

District: South and Vale

Planning Ref: R3.0138/21

Team: Healthy Place Shaping

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Once completed please email your comments to emily.catcheside@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Comments

Didcot Garden Town HIF 1 Scheme Environmental Statement – Volume I

The public health team have reviewed the following chapters in the environmental statement in order to assess the impact of the scheme on human health and wellbeing:

- Chapter 13: Population and Human Health
- Chapter 6 Air Quality
- Chapter 10: Noise and vibration

It is noted that at the time of the scoping review for the environmental impact assessment in 2020, there was no requirement for a separate Health Impact Assessment to be undertaken of major infrastructure schemes. However, the relevant chapters in the environmental statement provide sufficient information for an assessment of the impacts of the scheme, positive, negative and neutral, on health and wellbeing. Our comments address the impact of the scheme on the following:

- Air Quality
- Noise and Vibration
- Physical Activity
- Access to nature, green and blue spaces
- Connectivity and climate impact

Air Quality

The applicant confirms that there are no AQMAs within the study area, although there are potentially some concerns about neighbouring areas such as the Abingdon AQMA (3 km away). The AQA identifies sensitive receptors and states that these were chosen based on the areas where pollutant concentrations were likely to be highest. As no receptors are predicted to experience an exceedance of the objective for annual mean NO₂, a conclusion of no likely significant air quality effects is recorded for the construction traffic impacts. However, due to the scale of the Scheme and the presence of public exposure receptors close to the Site boundary, e.g., residential properties and education facilities, there is potential for adverse air quality effects during the construction of the Scheme in relation to construction dust and plant equipment.

Proposed mitigation measures must be implemented in full – see below.

Noise and Vibration

The Scheme will result in changes to the levels of traffic congestion on the road network through the redistribution of traffic. The assessment provides detailed information on how the redistribution of traffic will change the air quality and ambient noise environments at different receptors across the study areas resulting in a positive, negative or neutral outcome on the health of local communities. The assessment concludes that in total, 187 residential buildings in the study area are anticipated to experience a minor, moderate or major increase in traffic noise levels in the opening year, and 1,862 a decrease, based on the façade with the greatest magnitude of change. There will remain a number of properties which will experience a significant adverse impact from this scheme but will not benefit from the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975.

*Given that one of the receptors is negatively affected both during the construction and operational phases is a nursery, **additional information** is requested to identify any additional mitigations that are possible to reduce adverse impacts on air quality and noise in the short and long term on Culham Science Centre Nursery and Preschool.*

Mitigations

During the construction phase, a number of properties have been identified that will suffer Significant Observable Adverse Effect and vibration annoyance. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is mentioned as a way of minimising any air quality related effects of the dust and to reduce noise and vibration impact generated during construction. Given that the population health assessment has identified that a number of sensitive receptors will be adversely impacted during the construction phase, it is essential that effective monitoring is undertaken to ensure that the Noise and Vibration Management Plan (NVMP) and the Dust Management Plan are being fully implemented and adhered to in order to mitigate potential noise and vibration impacts.

It is recommended that the results of surveys including physical measurements and observational checks and audits to ensure that BPM should be publicly accessible.

Physical Activity

The Scheme will provide new footpaths/ cycleways and aims to improve safety along the road. In order to maximise use of this cycling and walking infrastructure, trees, shrubs and hedges should visually separate the road from the cycle and pedestrian paths alongside the road.

It is recommended that current levels of planting need to be enhanced to make this cycling and walking environment more attractive and to ensure that the local population increase active travel and participation in recreational activities.

It is noted that temporary closure of multiple sections of PRoW will reduce the amount of opportunities to undertake physical exercise.

In order to minimise the negative outcomes on health during the construction phase, clear signage of rerouting of PRoWs and advance publicity regarding these changes is essential.

Access to natural green and blue spaces

Access to green and public space is important for both physical health and mental wellbeing. Construction of this scheme will result in the loss of over 50,000m² tree cover and no detail is provided relating to the impact on hedgerows and other planting. In addition, although green infrastructure is mentioned as a way of mitigating air pollution, the applicant does not provide any detail as to how any proposed green infrastructure will affect air quality.

It is recommended that the level of planting is enhanced in order to minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity, improve air quality and encourage use of new active travel infrastructure.

Connectivity and climate change mitigation

This proposal will deliver key transport infrastructure, relieve congestion and improve connectivity and will support new housing and employment growth. As such it has the potential to improve human health. It is noted that where temporary or permanent access to private property or housing, community land and assets including open space and nature; community recreational and healthcare infrastructure as well as development land, and businesses, is severed as a result of the Scheme, appropriate alternative temporary or permanent access will be provided.

In order to ensure that the scheme positively mitigates against climate change it is important that the scope and biodiversity of planting is maximised.