# EIA Quality Mark Case Study

## Project: Land to the East of Cambridge

*Image: Map of the development site.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Issues:</th>
<th>Key Issues (cont):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whether the proposed development warranted Environmental Assessment, with reference to the Schedule 2 thresholds and associated planning practice guidance. The development site comprises an emerging site allocation (GB1) and is currently located within the Green Belt. A key issue was the weight to be applied to the Green Belt allocation in the ES. To the immediate south a separate application for a similar site allocation (GB2) for housing and community facilities had already been submitted but not approved. The Council’s formal scoping opinion required consideration to be given on how the two sites ‘work together’. Specific issues related to the weight to be afforded to the proposed community facilities within GB2 (which were not approved) and the fact that design details for the access into GB2 were not fixed and are still not fixed.</td>
<td>The scheme evolution was undertaken on the basis of a detailed Illustrative Masterplan, which was pared back to allow the preparation of the parameter plans. Notes were added to the parameter plans to ensure that key mitigation features (including set-back distances and the proposed route through the County Wildlife Site that was within the application boundary) were incorporated into the development parameters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of the project:</th>
<th>Description of the project:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of the project was to secure outline planning permission for the erection of up to 200 dwellings on land to the north of Worts’ Causeway, Cambridge. The clients were Commercial Estates Group and Guys St Thomas.</td>
<td>The proposed development covers approximately 7.2 hectares of agricultural land to the south east of Cambridge. The development comprises up to 300 residential dwellings (including 40% affordable housing), vehicular access, open space, and drainage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lessons learnt:

**EIA Screening and Scoping**
Whilst it was our view that the proposed development did not require EIA, project timescales did not allow for the submission of a Screening Direction request. Notwithstanding this, the scope of the EIA was focused on four topics only, which emphasised the need to focus only on those issues/topics that could give rise to potentially significant impacts. This emphasised the importance to screen (and scope) the EIA at the earliest opportunity to ensure that there is sufficient time in the programme to allow for challenge, if required.

**Consideration of the Adjacent Allocation (with submitted but not determined planning application)**
The adjacent GB2 site allocation was included within the cumulative assessment and utilised information provided within the submitted application. Despite not being ‘reasonably foreseeable’, the intrinsic link between the two sites warranted its inclusion in the assessment. It is acknowledged that the specific site access details may change, however, plans have been submitted with the application (and appended to the ES) that demonstrate that the GB1 development site access works with or without the GB2 access. Should circumstances change considerably, a judgement will be made as to whether this warrants a SES.

**Biodiversity Net Gain**
With regards to Biodiversity Net Gain matters, it was necessary to understand greater detail of proposals/strategy for landscaping and biodiversity enhancement at an early stage. Whilst this is not necessarily reflected on the parameter plans, a draft LEMP provided a commitment to take the strategy forward as inherent mitigation. It was also necessary to understand how different types of habitat affect the metric and to agree which metric should be used at an early stage, given the different options available (noting that most local authorities appear to favour the DEFRA 2.0 metric).

Lessons learnt continued:

**Scheme Evolution**
The final lesson was ensuring that the EIA reflected the likely significant effects of the parameters (and inherent mitigation) and not the Illustrative Masterplan, which was the focus of the design development and consultation meetings with the local authority and statutory consultees. Assessing the illustrative proposals may not have assessed a worst-case scenario, therefore it was important to develop parameters with adequate detail and inherent mitigation taken from the illustrative masterplan shown on the parameter plans.

Contact details

Liz Evans
Associate Director, Lichfields
liz.evans@lichfields.uk
029 20 435880

For access to more EIA case studies and hundreds of non-technical summaries of Environmental Statements visit: [https://www.iema.net/eia-quality-mark/eia-quality-mark-case-studies](https://www.iema.net/eia-quality-mark/eia-quality-mark-case-studies)