EIA Quality Mark Case Study

Land to the north east of Bury St Edmunds - a hybrid planning application for a mixed-use residential development for up to 1,375 dwellings.

Purpose of the project:
WYG worked to provide multi-disciplinary consultancy to support the hybrid planning application for a new mixed-use residential development and co-ordinate the relevant technical teams with the production of an Environmental Statement.
The final Environmental Statement was submitted to the West Suffolk Council in December 2019.

Description of the project:
The Application Site is for the production of a hybrid planning application comprising: an outline application for up to 1,375 dwellings, access, public open space, local centre uses, primary school and associated infrastructure; and, a full application for Phase 1 of the outline application, access roads, parking, open space, drainage infrastructure and associated works.

Key Issues:
The key issues and opportunities related to the development of a large residential project adjacent to the north east of Bury St Edmunds comprised the following:

Employment and community facilities: The development includes the provision of a local centre for use classes A1 to A5, B1, D1 or D2; the provision of a primary school and approximately 40ha of areas of open space.
Highways and Connectivity: The Site provides two means of access into the A143, which links into the centre of Bury St Edmunds and connects to Cambridge, Chelmsford and Norwich.

Heritage and Archaeology: The Site has high potential for buried archaeological features with a concentration of Iron Age/Roman remains in the central northern portion of the Site.

Air Quality: An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), is located in the village of Great Barton approximately 1.1km to the north-east of the Site. The AQMA was declared for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) exceedances.

Noise: The Ipswich to Ely railway line runs in an east west alignment along the southern boundary of the site.

Lessons Learnt:
It is important to emphasise the significance of communication between consultants, the planning authority and the client during the EIA process to ensure that all potential effects are identified and mitigated at the early stage of the project and throughout the lifetime of the EIA, especially when this extends for longer than two to three years.

Changes in the project team during the EIA process may also result in multiple changes to the layout and design of the scheme which consequently result in delays of the EIA and re-examination of multiple technical surveys and studies, especially those relating to ecology and cumulative effects assessment.

Later changes in the infrastructure layout of the project may also result in the amendments of the masterplan which is usually agreed on with the local planning authority and shared with the technical consultants at the early stages of the EIA process.

With the above in mind, this case study demonstrates the value of EIA being included at the earliest stages of site selection and master planning, and the significance of this being consistent throughout all design stages.
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