

Town & Country Planning (EIA) Regulations 2017
Secretary of State Screening Direction – Written Statement

Application name:	South Caldecotte, Milton Keynes
SoS case reference:	PCU/EIASCR/Y0435/3233469
Schedule and category of development:	10a Industrial estate development

Full statement of reasons as required by 5(5)(a) of the 2017 EIA Regulations including conclusions on likelihood of significant environmental effects.

The Secretary of State has considered whether the above proposal is likely to have significant environmental effects. He has undertaken this screening taking into account the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. In doing so he considers the main matters to be addressed are:

1 (a) – (f) regarding characteristics of development

The proposal is for the development of the site for up to 241,548 m² (2,600,000 sq ft) employment use, comprising of up to; 192,159 m² (Including mezzanine floors) of warehousing and distribution (Class B8) floorspace with ancillary B1a office space, up to 48,040 m² (Including mezzanine floors) of general industrial (Class B2) floorspace with ancillary B1a office space, 999 m² of a small standalone office (Class B1) and 350 m² small café (Class A3) to serve the development; car and HGV parking areas, with earthworks, drainage and attenuation features and other associated infrastructure, a new primary access off Brickhill Street, alterations to Brickhill Street and provision of Grid Road reserve to Brickhill Street. The clearance of the existing Farm building and the redevelopment of the site will result in a change in the built form of the area. It will result in new buildings of a greater scale than previously developed. Whilst this will inevitably comprise a physical change to the locality, it is noted that the South Caldecotte Site lies to the south of Milton Keynes adjacent to a built-up area.

Some solid waste is likely during construction but is not likely to be significant due to the scale of the development. The proposal is unlikely to produce significant pollution during construction and significant impacts affecting human health are unlikely due to established industry standard Health and Safety measures. Some noise and vibration are expected during the construction phase, but this is unlikely to be significant and once the development is completed this would not be over and above what would be expected in a normal employment area.

Whilst the proposal will inevitably comprise a physical change to the locality, the addition of an employment site in this area is not considered to have likely significant effects.

2 (a)-(c) (i) – (viii) regarding location of development

The Site is currently in use for arable farm land and pasture, which is mainly identified as agricultural grade 3b on the Natural England maps and will be changed to 241,548 m² employment use. However, it is noted that the fields are of a lower grade 3b and it is not reported that this category of land is in short supply. The clearance of the existing Farm building and the redevelopment of the site will result in a change in the built form of the area. It will result in new buildings of a greater scale than previously developed. The Site is triangular and is bounded to the north by the Bletchley to Bedford railway line, which provides a visual and movement barrier. To the west lies the A5 trunk road, which is separated from the Site by belt of vegetation, limiting views into and through the Site. To the east is Brickhill Street, which is separated from the site by a hedge of varying height. Beyond the site to the north is a mixed residential and employment area known as Caldecotte.

It is noted that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been undertaken. The LVIA considers the key views from the A5 over the Site towards the Greensand Ridge and informs the maximum heights of buildings.

The LVIA assesses that the impact of the development will be highly localised. The site is identified as being well contained through a combination of lowland flat topography and established vegetation cover and intervening built form. In addition as part of the scheme, significant vegetation will be added.

Overall, whilst the LVIA identifies the desirability of mitigation to be taken forward through design stages, it does not identify that the development of the Site would have a level of impact that would be significant in relation to the overall landscape context. It is noted that the LVIA concludes that the proposals will not result in significant harm to the landscape character of visual environment.

Heritage Issues: As the proposed development is located within the setting of a Scheduled Monument, the remains of the Roman town of Magiovinium and Roman fort, which lies to the south-west of the site (list entry number: 1006943), the Secretary of State has consulted Historic England, the Government specialist advisers on heritage issues, to ascertain whether the proposed development would have significant environmental effects on these matters. Historic England has stated that the development has the potential to impact on heritage assets which are either of national importance, or potentially of national importance.

The Secretary of State has considered the evidence including the views of both the applicant and the Council together with the comments provided by Historic England and concludes that the proposal could potentially have significant environmental effects on heritage issues.

3(a) –(e) regarding characteristics of potential impact

It is reported that the Site is currently identified on the Local Plan Proposals Map as open countryside and as a linear park extension, this designation is proposed to be superseded by the allocation of the land as a strategic employment Site in the submitted Plan: MK.

MK allocates land to the north-east at South-East Milton Keynes for 3,000 new dwellings and associated infrastructure. By its nature as a residential scheme it's impacts would, cumulatively with those of South Caldecotte, not be significant.

It is reported that the site does contain an area of priority habitat that would be lost as a result of the development. It is considered that the scale of this loss and the deliverable mitigation measures outlined do not give rise to a significant effect on the environment.

It is noted that a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been carried out. This suggests a number of surveys to be done to accompany the proposed planning application. This will include:

- A detailed botanical survey of the Lowland Meadow area and additional fields which provide microclimatic variability
- Woodland survey on the three small woodland parcels on the Site
- Bat surveys for roosting bats and foraging/commuting bats
- Watercourse survey (Water voles/otters)
- Great Crested Newt surveys
- Reptile Surveys
- Winter and breeding bird surveys

The loss of the lowland meadow habitat is likely and a scheme of mitigation taking into account the results of the ecological survey will be proposed in order to offset any loss of biodiversity.

Subject to these surveys and a package of ecological mitigation measures it is suggested that any planning application itself would be able to adequately mitigate the impact on protected species and biodiversity.

I have consulted Natural England but have not received any comments outlining any concern regarding this issue. I therefore conclude that the surveys undertaken have provided sufficient details for mitigation measures to be proposed.

Conclusion

In cumulative terms it is noted that the site to the north-east has been allocated as part of a Strategic Urban Extension for 3,000 houses as part of the recently adopted Plan: MK. At Eaton Leys to the south-west of the site there is extant outline planning permission for approximately 600 houses. Due to the scale of the proposed development and other large-scale developments in the area, there is potential for likely significant cumulative impacts during the construction/operation phase in terms of noise, vibration and traffic.

The Secretary of State notes that Historic England have raised serious concerns about the potential impact of the development on heritage designations. In the absence of sufficiently detailed assessments of these issues, the Secretary of State is unable to conclude that the proposal would not have significant effects on the environment in terms of heritage.

Given the additional information provided and the advice received from Historic England the Secretary of State is persuaded that the addition of the employment site would give rise to significant environmental impacts and adverse cumulative impact to the extent that an environmental statement would be required. In reaching this conclusion the Secretary of State has also considered the measures proposed by the developer to mitigate the environmental impacts. He has, however, concluded that the proposed measures are not sufficient to obviate the need for an environmental impact assessment because of the extent of the impacts are unknown.

Is an Environmental Statement required?	Yes
---	-----

Name	Karen Rose
Date	27/09/2019