

Shaping our Place 2026

Model Farm  
Supplementary  
Planning Document  
Sustainability Appraisal

September 2008

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& Herefordshire Council  
by  
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## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Baseline Research Information



## **1.0 Introduction**

This sustainability appraisal has been completed in accordance with section 39 of The Act and follows the relevant guidance set out in PPS12 and in '*Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents*' (November 2005, DCLG). The appraisal considers the significant effects of the proposal, opportunities available and possible alternatives to it. It addresses the proposal within the social, economic and environmental objectives which contribute to the delivery of sustainable development.

## **2.0 Background**

In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Development Documents that make up the Council's Local Development Framework must undergo a Sustainability Appraisal; this incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive for which the government have produced guidance.

The main purpose of this Sustainability Appraisal is to promote sustainable development through the better integration of sustainability considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans. This is done by appraising the environmental, social and economic effects from the outset of the preparation process to ensure that development accord with the principles of sustainable development.

## **3.0 Purpose of the Report**

This sustainability appraisal has been provided for the Model Farm, Ross-on-Wye development brief. Its principle aim is to assess the SPD against environmental, social and economic objectives, and to set out the information on which the assessment is based.

A table of research information, which provides a basis of consideration for this appraisal, is included at Appendix 1.

The principle objective for the development of Model Farm is the delivery of a high quality employment development providing a range of uses in order to diversify and enhance the local economy. The proposal will seek to provide forms of employment which develop the economic base of the area beyond that of the existing which is dominated by traditional forms of employment and a significant amount of B8 uses.

The development brief will provide a guide for future developers, setting out the objectives in terms of design, access, constraints, requirements and any obligations necessary in accordance with the development.

## **4.0 Sustainability Objectives, Baseline and Context**

There is a requirement to appraise the base policies of an SPD to determine its sustainability impacts. The policies in the UDP underwent SA at the first, revised deposit

and modification stages. This assessed the sustainability issues relating to the policies in a similar way by setting out the effects of the policies on a number of sustainability objectives. Given the existence of this prior assessment and the stage of the plan making process, no further assessment of these base policies is necessary.

This SA has focused on the environmental, social and economic considerations of the proposal within the framework of UDP policies and objectives for the delivery of sustainable development set out in PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005).

## **5.0 Social, Environmental and Economic Baseline**

There are a wide range of factors which have an impact on sustainability in relation to environmental, social and economic objectives. As part of the preparation of this SA a range of information was collected relating to a number of sustainability considerations and the Model Farm site. Appendix 1 sets out the sustainability issues which were considered and the location specific information collected relating to them.

The sustainability issues raised as part of the collection of baseline data are considered to be the most significant sustainability issues for the site prior to the construction of any development.

## **6.0 Issues Raised**

The collection of baseline data for this SA raised a number of issues relating to the delivery of sustainable development on the site, providing opportunities for the development brief to further promote the principles of sustainability through design, construction and use.

The physical issues raised relate to the site's existing location and character, and are considered in more detail below. The opportunities which arise from any issues are also considered below:

- **Accessibility** – the site is located approximately 1 mile to the east of the town centre. Whilst it is well served by public transport with a number of bus stops along the A40, existing access to the town centre by walking or cycling are currently limited to one footpath adjacent to the A40. Reducing the contribution that motorised transport makes to the production of carbon dioxide, 14% of all carbon emissions in 2004 (Stern Review, 2007), is a key objective for environmental sustainability.

The development of the site could provide the opportunity to enhance pedestrian and cycling links to the town centre and surrounding residential areas, consistent with the objective of reducing carbon emissions from the private motor car. The inclusion of an element of live/work development on the site would further emphasise this objective by eliminating the need to travel to work.

Design and layout of proposal could be arranged so as to reduce the dominance of the car and promote movement by non car modes, including the provision and service of public transport into the site.

The delivery of live/work development on the site will assist in minimising vehicular trips to and from the site, whilst delivering a sustainable form of employment development. There is no need to travel to and from work with live/work, representing mixed use in its purest form.

- Location – the site is predominately greenfield agricultural land occupying a relatively prominent position within an open landscape.

The topography of the site and position within the wider landscape enable solar gain to be maximised through the design of any proposal to ensure building efficiency is maximised and energy use minimised in line with the principles of sustainable construction.

Given the prominence of the site within the landscape, the proposal should be designed to minimise any impact on the surrounding landscape and be accompanied by a suitable landscaping scheme.

- Energy Use – Given the sites position within the landscape and accessibility to the town centre services and sources of employment, low carbon development, energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy should be promoted.
- Environmental/biodiversity considerations – there area number of natural features located on the site which are considered to be of environmental value, including the Alton Court Aquifer, established hedgerows and an existing pond. Measures to protect these environmental assets should be included within the development brief, providing the opportunity to ensure their preservation.

Additional protection is given to the fluvial considerations on the site; UDP Policy E3 requires suitable provision to be made for the source protection zone to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems should be used where possible. Hydrology consultants should be used to provide guidance on the appropriate measures required to prevent pollution of source protection zone.

Hedgerows will also be protected through local development plan policies dependant on their ecological and historical value. Ecological surveys have been undertaken as part of the collection of baseline data and a number of species identified. Mitigation, where necessary, will be required for identified species in accordance with the relevant UDP Policies. No protected species were identified on the site during the collection of baseline data for this SA. However, appropriate measures should be put in place to ensure necessary mitigation in order to protect biodiversity where possible.

The site is not located within a designated landscape such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However, regard should be given to its rural setting, given that there are views into the site from the south, north and east. The rural environment, landscape character and biodiversity should be protected.

- Existing Buildings – there are a number of agricultural buildings already located on the site.

In line with recycling objectives, the existing buildings should be retained and incorporated within any future proposal where possible.

- Architectural considerations – the vernacular architecture is varied within the local area, there is a mixture of gable fronted stone cottages, red bricked Victorian, modern properties and rendered dwellings.

The local architecture provides the opportunity to deliver a scheme which reflects the rural character of the site draws on local architectural influences and accommodates a high level of environmentally friendly building techniques with a low carbon footprint.

## **7.0 Social, Economic and Environmental Effects of SPD**

Overall, employment development on the site is likely to have a positive impact on the social and economic characteristics of the area. The benefits are likely to be derived from the high quality knowledge and live/work employment sources providing a catalyst for economic growth in the area. This will enable the local economy to diversify beyond the more common place B8 (storage and distribution) and B2 (general industry) sources of employment that have traditionally dominated the Ross-on-Wye economy.

A number of environmental benefits can also be derived from a focus on high quality B1 development. Such uses enable it to be viable to introduce a number of sustainable construction methods and operational characteristics which result in a lower carbon development than otherwise. The SPD will promote the delivery of eco-efficient development.

The SPD will promote a sustainable form of economic growth, diversifying the local economy and acting as a catalyst for further growth. The social benefits are inextricably linked to the economic growth which will be developed. In essence, the SPD promotes the provision of development which will enable high levels of economic and social growth within the area, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

## **8.0 Uncertainties and Risks**

When assessing the SPD against the sustainability objectives, there are positive and negative effects. These effects have been considered through this SA. However, the SPD is currently in draft format and the implementation of proposals brings uncertainties, as the detail of any proposed development will remain unknown. It is considered that the combination of the SA with the production of the development brief SPD will ensure that development of the site will be guided in the most sustainable way reducing the uncertainties of development.

## **9.0 Mitigation**

The purpose of the SA is to set out the effects of the plan in terms of social, economic and environmental aspects. Following the assessment of the SPD the SA process was able to inform the document with elements of mitigation and enhancement to make this balance more evident within the plan. Elements of mitigation and opportunities for future proposals have been considered throughout this SA. The following is a summary of the guidance for mitigation utilized during the production of the SPD, which has helped to influence the sustainability of the development brief:

It was recommended that the SPD:

- Expand the accessibility and public transport options to users of the site, to promote the use of modes of transport other than the private car;
- Promote an appropriate scheme of design and landscaping to retain the rural character of the area;
- Retain existing buildings where possible and re-use them within any proposed development;
- Appropriate measures/consultants should be utilized to ensure necessary ecological and fluvial protection where possible.
- Utilise eco-efficient forms of construction to enhance energy efficiency and minimize carbon production through the construction and use of the development, by encouraging renewable forms of energy production.
- Promote high quality knowledge based forms of employment which will help to diversify the Ross economy and act as a catalyst for new economic development.

## **10.0 Conclusion**

This SA has raised awareness of a number of sustainability issues relating the development of Model Farm and identified opportunities for enhancing the delivery of sustainable development through the development brief SPD.

## Appendix 1 – Baseline Research Information

| <b>SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL</b> |  |   |  |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>CRITERIA GROUP</b>           | <b>CRITERIA</b>  | <b>EXISTING SITUATION</b>   | <b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>   |
| Accessibility                   | Is the site well served by existing walking and cycling routes to local facilities?  | One existing footpath into town centre, adjacent to A40   | Introduction of new pedestrian/ cycle links to town centre, through green buffer area to west.   |
|                                 | Access to public transport links   | A number of bus stops are located along A40 providing access to Gloucester and surrounding network. Bus stop located adjacent to access.      | Introduction of new bus stop on site to enhance access to and from surrounding area.   |
|                                 | Access to retail, grocery and recycling facilities.                                  | 0.9miles (by road) to Town Centre retail area. 0.8 miles (by road) to Morrisons supermarket and recycling facilities.                         | Opportunity to provide improved and more direct cycle/pedestrian links with town centre. Provision of on site recycling facilities.  |
|                                 | Access to/for work force   |   | Enhance public transport, walking and cycling access to surrounding residential areas and urban centres. Live/work element will remove the need for people to commute to work. |
|                                 | Is there reasonable road access to the site? Sufficient to meet future requirements? | Yes – a transport assessment will be required with any future proposal. Capacity will be affected by amount and nature of future development. | Segregated vehicular movement of commercial and domestic vehicles will need consideration.   |
| Resource efficiency and use     | Is the site flat to maximise solar gain and reduce energy loss?                      | The site topography undulates, although not significantly. Provides opportunity to maximise solar gain. The site is not well sheltered.       | Opportunity to introduce green area to west to buffer from adjacent residential area. Orientate and design buildings to maximise solar gain and reduce energy                  |

|                      |  |   |   |
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|                      |  |   | loss.<br>Inclusion of additional renewable energy sources in construction.  |
| Environmental assets | Are any Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or other designated areas affected? | None – Area of Great Landscape Value located to the South of A40  | Views from the south should be considered through the design process.   |
|                      | What is the character of the surrounding area?   | Rural. Existing buildings on site are predominately agricultural. Range of architectural styles in the surrounding area.              | Ensure new development considers the rural/agricultural nature of the site, reflecting character in design. Retain existing buildings where possible and structurally capable.  |
|                      | Can the site integrate well with any surrounding development?                          | Physically segregated from periphery of Ross by green area designated as a buffer.  | The green area can be utilised to link site to eastern edge of town. However, it will not be physically integrated with surrounding development.  |
|                      | Are there any views into/ out of the site worthy of retention?                         | Yes – from south, north and east.   | Design of development needs to reflect the rural character of the area. Can utilise extensive views from within the site of the surrounding area.<br><br>An extensive scheme of landscaping will be needed to help protect views of the site from the surrounding area. |
|                      | What is the local vernacular architecture?   | Varied – mixture of traditional gable fronted stone cottages, red brick Victorian and modern properties and white rendered dwellings. | Opportunity to create a scheme which reflects the rural character draws on local architectural influences and accommodates the high level of eco-friendly development required.   |

|  |   |  |   |
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|  | Are there areas of ecological value? Any habitats of value? Or identified ecological species? | See appendix 2 – a number of species and ecological habitats of value have been identified. Ecology surveys have been undertaken, identifying areas of specific value.   | Consideration of areas of value will need be undertaken throughout the design process and suitable mitigation measures proposed.  |
|  | Are there existing trees or hedgerows worthy of preservation?                                 | Yes – identified through ecology surveys. See appendix 2.<br><br>There is a number of immature and semi-mature trees across the site. It is recommended that an arboricultural review is undertaken and considered through the planning application process to identify value of existing trees. | Affected areas can be protected through the construction and incorporated within the design to safeguard those worthy of retention.<br><br>Opportunity to implement a landscaping scheme to enhance the existing landscape. |
|  | Are there any fluvial implications for the site?  | Located within the source protection zone of the Alton Court Aquifer.<br><br>Further investigation and communication with the Environment Agency will be required.   | Design and implementation of any proposal will need to incorporate suitable pollution prevention measures, to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency.   |
|  | Impact on Conservation Areas?   | None in vicinity   |   |
|  | Are there any listed buildings on the site?   | None known.  |   |
|  | Are there any archaeological implications for the development of the site?                    | To be determined – desk top study and/or field evaluation may be required.   |   |

|                  |  |   |  |
|------------------|--|---|--|
|                  | Quality and proximity of open spaces?                      | Area to the west is to be included as open space for the wider community and residents of the live/work element of the development.   | Opportunity to provide a high quality area of POS.   |
| Resource impacts | Does the proposal utilise Previously Developed Land (PDL)? | The existing curtilage of the residential property on the site is the only element of PDL. The site is predominately agricultural land, although there is an area occupied by agricultural buildings. | Re-utilise any existing buildings suitable and capable of conversion.  |
|                  | Does avoid the best and most versatile agricultural land?  | The site comprises agricultural land, although is not considered to be within the best and most versatile category.   |  |
|                  | Is there any contaminated land on the site?                | Unknown at present  |  |
|                  | Are there any bad neighbours?                              | No  | Buffer area has been proposed in order to provide useable area between commercial and residential uses.  |
|                  | Are there any areas susceptible to flooding?               | Unknown. The site is not located within the Environment Agency's indicative flood zone.<br><br>Site is located within the source protection zone of Alton Court Aquifer.                              | A requirement to ensure that the source protection zone is safeguarded throughout the construction and use of the site. If flooding proves to be of a concern by the Environment Agency, ensure appropriate provision to mitigate any potential adverse effects. |

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