

5. Consideration of Alternatives

Introduction

- 5.1 This Chapter reports the ‘reasonable alternatives’ considered with respect to the Proposed Development.
- 5.2 Schedule 4, Paragraph 2 of the EIA Regulations¹ states that an ES should include:
- “a description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects”.*
- 5.3 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)² indicates that where “...alternative approaches to development have been considered, the Environmental Statement should include a description of the reasonable alternatives studied which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics and provide an indication of the main reasons for the choice made, including a comparison of the environmental effects.”.
- 5.4 As such, in line with the EIA Regulations, if no alternatives have been studied by the Applicant, the EIA does not need to report or assess reasonable alternatives.
- 5.5 Neither the EIA Regulations, nor PPG identify a specific methodology for the reporting of alternatives, or the criteria to be used to inform the consideration of reasonable alternatives. Therefore, the methodology to be adopted for the purpose of the EIA is based on professional experience of similar projects and an understanding of the Proposed Development and its characteristics, as well as focus on delivery of a proportionate output, in line with PPG.
- 5.6 The consideration of alternatives has followed a two-step approach in this Chapter as follows:
- **Step 1:** Consideration of ‘factors’ that constitute reasonable alternatives based on the EIA Regulations (i.e., alternative sites, alternative designs, alternative technologies and the ‘do nothing’ scenario) and justification / discussion of their inclusion / exclusion from further assessment; and
 - **Step 2:** Qualitative appraisal of the ‘factors’ for which reasonable alternatives have been considered and, where appropriate, a comparison of the environmental effects.

Step 1: Consideration of Alternatives

- 5.7 The common ‘factors’ considered with respect to reasonable alternatives, in line with Schedule 4, Paragraph 2 of the EIA Regulations are:
- Alternative sites;
 - Alternative design;

- Alternative technology; and
- ‘Do Nothing’ scenario.

5.8 These relevant factors have been considered to determine the need for further assessment:

- Alternative sites – Alternative sites have not been considered as the Applicant controls the Site and other sites are outside of the Applicant’s control. Consequently, alternative sites were not considered by the Applicant and have not been taken forward to Step 2;
- Alternative designs – The Application is outline (with all matters reserved except site access) and the ES is based on design parameters. The design parameters of the Proposed Development have evolved in response to stakeholder engagement; technical studies; and environmental constraints and opportunities; however alternative design parameters have not been produced. As the Application is in outline it is therefore likely that alternative designs will be considered at reserved matters. However, the evolution of the parameters based on environmental constraints and opportunities is summarised in **Table 5.1**.
- Alternative technologies – Whilst alternative technologies are available in terms of the construction of the Proposed Development these, are largely dictated by ‘build-ability’ and cost exercises rather than environmental-focused considerations. Furthermore, the Proposed Development is a residential led scheme (refer to **Chapter 4**). Consideration of alternative ‘technologies’ therefore is not applicable as they would be for other types of development (i.e. industrial processes or energy generation). As a result of these factors, alternative technologies will not be taken forward to Step 2; and
- ‘Do Nothing’ Scenario – Schedule 4, Paragraph 3 of the EIA Regulations requires an ES to include a description of the relevant aspects of the current baseline environment which are likely to evolve without the implementation of development, subject to the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge. The assessments of environmental effects presented in the ES will include the determination the Site’s ‘Future Baseline’, being the likely condition of the Site in the absence of development. As such, sufficient environmental information and scientific knowledge will be available to inform an appraisal of the natural changes likely to be observed in the ‘Do Nothing’ Scenario and this will be taken forward to Step 2.

5.9 As set out above, alternative designs and the ‘Do Nothing’ scenarios will be taken forward from Step 1 into Step 2.

Step 2: Qualitative Appraisal of Alternatives

5.10 As the Applicant has not considered ‘alternative sites’, or ‘alternative technologies’, in line with the PPG, these factors have not been considered further within this Chapter. The remaining factors for consideration are alternative designs; and the ‘Do Nothing Scenario’.

Do Nothing Scenario'

- 5.11 Broadly, it is considered that the 'do nothing' scenario would mean that the likely significant effects identified and reported in this ES do not occur (i.e., no adverse or beneficial effects). The conclusions of the ES are presented in **Chapter 9: Summary**.
- 5.12 In accordance with the EIA Regulations, each of the **Technical Chapters 6 – 7** report the future baseline scenario under a '*do nothing*' scenario (i.e., the anticipated changes that would occur over time if the Proposed Development was not brought forward).
- 5.13 Overall, it is likely that in the absence of the Proposed Development, the Site would not be developed, meaning that the current management regime would continue i.e. continued agricultural use. Therefore the habitat types, species and landscape within the Site are unlikely to change considerably.
- 5.14 This is with the exception of the below:
- A future change in agricultural practices from a largely pastoral use to arable use could decrease the value of the Site for invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds and foraging bats;
 - The effects of climate change may change the future baseline through:
 - Changes to the extent and distribution (i.e. a reduction in presence) of terrestrial and freshwater habitats (and associated species) as a result of changing rainfall patterns and associated hydrology;
 - Detrimental effects on freshwater ecosystems due to increasing temperature (e.g. reduction/loss of certain species); metabolic rates of many freshwater organisms and ecosystem productivity are directly regulated by temperature;
 - Northward movement of warmth-loving species and retreat of northerly-distributed species; and
 - Changes in the timing of natural events, including plant flowering, bird nesting and the emergence of insects (phenological changes).
 - Changes to the landscape due to changes in agriculture and habitats as outlined above; and
 - Changes to visual perception due to changes in agriculture and habitats as outlined above and implementation of committed development (including Cumulative Project 1 immediately west of the Site).

Design Parameter Evolution

- 5.15 The design parameters of the Proposed Development has evolved in response to studies, surveys and modelling to take account of the environmental constraints and opportunities. In addition, consultation with stakeholders have also informed the design development process.
- 5.16 **Table 5.1** below provides an overview of how the Parameters Plans (**Figures 4.1 to 4.2**) have been developed to avoid, reduce or offset environmental impacts. The parameters have also

formed the primary mitigation which is considered inherent to the Proposed Development described in **Chapter 4: The Proposed Development**, where relevant.

Table 5.1: Consideration of alternative design options

Technical topic	Alternative design options and final solutions
Landscape and Views	The Proposed Development is a landscape-led development. The Site includes individual mature trees and tree lined hedgerows which are key features of the existing landscape within the Site. These features were identified to be retained during the design process to avoid environmental impacts which including the retention of three veteran trees. The ditches, trees and hedgerows for retention are defined as 'Existing tree and hedgerows, and associated ditches (retained)' on Figure 4.1. A buffer of Green Infrastructure around the Site including a 10m offset to the deciduous woodland to the south west of the Site has been included to soften the impact of the development. The landscape areas are defined on Figures 4.1. The existing ditch network will also be retained through a blue infrastructure strategy. Visibility of the Site from the east and south will be filtered with new planting to the Site edge and enhancement of existing internal hedgerows into a site wide Green Infrastructure / biodiversity network.
Ecology	The primary habitats of ecological value within the Site are the trees/tree lined hedgerows and ditches. As detailed above, the design process has resulted in the retention of the majority of trees and hedgerows to avoid environmental impacts as shown on Figure 4.1. Where loss of hedgerows is necessary to facilitate the development, mitigation will include replacement planting elsewhere within the Site. The Site boundary has reduced to exclude the deciduous woodland to the south west of the Site (Eight Acre Plantation). A 10m offset (Figure 4.1) to the woodland has been incorporated to ensure protection of this woodland. In addition to the retained tree lined hedgerows the existing ditch network will be retained and enhanced where possible to provide biodiversity gain through a blue infrastructure strategy.
Transport and Access	The parameters of the Proposed Development have developed to allow retention of Public Right of Way (PRoW) MELW26 that passes through the Site which will be retained on its current alignment as shown on Figure 4.1. Access connections from Sandridge Common have been placed in a suitable location to serve the Proposed Development with vehicle, cycle and pedestrian connectivity; maintaining and connecting with the existing PRoW, including a new connection to bridleway MELW40 to the east.

Technical topic	Alternative design options and final solutions
Built Heritage^a	The points of connection into consented Cumulative Project 1 adjacent to the west of the Site have changed to show a link in the north rather than in the middle of the Site to offer a more direct opportunity for bus, pedestrian and cycle connection between the two developments. There are no heritage assets within the Site but the Grade II listed Blackmore House is located adjacent to the north west boundary of the Site. The setting of Blackmore House was considered during the design process with setbacks included following evaluation of different views which were tested and appraised in 3D until the final composition and width of the setback was fixed as shown on Figure 4.1 (Composite Parameter Plan). No buildings will be developed adjacent to Blackmore House, retaining a sense of the asset's former rural setting and maintaining views towards its location from bridleway MELW40. Effects of the Proposed Development on heritage assets are not considered to be Significant as a result of these final design parameters. Further details are provided in the EIA Scoping Report (Appendix 2.1).
Flood Risk and Drainage^a	The management of flooding has been a key principle of the design. The Site is largely within Flood Zone 1, however, the area immediately surrounding Clackers Brook which runs through the Site is within an area of medium risk Flood Zone 2 and high risk Flood Zone 3. The options for the uses of the Proposed Development adjacent to Clackers Brook have been considered, resulting in the land use within this area as Green Infrastructure (see Figure 4.1) which, will be set aside for landscaping and Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). No buildings will be built within this area thereby avoiding any risk of flooding to existing and future buildings (and users). There are areas within the Site of 'low' to 'high' surface water flood risk, generally associated with the existing ditches and areas of lower topography on the Site. The permanent surface water drainage strategy has been designed to incorporate the existing ditches and Brook along with new attenuation basins/SuDS. These areas are in co-ordination with the biodiversity and the landscape requirements (as set out above), providing landscape and wildlife corridors through the Site. Effects of the Proposed Development on flood risk and drainage are not considered to be Significant as a result of these final design parameters. Further details are provided in the EIA Scoping Report (Appendix 2.1).

^a Whilst these effects were considered unlikely to be significant as part of the EIA Scoping Report (**Appendix 2.1**) and subsequently was not considered further within the EIA, alternative designs have been considered given its influence on the final layout of the Proposed Development.

References

¹ The Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Available at:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents> [Accessed: 16/01/202].

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Online Resource). Planning Practice Guidance Environmental Impact Assessment. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-impact-assessment> [Accessed: 16/01/2026].