

# Highfield Farm Development

## Non-technical Summary



Fay & Son Ltd (Limited), the applicants, propose to construct a scheme of residential development on land at Highfield Farm, Tetbury, approximately 0.5 miles to the north of the town centre (see Figure 1: Site Location). This site is located immediately adjacent to the existing development boundary of Tetbury.

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Cover Picture: Highfield Farm site from the north showing existing development boundary of Tetbury

# Introduction

## Proposed Development

Fay & Son Ltd (Limited), the applicants, propose to construct a scheme of residential development on land at Highfield Farm, Tetbury, approximately 0.5 miles to the north of the town centre (see Figure 1: Site Location). This site is located immediately adjacent to the existing development boundary of Tetbury.

It would comprise the following elements:

- Residential development of approximately 250 residential units, comprised of a mix of detached and semi detached two storey/three storey residential;
- Other associated development including landscaping, access roads and a pumping station.

The project would require planning consent from Cotswold District Council (CDC), under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In addition, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999. The results of this EIA have been reported in an Environmental Statement (ES).



Figure 1: Site Location

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This document is a non-technical summary (NTS) of the ES and is provided both in Volume A of the ES and as a separate document. Details of how to view the full ES are given on the last page of this document.

### **The Need for Additional Housing**

Cotswold District Council intends that the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework should not be adopted before 2012. However changing demographics dictate that the supply of additional housing sites will be a key strategic issue facing the district over the next 20 years.

Following ministerial statements on the revoked Regional Strategies, a review of housing need commenced last year to consider the requirements of all six districts within the County of Gloucestershire. This data will form part of the Council's evidence base prepared to inform the Local Development Framework for Cotswold District. Trend-based population forecasting already reveals a projected housing shortfall in Cotswold District. In these circumstances Cotswold District Council is re-evaluating housing

requirements at a local level prior to adoption of the Core Strategy.

A consultation paper entitled 'Second Issues and Options Paper' (September 2010) was produced by Cotswold District Council last year. This paper sought responses on key issues including future housing in order to help define the direction of the Core Strategy. Two strategic locations for additional housing were identified; one in Cirencester and one in Tetbury. The identified strategic site in question includes the land to the north of Tetbury at Highfield Farm. For a full discussion of housing policy refer to the Planning Statement submitted as part of the Highfield Farm planning application.



Highfield Farm site from London Road

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# Site & Surroundings

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The site is comprised of rough grazing paddocks on the northern edge of Tetbury. The existing use is not related to an existing agricultural unit. Figure 1 shows its general location and Figure 2 shows the planning application site area and locations of the main elements of the development.

This site is located immediately adjacent to the existing development boundary of Tetbury as defined in the Cotswold District Local Plan, adopted April 2006.

The principal constraints on the development of the site relate to its environmental context within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and setting of the listed building (Highfield Farmhouse). Ecological and drainage considerations are also relevant.

The site is located alongside a key gateway into the town of Tetbury (London Road/A433). This is a major route into Tetbury incorporating an existing roundabout adjacent to the application site.

In discussions with Cotswold District Council it was agreed that the London Road forms an important gateway to the town of Tetbury which could be improved as part of the development proposal.

The town of Tetbury falls within National Landscape Character Area 107; 'Cotswolds'. The Cotswold AONB Landscape Character Assessment (2004) identifies Tetbury as lying within Character Type 11; Dip Slope Lowland and Character Area 11A; 'South and Mid Cotswolds'. Key characteristics of these areas are described in Chapter 6 (Landscape and Visual) of the Environmental Statement.

There are no other specific planning policy designations covering any part of the application site.

Habitats on the site have the suitability to support notable and protected species, including badger, common species of bat, breeding birds, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates. The related implications for these potential interests have been

assessed through baseline surveys by qualified staff.

The development site incorporates areas within the setting to the adjacent listed building (Highfield Farmhouse). The scale and extent of the setting is defined within Chapter 12 (Cultural Heritage) of the Environmental Statement. The spatial implications of these potential interests have been assessed through baseline surveys by qualified staff.

Following relevant baseline assessment and ground investigations, it is concluded that there are no significant buried archaeological remains within the application site area.

Given levels of generated traffic there is a need to provide access directly from London Road into the development site. Connection for development-generated traffic as well as construction traffic has been thoroughly considered and would be provided for via an extra spur from the existing roundabout.

Given the proximity of the adjacent school (Sir William Romney's School) it was agreed with Cotswold District Council that any opportunities to provide improved access to this school should be explored as part of the site assessment.



The site is surrounded by residential areas to the south, arable and grazed farmland (agricultural Grade 2/3) to the north, Sir William Romney's School to the west, and the A433 (London Road), with industrial and commercial premises beyond, to the south east. The site is currently managed as farmland and comprises poor semi-improved grassland, ponds, hedgerows, trees and woodland copses.

The physical landform appears generally flat although it has a steady downward slope from north west to south east of approximately 10m. In flood risk terms the site falls within Flood Risk Zone 1 (Low Probability). The upstream catchment has been defined (30 ha) and is mainly farmland with occasional buildings.

A ditch exits the site on the southern boundary and is piped via a 300mm diameter pipe through

neighbouring properties to Cooks Pool, which is located approximately 100m south east of the site on the London Road.

Built development to the north of the site comprises a collection of residential properties, an existing equestrian centre and farm buildings. Other farm buildings in the countryside to the north of the site include existing farmhouses (Broadfield Farm, Lowfield Farm & Ilsom Farm).

There are two public rights of way in the vicinity of the site and its western boundary (See Figure 1). It is intended to undertake a minor diversion to one of these routes as part of the proposals.

The A433 provides direct access to Cirencester and Bath from Tetbury with associated public transport connection to these centres as well as Stroud/Nailsworth/Stonehouse via A4135.



Figure 2: Development Strategy

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# Application for Planning Permission

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Outline planning permission for the Highfield Farm development is being sought by the applicant from Cotswold District Council (CDC). It is intended that a subsequent planning application will address detailed design matters.

Following pre-application discussions with Cotswold District Council the scope of this outline application is limited to address access, landscape and the general layout of development with all

other matters reserved. It therefore seeks to establish the general principles of development. These concepts are set out in a composite masterplan for the entire site (See Figure 3). This would be on the basis that a follow-up application for detailed planning consent will need to be in conformity with the general principles of development established at this outline stage, i.e. the approved composite masterplan.

## Project Details

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The proposed development will comprise:

*Residential development and associated development including hard and soft landscaping, access roads; allotment gardens, public open space and a pumping station.*

### Overall Layout

After defining the potential development site, the key findings of baseline environmental surveys have been used to identify options for development. This has involved the identification of those areas which should be excluded from development to meet environmental objectives. In defining these spatial areas the master-planning exercise has taken account of key opportunities to mitigate potential environmental impacts at both the design and the construction stages. This incorporates the potential to improve the environmental quality of the site.

Based upon the total site area of 8.92 hectares, known site constraints and associated mitigation requirements, a net developable area of approximately 6 hectares has been identified. Taking into account the likely residential densities which would be applied it is envisaged that the scale of proposed development would not exceed

250 residential units with associated landscaping, parking and servicing.

A Development Strategy Plan was tabled at the initial meeting with Cotswold District Council and at the subsequent public consultation meeting. It shows in outline potential housing zones, community infrastructure including areas of public open space, footpath/cycleway links and the enhancement of existing site features (Figure 2).

Each of the site-specific environmental considerations relating to the application site have been carefully considered in the design process to identify a range of illustrative masterplan options. These have been prepared in close collaboration with the County Highway Authority and District Council representatives, Town and Parish Councils and the local community to address the broad design objectives. The proposals have also been the subject of two public consultation exhibitions.

A preferred masterplan option has evolved from alternative versions taking into account baseline surveys and consultations with the various authorities and the local community.

Each version of the masterplan was discussed during the public consultation process.

The options have been evaluated against environmental objectives and the viability of the overall scheme. The Preferred Illustrative Masterplan Option is therefore the result of the process of comprehensive evaluation.

### Background to Masterplanning

Ten alternative options were considered in the course of the design formulation process. These are summarised in Table 1 (below) and involved additional road linkages, and community infrastructure.

The selection of the preferred option has involved the direct input of Cotswold District Council. This has involved changes to the road hierarchy and the introduction of squares and public spaces/focal points. The preferred option therefore involves the creation of high quality residential areas with creation of a series of interlinked zones overlooking open spaces.

The preferred option incorporates the specific requirements for environmental mitigation following the findings of environmental baseline studies. All of the mitigation measures provided for in the preferred option would be secured before

**Table 1: Summary of Options**

Option 'A'	2440-10A	Explored options for connection from London Road and a link road through to the Leisure Centre and Sir William Romney's School. Along with related internal footpath/cycle path links.
Option 'B'	2440-11A	Showed a link road to Shepherds Mead, however the vehicular link to school site deleted as it could not be justified in terms of County Highways requirements based on exiting information. Related internal footpath/cycle path links were however maintained.
Option 'C'	2440-12B	Affordable housing areas indicated. This scheme considered the inclusion of 'pepper potted' affordable housing in accordance with the adopted local development plan.
Option 'D'	2440-13A	Possible Doctor's Surgery site indicated. This scheme considered the inclusion of 'a health facility' to address local needs.
Option 'E'	2440-14	Possible Nursing Home site shown. This scheme considered the inclusion of 'a nursing home facility' to address local needs.
Option 'F'	2440-15	Possible Retirement Village site shown. This scheme considered the inclusion of 'a retirement village' to address local needs.
<b>Site Layout</b>		
Option 'B'	2440-21	Showing indicative housing on southern boundary and Nursing Home.
Option 'C'	2440-22	As option 'B' but with Retirement Village in lieu of Nursing Home.
Option 'D'	2440-23	Showing indicative housing on southern boundary and Doctor's Surgery.
Option 'E'	2440-24	Showing affordable housing locations including Extra Care Homes.
Option 'F'	2440-24	This is based upon a requirement for additional habitat areas around existing and proposed water features to address potential areas of protected species.
Option 'G'	2440-18	This illustrative masterplan incorporates revisions to the road alignment to preserve the long term option for a school link. It is the preferred option.

planning permission is granted. In this way the preferred option has incorporated the findings of archaeological, landscape, ecological, ground water, noise, pollution, surface water drainage and traffic impact assessments of the proposed development.

## Housing Mix

In accordance with national planning policy guidance, the proposed scheme of development will incorporate a mix of residential units. These will be arranged around five development cells within the site. It is envisaged that an element of affordable housing would be provided in the final development scheme. The proportion will be defined following ongoing discussions with Cotswold District Council representatives.

The proposed scheme involves a mix of tenures to meet the specific needs identified in the local Housing Needs Survey.

## Bulk and Massing

A detailed residential layout showing the design and the layout of individual residential units is not to be specified at this stage. However an indicative layout has been produced (See Figure 3). Additional details have been submitted with the planning application of proposed frontage development within the vicinity of London Road. The development would be two-storey with the exception of a limited amount of housing located within the central core area and some bedrooms in roof spaces.

## Landscaping

Given the AONB context and related considerations over the interface of the proposed development with adjacent residential properties in Shepherds Mead/Rylands Close/Cheviot Close (South) and on land to the rear of Highfield Farm (North East), an explanation of related assumptions over boundary treatments has been provided at this stage. The following assumptions can be confirmed at this stage:



- A buffer of approximately 20 metres will be maintained along the southern boundary of the site with Shepherds Mead/Rylands Close/Cheviot Close (South). This buffer will comprise open space with informal play areas and allotment gardens.
- A buffer of approximately 10 metres will be maintained along the eastern boundary of the site with Mews Cottages (East). This buffer will comprise open space with structural landscape planting incorporating a new pond (North East).
- A 15m 'development exclusion zone' is proposed along the northern boundary of the site. This is intended to reduce the potential visual impacts of residential development to the wider Cotswold AONB.

## Surface Water Run-off

Given existing problems it is proposed that surface water drainage from roofs and hard standing will be discharged via a pumping station to the existing highway drain in Quercus Road which Wessex Water intends to adopt as a public sewer.

Within the development itself it is proposed to also harvest rainwater by the inclusion of water butts on suitable buildings.

Attenuation of flows will be undertaken on the site in culverts or pipes under the proposed road and within the proposed pumping station. With



discharge of surface water to sewer from the 'developed site' the volume of water flowing off the site to Cooks Pool and any associated problems in this area will be reduced.

Adequate percolation rates have been proven in the north eastern part of the site and the use of infiltration measures, such as soakaways or permeable paving, in this area will therefore be further investigated at the detailed stage.

It is proposed to construct a landscaped bund in the south east corner of the site to reduce peak surface run-off by attenuating some of these flows.

### Accessibility

The proposed means of pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access from London Road is detailed at this stage. The proposed vehicular connection via the newly formed 'Highfield Way' has been influenced by site-specific environmental factors including ecological constraints and the setting of the adjacent listed building (Highfield Farmhouse).

These considerations relate to:

- The requirement to minimise disturbance to existing water features within the site given their ecological potential;
- Maintenance of the key vistas relating to the setting of Highfield Farmhouse.

The proposed layout has taken account of opportunities to maximise pedestrian and cycle permeability within the development site including:

- Connection to improved bus services and a community bus scheme;
- Proposed employment areas to the east;
- Proposed community facilities (allotments) and their accessing requirements;
- Potential improved connection to the existing school/leisure centre;
- Linkage to existing public rights of way in the vicinity of the site including the crossing at London Road;
- Options for pedestrian and cycle connection to Northlands Way.

Within the site there will be proposals for a network of attractive, safe, well-lit pedestrian and cycle routes through the development, linking the site bus stops, play areas, the Leisure Centre and Sir William Romney's School. These routes will also link into the town centre and local facilities.

Connection to the existing Industrial Estate to the east of the site would be achieved via the existing crossing point over the traffic island to the south of the existing roundabout on London Road.

These considerations have influenced the configuration of the preferred masterplan. Details of the road alignment for the main access into the site as well as internal road configuration are shown on the preferred masterplan option (See Figure 3).

## Eastern Boundary Treatment

Given the listed status of Highfield Farmhouse (Grade II) and its associated setting to London Road, components of the design approach are provided for consideration at this stage. This includes individual frontage units and the associated landscape treatments on the eastern boundary of the site.

This information relates to Properties Nos. 1- 12 along London Road, Nos. 1- 14 Highfield Way and the proposed Lodge opposite the existing Audi Garage. In effect treatment of this important interface will be determined at this stage. This treatment would then be carried through to the detailed application stage. In accordance with the Cotswold Design Code the layout of this frontage has been designed to reflect the distinctive Cotswold Style.



Details of the urban design philosophy underlying the approach to the frontage properties along the eastern boundary of the site (London Road) are explained in the following sections.

## Appearance & Context

The proposed development would involve the introduction of new built form along the eastern site boundary. This element of the proposed development will comprise approximately 26 properties arranged in two distinct groupings along London Road and the main access road (Highfield Way) into the site.

### Grouping 1: Frontage to London Road

The design intention is that new housing would address the London Road frontage but be set back behind a landscaped strip accommodating existing and new tree planting. A new pedestrian access linkage would be provided along the London Road frontage connecting with the existing public footpath in the vicinity of Highfield Farmhouse (Ref NTU/8/1).

In accordance with the Cotswold Design Guide proposed frontage dwellings would be built in a traditional Cotswold 'hole in the wall' vernacular

style. Twelve frontage dwellings are proposed along the main London Road frontage, with a variety of roof heights in a mixture of three and four bedroom houses. Street tree planting and the introduction of sympathetic properties set back to the road frontage would be associated with the creation of a much improved northern approach into Tetbury.

Following detailed analysis of its townscape context it is considered that the vernacular architecture of the Cotswolds and of Tetbury itself must be expressed in the future form of this frontage. In particular materials, massing, scale and the principles set out in the Cotswold Design Code referred to in 'The Cotswold Style' and 'Harmony & Street Scene' will be adopted.

The design philosophy for this boundary is to produce a robust landscaped zone through which local vernacular elevations will be glimpsed. Also the creation of a 'sense of place' and 'local distinctiveness' through sympathetic architecture

Figure 3: Indicative housing layout



KEY

← ○ ○ ○ ○ Footpath link into School Site

← ● ● ● ● Cycle & Footpaths

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Public Footpaths

← ● ● ● ● Emergency Fire Access

≡ ≡ ≡ Access Road

● ● ● ● ● Boundary reinforcement planting

▭ Newt Mitigation Area





will enhance public views into and out of the site. Locally distinctive architecture will result in the development sitting comfortably in its setting.

The existing boundary dry stone wall to London Road will be retained and refurbished along the whole site frontage. Most of the existing mature trees behind the wall will be retained apart from the

conifers which will be replaced with lime trees. This will serve to extend the existing avenue of lime trees which is a feature of the approach to Tetbury.

Behind the tree belt a pathway will give pedestrian access to houses fronting London Road. A new dry stone wall will form the garden boundary to the frontage dwellings. Low level lighting will be installed behind the walling.

Details showing the design of frontage buildings on London Road are shown below.

These properties would include integral rear gardens with external drying spaces.

The building forms will be created to blend well into their surroundings without relying on imitation. The use of common materials and care will ensure that new buildings are harmonious with historic setting of Tetbury.

A modern interpretation of the Cotswold style will use a combination of appropriate scale, materials, colour, detailing and high quality workmanship.

### **Grouping 2: Frontage to Highfield Farmhouse/Existing Footpath and Proposed Access Road**

This grouping of traditionally designed properties would form the main entry statement into the proposed development. The underlying design intention is that this new housing would complement the visual setting of the adjacent Grade II Listed Building (Highfield Farmhouse) and the disposition of its associated outbuildings. The proposed design therefore preserves an open vista to the east of the Listed Building to maintain the existing setting of this property. In doing so it is intended that this would limit the degree of change to key historic building elements or setting.



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In addition this grouping will provide a 'gateway transition feature' in itself alongside London Road to assist in the creation of an improved northern approach into Tetbury. The introduction of a traditional lodge-style building on the eastern frontage will also improve visual definition.

In all, 14 dwellings are proposed alongside the proposed main access to London Road. The two storey scale of these buildings would ensure that they remain of a domestic scale in their relationship to the main farmhouse. Dwellings would comprise of a mix of two and three bedroom properties. Typical elevational treatments are provided with this outline planning application.

Whilst Highfield Farmhouse is located close to the proposed vehicular entrance from London Road, the introduction of built form alongside the main access into the site will provide an enclosing element to preserve a defined 'open corridor' to the east to enhance the existing setting of this property. These buildings will also screen the existing vertical elements represented by the Audi Showroom and the associated lighting columns on London Road that illuminate the roundabout on the main entrance to the application site.

Boundary treatments have been carefully selected to incorporate traditional dry stone walls, estate fencing/railings, picket fences and traditional species hedges.

At the detailed stage the remainder of the individual properties within the proposed development on the wider site will be designed in compliance with the principles set out in the 'Cotswold Design Code' (March 2000).

### **Sustainability & Energy Efficiency**

The key aims for the proposed development is to provide a quality built environment that reflects best practice in sustainability. The extent to which the submitted scheme will be in accordance with guidance set out in the Code for Sustainable Homes is confirmed in the accompanying EA.

### **Lighting to Public Areas**

Lighting will be restricted to roads and pathways with no illumination on the boundaries of the site. Directional lanterns will be employed to avoid light spillage into the surrounding countryside particularly on the northern boundary.

Pathways will be lit with low level bollards. Illumination will focus on higher order pathways. Daylight cut-off sensors and movement detecting control devices will be installed.

### **Environmental Best Practice**

Environmental best practice and pollution prevention measures would be followed during all construction activities related to the proposed development. A construction environmental management plan (CEMP) would be prepared by the main contractor and include the mitigation measures committed to as part of the EIA. The CEMP would be produced following outline planning consent in order to incorporate all relevant planning conditions imposed by the local authority.

### **Public Consultation**

A statement of community involvement is attached to the planning application which describes the key consultation events which have taken place in connection with the formulation of the proposals. This document details the changes which have occurred in response to feedback from public exhibitions and dialogue with residents and other parties.

For the duration of the public and stakeholder consultation a telephone number/email address and postal address was provided. Following the second public exhibition in February 2010, an interactive website [www.hfdevelopment.co.uk/](http://www.hfdevelopment.co.uk/) was available to allow for a two-way communication between the applicant and the stakeholder groups. Planning Obligations have been discussed with local community groups. It appears that community support is focussed upon the part funding of a replacement community hall on the existing Dolphins Hall site

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## Ecology

Full details of ecological baseline conditions have been established through desk studies and field surveys. Given the presence of habitats on the site with the suitability to support notable and protected species, including Great Crested Newts,

a specific mitigation zone has been identified to preserve and enhance this species in the northern sector of the site.

A programme will be confirmed demonstrating that all recommended ecological enhancement works will be completed within a single annual cycle from completion of residential properties.

# Regulatory Requirements and the EIA Process

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## Regulatory Consent

In order to construct the proposed development the Applicant must first apply for planning permission from the Local Authority, CDC, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The project is also subject to an EIA in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

## The EIA Process

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process that must be followed for certain types of development before they can be granted development consent. The procedure is a means of drawing together an assessment of a project's likely significant environmental effects. The process takes into account each stage of the development, from the planning of the design through to construction.

The following stages are those followed for the Highfield Farm EIA:

- Scoping determination of the issues to be addressed by the EIA through consultation with the local authority and consultees;
- Data collection and surveys;
- Impact identification and evaluation;

- Identification of mitigation measures designed to reduce or prevent significant adverse environmental effects arising;
- Identification of monitoring requirements if required;
- Identification and evaluation of cumulative effects;
- Submission of the ES to the relevant authorities.

After submission, liaison and consultation is ongoing in order to resolve matters and a decision on whether the development proposal should proceed is made.

## Scoping

Scoping is the process of identifying the issues to be addressed in the EIA. It aims to focus the EIA on the likely significant environmental effects that require further attention, whilst determining the effects that are unlikely to require additional study. The scoping of an EIA by which these main or significant effects are identified is an important preliminary procedure that sets the context for the study.

Following submission of scoping documentation in October 2009 setting out the proposed scope for the Highfield Farm EIA, CDC provided their

Scoping Opinion in November 2009 having received responses from the following consultees:

- Natural England;
- RSPB;
- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust;
- English Heritage;
- Environment Agency;
- Gloucestershire County Archaeologist; and
- Gloucestershire County Council as Highways Authority.

In general the proposed EIA scope was accepted by CDC. Consultation with the Local Authority, the consultees listed above and other stakeholders has been ongoing throughout the EIA.

### Data Collection and Surveys

A series of detailed surveys, data collection exercises and desk studies were undertaken as part of the EIA to collect site-specific information. These are discussed in detail in the ES and include:

- Identification of landscape designations and sensitive visual receptors in consultation with CDC;
- A landscape and visual impact assessment;
- An ecological survey programme to identify potential habitats and any protected species; supplemented with ecological data searches to collate any previous records and review the requirement for further surveys;
- Desk-based assessment and site reconnaissance visits to collate information on the geology, hydrogeology and hydrology of the area, as well as a flood risk assessment;
- A review of existing historical and archaeological data followed by field evaluation including geophysical survey and trial trenching;
- A desk-based assessment with reference to local maps and data sources to identify features relating to the local community, including a review of community infrastructure



requirements, socioeconomic implications, land use, and recreation and access issues;

- Consultation with Highways Authorities regarding traffic and access issues, calculation of traffic movements and vehicle types during construction stages;
- Baselines noise surveys and a desk based assessment with reference to British Standards and other current relevant guidance.

### Impact Identification and Evaluation

The EIA Regulations require the identification of the main and likely significant effects which the project is likely to have on the environment. Receptors are defined as the physical resource or user group that could be affected by the project or part of the project throughout its construction. Some receptors will be more sensitive to certain environmental effects than others. The sensitivity or importance of a receptor may depend, for example, on its frequency or extent of occurrence at an international, national, regional or local level. Effects are defined as the physical changes to the environment attributable to the project. For each topic, the likely environmental effects are identified and taken into account, including their magnitude and other dimensions of identified change in the environment with the project by comparison with the situation without the project. Effects are



defined as either adverse or beneficial. Depending on discipline, they may also be described as:

- Direct: effects directly attributable to a project action/activity; or
- Indirect: effects not directly attributable to a project action/activity.

The magnitude of an effect does not directly translate into its significance. For example, a significant effect may arise as a result of a relatively modest effect on a resource of national value, or a large effect on a resource of local value. In broad terms, therefore, the significance of the effect can depend on both its magnitude and the sensitivity or importance of the receptor.

The significance of an effect has generally taken account of the following criteria:

- Extent and magnitude;
- Duration (short-term and long-term);
- Reversibility and irreversibility;
- Performance against environmental quality standards; and
- Sensitivity of the receptor.

Levels of significance that are used in the assessment, in descending order, are:

- Substantial;
- Major;
- Moderate;
- Minor;
- Negligible.

Where an effect is described as 'negligible' this means that there is either no effect or that the significance of any effect is considered to be negligible. All other levels of significance apply to both adverse and beneficial effects.

### Identification of Mitigation Measures

The project includes a range of measures that have been designed to reduce or prevent significant adverse environmental effects arising. The assessment of effects has taken into account all mitigation measures that form part of the project and to which the applicant is committed.

In a few cases it has been considered desirable to identify what have been described as 'further mitigation' measures. These are measures recommended by the author that could further prevent, reduce and where possible offset any adverse effects on the environment but are not part of the assessed project.

### Identification of Monitoring Requirements

Where monitoring is required to ensure good practice is being followed or to monitor the success of mitigation measures these have been incorporated.

### Identification and Evaluation of Cumulative Effects

It is standard for the cumulative effects assessment to include those developments that have planning permission, those where applications have been submitted and are considered likely to be approved in the near future and other projects planned in the area.

Development allocation sites on the opposite side of London Road have been carefully considered including the Matbro site, the Iron Smelting Works, Tetbury.

This site is currently not operating but has planning consent to reopen at some stage in the future. The site is considered the main

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development in the cumulative effects assessment for this EIA.

The application could have noise implications but these are deemed to be negligible and the impact has not been considered further.

### The Environmental Statement (ES)

The results of the EIA process are documented within an ES which contains the following:

- A description of the development 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 development is likely to have on the environment;
- An outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant and an indication of the main reasons for his choice, taking into account the environmental effects.

The following topics are assessed in the ES and are summarised in this NTS:

- Landscape and Visual;
- Ecology and Nature Conservation;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Historic Environment;
- Access and Traffic;
- Geology and Hydrogeology;
- Hydrology;
- Socio-Economics.

## Summary of Environmental Effects

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### Landscape

A comprehensive landscape and visual impact assessment has been carried out and the findings of this, together with ongoing consultations and appraisals, have guided the development of a structural landscape scheme which has been incorporated within the strategic development proposals.

Assessments have been undertaken in accordance with best practice, both with reference to available published literature and also following site investigations.

The landscape appraisal identifies areas of potential change associated with the proposal and concludes that, on balance, there would be beneficial impacts on the landscape character of this part of Tetbury in the context of the wider area of the AONB. The essential landscape features that contribute to local character would be

retained and new landscape proposals would be introduced to enhance character.

The visual appraisal concludes that the majority of anticipated visual impacts associated with development of the site as proposed lie close to the site and range in magnitude from substantial to slight. Where negative impacts are identified mitigation is proposed to substantially reduce adverse effects. Middle distance and distant views would largely be screened by existing landform, built form and vegetation.

The scheme incorporates a range of elements that would enhance the local landscape. There is provision for a significant new area of open space incorporating allotments, informal recreation and new habitat creation to the southern boundary of the site and the continued northern expansion of Tetbury is consistent with the historic development pattern of the town. A sympathetic development of the site would provide an opportunity to create

an improved urban edge to the northern boundary of Tetbury including substantial new woodland planting and an enhanced northern approach to the town along the A433.

Over the longer term these proposed new landscape elements would more than make up for any short-term losses and because of this the proposed development has the potential to bring landscape benefits at both a local level and also in terms of the wider AONB.

The Environmental Statement concludes that the study area has the landscape capacity to accommodate new development providing development is of a suitable type and detailed proposals are developed within the identified landscape framework in a way that is compliant with Policies 42 and 45 of the adopted Cotswold District Plan.

### Ecology and Nature Conservation

An ecological assessment has been undertaken of the site, which has been based on information obtained from ecological surveys (habitat and

species surveys) during 2009 and 2010, a full desk study and ongoing consultation.

This data has informed the assessment of the ecological value of the site and the development of the masterplan, such that the ecological features of value are retained and incorporated into the design where possible. A series of further ecological surveys are proposed to follow and therefore, ecological considerations have taken a precautionary approach to the protection of and provision for protected species likely to occur on site by assuming they are present, which has resulted in the provision of generous areas of the site to be managed for wildlife, in particular Great Crested Newt. This approach has been approved by Gloucestershire County Council.

In general, the assessment identifies that whilst some habitats would be lost, the majority of the ecological value of the site would be retained (such as all species rich hedgerows, a pond, a large area of grassland around the pond, a small copse and the majority of standard trees suitable for roosting bats). The majority of the existing network of natural habitats around the site (such as species rich hedgerows) will be retained and new green corridors created (grassland, hedgerows and public open spaces) to link ecological features. This will help to promote the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species in the wider environment. Where severance has been unavoidable, provisions have been made to mitigate loss of habitat connectivity, such as provision of underpasses, alternative corridors and strategic planting.

In mitigation for habitat loss, new habitats will be created and existing habitats enhanced for wildlife. A large wildlife area would be created in the north of the site with new ponds, wildflower grassland, shrub and tree planting for the benefit of amphibians and reptiles. Mitigation also includes replacement hedgerows and tree planting to improve species diversity.

Measures have been proposed to protect the species present that receive statutory protection, as well as other species identified as requiring



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conservation action, during construction. Through retention and protection of existing habitats, combined with habitat enhancement and creation, and the implementation of a long-term management plan, the long-term residual impacts anticipated for the majority of species are positive, including badger, bats, breeding birds, amphibians and invertebrates, with negligible impacts predicted to reptiles. No negative long-term impacts are predicted.

The development provides the opportunity to contribute to national, regional and local biodiversity targets by enhancing and creating habitat that is valuable to European protected species, including bats and Great Crested Newt, and to nationally protected species including badger and breeding birds through the creation of additional habitat such as hedgerows, tree planting, bat and bird boxes and the creation of wetland features (balancing pond, reedbed and swales).

## Noise and Vibration

Assessment of the suitability of the site for residential development in regards to noise has been conducted in reference to published guidance documents and Cotswolds District Council requirements. This has found that mitigation measures will only be required for the proposed housing nearest London Road as a result of traffic noise. A comprehensive noise survey and assessment of potential industrial noise from the existing steel works (SIAC Tetbury Steel) across from the site has also been conducted. Appropriate mitigation measures to reduce noise levels both externally within gardens and internally consist of the positioning of housing and gardens further from London Road, provision of imperforate timber fences at garden boundaries and providing sufficient facade sound insulation. With the implementation of the required mitigation measures the whole site is suitable for residential use.

The noise and vibration impact of the proposed housing development on the surrounding area will be due to construction, increased traffic

flow and activity noise from future occupiers. The construction period will be for a limited duration only. Many of the operations, such as the construction of the houses themselves, are relatively quiet. However, there are a number of activities such as excavation of the site that will produce high noise levels and may lead to perceptible vibration. By using best practices given in published documents, which includes agreed hours of operation, the noise and vibration impact on the surrounding area can be minimised.

The increase in noise due to the forecast of post-development road traffic flow is negligible. Activity noise from the future residents depends on the occupiers, though typically the noise impact is only expected to be minor.

With the implementation of mitigation measures to the proposed housing nearest London Road the site is suitable for residential use. The main noise impact of the housing development on the surrounding area will be during the construction phase. This will be for a limited period only, and by following best practices noise and vibration can be minimised.

## Historic Environment

Data for the compilation of the cultural heritage baseline conditions have been gathered from a desk-based assessment of the site, a geophysical survey and field evaluation including the excavation of 39 trial trenches.

The completed archaeological evaluation targeted anomalies which were found in the geophysical assessment.

The earliest artefact encountered consisted of a flint core, of probable Mesolithic date, recovered from the subsoil. No corresponding archaeological features were identified. The value of any such residual artefactual material present in the subsoil of the site is considered to be low.

Evidence of Late Iron Age/Early Roman activity was identified in a small area of activity considered to be a heritage asset of low value. Later Roman activity was also identified where a

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large pit, probably relating to quarrying, contained pottery dating to the 3rd to 4th centuries AD. The area of the Later Roman quarrying activity is located within a proposed housing area. Groundworks associated with construction would potentially remove this resource which, if unmitigated, would be a major impact of moderate adverse significance.

Probable post-medieval/modern features relating to water and/or landscape management agricultural activity or land division were identified.

Where construction activities have the potential to cause adverse effects on buried archaeological remains, a programme of archaeological investigation/recording will be implemented. This will be agreed with the Senior Archaeologist at Gloucestershire County Council before work commences.

The aim of the archaeological mitigation strategy will be to ensure that where it is not possible to preserve archaeological remains within the proposed development, any remains that are to be disturbed are subject to thorough recording, partially offsetting their loss through the knowledge gained through investigation. However, as cultural heritage is a finite resource and cannot be directly replaced, a residual minor impact will remain.

For the Mesolithic material in the subsoil, the Iron Age or Romano-British enclosure, and Late Roman quarrying activity, which are considered to be of low value, the significance of this residual minor impact would be neutral.

For the medieval pit, undated pits and post-medieval/modern land division or water management features, which are considered to be of negligible value, the significance of this residual minor impact would be neutral. Following mitigation, no significant impacts on the archaeological resource are anticipated.

The proposed residential development at Highfield Farm would not directly affect the physical fabric of any designated historic environment asset. There would be moderate adverse effects on

the setting of one Grade II listed building. These impacts would be mitigated.

### **Access and Traffic**

Access to the proposed development site is to be taken from a new fourth arm on the A433 London Road/Quercus Road roundabout. A pedestrian and cycle connection will be provided between the site and Northlands Way to enable safe walking routes towards the local schools, the town centre and other retail facilities. Pedestrian connections will also be provided to and across London Road and to the Public Footpath that runs along the western boundary of the site. The internal road and pedestrian routes will be designed to create a high level of permeability.

At the time of application submission measures to expand an existing community bus link in the vicinity of the site were being finalised. This scheme would provide a regular bus link to the town centre and local hospital on the eastern side of Tetbury. It would be directly funded by the proposed development.

Traffic surveys at the junctions either end of Long Street in the town centre and at the London Road roundabout have been undertaken together with the A433 junctions with Kemble Lane and the A429 to the northeast of the town. Traffic growth has been applied to these survey values to represent future traffic flow conditions with the additional traffic associated with the consented Tesco store extension also being added in. The operation of the surveyed junctions without the proposed development has been assessed using the appropriate computer software and shown to be acceptable.

The traffic flows associated with the proposed development have been derived through a robust comparison with other similar sites and using the modal choice of existing Tetbury residents. These development flows have then been added to the current traffic flows so that the operation of the various junctions under post-development conditions can be accurately assessed. In general, the increase in traffic flows is slight at an average of

approximately 7% which has no significant impact on the operation of the various junctions.

The proposed development will not have any significant severance effects as new pedestrian and cycle links will be provided through to both Northlands Way and London Road. The main pedestrian route to the town centre is already provided with signalised crossing points of London Road at which pedestrians have priority. These help to minimise any potential severance effect associated with the relatively minor increase in traffic flows.

As previously mentioned, the average increase in traffic flows during the AM and PM peak hours is approximately 7%. This increase in traffic flows will also increase queuing and driver delays at the various junctions but only marginally. It is therefore considered that the changes to the operation of the junctions, queuing and delays will have only a slight impact on existing road users.

The proposed development will have no impact on pedestrian and cycle delays. Direct pedestrian and cycle connections will be provided to Northlands Way and London Road so that a very permeable pedestrian and cycle environment is created. The off-site pedestrian and cycle facilities in the area are already considered to be good and suitable to accommodate the increased number of pedestrian and cycle movements.

The increase in traffic flows may have a slight impact on road safety and the risk of additional accidents however the number of recorded personal injury accidents for the area over the last five years is considered to be low. There would also appear to be no accident clusters that could represent a particular 'black spot' location. Pedestrians are the most vulnerable when it comes to road safety but there are existing high quality crossing facilities of London Road that would help to minimise any adverse impacts.

Public transport improvements are proposed in the form of both extensions to the existing services to and from the nearby Tesco store and contributions towards a new community bus service for the Tetbury area. These improvements



will provide future residents with the opportunity to use more sustainable modes of transport than the private car and hence assist in mitigating for the transport impacts of the proposed development.

Development of the site will involve traditional construction techniques only, therefore no hazardous loads are anticipated.

### Hydrology, Geology and Hydrogeology

From information supplied by the Environment Agency the site is located in an area which has the lowest risk of flooding from rivers known as Flood Zone 1 and has an annual probability of less than 1 in 1000 of being flooded by rivers. Tests have been undertaken to ascertain if the soil and rocks beneath the site are suitable for the use of soakaways. Unfortunately the majority of the site is underlain by impermeable soils.

There is a known problem with Cooks Pool flooding after very heavy rain. It is intended to reduce the volume of water currently being discharged to it from the site by constructing a surface water sewer to an existing Wessex Water sewer off site. Initial negotiations with Wessex Water over this have been undertaken.

Calculations have been undertaken to ascertain the amount of water which runs off the development site in its undeveloped state (known

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as greenfield run-off). The proposed run-off will be restricted to this amount and the Environment Agency has already approved the calculations. The amount of surface water in excess of this will be stored on site in underground tanks and released at a rate no greater than the greenfield run-off rate.

Foul drainage will be connected to the Wessex Water sewerage system. Wessex Water has confirmed that there is currently sufficient capacity at the treatment works to accommodate flows from the site.

### Socio-Economics

Cotswold District is a large rural district located close to Bristol/Gloucester.

One of the key issues raised by the construction phase of housing projects is the extent to which main contractors and sub-contractors bring in labour from outside the region or attempt to recruit labour locally. Normally this is a combination of the two, with imported labour usually consisting of workers with specialist skills, and local recruitment usually consisting

of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Given that nearly 25,000 people are employed in the construction sector in Gloucestershire alone, it is considered unlikely that the number of workers required for the proposed development, whatever level of skill is needed, would place pressure on the construction labour market.

Research by Gloucestershire County Council shows the great extent to which the local economy (and employment) depends on tourism. The District's considerable natural attractions are concentrated in the Cotswolds where there are extensive opportunities for informal recreation such as walking. It is considered highly unlikely that the proposed development will have any discernible impact on other visitor attractions in the area such as the historic Town Centre of Tetbury and Westonbirt Arboretum.

There is only one public right of way which would be directly affected by the proposed development. The nature of the existing rights of way in the area, and the condition of the environment through which they pass, suggests that the proposed development is likely to have a negligible impact on their current low levels of use.

## Further Information

This NTS has been prepared by WPB Planning Consultants. Further information on the Highfield Farm proposal can be obtained from the project website. This Non-technical Summary can be downloaded free of charge from the website <http://www.hfdevelopment.co.uk/>. Copies of this NTS are available from WPB free of charge while stocks last.

Copies of the ES, including this NTS, can be viewed at the planning authority offices. The address of the planning authority is: Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1PX.

Please note: If you wish to make any comment on the planning application, these must be made in writing directly to Cotswold District Council, using the address given above.

Further copies of the ES are available at a cost of £150 from WPB Ltd and can be requested by post from: WPB House, 143a Calton Road, Bath, BA2 4PP, or by email to [mail@wpb-bath.co.uk](mailto:mail@wpb-bath.co.uk)