## Key Issues

This scheme forms part of a much wider Strategic Development Framework (SDF) for the West Northampton Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE’s).

The SDF includes the 3 key Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE’s) located to the west of Northampton which will provide approximately 7,000 dwellings, schools and associated amenities.

- Northampton Upton Park SUE;
- Northampton Norwood Farm; and,
- Northampton West SUE.

The key issue with this ES was how to assess the cumulative effects of the adjoining designated development areas.

## Purpose of the project/ Background

WYG worked to provide multi-disciplinary consultancy support to revise and update an existing planning permission for the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

The HCA has worked to secure an appropriate planning permission for the Upton Lodge site since 2006, with initial outline consent, which was supported by an ES, being granted in 2008.

However, at that time West Northants District Council (WNDC) required further technical work, which was completed in 2011. As 3 years had passed since the resolution to grant, WNDC advised that a refreshed planning application and ES would be required owing to the fact that much of the supporting documentation was now out of date.

## Description of the project

The site comprises land at Upton Lodge Farm. The site is agricultural land with a site area of approximately 70 hectares and lies on the western edge of Northampton.

The Proposed Development is for a mixed use development of the site to provide up to 1400 dwellings with associated community facilities and infrastructure.
Description of Issues
As previously stated, in respect to the ES the key technical issue was how to consider the cumulative effects of the two other Sites being brought forward at different times by different development teams, which all form of what was always intended to be a coherent Sustainable Urban Extension.

The two topics which had the highest potential to result in significant cumulative effects were determined to be ecology and landscape.

Ecology
Despite frequent requests to the neighbouring developers, they refused to share the ecological survey data from their Sites. This prevented the assessments being able to accurately assess any potential cumulative effects. Therefore, the ecological mitigation design was limited, insofar as it was not possible to have a detailed understanding how it would interact with neighbouring habitats/ ecology. Whilst ecological mitigation was designed to allow movement of both bat and badger through the Site, the mitigation could have been added further value if it could have demonstrated connectivity with the other sites and the wider countryside.

Landscape
The Landscape cumulative assessment also had to make a number of assumptions about the location and scale of development on the adjoining Sites. These assumptions affected the certainty when assessing the impact of cumulative of effects.

Lesson Learned
If the Planning Authority had been insistent on a collaborative working agreement for the three Sites being brought forward, then greater certainty could have been achieved in respect to the assessment of cumulative effects. This also would have resulted in a more comprehensive masterplan demonstrating joined up sustainable design solutions, which would have been significantly more beneficial for this important urban extension of Northampton.

This information provides an interesting case study to demonstrate the value of EIA being included at the earliest possible stages of site selection and masterplanning to enable a joined up approach to environmental issues.

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