Land South of Keeley Lane, Wootton

Site Assessment

This site assessment for Land South of Keeley Lane, Wootton is based on the Site Selection Assessment Methodology (SSAM) of July 2020. A suite of technical studies has been prepared which support this assessment including:

* Archaeology and Heritage
* Preliminary Environmental Appraisals including:
  + Landscape
  + Ecology
  + Arboriculture
* Preliminary Transport Assessment (including proposed vehicular access drawing)
* Civils Technical Note including:
  + Flood Risk
  + Drainage

This assessment is also supported by a Vision Document, of August 2020 which has been informed by the technical studies.

| **Assessment questions – is the site** | **Assessment Criteria** | | |
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| **Air quality** – 1. Improve air quality | | | |
| 1a. Within or adjoining the urban area, a defined settlement policy area or built form of a settlement | ? | The site is adjoining Wootton which is defined as a key service centre. | |
| 1b. Accessible on foot to a food store? | + | The site is within 15 minutes’ walk of the Tesco Express food store located on Cause End Road. Accordingly, the site scores 6 out of 8 for this site assessment criteria based on the SSAM. | |
| 1c. Accessible on foot to a primary school? | + | The site is within 15-minute walk of the Wootton Lower School and 19 minutes’ walk of Wootton Upper School. The site scores 6 out of 8 for this site assessment criteria based on the SSMA. | |
| 1d. Accessible on foot or by bus to a major employer? | + | The site is within 5 minutes’ walk of a bus stop with a regular bus service which enables travel 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday. The bus stops located on Wootton Road to the north east of the site, known as Keeley Corner are served by the 53 and C1 services which provide connections to Bedford, Kempston and Milton Keynes. The 53 service operates approximately every 20 minutes on weekdays and hourly at the weekend and provides a link for commuters tying in with typical working hours. | |
| 1e. Outside, adjoining or within the air quality management area? | + | The site is not within or adjoining the air quality management area. | |
| **Biodiversity and green infrastructure** – 2. Protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity and habitats. | | | |
| 2a. Within or adjoining a site of nature conservation importance / within the impact risk zone of a SSSI / Natura 2000 site? | + | The site is not within or adjoining a site of nature conservation importance or the impact zone of a SSSI / Natura 2000 site. | |
| 2b. In an area where protected species are known or likely to exist? | + | There are no known protected species present on site that would prevent residential development.  The site is relatively unconstrained ecologically, no statutory or non-statutory designated sites are considered to be at risk of any material and adverse effects as a result of the proposed development. The habitats present on parcels are generally of moderate to low intrinsic ecological value, and given the small size of the site, it is considered that development of the site would have a minimal effect on local biodiversity.  The habitats present on parcels are generally of moderate to low intrinsic ecological value, and given the small size of the site, it is considered that development of the site would have a minimal effect on local biodiversity. Some habitats considered of local level value are present but subject to appropriate masterplan design, in accordance with the design principles outlined, adverse effects upon these habitats can be readily avoided, mitigated or compensated for and no net loss to biodiversity achieved.  A number of detailed baseline protected species surveys will be required to accompany any planning application for the site, together with an assessment of potential effects and strategies to avoid, mitigate or compensate for such effects. However, it is considered that through the adoption of industry standard impact avoidance and mitigation measures, any adverse effects on protected species can be appropriately addressed to ensure no net loss to biodiversity, in accordance with national planning policy. | |
| 2c. Potentially able to achieve a net gain in biodiversity? | + | Delivery of the site will achieve a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%. | |
| 2d. Able to link into the green infrastructure opportunity network? | 0 | The site is not within or adjoining the green infrastructure opportunity network.  Development of this site provides the opportunity deliver areas of open space through green corridors across the site that will link with off-site habitats. | |
| **Climate change and energy** – 3. Reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and improve energy efficiency | | | |
| 3a. Proposing a renewable energy scheme or extra energy efficiency standards? | + | Development of the site will deliver energy efficiency standards that go beyond current normal requirements.  Environmental Protection and Enhancement – Through a range of design measures development of this site will aim to protect and enhance the local environment, through:   * Design of homes to utilise sustainable materials and construction methods to reduce resource use and impacts on the environment; * Use of measures to reduce pollution during construction and operation including measures related to noise pollution, air quality and water pollution; * The development will be designed to minimise the impact of the development on the site habitats and wildlife as well as a range of mitigation and enhancement measures to achieve at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity; and * Measures to manage waste during both construction and occupation to reduce waste and maximise recycling.   Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change – The development will incorporate a range of measures to reduce carbon emissions, mitigating the effects of climate change, and adaptation measures to ensure the long term resilience of the development to the effects of climate change. Measures include:   * Homes designed in accordance with the energy hierarchy and a fabric first approach to reduce energy use and carbon emissions with homes achieving a 10% reduction in energy demand; * Installation of water efficient fittings to target water use of 110l/p/d, beyond the requirements of the Building Regulations; * Development of new homes in Flood Zone 1 and inclusion of a surface water management system including SuDS to manage the 1 in 100 annual probability plus 40% climate change rainfall event; and * Homes designed to minimise the risk of overheating taking into account the UKCP18 climate projections. | |
| 3b.Within or adjoining the urban area, a defined settlement policy area or the built form of a settlement? |  | See assessment at 1a above | |
| 3c. Accessible on foot to a food store? | + | See assessment at 1b above | |
| 3d. Accessible on foot to a primary school? | + | See assessment at 1c above |  |
| 3e. Accessible on foot or bus to a major employer? | + | See assessment at 1d above |  |
| **Cultural heritage and historic environment** – 4. Conserve, sustain and enhance the historic environment. | | | |
| 4a. Likely to impact on designated or non-designated heritage assets or their settings? | x | An Archaeology and Heritage Appraisal has been produced by EDP in support of this call for sites submission. It considers the primary archaeological and heritage issues in relation to the proposed allocation of the site in the Bedford Borough Local Plan. The key findings of the EDP report are summarised as follows.  Three designated heritage assets are identified as drawing significance from the site, all of which are Grade II listed buildings. However, in each instance the nature of this association is such that the site makes no more than a ‘very limited’ or ‘negligible’ contribution, and sensitive masterplanning could minimise or otherwise avoid the potential for harm to these assets through the allocation/development of the site.  In the instances of the two listed buildings where there is likely to be residual harm, this would only be very small or negligible, and unquestionably at the lower/lowest end of less than substantial harm. Any residual harm would need to be clearly and convincingly justified (paragraph 194 of the NPPF) and balanced against the public benefits of implementing a residential scheme on the site (paragraph 196 of the NPPF) and it would be a matter of judgement for the decision maker to decide its acceptability. Therefore, in terms of designated heritage assets, there is no reason why the site should not be included  in the Local Plan, and every reason to believe (based on the indicative masterplan) that a future application would be NPPF compliant.  In terms of non-designated heritage assets, the site is identified as having a moderate potential to contain archaeological remains from the Roman period, albeit most likely heavily truncated and of no greater than low value. It has a low potential to contain archaeological remains from any other periods, apart from very low value features and deposits related to medieval and later farming practices.  As such, the site has a low potential to contain archaeological remains that would be of such significance as to warrant preservation *in situ* and influence its capacity or deliverability for residential development.  In terms of the ridge and furrow within the site, this forms one small part of a much wider area of earthworks that extends to the west and south, which is not considered to be of more than local/low value. The ridge and furrow in the north, east and centre of the site has either been removed or heavily eroded by post-medieval quarrying and modern farming practices.  Two ‘historic buildings’ are close to the site to the west and north, which are identified as being of no more than low or very low/negligible significance. They draw a limited contribution to this from the site, as an area of undeveloped farmland with otherwise no known historic or functional links.  When considering the potential for harm to these non-designated heritage assets, paragraph 197 of the NPPF requires a ‘balanced judgement’, having “*regard to the scale of harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset*”. In this context, it should be noted that none of the non-designated heritage assets identified as potentially being affected are of greater than ‘low’ value, and, in the instance of the ridge and furrow and the two ‘historic buildings’, the level of harm is also ‘limited’, ‘very limited’ or ‘negligible’. Therefore, non-designated heritage assets are not considered to be constraints of such magnitude that they should preclude the allocation or future development of the site.  In conclusion, it is the finding of the Archaeology and Heritage Appraisal that the potential impacts of the draft allocation on designated and non-designated heritage assets are of insufficient scale to warrant development being prevented or severely restricted, such as to make its deliverability unviable. Therefore, in archaeological and heritage terms, there is no reason as to why the site should not continue to be allocated, given that there is every reason to believe that it could be delivered in accordance with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and the provisions in the adopted Local Plan (2030). | |
| **Employment, business, retail and tourism** – 5. Promote strong, sustained and balanced economic growth, stimulating job creation across a range of sectors. | | | |
| 5a. Likely to increase future economic and employment opportunities? | 0 | The proposal is not employment related.  It should be noted however that the proposed development will contribute to positive economic growth through construction and occupation, providing sustainable new homes, supporting the aims of the NPPF.  The economic benefits of construction are well known with considerable direct and indirect positive impacts resulting from new housing construction.  Further positive economic impacts of the proposed development resulting from the occupation of new homes and related increase in local population are noted as follows:   * The construction of up to 50 new homes will increase the population resulting in local benefits through the demand for goods and services; and * The increase in local population will also help support local facilities, groups and stores helping promote the vitality of Wootton. | |
| **Employment, business, retail and tourism** – 6. Promote vital and viable town centres. | | | |
| 6a. Proposing a main town centre use in, on the edge of or outside of a town centre? | 0 | Proposal does not include a town centre use. | |
| Heath and wellbeing – 7. Encourage and support physical activity. | | | |
| 7a. Within 400m of an existing open space or proposing open space within it? | + | The proposed development includes publicly accessible open space which will include an equipped children’s play area. | |
| 7b. Within 800m of a sports facility or proposing a sports facility within it? | + | The site is with 800m of the Wootton Blues FC football pitches as the crown flies measured from the centre of the site (the walking distance is circa 1km). | |
| **Landscape and townscape** – 8. Protect and enhance landscape and townscape character and the sense of place in settlements. | | | |
| 8a. Likely to have a significant adverse impact on the surrounding landscape? | 0 | The proposal is likely to have a neutral effect on the landscape.  Due primarily to the enclosure created by existing landscape features within the local context and intervisibility with existing built form, the site has a reduced landscape sensitivity.  The site is barely perceptible from the wider setting and has well-established urbanising influences in close proximity to it, being well contained by both existing built form and mature landscape features. It is likely that the majority of landscape and visual effects resulting from proposed development within the site would be limited to receptors in close proximity to them.  The development of the site provides an opportunity to enhance and augment the remaining landscape features across the site and along its boundaries. Further, landscaping measures included within the promoted development would be able to provide targeted mitigation where necessary, which would also be effective at promoting biodiversity gains. | |
| 8b. Within the existing settlement form? | + | The site adjoins Wootton which is a key service centre with a defined settlement policy area. | |
| **Land, soil and water** – 9. Maximise development on previously developed land and avoid loss of high quality agricultural land. | | | |
| 9a. On previously developed land | X | The site is not previously developed land as defined in the NPPF. | |
| 9b. On best and most versatile agricultural land i.e. grade 1, 2 or 3a? | X | The site is identified as grade 3a and grade 3b on www.magic.gov.uk which confirm the site was subject to a detailed ALC survey which was carried out in in accordance with the current MAFF ALC Guidelines. Although the Site comprises of some “best and most versatile agricultural land” less than 3 hectares grade 3a, this is not a sufficient quantity to be considered significant. Therefore the development of the Site for non-agricultural development is in accordance with policy advice set out in the Framework. | |
| **Land, soil and water** – 10. Protect the quality and quantity of water resources. | | | |
| 10a. Within a groundwater source protection zone? | + | The site is not located in a source protection zone. | |
| **Land, soil and water** – 11. Minimise flood risk | | | |
| At risk of flooding? | + | The site is within flood zone 1 (areas that have been shown to be at less than 0.1% chance of flooding in any year). | |
| **Population, housing and community** – 12. Promote good quality housing, ensuring an appropriate mix of house types and sizes | | | |
| 12a. likely to provide a mix of housing, including affordable housing? | + | The site will provide a mix of housing and include policy compliant level of affordable housing. | |
| 12b. Able to address a particular housing need? | + | The site is capable of providing housing to meet an identified housing need such as housing suitable for the elderly. | |
| **Population, housing and community** – 13. Provide for residents’ needs and improve access to community services and facilities | | | |
| 13a Within 800m of a facility where cultural or social activities can be accessed? | + | The site is located within 800m of facilities where cultural or social actives can take place including the Legstraps Public House, Wootton Library, Wooton Methodist Church, St Marys Church Hall and Wootton Baptist Church. | |
| **Population, housing and community** – 14. Promote social cohesion, the prevention of crime and reduce the fear of crime. | | | |
| 14a. Likely to encourage social cohesion? | 0 | Neutral, it is noted however that the site will provide POS and a play area which will be available for use to the wider community. | |
| 14b. Likely to make the area safer? | + | The development will increase public surveillance along Keeley Lane and the PROW through the site. | |
| **Transport** – 15. Reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable modes of transport | | | |
| 15a. Within or adjoining the urban area, a defined settlement policy area or the built form or a small settlement? |  | See assessment at 1a above | |
| 15b. Accessible on foot to a food store? | + | See assessment at 1b above | |
| 15c. Accessible on foot to a primary school? | + | See assessment at 1c above | |
| 15d. Accessible on foot or bus to a major employer? | + | See assessment at 1d above | |
| 15e. Able to connect with the highway without constraint | + | No access constrains. A detailed access drawing has been prepared and included in the Preliminary Transport Assessment. | |
| 15f. Able to be developed without causing highway or junction capacity issues? | + | The Preliminary Transport Assessment prepared for this site confirms that the proposed vehicle movements associated with the development of up to 50 new homes at this site are low and would not result in a materially cumulative severe impact on the local highway network. | |

**Constraints**

Important open spaces and views into and out of the settlement

The site is not located in an important village open space or urban space on the Local Plan Policies Map and is not subject to policies AD40 and AD43 of the Allocations and Designations Local Plan.

Contaminated land, hazards and pollution

There are no records of any contamination of the site and it is not near a hazardous site / pipleline and the development of the site is not likely to cause land/water pollution.

Minerals and waste

The site does not include an active or former minerals or waste site, nor does it fall within a mineral safeguarding area.

**Other considerations**

Education

Wootton Lower School and Wootton Upper School are located within 15 minutes’ and 19 minutes’ walk from the site respectively.

Ability to deliver necessary infrastructure and services

The site has the capacity to deliver publicly accessible open space with play areas. A future planning application could provide developer contributions towards community facilities should there be a need.

**Overall Conclusion**

Contribution to strategy

The emerging local plan’s development strategy has not yet been identified, however, we strongly recommend that it includes new housing in key service centres such as Wootton. In accordance with the draft vision set out in the emerging Local Plan development of the site would deliver well-planned growth avoiding areas of flood risk and support the creation of strong, safe and sustainable local communities in environments that facilitate healthy living.

Sustainability objectives

This assessment identifies that the site rates positively against the vast majority of relevant sustainability objectives. The site scores well in terms of accessibility being within acceptable walking distance of a food store, primary school, and bus stop served by a regular service. There are no known ecological constraints present on site that would prevent residential development and the proposed scheme would deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%. Development of this site provides the opportunity to deliver areas of open space through green corridors across the site that will link with off-site habitats. The development will deliver energy efficiency standards that go beyond current normal requirements, including a range of measures to reduce carbon emissions, mitigating the effects of climate change, and adaptation measures to ensure the long term resilience of the development to the effects of climate change. The proposal will include publicly accessible open space, children’s play areas and the opportunity for publicly accessible sports facilities.

The matters which score poorly are previously developed land (as the site is greenfield) and best and most versatile agricultural land (which affects most land in Bedford Borough). Otherwise the site scores very well in relation to sustainability objectives.

Accessibility

The site scores 6 of 8 in terms of accessibility to a food store being located within 15-minute walk; and 6 out of 8 for accessibility to a primary school.

The site is also within 10-minute walk of a bus stop served by a regular service (every 20 minutes) to Bedford Town Centre (approximately 25-minute journey) and Kempston (approximately 9-minute journey).

Constraints

A full suite of technical studies has been prepared which support this assessment that confirms there are no constraints that would limit residential development of the site.

Settlement Character

The site adjoins Wootton which is a key service centre with a defined settlement policy area. Residential development is located to the immediate east of the site. Development of this site would provide a logical extension to Wootton.

Landscape

The proposal is likely to have a neutral effect on the landscape. The Landscape assessment supporting this call for sites submission concludes that the development of the site provides an opportunity to enhance and augment the remaining landscape features across the site and along its boundaries. Further, landscaping measures included within the promoted development would be able to provide targeted mitigation where necessary, which would also be effective at promoting biodiversity gains.

The Site is immediately available, in single ownership, and is able to deliver 50 dwellings plus land for open space. This would make an important contribution to BBC’s housing land supply and will assist the function of Wootton as a village. The Site is therefore commended to BBC for development.