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8th April 2025

Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
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By email: development.control@huntingdonshire.gov.uk;
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Our Ref: 4639

Dear Sir/Madam

Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 Regulation 6 Request for Screening Opinion

Land to the north of Station Road, Bluntisham

Smith Jenkins Planning & Heritage act on behalf of Barratt Redrow, trading as Barratt Northampton ("the Applicant"), in respect of the above site. We write to request a formal Screening Opinion in accordance with Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the '*Regulations*'). This letter is accompanied by a Site Location Plan (ref. CSA/7362/110) demonstrating the location of the proposed development.

The proposed project will comprise:

> *"Outline application with all matters reserved except for access, for up to 160 dwellings (Use Class C3), functional open space and associated works"*

The proposals seek to redevelop part of the existing commercial orchard for up to 160 dwellings, a large area of open space, and sustainable urban drainage features. The areas of built development will have an average density of around 30 dwellings per hectare. The proposals include one dedicated vehicular access off Station Road. Pedestrian and cycle connections will link into the existing, surrounding networks.

Background to Environmental Impact Assessment:

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic and objective process through which the likely significant environmental effects of a development can be identified, assessed and wherever possible mitigated. Screening is the first stage to determine if the proposed development should be subjected to EIA.

Certain types of development require an EIA:

- For developments described in Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations ("Schedule 1 development") EIA is mandatory.
- For developments of a type described in Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations ("Schedule 2 development") EIA may be required if the development has the potential to give rise to 'significant' environmental effects by virtue to is nature, size or location.

If the proposed development is of a type described in Schedule 2 of the EIA regulations ("schedule 2 development") EIA *may* be required if the development has potential to give rise to 'significant' environmental effects by virtue of its nature, size of location.

If the proposed development is of a type described in in Schedule 2, then two further criteria should be considered:

- If the proposed development is located in or partly located in a sensitive area for the purposes of the EIA regulations; or
- If the proposed development exceeds the respective applicable threshold in Schedule 2.

Should both criteria be met, the proposed development will require screening against the selection criteria. Indicative threshold guidance is also provided in the National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Location of Development:

The *Regulations* define sensitive areas as being:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- National Parks
- The Broads
- A UNESCO world heritage site
- A Scheduled Ancient Monument
- An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- A European site for habitat and species conservation

The Site is not within a sensitive area as defined by the Regulations.

The Site is c. 2.3km west of the Ouse Washes SPA/Ramsar/SAC and SSSI and c. 1.0km north-west of Berry Fen SSSI. Given the distance from these designations no direct impacts are anticipated.

Due to the characteristics of these international and national designations there is a potential for indirect effects, in regard to; recreational disturbance, water abstraction/discharge and loss or disturbance of Functionally Linked Land used by wintering birds associated with the international designation. To date wintering bird surveys undertaken at the Site have not recorded the presence of important wintering birds associated with the designation.

A Habitats Regulation Screening and Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken to assess the potential for likely significance effects of the development proposals on the Ouse Washes SPA/Ramsar/SAC and SSSI and Berry Fen SSSI. Potential impact pathways and mitigation will be assessed via Appropriate Assessment. However, this does not mean that the project will constitute EIA development

Characteristics of Project:

The characteristics of the development are set out within the table below.

Characteristic	Commentary
Size of development	The site has an area of approximately 12.55ha and proposes up to 160 dwellings. The development would be contained within the site boundary as shown in the Site Location Plan; the final number of dwellings would be subject to detailed master planning.
The use of natural resources	The development of the site would, by its nature, require the use of a range of natural and man-made construction materials. The site comprises agricultural land (commercial plum orchard) which is likely to be classified as Grade 2 agricultural land (subject to survey) and in its current use there would be a loss of agricultural resource. However, as a commercial orchard it has declining viability with more than half the orchard requiring re-planning and significant investment to fell and replace trees. There are no other significant impacts on the use of natural resources.
Pollution and nuisances	The construction phase will be manged via a Construction Management Plan ('CMP') which can be secured via condition. Beyond the construction phase, the development is unlikely to generate significant pollution or nuisance to the area in terms of noise, odour or result in a detriment to air quality.
The production of waste	The proposal will generate an element of waste, both during construction (temporary) and once occupied. However, the impacts are unlikely to be significant or abnormal. As mentioned above, a CMP would be prepared to manage the construction phase of the development. The CMP would manage waste during the construction phase, ensuring that all waste generated during building works is appropriately handled and removed in compliance with relevant regulations. Post-occupation, provision will be made for appropriate storage and disposal of waste and can be secured via condition.
Flood risk and drainage	The site is located with Flood Zone 1. Areas around the site's southern access are at medium to high risk from surface water flooding. No significant impacts on flood risk or drainage are expected as a result of the development. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy will be submitted as part of the application to ensure all potential impacts are fully assessed and mitigated where necessary.
Transport (including access)	The proposals will include provisions for car parking and will include the enhancement of the existing access arrangements. It is not anticipated that the proposal will give rise to significant impacts in terms of traffic at the site. However, the application will be supported

	by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan to assess all potential impacts, including a cumulative parking impact study.
Ecology and biodiversity	The Site is c. 2.3km west of the Ouse Washes SPA/Ramsar/SAC and SSSI and c. 1.0km north-west of Berry Fen SSSI. Given the distance from these designations no direct impacts are anticipated. The site is presently a commercial orchard and is actively managed. Magic Map data shows this as 'traditional orchard' as a priority habitat. Early ecological assessment shows potential to increase the diversity of the tree species on the site and manage the spaces between and around planting to maximise the benefits for ecology and biodiversity. The large areas of open space are intended to be designed to offer alternative areas and routes for leisure and dog walkers drawing them away from the sensitive sites.
Landscape	The development is located on the edge of the existing built-up area of Bluntisham. Whilst the proposals would alter the character of the settlement and surrounding countryside, the site is not dislocated from the settlement. The consented development to the east of the site (Land North of 10 Station Road Bluntisham – 17/01015/OUT and 21/02690/REM) is in the process of being constructed and further extends the modern expansion of the settlement, with the site comprising land that faces into the natural landform associated with the settlement rather than being exposed to the wider setting of farmland. This helps to limit the wider effect of development on the countryside along with the established network of field boundary hedgerows and tree cover. Short-term landscape effects at a settlement level are likely to be of moderate significance, reducing to moderate to minor significance at the local character level for the Central Claylands and Great Ouse Valley. However, in the long-term this level of landscape effect should reduce to moderate to minor and minor significance respectively. Receptors groups are generally considered to be of medium to high (footpath users) and medium to low (road users) sensitivity, with short-term effects ranging from moderate significance to moderate to minor significance beyond the immediate setting of the site. With effective mitigation this level of effect will reduce over time. For these reasons, it is not considered that the development would generate significant landscape related effects.
Environment and climate change	The proposed scheme will incorporate measures to ensure that it does not have a detrimental impact on the environment or contribute negatively to climate change. This includes meeting or exceeding existing building regulations through improvements to fabric efficiency and the incorporation of other technologies such as Solar PV or Air Source Heat Pumps. The viability and suitability of

	these measures will be explored through an Energy and Sustainability Strategy to ensure that the energy hierarchy is met. The impacts of climate change are recognised. The development will be designed to orientate buildings to maximise gains but avoid overheating. Sustainable Drainage will be incorporated to help manage surface water run off from extreme events. An Air Quality Assessment, Noise Impact Assessment, Ground Contamination, Energy and Climate Statement, Sustainability Statement and Lighting Assessment will be prepared to assess all potential impacts with their recommendations incorporated into the final design(s).
The risks to human health	The development would not constitute risks to human health. The nature of the proposal renders its impact permanent. However, given the scale and location of the proposal, the relative impact is considered to be low. We therefore conclude that the characteristics of the impacts cannot be defined as significant.
The risk of major accidents and/or disasters	The development will not result in any hazardous substances or dangerous technologies. The development would not generate significant highway safety impacts and any impacts that are generated could be suitably mitigated.
Heritage and archaeology	Several listed buildings and the Bluntisham Conservation Area are located to the east, within the main settlement of Bluntisham. These assets are situated a reasonable distance from the site and no statutory listed buildings/conservation areas are located within the site itself. The Applicant will prepare a Heritage Assessment as part of the planning application submission to assess the potential effects of the scheme on both designated and non-designated heritage assets.
Socio-economics	It is considered that the proposed development would be generally beneficial with regards to socio-economic impacts. In the short-term, the development would generate jobs associated with the construction phase. In the longer term, the additional homes provided as part of the development would generate additional Council tax collections. Impacts of the additional homes on the availability of services and facilities would be mitigated via planning contributions.
Cumulation with other development	Generally, cumulative effects can be defined as 'impacts that result from the incremental changes caused by other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions together with the project'. Therefore, it is necessary to have regard to the receptor (in this case the Berry Fen SSSI). Within Bluntisham and the immediate area, The cumulative schemes are:

	• Land South Of The A1123 And West Of Bluntisham Road Needingworth – Pending Construction (17/01687/OUT and 19/01166/REM) • Land Rear Of 92 To 108 High Street Needingworth – Pending Construction (18/01073/OUT and 21/01723/REM) • Land North of 10 Station Road Bluntisham – Under Construction (17/01015/OUT and 21/02690/REM) • - F Vindis And Sons Ltd Low Road Fenstanton St Ives PE27 5EL – Under Construction (20/00285/FUL) • Land North Of 16 The Bank Somersham – Under Construction (19/01790/OUT 23/00369/REM) • Whilst land is promoted via the Planning Policy 'Call for Sites', these proposals do not have any planning status at the current time and their development is not 'reasonably foreseeable'. There are no further schemes within the vicinity of the site which we are aware of which would need to be considered at the screening stage. Therefore, the combined effects of the Applicant's proposals and the extant development are not likely to be significant.

Conclusion

Sufficient information, proportionate to the proposed development, has been provided to enable the Council to formally screen the proposals in accordance with the EIA Regulations and Planning Practice Guidance.

Having regard to the characteristics of the proposed development; the size of the site; the sensitivity of the site; characteristics of the potential impacts; and the mitigation measures, the proposed development will not give rise to any likely significant environmental effects.

It is recognised that due to the location of the site and proximity to the Berry Fen SSSI and the functional linkages with the Ouse Washes and Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken. This is separate to the requirement for EIA.

Therefore, it is our position that this development does **not** constitute EIA development, and an Environmental Statement would not be required. Accordingly, we request that the Local Planning Authority adopts a Screening Opinion to confirm this, and in accordance with paragraph 6(6) we look forward to hearing from the Council within the statutory period.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Associate
Smith Jenkins Ltd

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