



## South Tyneside Council

### **SCREENING OPINION OF THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY** **REFERENCE: 260074**

#### **THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (ENGLAND & WALES) REGULATIONS 2017 (AS AMENDED)**

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**Site: Land east of Boker Lane, Boldon (Land at North Farm), Boldon**

**Description of Development: Request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion, Under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, relating to proposed development of circa 263 dwellings**

This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion has been issued within an agreed extended time period, as is permissible by Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) and that are referred to as “the regulations” hereinafter.

The Council are satisfied that the proposed redevelopment is not a development that falls within Schedule 1 of the regulations and, as such; it would not automatically require EIA and the submission of an Environmental Statement (ES) as part of a planning application.

The proposed redevelopment does not lie within a “sensitive area”, as defined by the regulations; but the development proposed is a Schedule 2 development by virtue of Category 10(b) (urban development projects) of the regulations.

Schedule 3 of the regulations outlines the three criteria to be taken into account in undertaking EIA screening and whether there would be any likely significant effects on the environment. These are considered below.

#### **CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPMENT**

The proposal, as set out in the request, would be an outline planning application for circa 263 dwellings including landscaping and associated infrastructure, with all matters reserved except for means of access.

This Screening Opinion has had regard to the regulations, relevant material planning considerations including comments from consultees and the cumulative environmental effects of the proposals when taken together with other proposals/planning approvals for other nearby sites.

The proposal would require the use of natural resources to undertake it, but not in an exceptional or highly unusual way. Its construction could result in waste materials, pollution or nuisance but these are not considered to be unusually complex or significant whether in terms of risk or impact (and where mitigation could be applied). There is not considered to be a likely risk of major accidents occurring or to human health during construction or operation of the proposal (and again where mitigation could be applied).

## **LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT**

The site is approximately 9.34 hectares in area and consists of two fields bisected east-west by a hedgerow, with some tree planting. A Public Right of Way runs east-west across the site to the immediate south of this hedgerow.

The existing land use is as agricultural land, which would be lost to accommodate the proposed development. The land within the site is described by the applicant as falling largely under Grade 3b of the Agricultural Land Classification.

The majority of the site is Grade 3b (the lighter green) although a small area adjacent to the junction of Boker Lane with New Road is Grade 3a - 3a being good quality agricultural land (and best and most versatile [BMV] agricultural land for planning purposes) and 3b moderate quality agricultural land.

A watercourse crosses the northeastern area of the site with small areas of the site around this lying within Environment Agency Flood Zones 2 and 3. However, the vast majority of the site lies within Flood Zone 1.

Levels within the site rise by around 8 metres from north to south.

To the north of the site is the B1298 New Road and the northern boundary features scrub and tree planting. To the south of the site are set residential properties within their gardens with the boundary formed of an established tree belt. To the west of the site lies a residential development set across Boker Lane and a grassed area, with the western site boundary formed of a timber rail fence and a line of trees / scrub. To the east of the site lies an area of grassland separated from the site by a bridleway and a tree belt.

The existing nearby housing development consists predominantly of detached and semi-detached properties which are set within their own gardens. It is noted that site is situated within land currently designated as Green Belt by virtue of the adopted South Tyneside Local Development Framework, by reference to its Site-Specific Allocations Proposals Map. However, Green Belt is not an environmental designation in terms of the consideration of EIA, or a screening request pursuant to the regulations. It is, instead, a product of planning policy (and as principally set out in the National Planning Policy Framework).

Furthermore, it is also noted that the site is proposed as a housing allocation site, GA2, in the Regulation 19 draft South Tyneside Local Plan (February 2024). The draft Local Plan has been subject to examination in public hearings in July 2025 and January 2026 and is now the subject of Main Modifications consultation following receipt of the Inspectors post-hearing letter. In preparing the draft Local Plan and proposed allocations that it includes, such as GA2, a wide variety of technical papers / evidence base underpins it; and where that includes a variety of environmental (and other) considerations.

The site is not located in a sensitive area as defined by the Regulation 2 of the regulations.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF POTENTIAL IMPACT**

The development proposals fall within Part 10(b)(ii) of Schedule 2 of the regulations which relates to urban development projects including more than 150 dwellings. For such development, an EIA is required where likely significant effects arise and EIA screening must be conducted to determine if such an assessment is necessary.

The sections below consider each of the relevant Screening Criteria.

### **Natural Resources**

The use of natural resources as part of the proposed development will be limited and is not likely to result in any significant environmental effects. In terms of the topography, the development will generally work with the existing levels of the site. The construction and operation of the development will result in the loss of Grade 3 agricultural land but given the abundance of such land within the vicinity of the site, the development will not be likely to have a significant effect on such natural resources.

### **Waste**

Waste generated by the proposed development in the construction and operational phases is not likely to give rise to significant environmental effects given the nature of development proposed and the location of the site subject to appropriate management and mitigation which could be secured by means of planning conditions.

### **Pollution and Nuisances**

When reviewing historical maps for this location, the site has always been undeveloped farmland bordering a residential area. The site has been farmed therefore the risk from contamination from pesticides, fuel and some potential made ground cannot be ruled out.

At planning application stage ground investigation would be undertaken to obtain information on the presence of potential contamination and any related remediation requirements. Such work would be informed by input from the Council's Environmental Health Team. This will ensure that any risk of contamination can be appropriately mitigated and managed.

Ground contamination impacts arising could be satisfactorily addressed by means of planning conditions in respect of the construction and operational phases of development. Therefore, it is considered that the development would not be likely to give rise to significant environmental effects in respect of ground conditions.

### **Population and Human Health**

In terms of pollution, it is not considered that the proposed development would give rise to significant environmental effects in terms of noise pollution having regard to local ambient noise levels and the scale of the proposed development. A Noise Assessment would be undertaken at planning application stage and in terms of the operational phase of the development it is envisaged that any mitigation required in respect of noise from traffic or the nearby railway line could be secured by means of planning conditions.

In terms of air quality, it is considered that the proposed development would not give rise to significant environmental effects in terms of air quality having regard to existing local air quality, the scale of the proposed development, and the absence of Air Quality Management Areas within South Tyneside.

The construction phase could give rise to traffic, noise, vibration and dust pollution. However these are temporary effects rather than permanent ones. They are not considered to give rise to significant environmental effects given the nature of the proposal and its location and where appropriate management and mitigation measures such as a Construction

Environment Management Plan (CEMP) could be secured by means of planning conditions. The potential risk of major accidents occurring, during the construction or operational phases, is not considered to be highly likely or to be environmentally significant given the nature of the proposal and its location, and where appropriate management and mitigation measures could be secured by means of planning conditions.

The potential risks to the population and their health, whether during construction or operation, is considered to involve a limited geographical area where that area is not considered to constitute a “densely populated area” within the context of the regulations.

Overall, the proposed development will not in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) be likely to give rise to significant environmental effects with regard to noise or air pollution.

## **Water Resources**

With regards to surface water drainage matters, the site is predominantly located within Flood Zone 1. However, there are areas to the north of the site located in Flood Zones 2 and 3. There are also areas identified to be at surface water flood risk to the north of the site.

A watercourse which is a tributary of the River Don lies within the northeast area of the site.

It is proposed that a planning application will be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy which would include details of a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) for the development to manage surface water flows/discharges. No built development is proposed in Flood Zones 2 and 3.

From a flood risk and drainage perspective, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) consider that all planning requirements can be met through the planning process – within a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy and the imposition of planning conditions. The LLFA require the submission of a Construction and Environmental Management Plan that includes the water environment, to ensure that the water quality of the watercourse within the site is safeguarded during construction works.

In terms of foul drainage matters, it was clarified at the Local Plan EiP hearing sessions and in South Tyneside Council’s ‘Sewage Management – Local Plan Position Statement Update’ October 2025 that the Boker Lane site would be served by both the Hendon Sewage Treatment Works (STW) at Sunderland (around 35% of the proposed dwellings on-site) as well as the Howdon STW (the remaining 65% of dwellings).

Northumbrian Water advised during the Local Plan EiP that they consider that there is sufficient capacity at those sewage treatment works to accommodate foul sewage from the development.

Foul water travelling to the Hendon Sewage Treatment Works journeys via Whitburn, although there are also some discharges of partially treated foul water direct to the marine and water course environments via Combined Storm Overflows (CSO’s) including a CSO at Whitburn associated with rainfall events which are permitted and monitored by the Environment Agency (EA).

A European Court of Justice (ECJ) judgement from 2012 found that sewage discharges at Whitburn were in breach of the European Union’s Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD).

In March 2022 Ofwat opened an enforcement investigation into Northumbrian Water to investigate whether it was managing its wastewater treatment works and networks appropriately, such that the company limits spills and environmental harm from storm overflows.

On 4 June 2025 Ofwat published their final decision for this case and concluded that Northumbrian Water had contravened the Urban Waste Water Treatment (England and Wales) Regulations 1994 (UWWTR) by failing to operate and maintain its wastewater assets adequately, and to upgrade them where necessary, to provide sufficient performance. It had also failed to put in place adequate processes and systems to routinely monitor and maintain the capacity and performance of its assets to ensure they were meeting legal requirements. The identified failings included failings related to the storm overflow discharges to the environment within the Whitburn/Hendon sewage infrastructure.

In response to the findings of Ofwat Northumbrian Water has provided undertakings to them that will see Northumbrian Water commit to investing an additional £15.7 million to improve the quality of the environment in its region and further reduce spills. A study will also be undertaken into the performance of the Whitburn/Hendon system to identify whether any additional interventions can be identified for reducing both the frequency and volume of spills from the system consistent with Best Technical Knowledge Not Entailing Excessive Costs (BTKNEEC) to below 20 spills per year. Should this study identify any additional interventions required to comply with BTKNEEC, these will be implemented within Northumbrian Water's Waste Water Treatment Works & Network Flow Compliance Plan. Ofwat have accepted these undertakings. NPPF paragraph 201 states that the focus of planning decisions should be on whether proposed development is an acceptable use of land, rather than the control of processes or emissions (where these are subject to separate pollution control regimes). That paragraph of the NPPF also states that planning decisions should assume that these regimes will operate effectively. In light of the above commentary regarding the findings of Ofwat and the undertakings given to them by Northumbrian Water, it is considered that the pollution control regime that regulates the operation of wastewater infrastructure is operating effectively in respect of the wastewater infrastructure that would be impacted by the proposed development.

EA Bathing water data for the coastline to the east of the application site shows Seaburn beach to have good bathing water quality whilst Roker and Marsden beaches have excellent bathing water quality and this coastline is not within a catchment area identified by Natural England (NE) where nutrient enrichment is a concern.

In light of all the above it is considered that the impact of the proposed development in respect of foul drainage discharges would be acceptable.

Overall, the development is not considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects in relation to water resources.

## **Biodiversity**

With respect to ecology, the existing land use of the site as an arable field means that there are limited habitats onsite which limit the range of species that it will support. Whilst some ecological impacts are inevitable, this is not considered to be on such a scale or to such sensitive receptors as to trigger the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment, particularly bearing in mind that it is proposed to retain existing trees and hedgerows on the site as part of the proposed development.

The site lies in proximity to a number of designated sites of local and national value and in terms of sites of national value is within the Impact Risk Zones of the West Farm Meadow and Durham Coast SSSI's.

Further assessment work would be required at planning application stage regarding the impact of the development on all such sites as well as impacts on any protected species that may use the application site itself, although it is envisaged that such impacts would not be large scale and that mitigation measures could be identified to ensure that any protected species and their habitats are safeguarded and with statutory requirements in relation to 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) also being provided for.

The implementation of mitigation measures and BNG including mitigation measures in respect of the construction phase of the development could be secured by planning conditions.

In terms of impact on internationally designated coastal sites from recreational disturbance associated with future occupiers of the development, a financial contribution in accordance with the Council's Interim SPD23 – Mitigation Strategy for European Sites – could be secured via a Section 106 Agreement in order to fund and satisfactorily mitigate the impact on these sites arising from the proposed development. In this regard the applicant has advised that a Shadow Habitat Regulation Assessment would accompany any planning application. The coastline of South Tyneside to the east of the site is not within a catchment identified by NE where nutrient enrichment has been identified as a matter of concern.

Overall, it is considered that the development would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects in relation to biodiversity.

## **Landscape and Visual**

The Site is located within the Green Belt and is surrounded by further Green Belt land to the north. However, the site is proposed as a housing allocation site, GA2, in the Regulation 19 draft South Tyneside Local Plan (February 2024). This has been subject to EiP hearings in July 2025 and January 2026 and is now the subject of Main Modifications consultation following receipt of the Inspectors post-hearing letter. In preparing the draft Local Plan and proposed allocations that it includes, such as GA2, a wide variety of technical papers / evidence base documents underpin the Plan; and these include documents relating to Green Belt and landscape matters. Once the Plan is adopted this allocation would remove the site from the Green Belt.

The South Tyneside Green Belt Study (2023) is an up to date, independent study undertaken to support the Local Plan and assesses the potential harm of development within the Green Belt against the Green Belt purposes set out in the NPPF. The study assesses individual parcels and uses a four-point harm rating scale: 'Low/No', 'Moderate', 'High' and 'Very High'. The Green Belt study assesses parcels against each of the five purposes of the Green Belt:

*Purpose 1: Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas*

*Purpose 2: Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another*

*Purpose 3: Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*

*Purpose 4: Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*

*Purpose 5: Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

All of the Borough's Green Belt has been found to perform a similar Green Belt function in relation to the purposes 4 and 5. It does not play a role in preserving the setting and special character of historic towns (Purpose 4). This is because there is no notable relationship

between South Tyneside's Green Belt land and the historic setting and special character of surrounding historic towns. It all plays a role in assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (Purpose 5).

The site is within parcel BO-N3 in the study. The parcel is assessed overall as 'moderate' and therefore development on the site would cause moderate harm to the purposes of the Green Belt.

The Landscape Character Study identifies the site as being part of the urban fringe Boldon-Cleadon fragmented farmland character Area. The area is characterised by medium to small scale fields, bounded by dense hedgerows with hedgerow trees and by being well used for recreation, with areas of access land, wildlife sites and a dense network of footpaths linking across the area between the settlements.

The study recommends the enhancement of landscape structure and access to green networks and supporting the reinstatement and reinforcement of hedges and hedge trees.

This request outlines that the Proposed Development would be designed to ensure clear and defensive boundaries, retaining existing trees/hedgerows and making landscaping an integral part of the design to ensure that the development is sensitively integrated into its surroundings, thereby mitigating potential landscape and visual impacts to an acceptable level.

Furthermore given the location of the site, its landscape character is heavily influenced by its settlement edge location with nearby built development and roads/railways impacting on such character. These influences include highways on Boker Lane and New Road with the Newcastle – Sunderland rail/Metro line beyond as well as housing development within Boldon to the south and west. As such the locality within which the site lies is considered to have a semi-rural character but with significant built development influences.

Overall, it is considered that the development would not be likely to have significant urbanising effects or result in significant environmental effects in relation to landscape and visual impacts.

### **Cultural Heritage/Archaeology**

The site is not within a Conservation Area, it does not contain any other designated heritage assets and is not identified as being archaeologically significant. The closest part of the East Boldon Conservation Area is approximately 210m to the south of the site whilst the West Boldon Conservation Area lies around 800m to the south west of the site. There are also listed buildings within these Conservation Areas.

It is considered that the application site makes no contribution to the character and appearance of the above Conservation Areas due to its visual and physical separation from these and therefore the proposed development would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas and their settings. With regard to other heritage assets, the site has no visual or historic association with these assets and is considered to make no contribution to their significance. It is considered that no harm to the significance of these assets or their settings would arise from the proposed development.

Further investigation work would need to be undertaken at planning application stage regarding below ground archaeology but the Council's Archaeologist does not consider that significant environmental effects in this regard are likely to arise that would be sufficient to justify the need for Environmental Impact Assessment.

Overall, it is considered that the development would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects in relation to cultural heritage/archaeology.

## **Transport and Access**

With regards to traffic, the Council's Transport Development Officer has confirmed that no issues are envisaged from the proposal for the purposes of this screening opinion. The Site Frameworks document which forms part of the evidence base to the Council's emerging Local Plan (within which this site is a proposed housing allocation) shows that the site could be accessed from New Road and/or Boker Lane.

Notwithstanding the above, further information will be required at the formal planning application submission stage regarding the precise locations of access points and Transport Assessment matters, which will first require scoping with South Tyneside Council as Local Highway Authority and possibly National Highways. Non-Motorised User improvements and connections will also be required, including upgrades of the PRoW. A draft Travel Plan will also be required.

A CEMP and Construction Method Statement, together with a supporting plan, will also be required at any formal planning application stage to ensure highway safety during the construction phase.

Given its edge of settlement location, the site is considered to be accessible by a choice of means of transport with a bus service within walking distance which provides access to Durham, Newcastle, South Shields & Sunderland.. East Boldon Metro Station is also within walking distance of the site (approximately 20 minutes). A Travel Plan could be secured through a planning condition to further promote sustainable transport choices.

As the line of the public right of way, B19, is inside the application site, the route will be affected by the granting of planning permission. The Council's Transport Development Officer has requested that works to improve the bridleway are included as part of any planning application.

Transportation impacts arising during construction works are not anticipated to be likely to have significant environmental effects and it is considered that such impacts could be appropriately managed through submission of a Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan (DCEMP) secured through a planning condition.

SYSTRA Ltd were commissioned by the Council to assess how the growth planned as part of the South Tyneside Local Plan will impact on the local and strategic road network across the borough. The Traffic Assessment (2023) identifies that the traffic impact of the Local Plan developments can be mitigated through a combination of highway mitigation schemes supported by sustainable transport improvements.

Overall, it is considered that the development would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects in relation to transport and access.

## **Land Use**

In terms of socio-economic impacts the proposed development has the potential to provide employment and to contribute to economic growth in South Tyneside during its construction and operational phases and once complete would provide new homes, including affordable housing, which would contribute to the Council's current housing land supply shortfall.

Other social impacts have been considered including any increased pressures upon social infrastructure. A contribution could be secured as part of any S106 agreement towards delivering additional pupil places to support the need generated by the development and/or the enhancement of primary healthcare provision. There are shops, services and other local amenities nearby in East Boldon, West Boldon and Boldon Colliery. Overall, the socio-economic impacts of the development are not considered likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

Overall, it is considered that the development would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects in relation to land use.

### **Land Stability and Climate**

The site is not considered to be susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme / adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds and which could cause the proposal to present significant environmental problems.

The application site is not within a Coal Authority Development High Risk area. Further assessment in respect of land stability would be addressed through site investigation at planning application stage with any required mitigation secured through planning conditions. Therefore the risk of land instability is considered low.

Energy efficiency will need to be in accordance with the relevant standards prevailing at the appropriate time, consistent with Government proposals aimed at reducing carbon emissions over the coming years. As part of the detailed design of the development it would be possible to take into account energy efficiency, waste and services with an overall aim of reducing home energy use and lowering environmental impacts.

In addition to these measures, the site is in an accessible location close to good public transport connections, including bus routes and is 20 minutes' walk from East Boldon Metro Station.

The development therefore includes an opportunity to deliver new dwellings in a location where there are attractive alternative options to travel than use of the private car. The use of these would also be encouraged through the implementation of a Travel Plan for the development which could be conditioned.

Overall, it is considered that the development would not be likely to result in significant environmental effects on the climate or in respect of land stability.

### **Cumulative Effects and Transboundary Effects**

With regard to the matter of cumulative impact consideration has been given to the environmental effects of the proposed development taken together with large scale housing and commercial development proposals elsewhere in the South Tyneside area which are both the subject of current planning permissions but not yet commenced or completed. These comprise the large scale commercial development on the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) site in the south west of the Borough, consented housing developments in Hebburn to the north west at Argyle Street, Glen Street, Hawthorn Leslie Ellison Street and Lukes Lane, the former Chuter Ede, Holborn Riverside and South Tyneside College sites in South Shields, the Cleadon Lane Industrial Estate site in East Boldon and the Whitburn Lodge site in Whitburn Village.. The proposal is not functionally or physically linked

with these other schemes. Given this and having regard to the various matters highlighted previously in this Opinion it is not considered that cumulative impact matters in respect of all the above proposals taken together with this proposal would give rise to significant environmental effects requiring EIA in respect of this current planning application.

In terms of the consideration wider cumulative effects, the site has been subject to consideration in that regard as part of the local plan process mentioned earlier, and where that has not precluded it being put forward in that plan as a housing allocation (GA2).

There would be no transboundary effects (i.e. meaning with another country).

## **Summary**

Overall, the environmental impacts arising from the proposed development will be largely no more than localised to those properties and land within close vicinity of the development, and can be satisfactorily mitigated through planning conditions and obligations. The magnitude, complexity and probability of the impacts arising from the proposals are not of a scale or nature that would result in additional substantive impact beyond the immediate local area subject to the above-mentioned mitigation being secured regarding coastal recreational disturbance.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is considered that **the proposal is not EIA development** (meaning that EIA is not required to be undertaken in respect of it).

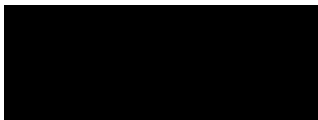
Please note that this letter is issued solely pursuant to Screening Opinion of the regulations and a copy of it will be placed on the planning register. It is issued within an extended timescale that you have agreed to, in writing, and as is permissible by the regulations.

If you disagree with this Screening Opinion, you may request that the Secretary of State issues a Screening Direction. Please refer to the regulations for further information about that.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact the case officer

DECISION DATE: 8 May 2026

Signed:

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the case officer.