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***The Town and Country Planning Act 1990  
The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations  
2017 (the 2017 Regulations)***

**SCREENING OPINION – Land Adjacent To Blackford Mill Farm, Stratford Road, Wootton Wawen**

**Proposal:** Screening opinion for proposed development for up to 300 residential units, including affordable homes, with associated infrastructure, including new site access, landscaping and public open space.

Dear Polly,

I refer to your request for a screening opinion from this authority, received on 11 March 2026.

I have considered the proposed development in respect of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and have referred to the content of the Environmental Impact Assessment section of the Planning Practice Guidance.

The following document has been submitted:

- Land Adjacent To Blackford Mill Farm, Stratford Road, Wootton Wawen - EIA Screening Request – 11/03/2026

This response is based on the above information, including the location of the site and its geographical coverage.

**Site and Surroundings Description**

The site is in the countryside and comprises of agricultural land and grassland fields located outside of and to the south of the Built-Up Area Boundary of (BUAB) of Henley in Arden and is bound by the A4189 Warwick Rd to the north and the A4300 Stratford Rd to the west. Wootton Wawen lies to the south. The River Alne runs through the middle of the site in a north to south direction.

At the time of the site visit the agricultural land appeared to have an arable use. In terms of agricultural land quality, whilst some of the agricultural land within the red line area is classified as Grade 3 (Good to Moderate), the remainder is classified as Grade 2 (Very Good). A grade II listed building (Blackford Mill Farmhouse) lies directly adjacent to the site. A Public Right of Way 192/SD188/1 runs diagonally across the site.

The majority of the site is within flood zone 1 except for the centre of the site where the River Alne runs north to south (flood zones 2 and 3).

The nearest SSSIs are Oak Tree Farm Meadows SSSI, which is approximately 4.5km to the north east, and Bannam's Wood SSSI which is located around 4km to the south west. There are also additional SSSIs within 10km of the site; these are Ipsley Alders Marsh SSSI, Ullenhall Meadows SSSI, Merriman's Hill Farm Meadows SSSI, Snitterfield and Bearley Bushes SSSI and Wilmcote Quarry SSSI.

There is ancient woodland approximately 800m to the south east.

### **Approach adopted to inform the screening opinion**

The Regulations require Environmental Impact Assessment procedures to apply to all applications for Environmental Impact Assessment development which is defined by Regulation 2(1) as meaning development which is:

1. *Schedule 1 development; or*
2. *Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. Development of a type listed in the left hand column of Schedule 2 is Schedule 2 development only if:*
  - a. *it is located wholly or partly in a sensitive area (defined in Reg. 2 as including areas like SSSIs, National Parks, AONBs, Scheduled Monuments, World Heritage Sites and European Sites; or*
  - b. *any applicable threshold or criterion in the second column is respectively exceeded or met in relation to the development.*
3. *Changes or extension to Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 development which may have significant adverse impacts on the environment. If the change or extension itself constitutes Schedule 1 development then assessment is always required; otherwise, it counts as Schedule 2 development.*

The proposal is not a Schedule 1 development because it is not one of the projects listed in Schedule 1 development.

### **Does the development fall within Schedule 2 and, if it does, does the development meet the relevant criteria in Column 2 of Schedule 2?**

In the opinion of the Local Authority, the development is a Schedule 2 Development under 10 Infrastructure projects - (b) Urban development projects, including the construction of shopping centres and car parks, sports stadiums, leisure centres and multiplex cinemas.

The criteria for Part 10 (b) Urban Development Projects are given in column 2 as either:

- “(i) The development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development; or  
(ii) the development includes more than 150 dwellings; or  
(iii) the overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares.”

The proposal is for more than 150 dwellings and the site area is approximately 23.26ha, which is above the threshold of 5 hectares established by the Regulations beyond which a development is deemed Schedule 2 development.

The Regulations are clear to emphasise that projects which qualify to be within the list in Schedule 2 require an Environmental Impact Assessment only where they are likely to have significant environmental effects by reason of their nature, size and location. The key test in this regard is not only about the size of the development but more fundamentally, the significance of the impacts of the proposal on the environment.

As set out in Planning Practice Guidance:

*'Environmental Impact Assessment should not be a barrier to growth and will only apply to a small proportion of projects considered within the town and country planning regime. Local planning authorities have a well-established general responsibility to consider the environmental implications of developments which are subject to planning control. The 2017 Regulations integrate Environmental Impact Assessment procedures into this framework and should only apply to those projects which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. Local planning authorities and developers should carefully consider if a project should be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment. If required, they should limit the scope of assessment to those aspects of the environment that are likely to be significantly affected.'*

Consequently, only a small number of projects will require an Environmental Impact Assessment (including large scale housing and major infrastructure developments) because, the environmental implications would also be subject to consideration in the planning application process, assessments (i.e., planning considerations and matters) and subsequent controls. Moreover, an Environmental Impact Assessment does not, in anyway, permit development.

### **Is the development likely to have significant effects on the environment?**

Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations provides selection criteria for screening schedule 2 development which falls into 3 broad categories:

- 1) Characteristics of development,
- 2) Location of development; and
- 3) Types and characteristics of the potential impact.

### **Assessment of the environmental implications of the proposed development.**

#### **Schedule 2 selection criteria**

##### Characteristics of Development

1. The characteristics of development must be considered having regard, in particular, to:

(a) *the size and design of the whole development;*

The development as proposed would introduce up to 300 dwellings at the site, with associated infrastructure, including new site access, landscaping and public open space. This is considered to be large scale in the overall spatial context of the locality and on land that is in the countryside.

(b) *cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;*

To the west of Stratford Rd, adjacent to the site is Warwickshire College. In recent years the site has been granted permission for a Care Village for over 55s (15/03669/OUT) and the erection of a 64-bed care home and the erection of 3 no. assisted living apartment blocks (C2) (17/03206/FUL). Further approved development at this site includes the demolition of former College buildings, erection of 39 new age restricted apartments, 19 new townhouses and change of use, refurbishment and conversion of Arden House into 15 apartments (21/04058/FUL).

Due to the scale of development and proximity to the existing settlement this could result in a cumulative impact on the rural landscape. However, I consider that this urbanisation of the landscape could be adequately assessed and mitigated as part of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA).

*(c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;*

There would be a significant level of development and use of natural resources to construct up to 300 dwellings on areas of agricultural land some of which is classified as Grade 2 (Very Good), which would be lost as a result of the development.

The centre of the site is within flood zones 2 and 3 which means that development has potential impacts on flooding.

Any impact on biodiversity would be assessed through the planning remit by the submission of ecological surveys and the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

In respect to water courses and contamination, detailed reports will be submitted with the application. These must demonstrate how any contamination will be fully examined and remedied (where applicable) as well as any water impacts (i.e., discharges, surface water runoff, etc.) which could result from the proposed application. Consultations will also take place with Environmental Health and the Lead Local Flood Authority who will fully examine the submitted reports as well undertaking their own site assessment on the potential impact from the development.

*(d) the production of waste;*

Waste would be produced during the construction phase but would be limited once the development is completed. Construction waste would be managed and disposed of in accordance with the applicable legislation and via the use of a CEMP (Construction Environmental Management Plan), where necessary.

*(e) pollution and nuisances;*

There would be a degree of traffic, noise and nuisance during the construction phase of development, which given the large scale of the site could affect the amenity and tranquillity levels within vicinity of the site. The impacts of noise and disturbance could affect users of the public right of way running through the site.

No chemical pollution would result from the development and once completed, there would be no obvious source of noise pollution, other than residential activity. As part of the planning application process the Council's Environmental Health team and the Environment Agency would be consulted.

The creation of a new access has the potential to cause increased noise, air pollution, light pollution and disturbance to existing residents living in the vicinity of the site.

The site is located in the open countryside. As such any lighting would have to be duly assessed and Environmental Health and the Local Highways Authority would consider the impact of lighting on the neighbouring

properties. The impact of light on protected species would also be considered by the County Ecologist as part of the planning application process.

The number of traffic movements to and from the site would be assessed as part of a Transport Assessment.

A Flood Risk Assessment along with Surface Water Drainage Strategy and Foul Drainage scheme will be required during the planning application. The Lead Local Flood Authority and Severn Trent will be consulted on a planning application.

There are a number of farms in the vicinity of the site which could produce pollutive impacts on residents of the site, such as noise, odours, crop spraying etc.

Due to the scale, siting and ground level difference across the site the potential visual impact within this part of the rural landscape, could be significant. However, this could be assessed via a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

- (f) *the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;*

The creation of a new access into the development site is a potential source of highway concerns.

A development of 300 dwellings would generate a population in the region of 700 people. The current proposals do not provide any shops or commercial premisses on site, do not provide any employment opportunities on site or provide healthcare or school requirements. The site is to the east of the A4300 Stratford Rd with the closest existing essential day to day living requirements and services to the north in Henley in Arden. The vast majority of pedestrian wheeled and cycle movements will therefore need to use the A4300. This brings increased risk to highway safety.

Adequate consultation would be undertaken with the relevant statutory consultees (i.e., highways, environmental health, etc.) to assess any potential incidents and/or accidents before the commencement of development in respect to highways and land contamination. Contractors and construction workers would implement Health and safety guidelines to reduce the risk of accidents, and this would feed into a CEMP, where necessary.

A Traffic Assessment and Road Safety Audit would also consider whether the increased risk of traffic accidents would necessitate any additional controls. I consider this approach satisfactory.

There is not considered to be the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge, that would require the submission of an Environmental Statement.

No other specific risks have been identified.

- (g) *the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).*

The increase in traffic movements into and out of the site and the changes traffic flows along the A4300 Stratford Rd and wider transport network could have implications for air quality in the vicinity of the site and wider area.

The River Alne runs through the centre of the site. Given the agricultural use of parts of the site, a ground contamination assessment would be required as part of the planning application process. Environmental Health, the Lead Local Flood Authority and the Environment Agency would be consulted on any future drainage proposals.

### Location of Development

2. The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, having regard, in particular, to:

*(a) the existing and approved land use;*

The site comprises of a mix of grassland fields and agricultural land .

*(b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;*

The site comprises Grade 3 (Good to Moderate) and Grade 2 (Very Good) agricultural land.

The site is part of an extensive minerals safeguarding area but has no specific permissions relating to minerals extraction.

*(c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas -*

- (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;*
- (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;*
- (iii) mountain and forest areas;*
- (iv) nature reserves and parks;*
- (v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation;*
- (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;*
- (vii) densely populated areas;*
- (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.*

The River Ane runs through the site and would need to be safeguarded from increased water flows and pollutive effects of the construction and operational phases of the development.

The site is within the Arden Special landscape Area. However, there are no International or European designated sites (Ramsar, Special Protection Area or Special Areas of Conservation) within close proximity.

The site can be viewed from Public Right of Way 192/SD188/1 running across the site. The site will also be viewed from the A4300 Stratford Rd to the west and the A4189 Warwick Rd to the north. It is also possible that there could be views from Pettiford Lane to the east.

The site is close to the Henley in Arden Conservation Area, which is approximately 200m to the north. A grade II listed building (Blackford Mill Farmhouse) lies directly adjacent to the site. As such, it is considered that the proposal has potential to impact heritage assets. Impacts on Archaeological deposits are unknown and would require further investigation at planning application stage. This can be achieved through the submission of a Statement of Significance and Archaeological Assessment.

There is no current information to suggest that Land Contamination is a major issue with the exception of the agricultural nature of the site area which is likely to need contamination investigations. This can be achieved through a contaminated land assessment.

### Types and Characteristics of the Potential Impact

3. The likely significant effects of the development on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in the first two selection criteria categories above, with regard to the impact of the development on the factors specified in regulation 4(2), taking into account:

*(a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);*

The proposal is extensive in scale and I consider the 300 residential units, including affordable homes, with associated infrastructure, including new site access, landscaping and public open space would be highly visible in the landscape due to their number and massing within the 23.26ha extent of the site. However, this would be considered as part of a LVIA and the submission of mitigation planting proposals.

*(b) the nature of the impact;*

The main impacts would be to the traffic flows, highway network, highway safety for road users and pedestrians and cyclists; landscape character and visual impact from the built form of the development and its associated lighting; impacts on ecology and biodiversity; impacts on drainage and flooding; impacts on the use and enjoyment of the local PRow network. There would also be impacts on neighbours' amenity in terms of construction noise and dust during the construction phase and additional traffic noise and lighting at the operational stage. Impacts on archaeology are as yet unknown and would require further investigation. Impacts on other heritage assets and not considered to be significant; but this would be subject to the submission of a Statement of Significance along with comments from relevant consultees.

*(c) the transboundary nature of the impact;*

The proposal would change the rural character and appearance of the area, which would affect views from nearby PROWs and longer distance views. Nonetheless, the development would have fairly localised impacts and I consider that the proposal would not have a transboundary impact.

*(d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;*

The proposal would have an intense impact on the rural character and appearance of the area but would be fairly limited in its complexity.

*(e) the probability of the impact;*

The probability of the impact is likely and would be permanent. However, the impact could be reduced to a certain extent through the imposition of planning conditions to secure on-site landscaping, traffic management, noise mitigation, archaeological evaluation, flood risk mitigation and ecological net gains.

*(f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;*

The proposal is not temporary or readily reversible and as such, it is considered essential to fully determine the likely environmental impacts that would result from the proposal.

*(g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;*

The impact of the proposed development (particularly on the landscape, traffic generation, heritage assets, flooding and important natural environment) would be more keenly felt due to existing and more recent development in the nearby area. The cumulative impact on the rural landscape and important ecological and archaeological sites could be significant, but would be assessed as part of the planning remit.

*(h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.*

Further assessment work in respect of key factors such as habitat, protected species & biodiversity; hydrology; traffic; noise; air quality; contamination; landscape and visual impact assessment; archaeology etc could identify measures to reduce and mitigate impacts. The development impacts could potentially be reduced through the imposition of planning conditions to part mitigate the impacts, such as for example securing on-site landscaping and ecological gains, limiting noise levels and other potential mitigation measures.

## **Conclusion**

In considering the thresholds and criteria for the identification of Schedule 2 development requiring Environmental Impact Assessment and indicative values for determining significant effects as set out in paragraph 058 of the PPG on EIA, the proposal is clearly for residential development over 150 dwellings, with a site area exceeding 5.0ha.

Key issues to consider are:

- traffic flows;
- highway network capacity;
- highway safety for road users and pedestrians and cyclists;
- landscape character and visual impact from the built form of the development and its associated lighting;
- impacts on ecology and biodiversity;
- impacts on drainage and flooding;
- impacts on the use and enjoyment of the local PRow network;

There would also be impacts on :

- neighbours' amenity in terms of construction noise and dust during the construction phase and additional traffic noise and lighting at the operational stage.
- Impacts on archaeology are as yet unknown and would require further investigation but there will be lesser impacts on other heritage assets.

On the basis of the details submitted and the evaluation of the scale and impacts of the proposal, based on the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations, the proposal is likely to not have a significant effect on the environment and can be adequately considered under the planning remit. As such an Environmental Impact Assessment will not be required to accompany any forthcoming planning application.

Should the legislation and/or guidance relating to Environmental Impact Assessments change, or the details of the project alter, or hitherto unknown evidence and/or information emerges regarding the sensitivity of the site and surrounds and/or the environmental impacts of the development, then the considerations described in this letter may no longer hold true and I would encourage you to then seek further revised opinion from this Authority.

Should the details of the project alter, or hitherto unknown evidence regarding the sensitivity of the site should arise, the considerations described in this letter may no longer hold true and I would encourage you to then seek further revised opinion from this Authority.

This Screening Opinion will be placed on the public register and the Screening Opinion is valid for two years.

Yours sincerely



Stuart McIver  
Senior Planner