EIA Quality Mark Case Study

Plot SGR1, Bicester

Key Issues
- Built heritage and visual effects relating to a nearby listed buildings.
- Consideration of potential cumulative effects of nearby consented schemes within designated ‘Eco-Town’ masterplan area.
- Access from adjacent roads and neighbouring residential developments.
- Location of community amenities.

Purpose of the project
- New residential development to contribute to the North-west Bicester Eco-Town, as defined by national and local policy. Future development within the area includes proposals for a new Strategic Link Road, up to 6,000 new homes, office accommodation and public amenities such as a nursery, schools and community facilities.

Description of the project
- Client: SGR (Bicester 1) Limited
- 5.03 hectare site, located approximately 2.2 kilometres north of the centre of Bicester.
- Outline application for provision of up to 75 new homes, pedestrian and cycle routes, open space and playspace.
- Despite the scale of development being below the thresholds, EIA was required (through receipt of Screening Opinion) and an ES was submitted.
- It is anticipated that the Development would come forward over an 18-30 month construction period, with construction expected to commence at the end of 2018 and complete in mid-2021.
EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt
- Cherwell District Council (CDC) placed great emphasis on the potential for in-combination cumulative effects with nearby consented schemes within the Eco-Town area. This resulted in the relatively small development requiring EIA despite a detailed screening appraisal that incorporated an in-depth cumulative assessment. Early consultation and open dialogue with adjacent sites through the pre-planning process ensured the smooth development of the scheme, including rerouting of access through neighboring land, and allowed full consideration of cumulative effects.
- Early identification of key environmental issues provided an opportunity to ‘design out’ and, where possible, enhance key constraints so that minimal environmental effects were identified during the EIA process, e.g. preserving and enhancing the vista to the Grade II* listed Church of St. Laurence (see figure to the right).

Lessons learnt continued
- Proactive design engagement with CDC to ensure alignment with their masterplan and helped to expedite the process. This included aligning the design closely to their indicative masterplan to maintain the allocation of green space on the eastern site boundary. This also acted as a buffer to the listed assets to the east of the site.
- Inclusion of parking for church parishioners and visitors in northern corner of the site following public consultation. This final location minimised the indirect noise and air quality effects of vehicle movements on nearby listed buildings and residential receptors compared to early designs which located car parking in the south-east of the site.

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