consider impacts potentially arising from operation.

The sites historical industrial use has over the years led to contamination of the site and associated adverse impact on the water quality of the River Arrow. Previous hard engineering and culverting that passes through the site meant that the river that passes through the site inaccessible.

The cessation of polluting activities adjacent to the river channel has meant the water quality of the River Arrow is already showing signs of improvement. The proposals for the redevelopment of the application sites, which include remediation, will ensure constraints (such as underground structures and existing culvert) are removed adjacent to the watercourse, overall improving groundwater quality and therefore surface water quality. In addition to these benefits that the redevelopment will bring to the River Arrow and surrounding environment, proposals for the application sites include enhancing and improving the River Arrow bringing it back to a
more natural state and ensuring it is accessible to the public.

All potential impacts during remediation, earthworks and re-profiling can be mitigated by adherence to best practice construction techniques and to planned site drainage solutions.

### Noise and Vibration

An assessment of the potential noise and vibration impacts that may arise as a result of the Site Wide and Phase One developments of Longbridge East have been undertaken for construction and operation respectively.

Noise and vibration from construction of the proposed development may be generated by the operation of construction plant and equipment (such as earth moving equipment, concreting works, compressors / generators to power hand held tools etc.) as well as road traffic movements required for deliveries and workforce movements to and from site. All construction works are, however, temporary in nature and therefore the potential noise and vibration impacts will be limited in duration.

It is considered unlikely that any fixed plant installations will be installed to serve the proposed residential scheme. Notwithstanding this, consideration has been given to operational noise impacts that could potentially arise from any fixed plant as well as from increases to road traffic flows that may be generated on the local road network. In addition, there is the possibility that noise impacts could be generated by activities that may take place at the proposed new community facilities.

The assessment of noise and vibration for both the Site Wide and Phase One development sites has established that the site as a whole would be suitable for residential development, provided mitigation measures are provided to control noise levels for some parts of the site. These mitigation measures are subject to further design development, however mitigation will be specified such that internal noise levels within the proposed dwellings are no higher than those which would be considered “reasonable” under the guidance of BS 8233. During construction, mitigation will include restricted site working hours, implementation of best practice construction methods and inclusion of 2.5m high solid site hoardings (or similar). During operation, potential noise impacts from fixed plant and equipment will be mitigated through installation of appropriately specified attenuators, plant enclosures and 2.0 high solid site hoardings (or similar) along the railway line boundary.

### Air Quality

The Air Quality Assessment has involved consideration of Bromsgrove District Council and Birmingham City Council’s Air Quality Management Area Review and Assessment documents; review of existing air quality data; identification of areas likely to be particularly sensitive to change in air quality; semi-quantitative analysis of potential dust nuisance arising from construction; and, quantitative assessment of air quality at the site and at sensitive receptors adjacent to the local highway network.

The assessment concludes that the site clearance and construction phase for both the Site Wide and Phase One developments are likely to generate dust which, if unmitigated, has the potential to cause complaints at properties in close proximity to the application sites. However, with the adoption of Best Practice Measures complaints should be avoidable and the effects of dust from the construction phase will be temporary. The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been produced which will detail the Best Practical Measures to site operatives and will monitor the implementation and success of these measures and the mitigation.

The assessment has determined that the operational air quality effects of traffic associated with the Site Wide proposals would be of negligible significance at existing sensitive receptors and at receptors introduced on the application site as part of the proposed development. No Air Quality Strategy objective would be exceeded as a result of the Site Wide proposals. Operational impacts due to the changes in traffic associated with the proposals are expected to be of negligible significance at new and existing receptors.

### Transport, Movement & Access

A Transport Assessment written in 2008 by Halcrow Group Ltd, was agreed with Birmingham City Council and Worcestershire County Council and provided the evidence base for the Longbridge Area Action Plan.
(LAAP) Examination in Public. It has been used as the baseline for the assessment of Transport, Movement and Access.

The Application Site has the advantage of being located close to public transport links including bus stops located on Groveley Lane and being an easy cycling distance from Longbridge Railway Station (approximate distance is two kilometres). As part of the wider development a significant amount of infrastructure will be implemented to reduce severance and increase permeability for the benefit of sustainable travel modes. Longbridge East residents will be able to make use of these and the improvements that are being delivered on Longbridge Lane as part of the Bournville College construction (Phase One Highway Works).

The construction traffic management plan will seek to encourage deliveries and other traffic to arrive at the site outside of the peak hours, and in the daytime. This traffic will be directed via the A38, Lickey Road and Lowhill Lane. There is a marginal impact on residents from HGV traffic, for the Longbridge East Application Site, volumes of construction traffic are not considered to be material, and no further mitigation is considered necessary.

Mitigation strategies developed for highway network, public transport, pedestrians and cyclists, accommodate the development. However there is likely to be an increase in vehicular traffic on local roads. Mitigation to reduce the impact of increased traffic includes improvements to junctions to provide additional capacity or overcome safety concerns; provision of infrastructure to enhance access by bus, walking and cycling; and, preparation of a Travel Plan to promote incentives to encourage people to choose methods of travel other than by single occupancy car journeys.

Providing the recommendations are implemented there should be no significant adverse cumulative effect from the development during construction.

During Operation when all nine developments are operational it is considered that without the implementation of mitigation measures there may be an adverse cumulative effect on certain receptors. However, providing recommendations contained within this ES are implemented there should be no significant adverse cumulative effects.

Summary

The proposed development has been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (as amended).

A specialist assessment has been undertaken for each of the key environmental topic areas and for any adverse impacts identified, mitigation measures have been provided to either reduce or remove the impacts where possible. In some circumstances, the opportunity for improvement has been highlighted to design team. These opportunities have been incorporated into the masterplan for the proposed development.

Further details relating to the EIA of the proposed development of the Application Sites are provided in the ES which has been prepared in support of these planning applications.

Cumulative Effects

A cumulative effects assessment has examined the incremental contribution of the proposed development together with potential impacts from other developments within the immediate vicinity at the site preparation/construction phase and the operational phases.

The Environmental Statement for the application sites has provided sufficient mitigation measures to ensure that any impacts to the works at the application site will be avoided or minimised.
Further details relating to the Environmental Assessment of the scheme are provided in the Environmental Statement.

Additional copies of the Environmental Statement can be obtained. A paper copy can be provided at the cost of printing or on CD at a cost of £10, by writing to the following address:

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