
4.0 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

PACEC has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the community and social effects arising from the proposed Brickkiln scheme located to the east of Luton.

Section 4.2 introduces the potential effects and the potentially sensitive receptors around the site. *Section 4.3* describes the assessment methodology, *Section 4.4* summarises the baseline conditions and *Section 4.5* presents the mitigation. A more detailed analysis of baseline conditions can be found in *Appendix B1*. *Section 4.6* sets out the predicted impacts and *Section 4.7* summarises this chapter on the community and social impacts.

4.2 POTENTIAL EFFECTS

Prior to assessing the effects of the proposals on the community and social environment, it is important to identify what constitutes a potential effect. In the context of this assessment, potential effects will be related to the increase in population and provision of housing, open space and local facilities associated with the proposed development. These changes have the potential to affect the following community and social aspects:

- demography;
- existing businesses;
- demand for services (such as education facilities, healthcare, recreation).

It is also important to identify potential sensitive social, economic and community receptors in the vicinity of the site, including individuals, groups, businesses and services.

4.2.1 Geographical Distribution of Receptors

There are a number of receptors, particularly the residents of the existing villages that will be close to the new development, in Tea Green, Mangrove Green and Cockernhoe.

Close to and bordering the site itself there are a number of farms and accommodation, including:

- Crouchmoor Farm;
- Crouchmoor Cottage;
- Wandon End Farm;
- Tankards Farm;
- Cockernhoe Farm;

- Parsonage Farm;
- Mangrove Green Cottages;
- Ivy Cottages.

To the west of the site there are a number of homes in Wigmore in Luton that currently overlook the site, and may be affected by the development. The boundary with Wigmore will consist of public open space, existing woodland/hedgerow, allotments, and structured planting.

There are a number of hamlets and villages that lie close to the site, including:

- Tea Green;
- Wandon End.

Further afield, there are also villages that may be affected by nearby development, including:

- Little Offley;
- Great Offley;
- Ley Green;
- Kings Waldon;
- Winch Hill;
- Breachwood Green;
- Bendish;
- Wandon Green;

The wider geographical area, particularly Luton, may also be impacted by the new development, since residents from the wider geography may take up accommodation in the new development and vacate from elsewhere. There may also be a higher demand on services in the wider area for some types of service e.g. senior schools, libraries, emergency services etc.

Residents of North Hertfordshire, particularly Hitchin, may be impacted as there may be higher demand placed on their services e.g. library and police service.

Conversely, the residents of Wigmore, Cockernhoe, Mangrove Green, and other nearby settlements may have access to the new facilities, including a primary school, a local centre, and increased formal and informal public open space including playgrounds and allotments. The proposed landscaping provides a buffer between the development and existing housing in Wigmore, Cockernhoe, and Mangrove Green. There will be Local and Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas. Public access to Putteridge Bury will be increased.

4.3 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this assessment combines collection and analysis of baseline information and desk-based study and the findings of a community capacity exercise to assess the community and social baseline conditions in the vicinity of the proposed scheme.

The assessment is presented throughout this Chapter in topic areas as follows:

- Demography;
- Recreation;
- Healthcare;
- Community Facilities;
- Housing;
- Employment;
- Local Businesses;
- Crime.

The community capacity exercise assessed the planning obligations relating to the type and size of development being applied for and the needs of the projected population. The following documents were considered during this exercise:

- North Hertfordshire District Council (2006) Local Development Framework Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document;
- Luton Borough Council (2007) Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document;
- Hertfordshire County Council (2008) Planning Obligations Guide.

Further details in relation to planning conditions are provided in the Supporting Planning Statement submitted with the application.

Telephone consultations were undertaken with North Hertfordshire District Council and Hertfordshire County Council planning departments, specifically on their approach to the proposed Brickkiln development and its interactions with their planning strategies, and their requirements for community facilities such as the primary school. In addition this analysis builds upon work done on previous schemes and scoping opinions received from a number of interested parties.

4.4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

The site needs to be considered within the context of two administrative boundaries i.e., North Hertfordshire and Luton. Whilst the site lies within North Hertfordshire and under the planning jurisdiction of North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), it will form an urban extension to Luton. Both NHDC and Luton Borough Council (LBC) have quite distinct characteristics and requirements of which detailed statistics can be found in *Appendix B1*.

The smallest geography for which statistical data is available is the lower-level super output area (LSOA). The LSOA applicable to the proposed scheme is North Hertfordshire 014D which has a small number of small establishments. Its population has a similar age structure to the national economy but it is much more over-represented by White British people than other ethnicities. Economic activity rates are high, with the self-employment rate particularly high.

The site is in the 20-80% least deprived areas in the country for all measures of deprivation, except for 'barriers to housing and services', for which it is in the 10-20% most deprived areas, something not atypical of rural areas.

References to tables and figures within this section relate to data in *Appendix B1*, which provides a comprehensive overview of the baseline economic and social data for North Hertfordshire District and Luton Borough.

4.4.1 Demography

Luton has a much younger population than North Hertfordshire (*Table B1.6*) and there is a more diverse ethnic background of its residents (*Figure B1.8*), with particularly higher proportions of Asian residents. Residence-based earnings tend to be lower in Luton (*Figure B1.9*). Residents of Luton tend to be less well-qualified than is average in England, and residents of North Hertfordshire more highly qualified (*Table B1.8*). Luton has lower proportions of adults living as couples and North Hertfordshire has higher proportions (*Table B1.9*).

There are some areas of multiple deprivation in Luton (*Figure B1.22*), particularly in the centre and north west of the authority. There are currently relatively low levels of deprivation close to the site, although deprivation tends to be higher in Central Luton. Where deprivation exists it tends to occur in the form of barriers to housing and services, which will be mitigated by the provision of housing and services.

4.4.2 Education

There is a slight area of education deprivation to the south west of the site (*Figure B1.25*).

Most of the primary schools in Luton with proximity to the site have some spare capacity but not enough to provide space for all the young people from the new residents. The schools in North Hertfordshire tend to be small village schools and according to the County Council would not have capacity to take on many new pupils. There are a number of early years groups near the site but we do not have data on their spare capacity.

Children's centres were highlighted by Hertfordshire County Council as something that the development might impact upon. Children's centre programmes provide integrated education, care, family support and health services. The centres are expected to provide the following core services to under 5s and their families:

- Early education integrated with full day care, including early identification of and provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities;
- Parental outreach;
- Family support, including support for parents with special needs;
- Health services;
- A base for childminders, and a service hub within the community for parents and providers of childcare services;
- Effective links with Jobcentre Plus, local training providers and further and higher education institutions;
- Effective links with Children's Information Services, Neighbourhood Nurseries, Out of School Clubs and Extended Schools;
- Management and workforce training.

4.4.3 Recreation

The areas to the south and north-west of the site are among the least environmentally deprived in the country (*Figure B1.27*). Luton has a current deficit in public open space provision, with Stopsley among the wards with greatest deficiency¹.

North Hertfordshire's recreation facilities include: 52 play grounds; 27 football pitches; 3 rugby pitches, 14 tennis courts; 2 netball courts; 3 cricket squares; 6 bowling greens; and 1 putting green.

In Luton, the council runs 47 playgrounds, 5 locations with bowling greens, 10 cricket squares, almost 100 football pitches in parks and recreation grounds, crazy golf and rugby at Wardown Park, 137 areas listed as parks and open spaces, a dedicated athletics arena (Stockwood Park), swimming pools (at Warden Swimming Centre and Lewsey Park Pool), leisure centres (including Luton Regional Sports Centre, High Town Community Sports and Arts Centre, Putteridge Recreation Centre, Warden Swimming and Leisure Centre, Lea Manor Recreation Centre) and a public golf course (at Stockwood Park).

4.4.4 Healthcare

The current size of patient list in the doctors and dentist surgeries closest to the site are relatively high, suggesting there is little spare capacity nearby. These facilities are therefore considered to be of medium to high sensitivity to population change.

¹ LBC Planning Obligations para. 5.4.

There are currently a number of large hospitals which residents of the site would be able to access.

4.4.5 Community Facilities

There is a local library in Wigmore and a mobile library service currently serving Cockernhoe. The sensitivity of these services to population change is predicted to be medium to low.

There are currently a small number of youth services relatively close to the site. The sensitivity of these services to population change is considered to be medium.

HCC can achieve the fire attendance standards and does not require a contribution towards fire stations. However, adequate hydrants must be provided².

4.4.6 Housing

Owner occupation is higher in Luton (*Table B1.10*), although owner-occupation growth is higher in North Hertfordshire (*Table B1.11*). There are more dependent children in Luton (*Table B1.12*). Average house prices are much lower in Luton (*Figure B1.15*) and tend to be more affordable compared to workplace salaries (*Figure B1.16*). Households tend to be larger (*Table B1.17*) and there is a higher rate of overcrowding (*Figure B1.20*). On average there are more rooms per home in North Herts than in Luton (*Figure B1.19*).

Barriers to housing and services are worse in North Hertfordshire (*Figure B1.23*), as is usual in rural areas.

The provision of housing is of medium to high sensitivity because of the high housing demand in the area.

The North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Strategic Housing Market assessment identified “a significant need for affordable housing in excess of supply levels from both re-lets and planned new delivery” of 642 units a year in North Hertfordshire³. The affordable need in North Hertfordshire is 1,089 properties a year.

The 2004 Offley and Cockernhoe Housing Need Survey identified seventeen households considered to be in housing need, plus a further four households in need who did not complete the questionnaire. This implies an existing unmet demand for affordable housing provision from the current population of the immediate area.

The Luton Housing Requirements Study 2004-05 identified a net shortfall of 1,384 affordable units per year.

The provision of affordable housing is of medium to high sensitivity because of the high levels of backlog in both Luton and North Hertfordshire.

² HCC Scoping response, February 2009

³ North Hertfordshire & Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2008, para. 1.17.14

4.4.7 Employment

There are employment opportunities in both Luton and North Hertfordshire, with Transport and Wholesale sectors well-represented in Luton, and Wholesale, Manufacturing and Construction sectors well-represented in North Hertfordshire (*Table B1.1*). Workplace-based earnings are similar for both authorities (*Figure B1.2*). Jobs in North Hertfordshire tend to be more productive (*Figure B1.3*).

Unemployment is much higher in Luton than in North Hertfordshire (*Figure B1.10*) and economic activity rates are lower (*Figure B1.11*).

People in Luton tend to travel less distance to work (*Table B1.19*).

There is no serious employment deprivation in the area immediately around the site (*Figure B1.26*).

There will be some limited employment opportunities, both full-time and part-time, associated with the primary school and units in the local centre.

However, these will represent a negligible magnitude of change in employment in North Hertfordshire and Luton and will not be significant.

4.4.8 Local Businesses

There has been higher growth of VAT-registered businesses in North Hertfordshire (*Figure B1.5*). There is a higher proportion of small businesses in North Hertfordshire (*Figure B1.6*).

There are areas of acute income deprivation within Luton (*Figure B1.29*), but the areas immediately south and east of the site are particularly comfortable.

The land at the North West of the site, including the proposed primary school site, is currently leased to an equestrian stabling business. The buildings used by this business will remain available, but the current lessees consider it will no longer be viable to run a stabling business there without the land.

The majority of Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo ward's businesses are focused on custom from local residents, so the medium to large increase in population is likely to lead to an increase in demand. However, a local centre is proposed as part of the development, which will include a number of retail units. This is likely to reduce any increase in demand for local businesses and services to negligible to small magnitude.

4.4.9 Crime

Crime rates are slightly higher in Luton than in North Hertfordshire (*Table B1.21*).

The most serious areas of crime-related deprivation are found in the centre and north-west of Luton (*Figure B1.24*).

4.5 MITIGATION MEASURES

4.5.1 Putteridge Bury

Putteridge Bury is a grade II listed early twentieth century house with gardens, surrounded by parkland dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The estate covers about 170 ha. The area is identified in the Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan as an opportunity for “strategic urban fringe landscape enhancement”.

The area to be restored is approximately 98 ha. The house and gardens are currently used by the University of Bedfordshire. The Bedfordshire University area and the formal gardens will not be affected. The parkland is now used as a mixture of arable land and woodland.

The management plan will maintain existing habitats, create new habitats, enhance biodiversity, and provide maintained public pathways with interpretation boards through the woodlands, giving recreational access to the new habitats. Some of the new habitats will be aquatic. Management will be provided for twenty years.

The management plan is detailed in Section 6.0 of the Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity Management Plan.

4.5.2 Recreation

There will be an area of formal open space between the proposed development and Cockernhoe, and additionally the grounds of the primary school will act as a buffer. Structured planting will shield the view from Mangrove Green. Similarly, the boundary with Wigmore will consist of public open space, existing woodland/hedgerow, allotments, and structured planting. There will be Local and Neighbourhood Equipped Play Areas.

4.5.3 Education

A 2FE primary school is included in the proposals to mitigate the increase in demand for school places. The primary school will include nursery provision and facilities for wrap-around childcare.

Contributions will be made towards a children’s centre and youth service provision.

4.5.4 Healthcare

Contributions will be made towards primary health care facilities.

4.5.5 Community facilities

There will be a Local Centre incorporating retail and community facilities (A1-A5, C2, C3 and D1). The centre will comprise 1.2 ha, including up to 850 m² GFA for A1–A5 retail, up to 500 m² GFA for a community centre, and 40 car parking spaces.

The design will include a parking bay suitable for the mobile library. Contributions will be made towards libraries and museums.

4.6 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS

This section summarises the potential impacts of the development, taking into account the demographics and economy of the site and its environs. It considers in particular the demographics and economies of the authorities of North Hertfordshire and Luton. Data on the site specifically is not available as it is too small an area for data to be collected for national surveys and so its area is estimated by a lower-level super output area (LSOA). However, there is nothing to suggest the site is not representative of the LSOA as a whole.

4.6.1 Impacts During Construction

A number of workers will be employed on site during the construction phase. This is a temporary beneficial impact of minor magnitude that, given the low unemployment in the area, is of minor significance. The majority of workers are likely to come from the local area, so any impact on demography will be negligible. Therefore, any increase in demand for local businesses and services as a result of temporary in-migration during construction is also likely to be negligible.

4.6.2 Impacts Post-Construction

Demography

Given the sensitivity of the population in North Hertfordshire and Luton, the proposed development will lead to a long term medium to large increase in population in the area. This represents an increase in the population of Hitchwood, Offa and Hoo ward, which is a change of moderate to substantial magnitude.

It is likely that many of the dwellings will be occupied by families and young professionals, so the average age of residents in the proposed development may be lower than for the ward as a whole. Similarly, the average household composition is likely to differ slightly from the rest of the ward, with a larger proportion of children anticipated. However, the magnitude of any change to the area's average age structure and household composition is likely to be minor. Many of the dwellings, particularly those of an affordable nature, are likely to be occupied by residents moving from other parts of Luton or North Hertfordshire.

Overall, given the medium sensitivity of the area's demography to change, the proposed development is predicted to have substantial beneficial impact on demography.

There are currently relatively low levels of deprivation close to the site, although deprivation tends to be higher in Central Luton. Where deprivation exists it tends to occur in the form of barriers to housing and services, which will be mitigated by the provision of housing and services. The impact to deprivation is assessed as minor beneficial.

Education

The primary school proposed as part of the development will be able to accommodate the majority of the new primary-aged children that will move into Brickkiln, and there have recently been sufficient surplus places at Wigmore Primary and Stopsley Primary to accommodate the remainder, so the increase in pressure on primary schools in the area is assessed as being of negligible magnitude and significance. The primary school will include nursery provision.

In the medium to long term the demographics of the area will tend towards that of established settlements, with a smaller proportion of primary aged children, and the new primary school will be sufficient to cater for the medium and long term demand.

The proposed development will provide a new primary school. This educational impact arises as a direct result of the development and is assessed as a moderate beneficial impact on a long term basis.

The number of secondary aged children in the new development is likely to be less than the current surplus of places in the secondary schools in Luton, so the increase in pressure on secondary schools in the area is assessed as being of negligible magnitude and significance.

The proposed development is likely to have a moderate adverse impact on children's services.

Recreation

The proposals include allotments, formal and informal open space, and areas of children's play space, in excess of the six acre standard. The increase in population associated with the proposed development will therefore not increase pressure on existing recreational facilities within Luton and North Hertfordshire. A negligible impact is therefore assessed for existing formal recreation facilities.

The proposed formal and informal public open spaces will be an accessible amenity for residents of nearby areas of Luton, including Stopsley, Cockernhoe and Mangrove Green. The restoration of the Putteridge Bury parkland will provide a substantial permanent beneficial outcome for existing and new residents.

Overall, the recreational impact is assessed as a local and regional substantial beneficial impact which arises on a long term basis.

Healthcare

The predicted increase in population is likely to lead to an increase in pressure on GP and dental services. The overall impact on healthcare facilities arises as a direct result of the development and is assessed as a local substantial adverse impact.

Community facilities

The moderate increase in population will increase demand for community facilities. This will be mitigated by the new community building and local centre, but there is still likely to be a small residual increase in pressure on local facilities. Combined with the medium to high sensitivity of such facilities, this impact will be of moderate significance.

Housing

The proposed development will give rise to up to 1,000 new homes of which 40% will be classed as affordable. This will lead to a substantial increase in affordable housing provision in the area. The exact proportion of affordable dwellings is to be agreed with North Hertfordshire District Council. Overall the housing impact is assessed as being local to regional substantial beneficial impact on a long term basis.

Employment

There are employment opportunities in both Luton and North Hertfordshire, with Transport and Wholesale sectors well-represented in Luton, and Wholesale, Manufacturing and Construction sectors well-represented in North Hertfordshire. There is no serious employment deprivation in the area immediately around the site (*Figure B1.26*).

The proposed development will provide some employment opportunities, both full-time and part-time, associated with the primary school and retail units in the local centre. These will represent a negligible magnitude of change in employment in North Hertfordshire and Luton and will not be significant.

Local businesses

A local centre is proposed as part of the development, which will include a number of retail units. This is likely to reduce any increase in demand for existing local businesses and services to negligible to minor magnitude. Given the moderate sensitivity of local businesses, this beneficial impact will be of minor to moderate significance.

Crime

The proposed development is not considered likely to have adverse effects upon crime levels in the local area. The proposals will be designed in such a way as to promote the safety of the future residents and any existing residents that use the new facilities.

4.7 SUMMARY

The summary of the residual impacts for each of the key impacts areas:

4.7.1 Demography

Overall, given the moderate sensitivity of the area's demography to change, the proposed development is predicted to have an effect on demography of substantial beneficial significance.

There will be a minor beneficial impact on deprivation levels.

4.7.2 Recreation

The formal and informal public space will help mitigate the current shortage of public open space in Luton and provide a substantial and permanent beneficial impact.

The restoration of Putteridge Bury is assessed as a long term local and regional substantial beneficial impact on recreational facilities.

4.7.3 Education

The development includes a 2FE primary school and Local and Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play. The primary school will include nursery provision and facilities for childcare. This educational impact arises as a direct result of the development and is assessed as a moderate beneficial impact on a long term basis.

The proposed development is likely to have a moderate adverse impact on children's services, which have high sensitivity. Contributions will be made towards children's and youth service provision.

4.7.4 Healthcare

Contributions will be made towards primary health care facilities.

4.7.5 Community Facilities

The Local Centre will include community and retail units, and a bay suitable for parking a mobile library. Contributions will be made towards libraries and museums.

4.7.6 Housing

Both North Hertfordshire and Luton currently have a shortage of housing, and in particular a shortage of affordable housing. The proposed development will supply up to 1,000 homes which will include affordable housing and family housing. Given the medium to high sensitivity of housing, this will have a substantial long term beneficial impact locally and regionally.

4.7.7 Employment and Local Businesses

New employment in the area will be negligible. There will be a minor to moderate beneficial impact on existing local businesses.

4.7.8 Crime

There will be no adverse impact.