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18th August 2020

By Email

Dear Jane,

ADDRESS: LAND TO THE WEST OF MOUNT ROAD, LEEK
APPLICANT: BLOOR HOMES NORTH WEST
APPLICATION: REQUEST FOR EIA SCREENING OPINION

Further to our recent pre-application discussion regarding the forthcoming detailed planning application for residential development at Land off Kniveden Lane, Leek ('the site'), I write on behalf of Bloor Homes North West to request a formal Screening Opinion under Regulation 6(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (herein 'EIA Regulations 2017'). Its purpose is to ascertain whether, in the opinion of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for the proposed residential development at the site.

The description of development is as follows:

> *'Residential development (Use Class C3) including new publicly accessible open space, landscaping, car parking and ancillary works with new vehicular access from Kniveden Lane.'*

In accordance with Regulation 6(2) this screening opinion letter provides the following:

- a plan sufficient to identify the land;
- a description of the development, including in-particular:
  - a description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works;
  - a description of the location of the development, with regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected;
- a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;
- to the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from:
  - the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and
  - the use of natural resources, in particular, soil, land, water and biodiversity; and
- such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the proposed development or any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.

EIA Threshold and Criteria

The EIA Regulations 2017 specify that certain types of development require an EIA to be undertaken. This includes development known as 'Schedule 2 development' which requires an EIA only if the development meets or exceeds given thresholds and is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size, or location.

The proposed development at the site is considered under Schedule 2 (10. Infrastructure Projects) and falls under category 10 (b) Urban Development Projects. This category sets a threshold of 150 residential units, over which the proposal needs to be screened by the Local Planning Authority to determine whether significant effects on the environment are likely and hence whether an EIA is required.

Planning practice guidance (2017) states that projects which do not exceed the relevant threshold or meet the criteria in the second column of the Schedule, or are not at least partly in a sensitive area, are not Schedule 2 development (Paragraph: 017 Reference ID: 4-017-20170728).

The more environmentally sensitive the location, the more likely it is that the effects on the environment will be significant and will require an Environmental Impact Assessment. Certain designated sites are defined in regulation 2(1) as sensitive areas and the thresholds and criteria in the second column of the table in Schedule 2 are not applied. All developments in, or partly in, such areas should be screened. These are:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites;
- National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
- World Heritage Sites and scheduled monuments (Paragraph: 032 Reference ID: 4-032-20170728).

The Site

The application site is greenfield in nature and extends to approximately 3.1ha. It is currently used for grazing sheep. The site is broadly rectangular in shape with the site topography generally sloping up from the south-western corner towards the northern and eastern boundaries.

The site is bound to the north by Kniveden Lane, to the east by Mount Road, to the south by an open field and beyond that by Pike Hall Farm, and to the west by residential properties on Moorland Road. The site boundary is demarcated by established hedgerows, wire fencing, and a stone wall along Mount Road.

The site is located immediately adjacent to the built-up area of Leek on its eastern side. The surrounding area can be characterised by residential development, agricultural farmland, and greenfield land used for the grazing of sheep. The surrounding residential properties are characterised by 2-4-bedroom, 2 storey semi-detached / detached dwellings and single storey bungalows.

Statutory Designations

The following designations are applicable to the site and surrounding area.

Heritage

The site is not subject to Listed Building, Conservation Area, or Schedule Ancient Monument designations. Approximately 400m to the south-west of the site is the grade II Listed Moorlands Hospital (list entry number: 1268665).

Flooding

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore carries a low probability of flooding.

Trees

There are no trees at the site subject to Tree Preservation Orders. However, immediately to the south of the site there are a number of protected trees (ref. SM280A1, SM280T4, SM280T3, SM280T2 and SM280T1).

Rights of Way

At the north of the site is a public right of way which connects Mount Road and Kniveden Lane. Staffordshire County Council (SCC) Environmental Land Management Interactive Map denotes the right of way as 'Leek Town 22'.

Landscape

The site is not subject to any statutory landscape designations.

The site lies within National Character Area 64: Potteries and Churnet Valley (NCA 15) in the Natural England National Character Assessment. At a local level, the site is situated within the Landscape Character Type 'Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands', and within this, sub type 'Farmland'.

Nature Conservation

The site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations.

The following European designated sites are within 10km of the site:

- South Pennine Moors SAC (4km north east);
- South Pennine Moors SPA (5.6km north east); and
- Peak District Dales SAC (8.9km east).

There is one locally-designated site within 2km of the site, the Borough Park Fields Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which is located 1.2km north west of the site.

Summary

The site is not subject to any statutory nature conservation, landscape, heritage designation, and is situated within Flood Zone 1 (low probability).

Proposed Development

The planning application seeks full planning permission for 98 residential dwellings together with publicly accessible open space, landscaping and a new access from Kniveden Lane to the north. The proposed residential development includes a mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed dwellings as set out Table 1 below.

Table 1: Accommodation Schedule

Beds	Storeys	No.
1	1	8
2	2	10
3	2	34
4	2	46
Total		**98**

Access

Vehicular access to the Site will be achieved via Kniveden Lane to the north. Discussions are ongoing with SCC Highways as to any wider requirements in the vicinity of the site.

Publicly Accessible Open Space and Landscaping

An area of publicly accessible open space is provided around the public footpath to the north east of the site together with a landscape buffer with advanced planting along the site's eastern boundary.

Technical Assessments

An experienced project team has been instructed by the Applicant to undertake the following technical assessments to inform the scheme proposals:

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Transport Statement
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Phase 2 Geo-Environmental Report
- Noise Impact Assessment
- Phase 1 Habitat Survey
- Arboricultural Survey
- Landscape Proposals

Through the above assessments it is has been confirmed that the site is not within an environmentally sensitive location.

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

In the emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan the site is allocated for residential development as part of allocation Policy DSL 2 Land at The Mount, Leek. The emerging Local Plan is at an 'advanced stage' with main modifications accepted by an independent Planning Inspector. The emerging Local Plan can therefore be afforded 'substantial weight' in decision making.

The potential for residential development at the site has been assessed and deemed acceptable by a Planning Inspector subject to the provisions of emerging Local Plan Policy DSL 2. The provisions of emerging Policy DSL 2 ensure any adverse impacts can be mitigated.

Emerging Local Plan Policy DSL 2 Land at The Mount, Leek

Emerging Local Plan allocation Policy DSL 2 encompasses the site along with sites known as LE066, LE140, LE142a, and LE142b. As shown on the emerging proposals map, approximately 10.62ha is allocated for housing with the potential to accommodate 345 dwellings and 0.76ha for education provision (Use Class D1).

A Development Statement and Illustrative Masterplan was submitted to SMDC as part of the Local Plan 2016-2031 Submission Version consultation in February 2018. The masterplan illustrates how residential development and land safeguarded for a new First School (LE140) could be suitably and sustainably accommodated at Land at The Mount. A updated masterplan will be provided with the planning application including indicative phasing.

This application represents the first phase of development to come forward at the Mount.

Conclusion

The proposed development of 98 residential dwellings does not meet or exceed the threshold and criteria under category 10 (b) Urban Development Projects and therefore it is not classed as Schedule 2 development and should not be considered 'EIA development'.

We would be grateful if you could confirm in accordance with Regulation 6(6)(a) a Screening Opinion within 3 weeks beginning with the date of receipt of this request.

Should you have any queries or wish to discuss then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Sinton
Associate Director – PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Enclosures. Site Location Plan