

Our ref : CPR/cjb/3682

23 December 2009

Mr A. Senior
Planning
Blaby District Council
Council Offices, Desford Road
Narborough, Leicestershire
LE19 2EP

Dear Mr Senior

**RE : LUBBESTHORPE SUSTAINABLE URBAN EXTENSION
REQUEST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT SCOPING OPINION**

You will be aware from preliminary meetings with our team that a comprehensive masterplan for a high quality mixed use urban extension is currently being prepared encompassing land at Lubbesthorpe.

In view of the scale of the development, we propose to prepare an Environmental Statement to accompany the eventual planning application, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

Please find attached our request for a scoping opinion, in accordance with Part IV, section 10 of the Regulations. As set out at paragraphs 14 and 25 of "Environmental Impact Assessment : A Guide to Procedures", we include a plan of the site, a brief description of the proposed development and a review of what we consider to be the possible effects on the environment.

Please let me know if you require any further information. It would also be helpful to have a list of the relevant contacts at the statutory consultees who are approached by yourselves for a scoping opinion. I look forward to meeting you at the design workshop on the 7th January. Have a good Christmas, and best wishes for the New Year.

Regards

Phil Rech
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LUBBESTHORPE

Blaby, Leicestershire

**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT
REQUEST FOR SCOPING OPINION**

**Hallam Land Management Limited
David Wilson Homes East Midlands
Davidsons Group**

December 2009



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Context

- 1.1 This is a request to Blaby District Council (BDC) for an Environmental Statement Scoping Opinion made on behalf of Hallam Land Management Limited, David Wilson Homes East Midlands and the Davidsons Group.
- 1.2 It is intended to submit an outline planning application for a high quality Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) at Lubbethorpe, west of Leicester, to help meet the requirements of the Regional Plan for the East Midlands (Regional Spatial Strategy), and the emerging Blaby District Council Core Strategy. The site area lies to the south of the existing Leicester Forest East residential area and neighbouring motorway services, encompassing land immediately west of the M1 and both north and south of the M69 (Figure1). Employment developments including Fosse Park, Meridian Business Park, Grove Farm Triangle and Meridian Leisure Park lie to the east of the M1.
- 1.3 The Project site extends across an area of approximately 400 ha and is separated into two main parcels by the M69. Currently the site consists of predominantly arable farmland with some pasture and occasional plantation woodlands. The deserted mediaeval village of Lubbethorpe, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), is situated around Abbey Farm. A further SAM (a rabbit warren) lies to the west of Beggars Lane. The parkland associated with Enderby Hall lies to the north of Leicester Lane. This will be retained primarily as open space.
- 1.4 The Highways Agency have published proposals to upgrade the M1 and the M1/M69 junction, with land being safeguarded for this purpose. The SUE will need to have regard to these proposals.

The Requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.5 Planning applications for certain types of development in England and Wales need to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement in order to comply with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment (England) Regulations 2008 ("2008 Regulations"). An Environmental Statement (ES) is to be prepared as part of the outline planning application for the development of this site. The ES will contain the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations. **The principal objective is to identify the potential for significant environmental effects arising from the Project.**

1.6 The ES will include information required by the 2008 Regulations i.e:

- **A description of the Project, comprising information on the site, design and size of the development;**
- **A description of the measures envisaged in order to avoid, reduce and if possible remedy significant adverse effects;**
- **The data required to identify and assess the main effects which the Project is likely to have on the environment;**
- **An outline of the main alternatives studied and an indication of the main reasons for the choice, taking into account the environmental effects;**
- **A non-technical summary of the information set out above.**

1.7 Each environmental issue will be considered in the following way:-

- **A description of baseline conditions;**
- **A description of the Project design proposals;**
- **A description of the likely significant effects of the Project resulting from:**
 - (a) **The existence of the Project;**
 - (b) **The use of natural resources;**
 - (c) **The emission of pollutants, the creation of nuisances and the elimination of waste;**
- **A description of cumulative effects;**
- **Mitigation envisaged to address any significant adverse effects is listed.**

Scoping Opinion

1.8 The purpose of this request is to seek a "Scoping Opinion" from the Local Planning Authority (LPA) pursuant to Regulation 10. This is the formal opinion of the LPA on the information to be supplied in the ES and enables the applicant to be clear about what the LPA and other appropriate consultees consider the main effects of the development are likely to be and therefore the topics on which the ES should focus.

1.9 The following information is therefore provided:-

- **A site location plan (Figure 1);**
- **A brief description of the nature and purpose of the Project;**
- **An indication of the possible environmental effects and a broad indication of their likely scale;**

- **Details of the EIA scope and methodologies proposed to be employed for the various environmental topics;**

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The SUE would comprise a high quality mixed use development complete with the facilities required to meet the community's needs. This would all be set within a comprehensive and cohesive green infrastructure (GI) framework. The area north of the M69 would primarily encompass residential development and facilities to serve the community whilst the employment development (B1, B2, & B8) would largely be contained within the area south of the M69. It is anticipated that the SUE would deliver around 4.500 new homes together with primary schools, a secondary school, a district centre and local centres, including community facilities, local employment and associated greenspace, and a strategic employment site of 20 hectares.
- 2.2 A Sustainability Strategy for the SUE will target the Government's programme for the Code for Sustainable Homes and its equivalent for the commercial and employment elements, along with the provision of low carbon renewable energy, waste management systems, Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDS) and enhancement of existing biodiversity assets. The Sustainability Strategy will be submitted alongside the Planning Application.
- 2.3 As part of its GI and public open space strategy, the Project would incorporate major formal and informal parks to the north and south with a parkland edge adjacent to the M1 to 'contain' the SUE and further enhance its setting. These components would be connected by green corridors which integrate retained and enhanced woodlands, significant hedgerows, veteran trees and watercourses along with the adjacent Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). The GI framework will create a strong and diverse landscape structure for the SUE which caters for a wide range of recreational needs, whilst delivering creative conservation requirements. Both the Lubbersthorpe SAM and Enderby Hall parkland are significant features, and their settings would be protected, enhanced and integrated into the extensive GI framework. The GI would target biodiversity enhancements in accordance with the objectives of the East Midlands Biodiversity Strategy.
- 2.4 It is envisaged that safe 'walkable' neighbourhoods would be a fundamental objective of the overall design proposals, supported by a connective comprehensive public transport system linking to nearby communities and major amenities. Existing footpaths would be incorporated in to the proposals. Design will be informed by reference to the latest guidance

provided by government agencies such as CABI, Natural England, Sport England and the Environment Agency. Each environmental constraint would be assessed, and the results used to guide the emerging Masterplan, which would continue to evolve in response to further research and consultation responses.

Parameters Plan

- 2.5 The Concept Masterplan will evolve in response to findings of the environmental surveys and appraisals. The iterative process seeks to minimise potentially detrimental environmental effects from the outset, and to maximise positive benefits. The preliminary prediction of environmental effects and the integral design of mitigation measures is central to this process and will enable good design to be achieved in response to the environmental issue. A Parameters Plan will be prepared as part of the ES and this would form the basis for the EIA to enable the environmental effects of the development to be assessed. It would indicate the main fixed aspects of the Project including land use, movement, green infrastructure, maximum building heights and phasing. Measures to mitigate the anticipated effects would also be described.

Consideration of Alternatives

- 2.6 As part of the preparation of the Blaby District Council Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, all the potential sites for urban extensions have been considered. A comparative assessment has thus already been undertaken and it is not necessary for the Lubbersthorpe ES to repeat this exercise. The alternative uses and Masterplan options for the site will however be briefly considered.

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

Scope of Studies

- 3.1 The following topic areas are proposed to be covered in the ES:-
- **Development Proposals and Design (including phasing, design quality, green infrastructure and sustainability);**
 - **Planning Policy (including Socio-Economics);**
 - **Landscape Character and Visual Resources;**
 - **Ecological Resources (including Arboriculture);**
 - **Heritage and Archaeology;**
 - **Agricultural Land Quality;**
 - **Water, Hydrology and Drainage, including flood risk assessment;**

- **Land Contamination;**
- **Noise and Vibration / Acoustics;**
- **Air Quality;**
- **Transportation (a separate Transportation Assessment and Travel Plan will be submitted as part of the planning application);**
- **Cumulative Effects;**
- **Non-Technical Summary.**

3.2 An indication of possible environmental effects and methodologies for each of the respective environmental issues is outlined below. The Development Proposals and Design section would provide a comprehensive statement on the nature of the Project and would collectively address all component parts of the proposal, including sustainability and design quality. This section would relate directly to the companion Design and Access Statement which supports the Planning Application. Consideration would be given, within the relevant ES chapters, to the effects of the proposals on green infrastructure.

Planning Policy

3.3 This section would detail the overall planning policy context for the Project ranging from national to local levels. The socio-economic implications of the Project would be assessed with reference to this policy framework. Policy relative to specific topics would be outlined within the relevant ES chapter.

Landscape Character and Visual Resources

3.4 An assessment of the potential effects upon landscape character and visual resources would be conducted encompassing the “Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment” (GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2002, and “Landscape Character Assessment. Guidance for England and Scotland” (LCA) published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage 2002.

3.5 These documents do not provide a prescriptive approach to assessment but identify broad principles and good practice. This assessment will focus upon the following potential effects:-

- **Direct and indirect effects upon landscape character and individual notable features;**
- **Visual effects upon surrounding receptors, including construction and night time effects;**

3.6 Potential effects could arise from the loss of open agricultural land and the change in context experienced by surrounding local landscape character areas and visual receptors.

3.7 The assessment will include:-

- **Baseline landscape character assessment** - addressing the site and its landscape context, with reference to land use, topography, condition and sensitivity;
- **A visual resources assessment** - detailing the visual receptors, (ranging from residents of existing properties to users of public footpaths), their sensitivity and resulting anticipated impact levels, including construction and night time effects. A Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) will be prepared together with key representative viewpoints.

Ecological Resources

3.8 A comprehensive suite of baseline ecological surveys has already been undertaken. Based upon current survey results and information supplied by third parties, the principal potential effects are considered to be as follows:-

- **Possible disturbance to protected species;**
- **Disruption of existing habitats.**

No significant constraints to development have been identified.

3.9 The general approach for assessment will follow *Guidelines for Baseline Environmental Assessment* (Institute for Environmental Assessment, 1997). Detailed methods for evaluation of significance of effects will follow *Guidelines on Ecological Assessment: Amended Pilot, November 2002* (Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2002).

3.10 In summary, the method of evaluation and assessment of effects follows three stages:-

- Stage 1: Evaluation of nature conservation importance of features of the site;**
- Stage 2: Analysis of the magnitude of the development's effect on the features of the site prior to mitigation;**
- Stage 3: Assessment of the significance of the development's effect on the features, taking account of mitigation/design proposals.**

3.11 A tree survey report of the site and a consideration of the arboricultural implications of the Project will form an appendix to this chapter of the ES. Veteran trees will also be addressed.

Heritage and Archaeology

3.12 An archaeological/cultural heritage desk-based assessment (DBA) has already been undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) in accordance with standard guidance. Follow up field evaluating was commenced during Autumn 2009. A number of sites of archaeological interest are present within the site including the Deserted Mediaeval Village (DMV) of Lubbesthorpe which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). There are further sites of importance near to the site area. No listed buildings fall within the site area itself.

3.13 Having established baseline conditions, the impacts of the Project would be assessed in terms of findings drawn from the above and the appropriate design/mitigation measures/course of action proposed. **Potential significant effects on heritage resources include:-**

- **Loss/damage/disturbance to known archaeological features;**
- **Effect upon the archaeological potential of the site;**
- **Impact on the setting of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas or Listed Buildings.**

Agricultural Land Quality

3.14 The Project would result in the loss of agricultural land. The quantity and quality of the land affected would be assessed, together with any potential impact upon overall farm productivity. A strategy for the mitigation of impact upon soil resources would be prepared.

Water, Hydrology, and Drainage

3.15 Potential significant environmental effects include the following:-

- **Flood risk;**
- **Changes in pattern of hydrology;**
- **Increased discharge to watercourses;**
- **Pollution of watercourses;**
- **Additional demand upon water resources:**

3.16 A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) would be prepared in consultation with the Environment Agency in order to meet the requirements of PPS25.

3.17 The potential impacts of the Project upon hydrology and hydrogeology, including water quality effects, would be assessed. The proposals would address the requirements of PPS25 for the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and would be based upon current good practice.

3.18 Discussions would be held with the Environment Agency, Water & Sewerage Undertaker and Local Authority to identify (and resolve) any other matters of legitimate concern.

Land Contamination

3.19 This section of the EIA would:-

- **Provide a baseline on the current environmental status of the site in relation to soil contamination;**
- **Identification of potential impacts both positive and negative away from the Project;**
- **Identify appropriate mitigation measures to reduce any unacceptable impacts to an acceptable level.**

3.20 The information review will include the following:-

- **Appraisal of historical OS maps;**
- **Appraisal of environmental setting to include review of maps relating to geology, hydrogeology and hydrology, aerial photographs;**
- **Coal Authority report assessment and site specific report, if applicable;**
- **Radon gas assessment and site specific report, if applicable;**
- **Walkover of site to obtain information relating to current site status and constraints;**
- **Appraisal of readily available regulatory authority database information to identify water abstractions/discharges, pollution incidents, water quality classifications, landfill sites, industrial processes, surface water courses within influencing distance of the site;**
- **Qualitative risks assessment;**
- **Development of preliminary conceptual site model in accordance with Environment Agency good practice;**
- **Intrusive investigations if these are judged to be necessary.**

3.21 Appropriate mitigation/design measures would be proposed where necessary.

Noise and Vibration / Acoustics

3.22 The assessment would consider the operational noise and vibration impacts of road traffic activities, both existing and proposed. Noise emanating from the M1/M69 transport corridor is an important factor in establishing development criteria for adjacent masterplan components. The noise environment of the existing electricity sub station close to the site will also have to be addressed.

3.23 Baseline noise levels would be calculated to determine the existing noise climate at the nearest noise sensitive properties. The noise predictions for operational road noise as well as construction noise would consider the impact against the baseline noise levels as well as the standards and guidelines as agreed with BDC. The assessment work would include:-

- **Liaison with Local Authority Environmental Health Officers regarding existing noise nuisance and any noise constraints;**
- **Identification of areas sensitive to noise and vibration;**
- **Estimation of number of houses affected by increased traffic flows.**

3.24 The principle potential impacts are considered likely to be due to additional traffic generated by the Project. Other noise and vibration sources that may have a significant short term impact are as a result of construction activities, especially from on-site vehicle movements. The relationship between proposed residential and employment components within the SUE Masterplan would also require careful consideration. All of these issues would be addressed within the Environmental Statement along with appropriate and practical noise and vibration mitigation measures, where applicable.

Air Quality

3.25 The baseline situation at and surrounding the site would be established using data available from local and national measured and calculated sources. BDC would be contacted for data. If available, this data would be used to define the baseline at distinct points. If such data is not available, national sources would be used.

3.26 The main source of any potential air quality impact is likely to be as a result of increased traffic generated by the Project, although possible influences on the pattern of site development arising from existing sources, notably the M1 and M69, would also be considered. The objective at this stage is to indicate whether there are likely to be any significant air quality impacts associated with the Project. The steps to be taken are:-

- **Identification of local Air Quality Management Areas and key influences on local air quality or other local air quality issues that could be affected by the Project.**
- **Identification of local roads likely to experience significant changes in traffic volumes as a result of the Project;**
- **Identification of properties and areas likely to be sensitive to changes in air quality resulting from the operation and/or construction of the Project;**
- **Identification of properties and sensitive areas within 200m of roads which experience significant changes in traffic volumes, flows or speeds;**

3.27 Suitable mitigation/design measures would be identified where appropriate.

Transportation

3.28 The transport impact of the Project would be assessed in accordance with Department for Transport Guidance on Transport Assessment (March 2007). The analysis would encompass all aspects of transport, including impact on public transport, walking, cycling and HGV / Private Car traffic.

3.29 The Transport Assessment and accompanying Travel Plan would address the transport issues that relate to the Project and set out what measures are proposed to deal with the predicted transport impacts. It would also set out the proposals that are necessary to make the Project accessible by a choice of modes of transport.

3.30 In order to establish the potential transportation impact the assessment would include:-

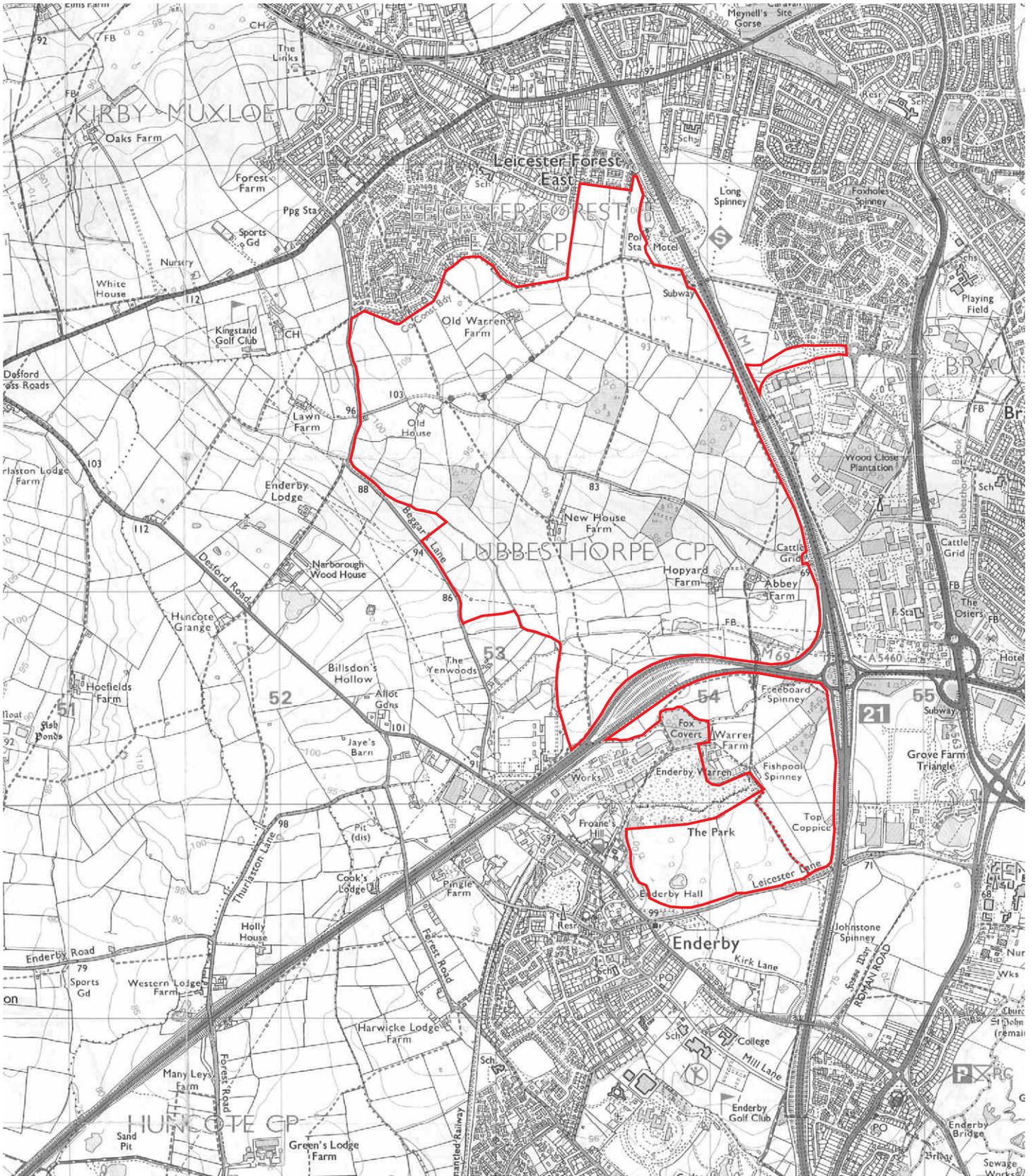
- **Baseline appraisals of the existing transport infrastructure – addressing the area from its current standpoint, with reference to existing, constraints and potential improvements.**
- **Analysis of new transportation infrastructure and public transport networks designed to encourage modal shift.**
- **Travel planning proposals**

Cumulative Effects

- 3.32 An overview of all the assessment topics and their statement of effects will be completed with an appraisal against other development projects in the vicinity. This is to ensure that the scheme does not result in a cumulative unacceptable combined impact. By way of this scoping report, it is requested that Blaby District Council identify other schemes which they consider should be assessed.

Non Technical Summary

- 3.33 A non technical summary would be provided which summarises, in non technical language, the description of the Project, the main findings of the assessment (for each of the environmental topics outlined), the mitigation/design measures adopted and the overall environmental impact of the Project.



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Hallam Land Management Ltd.
 David Wilson Homes East Midlands Ltd.
 Davidsons Group.

Lubbesthorpe, Leicestershire

SITE LOCATION PLAN

Figure 1

Scale 1:25,000 @A3 November 2009

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