

**Report to District Development  
Management Committee**



**Date of Meeting: 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Site Address: Bakers Lane Car Park, Bakers Lane, Epping  
CM16 5BD**

<b>Application Number:</b>	EPF/2924/20	
<b>Application Type:</b>	Full Planning Application	
<b>Proposal:</b>	<b>Full application for the redevelopment of existing surface level car park to provide a leisure centre to include swimming pool, gymnasium, sports hall, squash courts and studio (mixed Class E (d) and F.2 (d)) together with disabled parking provision, new vehicular and pedestrian access, all hard and soft landscaping, and associated works.</b>	
<b>Site Address:</b>	Bakers Lane Car Park, Bakers Lane, Epping CM16 5BD	
<b>Ward:</b>	Epping Lindsey and Thornwood Common	
<b>Parish:</b>	Epping Town	
<b>Conservation Area:</b>	No	
<b>EFDLP Site Allocation</b>	Yes	LPSV Ref: EPP.R7
<b>Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation</b>	Subject to the imposition of planning conditions and completion of a section 106 planning obligation to secure the measures identified in the Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy and electric vehicle charging infrastructure, the Council can conclude that there will be	

	no adverse impact on the integrity of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.
--	---

<b>Applicant:</b>	Qualis Commercial Ltd (part of Qualis Group Ltd) Qualis Group Ltd is a company wholly owned by Epping Forest District Council
<b>Agent:</b>	Q+A Planning Ltd
<b>Case officer:</b>	Nick Finney
<b>Democratic Services Officer</b>	Gary Woodhall. Contact number: 01992 564 470
<b>Validation date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> December 2020
<b>Reason for reporting application to Members:</b>	<i>This application is before this committee since it proposes a 'major scale' development where the Council is a landowner as defined in Article 10 of the Constitution.</i>  <i>The site is retained in the ownership of the Council.</i>

## 1. **RECOMMENDATION**

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to:

1. the prior completion of a Legal Agreement or such another suitable mechanism agreed by the Planning Service Director within four months of the resolution to grant planning permission to secure the planning obligations within section 3 and subject to planning conditions listed in Appendix 1 of this report.

## 2. **SUMMARY OF KEY REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The application site has been proposed for allocation (ref: EPP.R7) in the Epping Forest District Local Plan Submission Version (LPSV) to provide new residential accommodation to meet an identified need. The proposal for a leisure centre on the site is contrary to this site allocation, however, the applicant is to make good the shortfall in residential provision via the use of the Land at St John's Road site as a 'donor site'. Subject to securing the planned for residential accommodation via the s106 planning obligations the principle of the use is supported.

- 2.2 The new facilities provide a replacement and enhancement to those provided at the existing Epping Sports Centre, which will continue in operation until the proposed centre is opened.
- 2.3 The site is a sustainable town centre location and the proposal will support the vitality and viability of the wider town centre. The high quality architecture will contribute positively to the setting and the development will enable much improved public realm and town centre connectivity. The provision of a 'green' roof supports an overall biodiversity net gain on the site.
- 2.4 Potential impact on the amenity of adjoining residential properties is suitably mitigated through the boundary treatment, orientation of the buildings, restrictions on plant noise and construction management conditions.
- 2.5 It has been concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the development will not result in an adverse impact on the integrity of the Epping Forest SAC subject to mitigation measures and site-specific conditions and obligations that will be imposed.
- 2.6 The proposal is targeting a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' which is within the top 10% of non-domestic UK buildings. The proposal provides a 58% reduction in CO2 emissions over the requirements of Building Regulations Part L and will utilise renewal sources of energy thus contributing to the Districts carbon neutral by 2030 targets.
- 2.7 On the basis of the analysis undertaken within this report, it is considered that the proposed development is compliant with the requirements of the Development Plan and the LPSV.

### **3. PLANNING OBLIGATIONS AND CONDITIONS**

- 3.1 The recommendation is given subject to conditions as set out in Appendix 1 of this report. In addition, a Legal Agreement or such another suitable mechanism will secure the following planning obligations and financial contributions. The obligations are grouped into sections for ease of reference:
- 3.2 Delivery Controlling Mechanisms
- No closure of Bakers Lane Car Park prior to completion and opening of Cottis Lane Car Park
  - Implementation restricted until substantial implementation of St John's Road residential development
  - Opening linked to closure of existing leisure centre to ensure existing use is extinguished
  - Community use secured

### 3.3 Transport

- Bus Infrastructure Improvements (Highway Agreement + £22,000)
- Travel Plan (Monitoring Fee £6,132)
- Controlled Parking Zones Management

### 3.4 Employment and Skills

- An employment and skills plan to be agreed for the development.

3.5 As things currently stand, the Council may be the only party with an interest in the site at the date that development is commenced and in such circumstances an agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 may not be appropriate. Legal advice is being sought and it may be appropriate to secure the obligations through an agreement relying on other local government powers and/or by way of a Grampian condition. It is proposed that the decision on the appropriate mechanism be delegated to the Planning Service Director.

#### Completion of the agreement

3.6 In the event that the required agreement is not satisfactorily completed within four months of the date of the resolution to grant planning permission then in the absence of a suitable mechanism to secure planning and financial obligations to mitigate the impact of development, the Planning Services Director is authorised to refuse planning permission.

#### Conditions

3.7 The full list of conditions recommended for the planning permission is identified in Appendix 1. In summary, the conditions applicable to the planning permission will cover the following matters:

- Time Limit for commencement
- Approved drawing numbers
- Finished floor levels
- Use of materials
- Design and landscape
- Ecology issues
- SuDS and land drainage

- Land contamination
- Sustainability / energy
- Noise and air quality mitigation
- External lighting strategy
- Restrictive conditions

#### 4. **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

**Full application for the redevelopment of existing surface level car park to provide a leisure centre to include swimming pool, gymnasium, sports hall, squash courts and studio (mixed Class E (d) and F.2 (d)) together with disabled parking provision, new vehicular and pedestrian access, all hard and soft landscaping, and associated works.**

#### 5. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) have been undertaken for all five sites and reported in two Environmental Statements:
1. Environmental Statement dated 31 March 2021 which reports the findings of the EIA for the three residential sites (St John's Road (EPP.R4), Sports Centre (EPP.R5) and Civic Offices (part) (EPP.R8) (the **Residential ES**); and
  2. Environmental Statement dated 28 July 2021 which reports on the findings of the EIA for the two commercial sites (Cottis Lane (EPP.R6) and Bakers Lane (EPP.R7)) (the **Commercial ES**).
- 5.2 The 'Epping Town Centre Development: Environment Summary Report' dated July 2020 sets out how the Residential ES and the Commercial ES interact and that relevant environmental effects have been assessed for each site individually and cumulatively.
- 5.3 It is assessed by the Council that the submitted ES's collectively provide adequate environmental information to enable the applications to be determined.
- 5.4 Both the Residential ES and the Commercial ES assess the likely significant effects on ecology and biodiversity, traffic and transport, socio-economics, air quality, townscape, cultural heritage and climate change. The effects have been analysed and mitigation measures have been identified.
- 5.5 Both of the environmental statements identify the following significant effects:

5.5.1. Significant effect on climate change, which is to be addressed via embedded and operational mitigation to reduce carbon emissions, as detailed further in the Sustainability section of this report.

5.5.2. Significant beneficial effect from new employment opportunities.

5.6 Other residual effects are to be addressed via Construction Management Plans, Landscape and Ecological Management Plans secured by planning condition.

## **6. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

6.1 The application site lays within the defined Epping town centre to the north of the proposed primary shopping area as defined in the LPSV. The site comprises a public car park which provides 133 surface level public pay and display car parking spaces. Pedestrian access to the town centre can be gained from the car park via Cottis Lane and St Johns Road. The natural gradient of the site slopes away to the north-east, although the existing car park is provided level with a densely vegetated retaining embankment on the north-eastern boundary. The boundaries of the site are mainly comprised of established hedging, although there has been some recent site clearance works.

6.2 The site is immediately surrounded by a mixture of 19th and mid-20th century residential development to the north and west. The Bakers' Villas sheltered housing complex lays to on the opposite side of the Bakers Lane to the east. To the south there are two, three storey blocks of offices forming part of the Falconry Court development. Kestrel House and Peregrine House are modern buildings, designed in Georgian and Victorian Gothic styles. These properties have been subject of a recent Prior Approval Application (ref. EPF/2056/21) for conversion from office to residential use under the provisions of Class O of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended). The prior approval was granted on 20/09/21 which enables these properties to be converted into the 51 residential dwellings if implemented.

## **7. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

7.1 Given the existing use of the site as a car park, the planning history of the site is limited as follows:

Application Reference	Description of Development	Decision
EPF/1075/20	Erection of 6 metre CCTV camera pole within car park to the rear of Cottis Court.	Granted 27.07.09

DC/EPF/0004/88	Installation of one automatic public convenience.	Granted 11.03.88
EPU/0171/70	Use of land for permanent car park.	Granted 07.12.70

## 8. **CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATIONS**

8.1 Statutory and technical consultee comments are noted below and provided in summary within Appendix 3 (the submitted comments are available in full on the Council's website through the following link).

- Essex County Council - SUDS – No objection, subject to conditions.
- Essex County Council – Green Infrastructure – No objection, subject to condition.
- Essex County Council - Highways – No objection, subject to conditions.
- Essex County Council - Place Service Archaeology – No objection subject to conditions.
- Essex County Council - Place Service Ecology – No objection, subject to conditions.
- EFDC - Environmental Health – Noise – No objection in principle, subject to conditions.
- EFDC - Environmental Health - Contaminated Land – No objection, subject to conditions.
- EFDC - Environmental Health – Air Quality Officer – No objection, subject to conditions.
- EFDC - Trees and Landscape – Objection due to the loss of trees and existing vegetation.
- EFDC - Building Control – Suggested early consultation is carried out by the applicant with Essex Fire and Rescue Service with regard to building regulations.
- EFDC - Land Drainage Section – No objection, subject to conditions.
- Environment Agency – Provided advice regarding ground water contamination management.

- Sports England – No objection subject to detailed design specification condition.
- Essex Police – No objection.
- Thames Water – No objection.
- Epping Town Council – Parish – No objection, but highlight concerns regarding impact on residential amenity and traffic.
- Epping Society – Raises objection due to scale of the development and impact on traffic.

## 8.2 Notification

- 8.3 In accordance with relevant legal requirements and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, notification letters were sent to the occupants of 342 residential properties on 22.12.20. Site notices were displayed on 23.12.20. A press notice was published in the Epping Forest Guardian on the 24.12.20. Over the course of the consultations, 11 representations have been received in response to the consultation on the application.
- 8.4 Following design amendments made during the determination of development a 14-day consultation exercise was undertaken. The changes comprised minor amendment to proposed highway and public realm works and associated alteration of the main entrance and external seating areas. Changes to architectural composition of front elevation to rationalise material palette including material changes and the introduction of additional glazing.
- 8.5 The re-consultation period expired on the 02/07/2021
- 8.6 The representations received identified the following material planning considerations relevant to the determination of the application a summary of which is contained at Appendix 2.
- Impact on ecology
  - Car Parking capacity and traffic impact
  - Character of design
  - Overlooking, loss of amenity and daylight and sunlight effects
  - Construction noise and traffic
  - Operational noise and lighting

## 8.7 Other Consultation



### Quality Review Panel

8.8 Development proposals on the site have been the subject of four Quality Review Panel (QRP) meetings. These were held on the following dates:

- 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (town centre strategy);
- 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020 (town centre strategy);
- 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020 (town centre strategy);
- 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020;

The design review was undertaken in parallel with that for the Cottis Lane development, with that development forming the main focus of comments. The panel however raised no major concern with the architecture of the leisure centre and welcomed the appointment of specialist leisure architecture to space plan the internal layout of the centre. A summary of the QRP feedback is enclosed at Appendix 4.

### 8.9 Engagement with the Local Community

8.10 A comprehensive community engagement strategy was developed by QCL in relation to five sites, one of which is the application site. The approach involved two consultation stages as follows:

- Stage 1 consultation – this included consultation on the land use strategy for five sites plus initial design ideas for all five sites.
- Stage 2 consultation – this included more detailed design for all five sites, including layout, quantum, massing, landscaping and appearance.

### 8.11 Development Management Forum

8.12 The proposed development of the application site was also the subject of a Development Management Forums (DMF) on 24/09/20.

- The purpose of the DMF is to allow early engagement with the local community to ensure that any concerns and questions can be raised at an early point in the process and used to assist in the evolution of the scheme as it progresses.
- This process is part of the Council's commitment to ensure that development proposals of this scale are the subject of robust engagement within the local community.

## **9. DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

9.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended ("the 1990 Act"), requires that in dealing with any planning application the authority shall have

regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application and to any other material planning considerations.

9.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ("the 2004 Act") requires that if regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise

9.3 The Development Plan currently comprises the saved policies of the Epping Forest District Council Adopted Local Plan (1998) and Alterations (2006) (ALP). The list below indicates which policies of the ALP are relevant to the determination of this application and the degree to which officers consider that they are consistent with the NPPF as noted in the report to the Local Plan Cabinet Committee (25th March 2013):

CP1 – Achieving Sustainable Development Objectives – Compliant

CP3 – New Development – Compliant

CP4 – Energy Conservation – Compliant

CP5 – Sustainable Building – Compliant

CP 6 – Achieving Sustainable Urban Development Patterns – Compliant

CP 7 – Urban Form and Quality – Compliant

CP 8 – Sustainable Urban Economic Development – Compliant

CP 9 – Sustainable Transport – Compliant

TC1 – Town Centre Hierarchy – Compliant

TC2 – Sequential Approach – Compliant

TC3 – Town Centre Function – Compliant

HC6 – Character Appearance and Setting of Conservation Areas – Compliant

DBE1 – Design of New Buildings – Compliant

DBE2 – Effect on Neighbouring Properties – Compliant

DBE3 – Design in Urban Areas – Compliant

DBE6 – Car Parking in New Development – Compliant

DBE9 – Loss of Amenity – Compliant

LL11 – Landscaping Schemes – Compliant

ST1 – Location of Development – Compliant

ST2 – Accessibility of Development – Compliant

ST4 – Road Safety – Compliant

RST1 – Recreational, Sporting and Tourist Facilities – Compliant

RP4 – Contaminated Land – Compliant

RP5A – Adverse Environmental Impacts – Compliant

U3B – Sustainable Drainage Systems – Compliant

I1A – Planning Obligations – Compliant

I3 – Replacement Facilities – Compliant

NC1 – SPAs SACs SSSIs – Compliant

- 9.4 The relevance of the identified saved Local Plan policies to the determination of this application and the weight to be accorded to each policy are addressed in further detail within this report.

## **10. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 10.1 The current version of the National Planning Policy Framework ("the Framework" or "NPPF") was published in July 2021. It provides the framework for producing Local Plans for housing and other development, which in turn provide the policies against which applications for planning permission are decided.
- 10.2 Reflecting the proper approach identified in the previous section of this Report, the NPPF explains (at paragraph 2) that:

*"2. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.<sup>2</sup>"*

10.3 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF concerns the presumption in favour of sustainable development and states (so far as relevant):

*"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.*

...

For **decision-taking** this means:

- c) *approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
- d) *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date<sup>8</sup>, granting permission unless:*
  - i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed<sup>7</sup>; or*
  - ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."*

10.4 Paragraph 11 d) ii. is often referred to as the 'tilted balance'.

10.5 Paragraph 219 of the NPPF requires that policies in the existing Development Plan should not be considered out of date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of the NPPF. Rather, due weight should be given to such policies according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF; in other words, the closer the policies in the Development Plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given to them.

10.6 For the purposes of sub-paragraph (i) of paragraph 11, footnote 7 lists the policies in Framework (rather than those in development plans) that protect areas or assets of particular importance including: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 176) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, or Local Green Space; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 63 of the NPPF); and areas at risk of flooding.

10.7 The NPPF comprises a number of chapters of which nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 16 are particularly relevant to the proposed development.

## 11. EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

- 11.1 On 14 December 2017, the Council resolved to approve the Epping Forest District Local Plan (2011-2033) – Submission Version ("LPSV") for submission to the Secretary of State and the Council also resolved that the LPSV be endorsed as a material consideration to be used in the determination of planning applications.
- 11.2 The Council submitted the LPSV for independent examination on 21 September 2018. The Inspector appointed to examine the LPSV ("the Local Plan Inspector") held examination hearings between 12 February and 11 June 2019. As part of the examination process, the Council has asked the Local Plan Inspector to recommend modifications of the LPSV to enable its adoption.
- 11.3 During the examination hearings, a number of proposed Main Modifications of the LPSV were 'agreed' with the Inspector on the basis that they would be subject to public consultation in due course. Following completion of the hearings, in a letter dated 2 August 2019 the Local Plan Inspector provided the Council with advice on the soundness and legal compliance of the LPSV ("the Inspector's Advice"). In that letter, the Inspector concluded that, at this stage, further Main Modifications (MMs) of the emerging Local Plan were required to enable its adoption and that, in some cases, additional work would need to be done by the Council to establish the precise form of the MMs. Subsequently the proposed MMs have been submitted to the Inspector and subject to public consultation.
- 11.4 Although the LPSV does not yet form part of the statutory development plan, when determining planning applications, the Council must have regard to the LPSV as material to the application under consideration. In accordance with paragraph 48 of the NPPF, the LPAs "may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:
- a) *The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
  - b) *The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
  - c) *The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).<sup>22</sup>*
- 11.5 Footnote 24 to paragraph 48 of the NPPF explains that where an emerging Local Plan is being examined under the transitional arrangements (set out in paragraph 214), as is the case for the LPSV, consistency should be tested against the March 2012 version of the NPPF.

11.6 As the preparation of the emerging Local Plan has reached a very advanced stage, subject to the Inspector's Advice regarding the need for additional MMs, significant weight should be accorded to LPSV policies in accordance with paragraph 48 of Framework. The following table lists the LPSV policies relevant to the determination of this application and officers' recommendation regarding the weight to be accorded to each policy.

SP 1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development – Significant

SP 2 – Spatial Development Strategy – Moderate

SP 3 – Space shaping – Significant

SP7 – The Natural Environment, Landscape Character and Green Infrastructure – Significant

T 1 – Sustainable transport choices - Significant

DM 1 – Habitat protection and improving biodiversity - Significant

DM 2 – Epping Forest SAC and the Lee Valley SPA - Significant

DM 3 – Landscape character, Ancient Landscapes and Geodiversity - Significant

DM 5 – Green and Blue Infrastructure - Significant

DM 7 – Heritage Assets - Significant

DM 9 – High quality design – Significant

DM 11 - Waste recycling facilities on new development – Significant

DM 15 – Managing and reducing flood risk – Significant

DM 16 – Sustainable Drainage Systems - Significant

DM 18 – On site management of wastewater and water supply - Significant

DM 20 – Low carbon and renewable energy - Significant

DM 21 – Local environmental impacts, pollution and land contamination – Significant

DM 22 – Air Quality – Significant

P 1 – Epping– Significant

D 1 – Delivery of Infrastructure – Significant

D 2 – Essential Facilities and Services – Significant

D 3 – Utilities – Significant

D 4 – Community Leisure and Cultural Facilities – Significant

## **12. EPPING TOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

- 12.1 A draft version of the Epping Town Neighbourhood Plan (ETNP) was published for consultation in May 2018. The ETNP has not yet been finalised, put to a local referendum or therefore adopted as part of the development plan. Whilst the draft ETNP can only be afforded limited weight, the relevant policies are summarised below.

Policy 3 – identifies the site as a site for development

Policy 7 – states the capacity and balance of existing public car parking should be maintained

Policy 11 – considered in the context of the need to maintain and enhance the health and vitality of shopping and commercial/employment areas.

Policy 13 – relates to business and employment. It states that the main area for employment-related activities will be in premises along and adjoining the High Street

Policy 14 – addresses the enhancement of social, sporting, play, cultural and community facilities in Epping. This policy is discussed later in the report.

Policy 15 – states that development will only be permitted with design qualities that match the character of the area and respect the amenity of existing residents with regard to noise generation, overlooking and car parking.

Policy 19 – addresses sustainability

## **13. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

- 13.1 The remainder of the report will consider the proposal against the requirements of the development plan as follows:

- Principle of development.
- Impact on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation
- Design
  - Layout, access and connectivity
  - Scale, form and massing
  - Landscaping
  - Appearance and materials

- Impacts on neighbouring amenity
  - Privacy and amenity issues
  - Sunlight, daylight and open aspect
  - Overlooking/loss of privacy issues
  - Outlook issues
  - Noise, vibration, fumes, light pollution and air quality
- Transport and Highway considerations
- Sustainability
- Energy and climate change
- Flood Risk and SuDs
- Ground Contamination
- Historic Environment
  - Archaeology
- Ecology
- Infrastructure
- Employment and skills
- Equality duties and human rights
- Conclusion

## **14. Principle of development**

### 14.1 Introduction

14.2 This planning application is one of five submitted by the applicant. The five sites comprise Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane car parks, Land at St Johns Road, Epping Sports Centre (Hemnall Street) and Land at the Civic Offices (Condor Building). Through the process of determination of the five Epping town centre planning applications, it has been agreed with the applicant that the five sites should be considered collectively for the purposes of this assessment. Looking at the sites collectively enables the full extent of proposals to be understood when considering the appropriate mix of uses and level of affordable housing. Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) have been undertaken for all five sites and reported in two



Environmental Statements (ES): Environmental Statement dated 31 March 2021 which reports the findings of EIA for the three residential sites; and Environmental Statement dated 28 July 2021 which reports the findings of EIA for the two commercial sites. These were submitted voluntarily by the applicant.

- 14.3 In the development of their proposals a Town Centre Strategy was developed by the applicant and formed part of the pre-application public consultation. This was submitted with the applications as an appendix to the submitted Planning Statements (Q+A Planning Statement Appendix 1) and sets out how the five sites have been considered together. A development optioneering process is set out with a preferred distribution of uses proposed by the applicant. This distribution of uses is reflected in the submitted planning applications. The applicant has proposed an alternative arrangement of uses to that set out in the relevant site allocations identified in Policy P 1 of the LPSV. This was as a result of the formation of Qualis Commercial Ltd and their appointment to take forward the development strategy for these Council owned sites. In looking at the development opportunity wholistically the applicant was able to develop a more deliverable site strategy which they considers provides a better overall outcome.
- 14.4 For the avoidance of doubt, the Town Centre Strategy is simply a document prepared by the applicant in support of the applications; it is not adopted Council policy or guidance.
- 14.5 The proposed development as submitted with each of the five planning applications is set out below:

Site	Description of Development	Summary of Proposed Development
Bakers Lane Car Park EPF/2924/20	Full application for the redevelopment of existing surface level car park to provide a leisure centre to include swimming pool, gymnasium, sports hall, squash courts and studio (mixed Class E (d) and F.2 (d)) together with disabled parking provision, new vehicular and pedestrian access, all hard and soft landscaping, and associated works.	5,575 sq m GIA (6,087 sq m GEA)  6-lane swimming pool, fitness suite, studios, sports hall and squash courts.  6 blue badge parking spaces
Cottis Lane Car Park	Full application for the redevelopment of existing surface level car park comprising the demolition of public toilets and the construction of a multi-	330 space multi-storey car park

EPF/2925/20	deck car park, cinema (sui generis), commercial floorspace (mixed Class E), replacement public toilets and cycle store, all associated plant, together with new vehicular and pedestrian access, all hard and soft landscaping, and associated works.	1,166 sq m GIA (1,201 GEA) Class E commercial floorspace  846 sq m (GIA) (871 sq m GEA) Cinema (Sui Generis)  Total: 11,126 sq m GIA (11,460 sq m GEA)
Land at St Johns Road  EPF/0917/21	Redevelopment of the former school buildings and depot. Demolition of five buildings and the retention of three locally listed buildings. Development to comprise erection of new apartment buildings and the conversion, extension and change of use of the existing locally listed Centrepont building and Cookery School to provide a mix of residential units (Use Class C3) and ancillary communal amenity areas. Extension and refurbishment of two existing locally listed semi-detached caretaker cottages. Revised vehicular and pedestrian access from St Johns Road and new pedestrian access from High Street, all associated car and cycle parking, servicing, hard and soft landscaping and associated works.	113 – 1 bed flats  62 – 2 bed flats  7 – 3 bed flats  2 – Existing 2-bed house's refurbished  Total: 184 (182 new) dwellings
Epping Sports Centre (Hemnal Street)  EPF/0918/21	Redevelopment of existing Sports Centre and car park. Demolition of existing Sports Centre. Development to comprise a new apartment building and houses to provide a mix of residential units (Use Class C3), new vehicular and pedestrian access from Nicholl Road and new pedestrian access from Hemnal Street, all associated car and cycle parking,	13 – 1 bed flats  12 – 2 bed flats  4 – 3 bed flats  11 – 3 bed houses  Total: 40 dwellings

	servicing, hard and soft landscaping and associated works.	
Land and part of Civic Offices (Condor Building)  EPF/0919/21 +EPF/1042/21	The redevelopment of the existing office building and car park. Demolition of the existing office building and alterations to connection to existing Listed Civic Centre. Development to comprise new apartment buildings and houses to provide a mix of residential units (Use Class C3), revised vehicular and pedestrian access from High Street, all associated car and cycle parking, servicing, hard and soft landscaping and associated works.	7 – 1 bed flats  17 – 2 bed flats  5 – 3 bed flats  1 – 2 bed house  13 – 3 bed houses  2 – 4 bed houses  Total: 45 dwellings

14.6 NPPF

14.7 As demonstrated at recent appeals the Councils current five-year land supply of deliverable housing sites has been shown to currently be 2.43 years (although on adoption of the LPSV the Council will be able to demonstrate a five year supply) and the tilted balance identified in Para 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged. which provides that permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

14.8 Adopted Local Plan (1998, altered 2006)

14.9 As previously identified, section 38(6) of the 2004 Act require that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

14.10 The policies from the adopted Local Plan form part of the existing Development Plan. However, it is acknowledged that the adopted Local Plan is not for the current Plan Period and a number of the policies therein are inconsistent with the NPPF.

14.11 By comparison, the LPSV contains up-to-date policies which have been informed by robust and up-to-date evidence. On this basis and having due regard for the provisions of paragraph 48 of the NPPF, it is concluded that the policies contained within the LPSV should be afforded greater weight in the overall balance. Further examination of the weight to be afforded to the draft allocation in the LPSV is assessed in the following section.

14.12 The emerging Local Plan Policies

As previously set out, the LPSV is now at a very advanced stage in its production. The examination hearing sessions, as part of the Independent Examination (IE), have been concluded and the Local Plan Inspector published her advice following the hearing sessions in August 2019.

- 14.13 The Inspector's advice dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2019 sets out the areas where Main Modifications (MMs) to the LPSV will be required in order for it to be considered "sound". Of the five site allocations, the Inspector in her advice identified actions only in relation to St Johns Road and the Civic Office. Paragraph 46 of the Inspector's advice confirmed "*a modification is required to the "Design" entry in Appendix 6 for EPP.R4 (Land at St Johns Road) to make it explicit that the site is expected to accommodate a replacement for the sports/leisure facility to be lost through the allocation of EPP.R5*". Her advice goes on to advise that modification proposed in paragraph 5 of document ED85 would be sufficient to ensure the protection of the listed building forming part of allocation EPP.R8 (Land and part of Civic Offices) (Action 20). The Inspector confirmed in her response dated 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019 that she does not have any concerns about areas or allocations in the LPSV which are not mentioned in her advice from August 2021.
- 14.14 The comments made regarding Land at St John's Road and Land and part of Civic Offices were points of clarification save for the request to amend the St John's Road "Design" entry to specify Leisure Centre given that a Leisure Centre was to be lost as a result of site allocation EPP.R5 Epping Sports Centre. The MMs published by EFDC on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021 addressed this comment and reference is now incorporated into the draft Local Plan.
- 14.15 Within this context and having due regard to Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, it is considered that there are no unresolved objections in respect of the proposed site allocations at Bakers Lane car park (EPP.R7), Cottis Lane car park (EPP.R6), Epping Sports Centre (Hemnall Street) (EPP.R5). With regards to the Land at St John's (EPP.R4) and Land at and part of Civic Offices (EPP.R5) there are no unresolved objections to the principle of development on these sites.
- 14.16 As that the Local Plan Inspector has not raised 'in-principle' objections to the proposed site allocations for the five planning applications; the emerging Local Plan is consistent with the requirements of the NPPF; and the public consultation on the Main Modifications to the Local plan recently ended on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, it is concluded that the emerging Local Plan is at an advanced stage and must be given significant weight in the determination of planning applications.
- 14.17 The policy site allocations are set out in the table below alongside the development proposed by the current planning applications.

LPSV Site Allocation	Proposed Site Allocation	Summary of Proposed Development
----------------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------

<p>EPP.R7</p> <p>Bakers Lane Car Park</p>	<p><i>Residential with an approximate net capacity of 47 dwellings or 78 dwellings in total between site allocations EPP.R7 and EPP.R6.</i></p> <p><i>Site allocations EPP.R6 and EPP.R7 should together incorporate the re-provision of the existing number of car parking spaces [336] for town centre visitors to ensure that there is no net loss of parking spaces</i></p>	<p>5,575 sq m GIA (6,087 sq m GEA) mixed Class E (d) and F.2 (d)).</p> <p>6-lane swimming pool, fitness suite, studios, sports hall and squash courts.</p> <p>6 blue badge parking spaces.</p>
<p>EPP.R6</p> <p>Cottis Lane Car Park</p>	<p><i>Residential with an approximate net capacity of 31 dwellings or 78 dwellings in total between site allocations EPP.R7 and EPP.R6.</i></p> <p><i>Site allocations EPP.R6 and EPP.R7 should together incorporate the re-provision of the existing number of car parking spaces [336] for town centre visitors to ensure that there is no net loss of parking spaces.</i></p>	<p>330 space multi-storey car park</p> <p>1,166 sq m GIA (1,201 GEA) Class E commercial floorspace</p> <p>846 sq m (GIA) (871 sq m GEA) Cinema (Sui Generis)</p> <p>Total: 11,126 sq m GIA (11,460 sq m GEA)</p>
<p>EPP.R4</p> <p>Land at St Johns Road</p>	<p><i>Mixed use including residential (approximate net capacity of 34 dwellings) and appropriate town centre uses.</i></p> <p><i>Development proposals should contain a mix of uses including a leisure centre and residential development. Other uses on site could include, retail, community facilities, hospitality, employment and further leisure uses.</i></p>	<p>113 – 1 bed flats</p> <p>62 – 2 bed flats</p> <p>7 – 3 bed flats</p> <p>2 – Existing 2-bed house's refurbished</p> <p>Total: 184 (182 new) dwellings</p> <p>The current proposal does not include the full extent of the site allocation with the portion of the site occupied by Epping Town Council hall being retained by the Town Council and not</p>

		forming part of the redevelopment proposals.
EPP.R5 Epping Sports Centre (Hemnall Street)	<i>Residential with an approximate net capacity of 43 dwellings. (Proposed Main Modifications amends this to 42 dwellings)</i>	13 – 1 bed flats 12 – 2 bed flats 4 – 3 bed flats 11 – 3 bed houses Total: 40 dwellings
EPP.R8 (Land and part of Civic Offices)	<i>Residential with an approximate net capacity of 44 dwellings.</i>	7 – 1 bed flats 17 – 2 bed flats 5 – 3 bed flats 1 – 2 bed house 13 – 3 bed houses 2 – 4 bed houses Total: 45 dwellings  The current proposal does not include the full extent of the site allocation with the portion of the site fronting High Street to be retained in use as part of the Civic Offices.

14.18 The proposed developments at Bakers Lane car park, Cottis Lane car park and Land at St Johns Road are therefore not in accordance with the emerging Local Plan policies as set out in Appendix 6 (Site Specific Requirements). Consideration is therefore given to the principle of the proposed developments as standalone sites and when taken together as a linked project.

### **Bakers Lane**

#### **Planning Policy Context**

14.19 Policy SP2 of the LPSV seeks to promote town centre development and regeneration, and Policy E2 is supportive of proposals for leisure uses within town centres where

they will maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of those centres. The site is located within Epping Town Centre boundary within the adopted plan and LPSV.

- 14.20 Policy D4 addresses community, leisure and cultural facilities in the District. The proposals would support the requirements of policy D4 by improving the quality and capacity of existing facilities that are valued by the community and ensuring that the new facilities are better in terms of quality, quantity and accessibility than the existing Epping Sports Centre.
- 14.21 Within the ALP Policy CP6 and TC1 support proposals that enhance the vitality and viability of Town Centres and Policy RST1 supports additional recreational and sporting facilities.
- 14.22 The location and proposals at Bakers Lane are in general accordance with planning policy which seeks that such uses are provided and in accessible town centre locations. The specific location at Bakers Lane is easily accessible to the town centre and supportive of town centre footfall.
- 14.23 The proposal to develop the Bakers Lane site as a Leisure Centre however is a divergence from the LPSV site allocation EPP.R7 which identifies the site for residential development. This shortfall in residential units is also not made up via proposed development at Cottis Lane as is permitted within the site allocation (as the Cottis Lane planning application proposes a multi-storey car park, cinema and commercial floorspace). The proposal therefore results in the loss of a residential site allocation which in combination with Cottis Lane amounts to 78 dwellings.
- 14.24 Significant weight should be given to the strategic policy requirement for new homes in LPSV Policy SP 2 in accordance with the Plan's spatial strategy and the 'Vision for Epping' within LPSV Policy P1. The proposal results in the loss of a combined site allocation of 78 homes. Despite this forming a small number of homes within the total housing need identified within the LPSV for the plan period, the loss cannot easily be made up elsewhere given the Council's current housing delivery shortfall.
- 14.25 Given the departure from the site allocation other material considerations should be considered in the balance regarding the planning merits of a leisure centre use in this location.

#### The Identified Need for a Sports Centre in Epping

- 14.26 The EFDC Built Facilities Strategy (March 2018) considers the need and supply of sports facilities in the district and provides part of the evidence base to the LPSV. The key findings of this document include:
- Recommendations that long-term solutions are identified for the replacement of Epping Sports Centre at a site that is accessible to Epping residents, with high quality wet and dry provision.

- In respect of swimming pools, as a whole District, the quantity of water space is adequate to meet the demand of residents. However, not all of the water space is located in the right place and therefore not all of the demand from Epping Forest District residents can be satisfied. Demand is exported to neighbouring authorities and this level of demand export equates to 10 lanes of a 25m pool.
- In respect of sports hall, the supply for sports hall for community use is at a deficit when compared with demand, for both 2017 and 2033, therefore there is a need to protect this quantity of supply.
- In respect of squash courts, it is recommended that the existing level of provision of squash facilities are protected (2 courts in the case of Epping Sports Centre).

14.27 The proposed development is for a modern leisure centre that will form a replacement for the existing Epping Sports Centre. The existing Epping Sports Centre has a 4 court sports hall, a 70 station health & fitness suite, 2 squash courts and 4 activity studios. The existing centre has reached the end of its lifespan and the new proposed centre will offer new and enhanced facilities. The proposal includes a 25m 6 lane swimming pool, learner pool, 4 court sports hall, 2 squash court, a 100 station fitness suite, 3 activity studios and supporting facilities including a cafe.

14.28 The proposed site allocation for the existing Epping Sports Centre EPP.R5 requires that '*Closure of the existing Epping Sports Centre and the re-development of this site should not take place until a suitable replacement sports/leisure facility is delivered and is operational.*' (Appendix 6 Site Specific Requirements). EFDC agreed in a Statement of Common Ground with Sports England as part of the LPSV Examination that the policy for the existing Sports Centre's redevelopment requires '*an equivalent or better (in terms of quantity and quality) replacement sports/leisure facility in a suitable location*'.

14.29 Sports England has provided representations in support of the current proposal being satisfied that the proposed facilities are equivalent or better in terms of quantity and quality to those that they will replace. Sports England has requested that a planning condition is included to require the detailed specifications of the sports hall and swimming pool to be agreed in order to ensure that the proposed facilities are fit for purpose and meet Sports England and the sports governing body design guidance and meet identified local need.

#### Assessment of the Principle of Development

14.30 The modification to the LPSV to identify Land at St John's Road for the replacement leisure centre was based upon the EFDC development strategy prior to the development of the alternative proposed by the applicant. The Inspector's concern was simply that clarity be provided in the emerging Local Plan as to where an



alternative leisure centre could be provided that would enable the release of the existing site for residential development and ensure the facility's deliverability.

- 14.31 The proposed development will make efficient use of an accessible and sustainable brownfield land whilst retaining and improving key public facilities. The proposed development will enhance the range of facilities within the town centre, support activity in the town centre by generating linked trips with other uses and will therefore strengthen the vitality and viability of Epping town centre. The proposed leisure centre is therefore likely to significantly improve the quality of existing community leisure facilities within Epping and enhance the range of available facilities including through the provision of a public swimming pool. This will be to the benefit of a significant cross-section of the local community. Although proposed to be operated as a community leisure centre accessible to all, for the avoidance of doubt a legal obligation will secure public access and community use of the centre.
- 14.32 The benefits of the new Sports Centre are as set out above and this proposal is a deliverable scheme that enables a phased redevelopment allowing the existing leisure centre to remain open during the construction.
- 14.33 The applicant considers that the provision of the leisure centre at Bakers Lane is preferable given that the site is better suited to a large footprint building given the less restrictive site layout as compared to St John's, which includes scattered trees and heritage constraints. Bakers Lane also offers the ability to be better integrated with the primary shopping area with clear and legible linkages rather than set at a distance. Finally, the site allocation at St John's was made on the basis of the Epping Town Council offices being incorporated into a development proposal. The current application site at St John's does not include this land further constraining the ability to accommodate large format buildings.
- 14.34 The proposed leisure centre at Bakers Lane also enables the release of the Epping Sports Centre site for residential development as the proposed by draft allocation EPP.R5 of Policy P1 of the LPSV.
- 14.35 These material considerations on their own do not balance against the overriding need to provide housing delivery. The loss of housing is to be given significant weight that if not mitigated would result in the proposal being an unacceptable departure from the LPSV. A mitigation however has been secured via the proposed development of the Land at St John's Road site for 184 new dwellings. This site is proposed to act as a 'donor site' site and will meet and exceed the shortfall by providing at least 112 dwellings (78 dwelling shortfall plus the 34 dwelling allocation on St John's itself). The Legal Agreement Heads of Terms set out in this report include the placement of a restriction on the implementation of the Bakers Lane development until such time as substantial implementation on the Land at St John's Road site for a residential development of at least 112 dwellings.
- 14.36 The Bakers Lane Car Park currently provides 133 existing public car parking spaces. The lost public car parking is to be replaced within the proposed Cottis Lane multi-

storey car park which has a provision of 330 spaces. Six blue badge spaces shall also be provided as part of the proposal for Bakers Lane. A total of 336 spaces would therefore be provided and the site allocation development requirements that there should be no net loss of parking spaces between the Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane sites when considered together will be met.

- 14.37 To ensure that the replacement parking is secured prior to the closure of the existing Bakers Lane Car Park the Legal Agreement Heads of Terms set out for this site includes an obligation requiring the completion of the Cottis Lane multi-storey car park prior to closure of Bakers Lane Car Park and the proposed redevelopment. The Legal Agreement shall also secure that the new leisure centre at Bakers Lane is not occupied until the use of the existing Epping Sports Centre has ceased.
- 14.38 The existing Epping Sports Centre site provides 41 spaces for staff and visitors and these will not be directly replaced with instead the proposed Cottis Lane multi-storey available for users as a general public access car park. The site is identified as being within Epping Town Centre which is considered a sustainable location with good public transport accessibility and specific dedicated parking provision would not be expected.
- 14.39 The objectives of policies EPP.R4, EPP.R6 and EPP.R7 of the LPSV to re-locate the Epping Sports Centre, to provide new housing, to provide commercial floorspace and to ensure no net loss of the Bakers and Cottis Lane car parking spaces are all achieved having regard to the proposals for the Bakers Lane, Cottis Lane and St John's Road sites and the proposal for Bakers Lane can therefore be considered compliant in terms of the principle of use for the reasons explained above.

## **Cottis Lane**

### **Planning Policy Context**

- 14.40 Policy SP2 of the LPSV seeks to promote town centre development and regeneration, and Policy E2 is supportive of proposals for retail, leisure, entertainment and office use within town centres where they will maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of those centres. The site is located within Epping Town Centre boundary within the adopted plan and LPSV.
- 14.41 Within the ALP Policy CP1, CP6, E10, TC1 and ST1 support proposals that enhance the vitality and viability of Town Centres as the key focus for commercial development.
- 14.42 The Cottis Lane Car Park currently provides 203 existing public car parking spaces and the proposed development is for a multi storey car park (MSCP) of 330 spaces, 8 motorcycle spaces and 38 cycle spaces. These spaces combined with the 6 to be provided at Bakers Lane provide a total of 336 spaces. This would therefore be in accordance with the LPSV site allocation EPP.R6 development requirements that there should be no net loss of parking spaces between the Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane sites when considered together.

- 14.43 The proposal to develop the Cottis Lane site for commercial development however is a divergence from the LPSV site allocation EPP.R6 which identifies the site for residential. This shortfall is also not made up via proposed development at Bakers Lane as set out in the proposed site allocation. The proposal would therefore result in a shortfall in the delivery of housing in the District which, in combination with Bakers Lane, amounts to 78 dwellings.
- 14.44 Significant weight should be given to strategic policy requirement for new homes in LPSV Policy SP 2 in accordance with the Plan's spatial strategy and the 'Vision for Epping' within LPSV Policy P 1. The proposal results in a combined shortfall in housing delivery of 78 homes as proposed by the policies in the LPSV. Despite this forming a small number of homes within the total housing need identified within the LPSV for the plan period, the loss cannot easily be made up elsewhere given the Council's current housing delivery shortfall.
- 14.45 Given the departure from the site allocation other material considerations should be considered in the balance regarding the planning merits of commercial town centre use in this location.

#### Assessment of the Principle of Development

- 14.46 The site is located within Epping Town Centre boundary but outside of the defined primary shopping area set out within the LPSV. For the purposes of retail development, (now a component of Class E), the primary shopping area is considered the 'Centre'. The site is within 300m of its boundary and for the purposes of the retail sequential test it would be considered an 'edge of centre' site. LPSV Policy E 2 (H) requires sequential testing under guidance contained within the NPPF. Sequentially the site is the best available site for such uses within Epping Town Centre, being in close proximity to the core of the primary retail area with direct connections to form a natural extension to its activity. The proposals will strengthen the commercial and leisure offer in the town centre. The proposed cinema will provide a use not currently available within the town centre and supported linked trips. As the Class E floorspace is below the 2,500 sq m threshold set by Para 90 of the NPPF (in the absence of a local threshold), retail impact assessment need not formally be considered.
- 14.47 There is potential for new retail provision to impact on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre however, the proposal consists of a limited number of Class E units allowing a range of uses and activities and offers the opportunity to support and reinforce rather than undermine the existing retail core within the primary shopping area.
- 14.48 In addition, a 846 sq m (GIA) (871 sq m GEA) Cinema (Sui Generis Use) is proposed. The proposed cinema space has the potential to accommodate a three-screen boutique operator with supporting café bar. This is a suitable use within a Town Centre location.

- 14.49 The applicant has indicated that this element of the scheme may be delivered at a later stage dependant on market demand. A 'meanwhile' strategy has been detailed to utilise this part of the site for interim landscaping and events space. Any interim use of the area which in itself constitutes development would need to be subject to a separate planning application at a future date. A planning condition has been proposed setting a long stop commencement date for the cinema of 5 years from commencement of the development or that by this time an alternative proposed landscape or development scheme for the area is submitted and if approved implemented.
- 14.50 Given that the proposal is to bring forward for town centre commercial uses previously identified as being accommodated on the Land at St John's Road site it will be necessarily to seek that the Land at St John's Road is not subsequently developed for further commercial development given this could result in excess provision which could undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre. A planning obligation will control this.
- 14.51 The site is closer to the core of the town centre with access to the High Street a short distance via the pedestrianised lane adjacent to the M&S store. The St John's Road site is approximately 400m to the same point and is separated by residential properties, St John's Road and any facilities would have to be access within the centre of the site. Cottis Lane is less likely to pose a competing town centre destination. The level or nature of commercial floorspace envisaged within the St John's Road site has not previously been quantified so a direct comparison can't be made. The current proposal however has responded to likely market demand and provides flexible space that can be used for a variety of purposes.
- 14.52 It offers better design arrangements to have commercial flanking MSCP as opposed to a mixed car park residential design. The commercial use also enables the development to be public facing with communal public realm as opposed to a residential development that would contain private amenity space and limited options for pedestrian connectivity.
- 14.53 These material considerations on their own do not balance against the overriding need to meet housing delivery objectives. The loss of housing is to be given significant weight that if not mitigated would result in the proposal being an unacceptable departure from the LPSV. A mitigation however has been secured via the proposed development of the Land at St John's Road site for 182 new dwellings. This site is proposed to act as a 'donor site' site and will meet and exceed the shortfall by providing at least 112 dwellings (78 dwelling shortfall plus the 34 dwelling allocation on St John's itself). The Legal Agreement Heads of Terms set out in this report include the placement of a restriction on the implementation of the Bakers Lane development until such time as substantial implementation on the Land at St John's Road site for a residential development of at least 112 dwellings. The restriction is placed on Bakers Lane rather than Cottis Lane to ensure that the early delivery of the proposed MSCP which unlocks the sequence of development is not stymied.

- 14.54 The objectives of policies EPP.R4, EPP.R6 and EPP.R7 of the LPSV to re-locate the Epping Sports Centre, to provide new housing, to provide commercial floorspace and to ensure no net loss of car parking spaces are all achieved having regard to the proposals for the Bakers Lane, Cottis Lane and St John's Road sites and the proposal for Cottis Lane can therefore be considered compliant in terms of the principle of use for the reasons explained above.

### **Land at St John's Road**

- 14.55 The St John's Road site currently comprises former school buildings (Use Class F1(a)) and a Council depot (Use Class B8). The site also includes two semi-detached cottages that will be retained and refurbished. The site was vacated in 2010 following the amalgamation of two schools and declared surplus to service requirements and with Essex County Council obtaining the necessary approvals from the DfE for a site disposal to take place.
- 14.56 The former school buildings have been vacant for a substantial period and the EFDC depot is surplus to operational requirements. The site has been allocated within LPSV for redevelopment supporting a change of these existing uses in principle.
- 14.57 Site allocation EPP.R4 identifies the site for mixed use including residential (approximate net capacity of 34 dwellings) and appropriate town centre uses, including a leisure centre. None of the town centre or other non-residential uses are proposed to be provided as part of the development, with Cottis Lane instead accommodating commercial town centre uses and Bakers Lane accommodating a replacement leisure centre.
- 14.58 The proposed development is wholly residential comprising 182 new residential units and inclusive of an ancillary residential amenity space within the former Cookery Building. ALP Policies CP1, CP6 and CP8 equally would support residential development in this location. This is not a full departure from the LPSV given that residential forms part of the site's allocation. The site allocation as described in the MMs does not set out specific uses or the quantum of floorspace anticipated other than it should include a leisure centre. The current application does not include the full extent of the site allocation given that Epping Town Council are retaining their hall/offices. This significantly reduces the developable site area and reduces the options to accommodate sufficient large format leisure development. For the reasons set out within the Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane sections above, the proposed alternative arrangement of town centre development is found acceptable. The intent of providing capacity for town centre commercial uses on the St John's Road site is therefore met by the provision made elsewhere.
- 14.59 The LPSV proposals map also includes a secondary retail frontage along St John's Road in anticipation of future commercial development on this site. LPSV Policy E 2 states that within a secondary retail frontage uses must encourage active shopfronts, attract a high footfall and maintain viability and vitality of the town. This policy is not strictly applicable to the site at the current time as a secondary retail frontage has not

physically been established and a departure from any commercial uses in this location is proposed.

- 14.60 This is a highly sustainable town centre location suitable in principle for residential development of this nature.
- 14.61 The objectives of policies EPP.R4, EPP.R6 and EPP.R7 of the LPSV to re-locate the Epping Sports Centre, to provide new housing, to provide commercial floorspace and to ensure no net loss of car parking spaces are all achieved having regard to the proposals for the Bakers Lane, Cottis Lane and St John's Road sites and the proposal for St John's Road can therefore be considered compliant in terms of the principle of use for the reasons explained above.

### **Sports Centre, Hemnall Street**

- 14.62 The existing use of the site comprises Epping Sports Centre a 2,164 sq m GIA building within Class E(d). The site allocation EPP.R5 within the LPSV identifies the site for residential development on the basis that a replacement sports centre is provided.
- 14.63 The site allocation EPP.R5 specifically requires that '*Closure of the existing Epping Sports Centre and the re-development of this site should not take place until a suitable replacement sports/leisure facility is delivered and is operational.*'
- 14.64 The principle of the loss of the existing leisure centre is acceptable only given that a replacement is secured and that this is provided prior to the redevelopment of the current centre to ensure that the public have uninterrupted access to sports/leisure facilities in the local area.
- 14.65 ALP Policy CF12 concerns the retention of community facilities and supports appropriate relocation. As described in detail in the Bakers Lane section above the replacement centre provides enhanced facilities within an accessible town centre location and as such the relocation of the centre is acceptable in principle.
- 14.66 As noted above, the applicant proposes to deliver the replacement leisure facility at the Baker's Lane Site. The Legal Agreement Heads of Terms for this site shall secure that the planning permission for redevelopment of the Sports Centre at Hemnall Street shall not commence until the new leisure centre at Baker's Lane is operational.
- 14.67 The application as amended proposes 40 units as compared to the approximate 42 identified within the LPSV allocation. This target figure is approximate only and is dependant on the size mix proposed and detailed design. The number of units although an under provision is felt appropriate in principle and is driven by a suitable detailed design approach.
- 14.68 The proposed development of the Hemnall Street site is fully residential in keeping with the LPSV site allocation. ALP Policies CP1, CP6 and CP8 equally would support residential development in this location.

14.69 Given that this development cannot proceed until the replacement leisure centre is provided on Bakers Lane, a five year implementation condition is proposed rather than the standard three year period. This will enable sufficient time for the completion and opening of the Bakers Lane leisure centre prior to commencement. The Bakers Lane site is itself reliant on the completion of the Cottis Lane MSCP to enable its current car park use to be closed and development to commence.

### **Land and Part of Civic Offices**

14.70 The existing site comprises the Condor Building of the Civic Offices, 2,561 sq m GIA Existing office Class E (g) (i) and the Civic Offices staff car park. Both are surplus to EFDC requirements and have been identified as a site allocation EPP.R8 for redevelopment within the LPSV.

14.71 ALP Policy E4A concerns protection of employment sites but notes that housing on redundant employment land will be regarded favourably. The site has been identified as surplus to requirements by EFDC and was subject to the LPSV site selection process where it was allocated for future residential use.

14.72 The proposed development is residential in keeping with the site allocation EPP.R8.

14.73 Alongside the LPSV site allocation, ALP Policies CP1, CP6 and CP8 equally would support residential development in this location.

14.74 The staff car park closing has been aligned with the Council's office reconfiguration that has recently been completed within the retained Civic Offices and the introduction of remote and flexible working strategies. Staff accessing the Council offices are being supported to transition to more sustainable modes of travel with the Council preparing a travel plan and establishing car sharing systems for example.

14.75 The draft site allocation seeks that a development brief is developed for the site, however the LPA has accepted that given greater certainty is now available regarding the strategy of EFDC in the downsizing of its estate and that the building is now vacant that a full planning application is suitable at this time without a development brief. This application was also supported by a Town Centre Strategy developed by the applicant across the five sites and which was subject to public and Quality Review Panel consultation. Extensive pre-application engagement also enabled the strategy for the site to be suitably tested and examined. The planning application contained all the information that would otherwise have been included with a development brief.

14.76 The civic offices 26 space public car park is not affected by the proposals.

14.77 The 'Design' section of the EPP.R8 allocation text also states that a development brief should consider opportunities to introduce town centre/ retail frontage at ground floor fronting the High Street. The current application does not include the element of the site allocation fronting the High Street which is to be retained as part of the Civic Offices and it is therefore not relevant to consider as part of the current application.

## **Principle of Development Conclusion**

- 14.78 The identified divergence from the LPSV site allocations has been mitigated via legal obligations which tie the sites together and ensure that collectively the five sites deliver the objectives of the LPSV and that housing delivery is suitably secured.
- 14.79 The reconfiguration of the sites enables an overall housing delivery number of 267 dwellings as compared to 199 identified in the LPSV. This is not to the detriment of the other uses, with the developments securing in particular the required level of town centre car parking and a high quality leisure centre. Equally the town centre commercial uses to be provided on Cottis Lane are well conceived and reinforce and enhance the existing town centre offer.
- 14.80 The developments are to be phased to enable the sequential delivery of the required facilities to enable wider development. The first phase will see the MSCP constructed on Cottis Lane and then the commencement of residential development on St John's Road, thus releasing Bakers Lane for redevelopment. The new Epping Leisure Centre can then be constructed on Bakers Lane releasing the existing Sports Centre site for residential development.
- 14.81 On the basis of this assessment, whilst some of the developments do not conform with their specific site allocations, it is considered that the proposed developments when considered in the round are compliant with the requirements of the Development Plan and achieve the objectives of the relevant LPSV site allocations when taken as a whole.

## **15. Impact on the Epping Forest SAC**

### **Background**

- 15.1 Epping Forest is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which limits what can be done within the forest, as well as having impacts upon all proposed development in its vicinity. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended by the 2019 EU Exit Regulations (the Habitats Regulations) transpose the EU Habitats Directive into UK law and require a decision-maker to consider the effects of proposed projects on European protected sites through undertaking a habitats regulations assessment (HRA). Under the Habitats Regulations, the Epping Forest SAC (EFSAC) is a European site. If the result of an initial screening assessment is that a project is likely to have significant effects on a European site, a full assessment of those effects must be carried out. Regulation 63 of the Habitats Regulations requires the competent authority to conduct an 'appropriate assessment' ("AA") if concluding that the project is 'likely to have a significant effect' on a European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Where an appropriate assessment is conducted, then Regulation 63(5) applies, such that "the competent authority may agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site".



- 15.2 Accordingly, the Council has a legal duty as the 'competent authority' under the Habitats Regulations to protect the EFSAC from the effects of development (both individually and in combination) and in doing so, must have regard to the representations of Natural England (NE).
- 15.3 The LPSV is supported by a Habitats Regulation Assessment dated June 2021 ("the HRA 2021") (EB211A). Two specific 'pathways of impact' relating to new development within the District have been identified as being likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of the EFSAC. Firstly, as a result of increased levels of visitors using the EFSAC for recreation arising from new development (referred to as "recreational pressure"). Secondly, damage to the health of the protected habitats and species of flora within the EFSAC from atmospheric pollution generated by motor vehicles (referred to as "air quality") caused primarily by motor vehicles using roads within 200m of the EFSAC.
- 15.4 Policies DM 2 and DM 22 of the LPSV and Policy NC1 of the Adopted Local Plan (1998) and adopted Alterations (2006) (of which some of the policies remain in place) provide the policy context for dealing with the effect of development on the integrity of the EFSAC outlined above. The Main Modifications July 2021 version of DM 2 sets out that the Council requires all new development to ensure no harm is caused to the integrity of the EFSAC and identifies its strategic solutions to ensure no such harm. These are as follows:
- (i) *An Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy (APMS)*
  - (ii) *An Approach to managing recreational pressure on the EFSAC (SAMM Strategy) and;*
  - (iii) *A Green Infrastructure Strategy (GI)*
- 15.5 The Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy (APMS) dated December 2020, (ED126/EB212) was adopted by the Full Council on 8 February 2021 following agreement with Natural England. The APMS identifies a number of mitigation measures, some of which are required to be delivered as part of individual planning applications alongside strategic initiatives and monitoring requirements, and whose implementation will require a financial contribution to be secured by individual developments. The APMS therefore provides the mechanism by which the Council can arrive at a conclusion of no adverse effect on the EFSAC as a result of planned development. The APMS sets out that all development which would give rise to a net increase in average annual daily traffic (AADT) will be required to be mitigated in accordance with the measures set out within the APMS. The SAMM strategy requires new development within the EFSAC zone of influence to make a financial contribution towards the implementation of the SAMM strategy and finally the GI strategy sets out practical interventions which are necessary to ensure recreational pressure is suitably mitigated, these include the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) on strategic sites as well as improvements to the accessibility and quality of existing Green and Blue infrastructure assets.

- 15.6 Policy DM 22 sets out that applications for planning permission will be required to identify and deliver necessary mitigation measures, including monitoring mechanisms for the EFSAC before consent is given. This will include, where appropriate, measures identified in the most up to date APMS.
- 15.7 Policy DM 22 also sets out that, where an application for planning permission has been made on a site not proposed for allocation in the Local Plan, or where the potential change in traffic movements have not been accounted for in the strategic modelling undertaken by the Council, an air quality assessment will need to be submitted which identifies the potential impact of the development in combination with existing baseline pollution and other plans and projects. This assessment must identify necessary mitigation measures that will address any unexpected deterioration in air quality as a result of the development together with any necessary financial contributions and monitoring.
- 15.8 The HRA 2021 undertook an Appropriate Assessment of the planned development proposed within the emerging Local Plan, to consider its effect on the EFSAC. The HRA 2021 concluded that, subject to securing urbanisation/recreational pressure and air quality mitigation measures as noted in the strategies in policy DM 2 of the Local Plan, the adoption of the Local Plan will have no adverse effect on the EFSAC.
- 15.9 This report will now consider these issues in turn in the context of the specific development proposals in these applications.

#### Recreational Pressure

- 15.10 With regards to recreational pressure, any potential adverse effect on the integrity of the EFSAC only arises from residential development. Consequently the development proposals on Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane can be screened out as having no adverse impact.
- 15.11 For the remaining development proposals on Land at St John's Road, Epping Sports Centre and Land and part of Civic Offices which propose residential development, each proposal will be required to pay a financial contribution of £352 per dwelling as noted in the SAMM strategy.
- 15.12 This would amount to £64,064 for St John's Road (182 new homes), £14,080 for Epping Sports Centre (40 new homes) and £15,840 for Land and part of Civic Offices (45 new homes). These financial contributions will be secured through a Legal Agreement and subject to being secured, it can be concluded beyond a reasonable scientific doubt that there will be no harm to the integrity of the EFSAC as a result of recreational pressure.

#### Atmospheric pollution

- 15.13 As noted above, the HRA 2021 advises that without appropriate mitigation measures, new development proposed in the District would cause harm to the integrity of the

EFSAC as a result of atmospheric pollution. Evidence has shown that a key contributor to atmospheric pollution arises from vehicles using roads in close proximity to the EFSAC. Figure 1 below is an extract taken from the HRA 2021 (page 180) and illustrates these key roads and junctions:

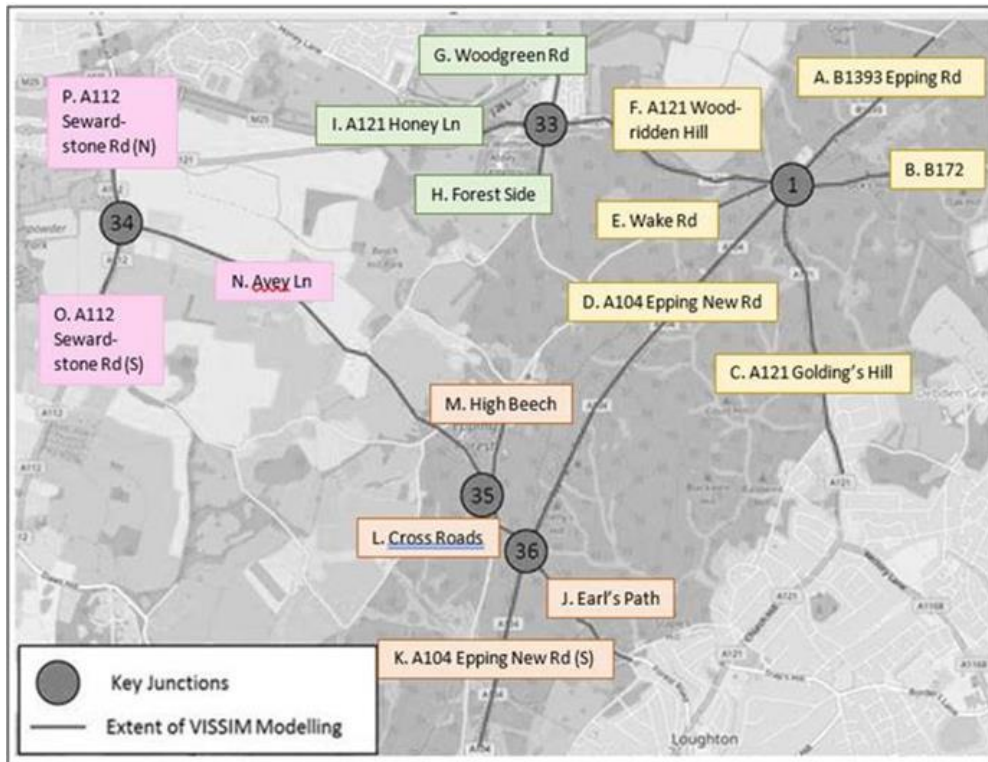


Figure 1

- 15.14 Paragraphs 1.1 of the APMS and paragraphs 4.18 and 4.20 of the emerging Local Plan also identifies that the EFSAC is currently in an unfavourable condition in ecological terms. The baseline worst case ammonia concentration at the roadside is 3.5 micrograms per cubic metre whereas the critical level for protecting sites with the special interest features of the EFSAC is 1 microgram per cubic metre. Any further traffic through the EFSAC as a result of new development will contribute cumulatively to worsening this situation without appropriate mitigation.
- 15.15 In response to this issue, in collaboration with NE, the Council has endorsed the APMS as the strategic solution to the identified issue and as noted above the HRA 2021 concludes that the development of the Local Plan will not cause harm to the integrity of the EFSAC if the mitigation measures are delivered.
- 15.16 Section 5.3 of the APMS sets out what needs to be achieved in order for the competent authority to conclude there will be no adverse impact on the EFSAC as a result of Local Plan growth, that:
- *A minimum 10% conversion of petrol cars to ULEVs by 2025, in other words, 4-5% of the Epping Forest SAC vehicle fleet to be ULEVs by this year;*

- *The introduction of a Clean Air Zone from 2025;*
- *A minimum 20% conversion of petrol cars to ULEVs by 2029; (8-10% of the Epping Forest vehicle fleet to be ULEVs by this year); and*
- *A minimum 30% conversion of petrol cars to ULEVs by 2033 (12-15% of the Epping Forest SAC vehicle fleet being ULEVs by this year)*

15.17 To achieve the minimum 30% conversion of petrol cars to ULEVs by 2033, paragraph 5.5 of the APMS identifies a number of measures which will need to be delivered by new development in the District:

- *a) ensuring that the necessary infrastructure for ULEVs is widely and easily available across the District;*
- *b) incentivising the replacement of petrol cars with ULEVs, targeted at people who live in areas from which the most frequent trips on roads in close proximity to the Epping Forest SAC arise; and*
- *c) Undertaking awareness-raising of both the issue of air pollution and the things that residents and businesses can do to contribute to improving air quality.*

15.18 The measures noted above and the others identified in the APMS, were informed by a traffic model which the Council undertook to accompany the emerging Local Plan. The modelling took into account the levels of AADT that would arise from the entirety of the development proposed across the District. Given the status of the EFSAC as noted above, AADT is the appropriate method for understanding the potential impacts of atmospheric pollution on the EFSAC.

15.19 In the context of these applications, all five sites are proposed for allocation in the emerging Local Plan and as such, all of the sites have been considered through the traffic and air quality modelling undertaken for the HRA 2021. Since these sites are all being considered together in the round and would be linked through a Legal Agreements, it is appropriate to consider them together for the purposes of the potential impact on the EFSAC.

15.20 The HRA 2021 Traffic model undertaken for each of these sites is based on the proposed allocation as follows:

- EPP.R4 Land at St John's Road – approximately 34 homes and appropriate mixed uses
- EPP.R5 Epping Sports Centre – approximately 42 homes
- EPP.R6 Cottis Lane Car park – approximately 47 homes

- EPP.R7 Bakers Lane Car Park – approximately 31 homes
- EPP.R8 Land and part of Civic Offices – approximately 44 homes

15.21 Across the entirety of these allocations therefore, the HRA 2021 traffic model assumed a total of 198 dwellings would be delivered. The planning applications currently being considered vary to differing degrees from the LPSV site allocations noted above, as follows.

- EPP R4 – Land at St John’s Road – Erection of 182 new dwellings
- EPP.R5 – Epping Sports Centre – Erection of 40 new dwellings
- EPP.R6 Cottis Lane Car Park – Erection of new multi storey car park, new cinema, commercial floor space and replacement public toilets
- EPP.R7 Bakers Lane Car Park – Erection of new leisure centre, including swimming pool, gymnasium, sports hall, squash courts and new studio together with disabled parking provision.
- EPP.R8 Land and part of Civic Offices – Erection of 45 new dwellings

15.22 The applications now total 267 new homes across all of the sites as well as the erection of the multi storey car park, cinema, commercial floor space, swimming pool, gymnasium, sports hall, squash courts and studio, all of which are high traffic generators. The traffic model which informed the HRA 2021 did not assume either the number of proposed dwellings across the sites, nor the proposed distribution of any of the non-residential uses proposed. The leisure centre however is a re-provision of an existing centre albeit with an expanded offer and the multi storey car park provides a replacement for existing parking spaces. A legal obligation will control the opening and closing of the leisure centres to ensure only one is open at one time.

15.23 Notwithstanding, there is a difference between the traffic generation assumed through the LPSV allocations and the development proposals advanced through these applications, in an unmitigated scenario. This is significant since the APMS was endorsed on the basis that it would address the increase in traffic due to the allocated sites in the LPSV and a relatively small allowance of windfall sites.

15.24 As noted in paragraph above, Policy DM 22 states that any development proposals which propose a change in traffic movements to what has been modelled in the LPSV need to be justified through the submission of an air quality assessment taking into the account other plans and projects and if necessary including further and bespoke mitigation measures. The measures put forward will be required to be precise, enforceable (both legally and in practice), quantifiable and effective beyond reasonable scientific doubt.

15.25 The first stage of the assessment is to consider the levels of AADT that the proposed development schemes would create on the key routes and junctions as noted in figure 1 above, compared to what was modelled for in the Local Plan traffic work. To ensure consistency, this traffic information must then be run through the Local Plan air quality model to get a comparison of modelled vehicle trips through the EFSAC.

15.26 Policy T 1 of the LPSV requires that any development which proposes vehicle parking spaces must ensure that those spaces have direct access to an electric charging point. The provision of electric charging points are also noted in the APMS as a required mitigation measure. (Appendix 3, page 35)

15.27 As part of the development proposals, the applicant has made a commitment to the delivery of electric charging points. Table 1 below sets out this commitment:

	Public Car Park	Allocated	Visitor	Blue Badge	Car Club	Total	EV Charging	EV Only Spaces
St John's Road	0	35	13	4	1	<b>53</b>	100% active provision	0%
Hemnal St	0	11	6	3	0	<b>20</b>	100% active provision	0%
Civic Offices	0	0	15	3	0	<b>18</b>	100% active provision	0%
Cottis Lane	330	0	0	12	TBC	<b>330</b>	85% passive provision, 15% active provision	15%
Bakers Lane	6	0	0	6	0	<b>6</b>	100% active provision	0%

*Table 1*

15.28 Other than Cottis Lane, each of the sites propose 100% active provision. The delivery of such a substantial amount of active provision of electric charging infrastructure is an important step to support the change in the traffic fleet from petrol and diesel cars to electric. Whilst Cottis Lane does not propose 100% of active provision from the outset, the 15% which will be provided will be for EV only parking spaces, preventing their use by non-electric vehicles. In addition a Travel Plan for the Leisure Centre will seek to raise awareness of the electric charging facilities available. This shall be secured by way of a Legal Agreement.

15.29 In addition to the provision of necessary electric charging infrastructure, the applicant has also committed to the delivery of an advertising campaign as well as financial contributions of £335 per dwelling towards the EFSCA Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy as required by the APMS. This would amount to £60,970 for St John's Road (182 new homes), £13,400 for Epping Sports Centre (40 new homes) and £15,075 for Land and part of Civic Offices (45 new homes). Such contributions shall be secured by way of Legal Agreements.

15.30 Taken together, these mitigation measures have been factored into the traffic modelling undertaken for the individual applications and cumulatively have resulted in a 4% reduction of cars in the level of AADT assumed as a result. The Council's transport specialists have confirmed that based on the mitigation measures above, this

assumed reduction is precautionary and therefore represents a robust approach to considering the new level of AADT created.

15.31 Figure 2 below illustrates the results of the modelling exercise on the key routes and junctions through the EFSAC which are noted in figure 1 above. The results of these are then compared against the level of AADT assumed through the Local Plan traffic modelling to result in a net change between the two:

	Five Sites Combined + EV Provision	Local Plan Traffic and Air Quality Model	Application (Net)	Net change
	Link			
A	B1393 Epping Road	63	50	-13
B	B172	0	0	0
C	A121 Golding's Hill	10	-1	-11
D	A104 Epping New Rd	25	12	-13
E	Wake Road	0	6	6
F	A121 Woodridden Hill	28	32	4
G	Woodgreen Rd	0	0	0
H	Forest Side	0	0	0
I	A121 Honey Ln	28	32	4
J	Earl's Path	0	0	0
K	A104 Epping New Rd (S)	25	12	-13
L	Cross Roads	0	0	0
M	High Beech	0	6	6

N	Avey Ln	0	5	5
O	A112 Sewardstone Rd (S)	0	0	0
P	A112 Sewardstone Rd (N)	0	0	0

Figure 2

15.32 The results show that when all five sites are considered together, with the proposed mitigation measures, there is a net increase in AADT movements on certain road links and a reduction on others. These AADT numbers have been considered through the Local Plan air quality model for the EFSAC as a new scenario, so that a direct comparison can be made with the modelling undertaken for the APMS.

15.33 The results of the modelling show that the biggest difference in terms of Nitrogen Oxide deposition is an increase at the roadside of  $0.03\mu\text{g}\text{m}^{-3}$  at transects E1 (Wake Arms Roundabout) and O (Honey Lane East). This magnitude of increase is matched by similar magnitude of reductions at the roadside of other transects in the EFSAC. The maximum change in nitrogen deposition is a nominal  $0.01\text{ kgN/hr/yr}$  and the results show that there will be no difference in ammonia concentrations from what was modelled for the HRA 2021. The change in pollutant load is therefore sufficiently small that the APMS will not be undermined by the change in the development proposed as opposed to the original allocations.

15.34 The findings of this assessment are predicated on the complete delivery of the proposed development in the form proposed across the five sites. An alternative delivery strategy that left some sites in their existing use would result in a different AADT and impact on the EFSAC that may not be acceptable. On this basis the Legal Agreement associated with each site will ensure that implementation is controlled such that existing traffic generating uses will cease.

#### Conclusion relating to the EFSAC

15.35 Subject to the suitable delivery of the required parking provision on each of the five development sites as noted in table 1 as well as a suitable Travel Plan to raise awareness of the electric charging facilities available and the payment of the necessary financial contributions as noted in sections above, the Council as the competent authority can conclude beyond a reasonable scientific doubt that the development proposed by each of these applications will not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of the EFSAC.

15.36 As a result of the analysis above, the proposal is demonstrably compliant with the requirements of policy NC1 of the Adopted Local Plan, with Policies DM 2 and DM 22 of the emerging Local Plan and with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations.



## **16. Design**

- 16.1 The LPSV is clear that the Council is committed to ensuring that all new development in the District is of the highest design standards in their broadest sense. Good design should ensure that new forms of development function well within the surrounding area and result in buildings which are durable and adaptable within their context.
- 16.2 The LPSV emphasises that good design is not solely a visual concern, but actually has social and environmental elements such as the potential to create high quality public realm, improving quality of life for local communities and contributing to the sustainability agenda.
- 16.3 This approach follows the NPPF requirement for Local Planning Authorities to require new forms of development to recognise local context and set out the quality of development expected within the District.
- 16.4 Policy SP 3 sets out that the Council seeks to ensure that development proposals accord with exceptional place making principles. Place making is a holistic approach to planning which brings together all component parts of a successful place.
- 16.5 Policy DM 9 sets out the policy requirements based on the overall design approach contained within the LPSV.
- 16.6 Similarly to Policy DM 9 of the LPSV, Saved Policy DBE1 of the ALP requires that new development is of high quality design. Development proposals are expected to be respectful to their setting, adopt a significance in the street scene which is appropriate to their function and use high quality external materials. In addition to high quality design standards required, Policy CP2 of the ALP seeks to preserve the rural environment, including landscape character and protecting the countryside.
- 16.7 In order to achieve the outstanding design as required by the LPSV, the Council has established a Quality Review Panel (QRP) to act as a 'critical friend' to both the Council and applicants.
- 16.8 The QRP consists of an independent, multidisciplinary group of experts who are suitably trained and highly experienced individuals in their fields and the Panel has the overarching ambition of assisting the Council with ensuring that new development achieves the high-quality design as required by the LPSV.
- 16.9 The proposed development on the application site has been the subject of review by the QRP. The comments received following each review has been taken into account when considering the various elements of design in the following section.

### Layout, Access and Connectivity

- 16.10 Policy SP 3 of the LPSV notes that development proposals must demonstrate strong vision, leadership and community engagement (i), extend, enhance and reinforce strategic green infrastructure and public open space (vii), ensure positive integration

and connection with adjacent rural and urban communities thereby contributing to the revitalisation of existing neighbourhoods (x) provide for sustainable movement and access to local and strategic destinations (including rail, bus and pedestrians, cycling) (xiii).

- 16.11 Policy DM 9 notes that development proposals must have regard to the framework of routes and spaces connecting locally and more widely (Part D (iii)).
- 16.12 Policy T 1 notes that development proposals will be permitted where they provide safe, suitable and convenient access for all potential users (Part C (i)) and provide a coordinated and comprehensive scheme that does not prejudice future provision of transport.
- 16.13 The proposed leisure centre building occupies the majority of the site footprint with public realm provided to the frontage and a servicing access to the rear. This is a positive site arrangement for a town centre site with surface parking limited to the 6 blue badge spaces adjacent to the entrance. The massing will be concentrated on the south eastern edge of the site. This is to provide a strong edge to the key corner at the junction of Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane and shifting away from the more sensitive northern and western residential boundaries, the service area to the north of the site will create a buffer here between the leisure centre and these dwellings.
- 16.14 The main entrance has been orientated towards the junction of Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane providing visibility to the town centre and encouraging pedestrian connectivity. Facilities within the centre with glazed frontages such as the entrance, pool hall and fitness suite have also been placed on this edge to provide visual interest. The public realm to the front of the centre enables the option for outdoor café seating and provides for public benches.
- 16.15 The applicant has provided a scheme of public realm and Highway Works to improve the public realm and connectivity on Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane. This provides for improved street surfacing materials, landscaping and widens pedestrian footways, providing a more traffic calmed environment. The proposal also includes the pedestrianisation of the section of Cottis Lane that forms an alley to High Street, providing a more positive environment for the connection to High Street. This has been subject to consultation with ECC as highway authority inclusive of a Road Safety Audit Stage 1 and found to be acceptable in principle. A planning condition will secure the detailed design and implementation of these works via a Highway Agreement with ECC. The implementation of works to amend the public highway and access will be subject to Transport Regulation Orders (TRO's) which will be consulted upon by ECC in due course. The works are likely to be implemented in phases alongside the two developments and a final split of delivery triggers can be agreed via the discharge of condition.
- 16.16 External cycle storage is provided at the main entrance with a larger covered cycle hub located adjacent to the parking. Six blue badge parking spaces are provided on site and a coach drop off zone is indicated adjacent the entrance as part of the proposed

Highway Works. A separate service route is provided to the rear of the centre, utilising the sloping topography of the site to access the basement plant at grade.

16.17 The centre comprises three floors, each separated by uses:

- Basement level accommodates team sports – squash and sports hall with team changing facilities.
- Ground floor level accommodates wet leisure – 25m x 6 lane main pool and learner pool with Changing Village, plus entrance and reception facilities.
- First floor level accommodates dry leisure – 2no. flexible studio spaces, cycle studio, main fitness suite and members changing facilities, plus spectator view to the main pool.

16.18 Sports England provided detailed design comments on the centres internal layout in collaboration with sporting bodies such as Swim England and British Gymnastics. Sports England are supportive of the proposals but requested a planning condition to enable the detailed specification of facilities to be confirmed as detailed design is finalised.

16.19 The centre is well orientated and laid out to provide good access to a range of users, promote its activities and form a component part of the town centre, reinforcing its viability and vitality. The facilities provide an enhanced provision as compared to the existing Epping Sports Centre and meet the identified need for swimming facilities with Epping.

#### Scale, form and massing

16.20 Policy DM9 of the LPSV notes that developments must relate positively to their context (Part A (i)), having regard to the form, scale and massing prevailing around the site (Part D (ii)), active frontages (Part D (v)), and respond to natural features of the site and surroundings (Part E). Policy DM 9 also notes that proposals should not result in an over-bearing or overly enclosed form of development (Part H (iii)) and consider microclimate conditions (Part H (iv)).

16.21 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF notes that development should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, and be sympathetic to the surrounding built environment and landscape character.

16.22 The scale and form of the centre is driven by the requirements of the facilities contained within. The centre incorporates both a swimming pool and a sports hall which are large format spaces alongside a number of other spaces and facilities. The proposed design utilises the natural fall of the site to facilitate a basement level allowing the sports hall to be set below ground level and thus minimising the height of this element of the building in close proximity to residential properties.

16.23 At the Bakers Lane frontage the building is lower in height than the existing Falconry Court office buildings opposite and sits well in the streetscape. The first floor is set in from the western boundary with St John's Road properties and at the northern boundary the building is set away allowing for boundary treatment and the service access.

#### Landscaping

16.24 Policy DM 5 of the LPSV seeks that developments retain and enhance existing green infrastructure including trees, use native species and enhance the public realm through the provision of trees.

16.25 Policy DM 9 Part A (v) notes developments must incorporate design measures to reduce social exclusion, the risk of crime, and the fear of crime. Policy DM 9 part A also notes proposals should relate positively to their context, and Policy DM 21 notes that the local environmental impacts, including light pollution, of all development proposals after mitigation must not lead to unacceptable impacts on the health, safety, wellbeing and amenity of existing and new users or occupiers of the development site, or the surrounding land.

16.26 There is minimal landscaping on the site as result of the footprint of the building occupying the majority of the site. This is mitigated through the use of green/biodiverse roofs over the majority of the building. New tree, shrub and hedgerow planting is proposed along the northern and western boundaries adjacent to residential properties. A strong landscaped element is provided at the front of the building, softening the frontage and providing some continuity of the current verdant condition of the Cottis Lane site boundary.

16.27 The Trees and Landscape Team have reviewed the application and submitted arboricultural statement and have raised objection to the loss an existing tree, the Category B Sycamore on the embankment at the northern extent of the site. The retention of this tree is not compatible with the proposed scheme which relies on a new service access road and associated retaining walls. An altered site arrangement to accommodate the tree would compromise the ability of the centre as proposed to provide the full range of facilities and provide an operationally viable layout.

16.28 10 trees in total are proposed to be removed within the site boundary and as part of wider Highway Works and with 16 new trees proposed within the site. Additional street trees are proposed outside of the application boundary as part of the Highway Works. The proposals overall offer a net biodiversity gain given that the site is currently majority hardstanding. The loss of an existing tree and existing landscaping is felt acceptable given the benefits of the scheme.

#### Appearance and materials

16.29 Policy DM 9 of the LPSV notes that development proposals are required to incorporate sustainable design and construction principles (Part A (iii)) and relate positively to their

locality having regard to distinctive local architectural styles, detailing and materials (Part D (vi)).

- 16.30 The NPPF paragraph 130 notes that developments must be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping, establish a strong sense of place, and be sympathetic to local character and history while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.
- 16.31 The site sits between the town centre conservation area and residential areas with the existing character predominately defined by the existing open car parks. The main built presence is that of the modern office buildings of Falconry Court. The combined Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane development have the potential to establish a new character for this transitional area.
- 16.32 Detailed liaison was undertaken during determination on the architectural treatment of the main building frontage to ensure that it successfully related to the street and its setting. This resulted in some simplification of materiality and realignment of key elements to achieve a more successful design. The key materials are linear textured brick with metal fins over glazing, assisting with privacy and overheating.
- 16.33 The entrance was also rationalised introducing greater soft landscaping, a defined café seating area and well-defined entrance doorway. An additional window was also introduced to the first floor cycle studio to address an inactive and dominant frontage as viewed from St John's Road.
- 16.34 As a result of these amendments the architecture and proposed materiality are supported and provide a well resolved solution that responds to existing context and supports the establishment of a new quarter to the town centre. The design has been driven by these objectives not simply the operational requirements of a leisure centre.

## **17. Impacts on neighbouring amenity**

- 17.1 Paragraph H of Policy DM 9 requires development proposals to take account of the privacy and amenity of the users of a development as well as that of neighbours. Policy DBE9 of the ALP contains the same objective by seeking to safeguard the living conditions of neighbouring properties. Paragraph H of Policy DM 9 is further split into subsections (i – iv) and the report will consider these issues in turn.
- 17.2 When considering privacy and amenity issues in relation to existing residents, it is important to understand the context of the application site in relation to the nearest of these neighbours.

### **Sunlight and Daylight**

- 17.3 Part (i) of paragraph H seeks to ensure that adequate levels of sunlight/daylight and open aspects are provided to the users of the development and nearby neighbouring residents.

- 17.4 The application was accompanied with a Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing Report (Dec 2020) prepared by Avison Young (AY) on behalf of the applicant. Officers have reviewed the report and assessed the application.
- 17.5 It is noted that the rear of a number of properties on St Johns Road are in close proximity to the application site to the west, as are those adjacent in Albany Court to the north. The bulk and massing of the proposed leisure centre is stepped back from the properties on St Johns Road thus attempting to minimise any loss of daylight or sunlight. The properties on Albany Court are located to the north of the application site and are set back from the proposed leisure centre by the proposed service area. No 1 Albany Court is likely to be most impacted by the proposed development with regard to the loss of daylight and sunlight. However such impacts are not considered to be detrimentally harmful to the amenity of the occupants of this property given that they will still receive sufficient access to daylight and sunlight. The properties on St Johns Road are likely only to experience loss of sunlight in the early part of the day. Any loss of daylight is considered to be acceptable noting the set back from the proposed development from the application site boundary which abuts the rear of these properties.
- 17.6 The submitted Daylight, Sunlight, Overshadowing Report (Dec 2020) confirms that 97% of neighbouring windows (16a-30 St Johns Road, Cottis Court, 1-2 Albany Court and Bakers Villas) and 100% of neighbouring rooms satisfying BRE guidelines for daylight. The only exception are two secondary windows that are situated very close to the site boundary and set at a lower level. The windows concerned are on the side south facing elevation of 1 Albany Court and either serve circulation space or form part of a dual aspect room with a main window facing the garden.
- 17.7 It is noted that as a future date Falconry Court could be converted to residential use given the recent Prior Approval, however it is currently in office use and does not form part of the assessment undertaken by the applicant.
- 17.8 Key amenity spaces of neighbouring properties also pass the 2-hr sun on ground test.
- 17.9 Given these results, there will be no discernible impact on the daylight or sunlight received by the neighbouring properties and the proposal is acceptable in this regard.

#### Overlooking / loss of privacy

- 17.10 Part (ii) seeks to ensure that existing neighbours will not be overlooked by users of new development.
- 17.11 There are no vantage points or windows from the proposed development towards the surrounding residential properties, therefore these properties will not experience any loss of privacy or overlooking.

#### Outlook

- 17.12 Part (iii) seeks to ensure that new development is not overbearing and would not cause significant harm to the outlook of occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- 17.13 Outlook from the surrounding residential properties will be reduced given that the site is in existing use as a car park with no built form. As such, the proposed development is likely to present a significant change to the levels of outlook from the surrounding properties, however noting the setbacks from these properties and the town centre location of the application site, any loss of outlook is considered acceptable noting that it will not detrimentally harm the visual amenity of the occupants of the surrounding properties.
- 17.14 The proposal is considered acceptable with regard to any impact on the surrounding residential properties in terms of privacy, overlooking, daylight, sunlight and outlook and is therefore compliant with paragraph H of Policy DM 9.

Noise, vibration, fumes, light pollution and air quality

- 17.15 Part (iv) requires that issues of noise, vibration, fumes, light pollution and air quality are properly addressed when considering an application to ensure that none would cause significant harm to the amenity of existing residents or new users of the proposed development.
- 17.16 In terms of noise the principal consideration regards plant that serves the centre and a planning condition is proposed that sets a cumulative noise limit of 39dB L<sub>Aeq</sub> 1hr.
- 17.17 Additionally, parking provision on the site will be significantly reduced and thus any noise generated from servicing vehicles is likely to be less than that of which the occupants of the surrounding properties currently experience with the existing car park use. Notwithstanding this a noise attenuation fence barrier is proposed of a minimum 2m in height and 12kg/m<sup>3</sup> density and is subject to a proposed condition. As such, the proposal is acceptable with regard to noise impacts.
- 17.18 A lighting impact assessment was submitted with the application which indicates that the upward light ratio (ULR) would not exceed the maximum permissible level of 5% for an E3 environmental zone. The report concludes finding that any residual effects of lighting from the proposed development will be negligible. Officers have reviewed the application and the lighting assessment report and are satisfied that there will be no undue harm caused to the amenity of the occupants of the surrounding properties as a result of lighting, subject to the recommended condition.
- 17.19 The application has been accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) which considers the potential impacts of the construction phase of the development as well as the operational phase.
- 17.20 The Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has considered the AQA and has commented that the proposals will contribute to a slight increase in local air pollution

which is principally as a result of construction work. A number of construction management conditions are proposed to mitigate this impact.

- 17.21 Based on the evidence provided by the applicant and subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal will not cause significant harm to air quality in relation to human health.

Summary relating to design and neighbouring amenity issues

- 17.22 Drawing all the strands together in relation to design and neighbouring amenity issues, the analysis conducted through this report has concluded that the proposed development fulfils the Council's overall vision and policies of ensuring that new development is comprised of high quality design, subject to the imposition of adequately worded planning conditions/obligations.
- 17.23 It has further been concluded that there would not be any significant harm caused to the living conditions of any of the existing residents who live in the area and that the development will ensure a good level of amenity to staff and visitors, subject to the imposition of suitably worded conditions / planning obligations.
- 17.24 The proposal is therefore compliant with the requirements of Policies SP 3, DM 9 and T 1 Part C and Part D of the LPSV and with Policies CP2, DBE1, DBE4 and DBE9 of the ALP.

**18. Highways and Transport**

- 18.1 The submitted Transport Assessment (TA) assesses the potential impacts of the proposed development on the local and strategic highway network.
- 18.2 The TA has been reviewed by Essex County Council Highways, who conclude that it the proposal is not considered to have a significant or severe impact at this location or on the wider highway network and not be detrimental to highway safety, capacity or efficiency.
- 18.3 The application proposes 30 cycle parking spaces (20 long-stay and 10 short-stay).
- 18.4 The application proposes 6 car parking spaces, which are to be fully reserved for blue-badge users. Policy T 1 of the emerging Local Plan requires that any development which proposes vehicle parking spaces must ensure that those spaces have direct access to an electric charging point. All parking spaces are to be active Electrical Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP), in compliance with this policy.
- 18.5 The Travel Plan submitted in support of the application includes detailed measures for the applicant to implement in order to reduce reliance on the private car. These include providing Staff Travel Information Packs, cycle parking provision, encouraging car share platforms. A workplace Travel Plan is to be secured by legal obligation. The site is well located, close to other accessible modes of sustainable travel. Given the scale



of the development and proximity to existing transport modes, these measures are sufficient.

- 18.6 A large proportion of the vehicles movements associated with the development are already on the network given the relocation of the centre. The enhance and expanded facilities including a swimming pool can be expected to attract additional movements however parking is not available on site and users will need to utilise the proposed public car park at Cottis Lane. It is likely that a proportion of visitors will undertake linked trips to other activities in the town centre while there.
- 18.7 Overall, the proposals will not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety and would not have a severe residual cumulative impact on the road network in accordance with paragraph 111 of the NPPF, as well as ST4 of the adopted Local Plan and policy T1 of the LPSV.

## **19. Sustainability, Energy and Climate Change**

- 19.1 The NPPF sets out that the overall purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which is defined as:

*Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*

- 19.2 In order to achieve sustainable development, the NPPF sets out three overarching objectives:
- *An economic objective;*
  - *A social objective; and*
  - *An environmental objective*

- 19.3 The NPPF is clear that each of these objectives are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

- 19.4 The LPSV sets out that the Council is committed to providing proactive strategies with regard to climate change resilience. This approach is based on the NPPF which encourages Local Planning Authorities to adopt a proactive strategy with regard to sustainable development and climate change.

- 19.5 On 19th September 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency for the District and set out a pledge that the Council will do everything in its power to make the District carbon neutral by 2030.

- 19.6 This approach is encapsulated within Policy DM 20 of the LPSV which seeks to encourage new developments to be of a low carbon energy use. Renewable energy measures in new and existing development is also to be encouraged as far as possible. The policies in the LPSV have been added to via the adoption in March 2021 EFDC

Sustainability Guidance and Checklist as supplementary planning guidance. The purpose of this guidance is to help applicants meet EFDC's goals of becoming net zero carbon by 2030.

- 19.7 In support of the application, a Sustainability Statement and Energy Strategy have been submitted along with a completed EFDC Sustainability Checklist which presents the sustainable aspects of the proposed development.
- 19.8 The Sustainability Statement highlights a number of aspects of the scheme which contribute to the sustainability credentials of the development. In short these are:
- A fabric first approach to reducing carbon emissions.
  - The development resulting in an annual 58% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions over the requirements of Building Regulations Part L.
  - A Ground Source Heat Pump providing heating, hot water and cooling.
  - Targeting BREEAM Excellent (Leisure Centre new Construction) with the submitted pre-assessment confirming a baseline score of 72.5% and the potential to achieve 81.2% both of which resulting in an 'Excellent' score.
  - Installation of electric charging points for all of the car parking spaces on the site and provision of bicycle storage.
  - Adopting measures for waste reduction during construction.
  - Using embodied carbon studies to guide design.
- 19.9 Generally, the scheme is compliant with the sustainability policies in the emerging Local Plan. However, the scheme is not particularly innovative or proactive in addressing Climate Change and could be more ambitious in aligning with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration. It is noted in the completed checklist that operational carbon, embodied carbon, circular economy/ waste management will be addressed in more detail during future design stages. Whilst it is acknowledged that some of the details of the scheme can only be developed at later design stages, many of the principles need to be in place at an early stage of design to enable this to be possible.
- 19.10 The proposal is considered to be a sustainable form of development and is therefore compliant with Policy SP 1 and DM 20 of the LPSV and Policy CP5 of the adopted Local Plan. The applicant is encouraged, through the recommended condition, to enhance the sustainability credentials of the development through the next stages of design.

## **20. Flood Risk and SuDs**

- 20.1 There is a clear need to ensure that surface and foul water drainage and treatment occur effectively and for the protection of both human health and the environment. This

includes the need to ensure that development will not cause pollution to water bodies or controlled water, including ground water.

- 20.2 Policy DM 18 of the LPSV sets out that it is expected that applications for planning permission will ensure that there is adequate surface water, foul drainage and treatment capacity to serve their development. This requirement is also reflected in Policy U2A of the ALP.
- 20.3 The application has been accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk from all sources of flooding.
- 20.4 A Below Ground Drainage Strategy has been submitted as part of the application and the EFDC Land Drainage Team is content with the general principles of the design. However further detailed information is required. This information can be secured through the use of a planning condition.
- 20.5 The ECC SuDS Team acts as the Lead Local Flood Authority. Similarly to the EFDC Land Drainage Team, based on the FRA and the surface water drainage strategy the team has no objection to the application subject to the imposition of planning conditions.
- 20.6 Thames Water has been consulted as part of this application as a key utilities provider. In terms of foul water disposal, Thames Water has raised no objection to the application.
- 20.7 Subject to the imposition of appropriately worded planning conditions the proposal is compliant with Policy DM 18 of the LPSV and with Policy U2A of the ALP.

## **21. Ground contamination**

- 21.1 The LPSV seeks to ensure that new forms of development avoid unacceptable risks from pollution to humans and other species. Paragraph C of Policy DM 21 of the LPSV requires that potential contamination risks are properly considered and adequately mitigated before development proceeds. Policy RP4 of the ALP is consistent with this approach, whereby potential contaminants are required to be identified and if necessary, appropriately mitigated.
- 21.2 The application is accompanied by a Geotechnical and Geo-environmental Desk Study Report, which considers the potential contamination risks present on the site.
- 21.3 The Councils Geo-technical Team have considered the report and agree with their findings that given the known history of the site and possible contamination that a ground investigation should be undertaken. A condition is recommended to secure the ground investigation and subsequently remediation scheme if required.
- 21.4 The proposed condition will ensure compliance with the provisions of paragraph C of policy DM 21 of the LPSV and with Policy RP4 of the ALP.

21.5 Following this advice and on the basis of the evidence submitted by the applicant, the proposal is compliant with paragraph C of Policy DM 21 of the LPSV and with Policy RP4 of the ALP.

## **22. Historic Environment – Archaeology**

22.1 The LPSV recognises that Epping Forest District benefits from a rich and varied historic environment, including historic remains. Where proposals could potentially affect archaeological remains, preference is given to their preservation since these remains are finite and irreplaceable.

22.2 Policy DM 7 of the LPSV seeks to ensure that heritage assets (including archaeological remains) are conserved or enhanced in a manner appropriate to their significance.

22.3 To investigate potential impacts on the historic environment the application is supported by a Heritage Statement which assesses the potential for archaeological deposits within the site. The site has been identified as having very limited scope for previously unknown archaeological deposits to survive and it is therefore concluded that no significant archaeological remains will be impacted or disturbed by the proposal.

22.4 The Historic Environment Team at ECC have recommended that no further investigation or planning conditions are required given evidence of extensive made ground at the site.

22.5 The proposed development is compliant with policy DM 7 of the LPSV and the proposals would conserve any heritage assets of archaeological significance.

## **23. Ecology**

23.1 The LPSV sets out that new development proposals should seek to deliver a net biodiversity gain in addition to protecting existing habitats and species. This approach is set out in Policy DM 1 of the LPSV. Policy NC3 of the adopted Local Plan is broadly consistent with this approach, whereby development proposals which may cause harm to established habitats are required to provide a replacement, alternative habitats of at least equivalent wildlife value. Additionally, Policy CP1 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to avoid or to minimise potential environmental impacts of development proposals.

23.2 The application is accompanied by an Ecological Assessment which sets out the baseline ecology of the application site and assesses the potential impacts of the development and mitigation and enhancement measures which may be required.

### Baseline ecological surveys

23.3 The findings of the Phase 1 habitat survey identified the site as low or negligible in terms of habitats of ecological importance and low suitability for protected species. The proposed landscape works and green roof will provide for a biodiversity net gain.

### Impacts, mitigation and enhancement measures

- 23.4 The ECC ecologist reviewed the report and recommended that the proposed ecological enhancements to the site should be secured and implemented in full. A condition is recommended to ensure that enhancement measures are to be outlined and secured through the approval of a Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy.
- 23.5 Overall, in terms of ecology, the proposal would be in accordance with policy DM 1 of the LPSV, is also compliant with Policies NC3 and CP1 of the ALP

## **24. Infrastructure**

- 24.1 In order to deliver the sustainable and balanced growth which has been identified in the LPSV, significant investment in infrastructure is required to meet the needs of residents and businesses.
- 24.2 Infrastructure includes a wide variety of elements including transport, utilities, flood and surface water management, open space and social and community infrastructure.
- 24.3 To outline the infrastructure requirements which are necessary to meet the needs of the growth outlined in the Plan, the Council has compiled an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The IDP identifies:
- The organisation responsible for delivering each piece of infrastructure;
  - The period over which the relevant investment will be required; and
  - The cost of each item and how it is going to be funded.
- 24.4 The IDP has been developed in consultation and cooperation with infrastructure providers and will ensure that infrastructure is delivered in a timely, predictable and effective manner. The IDP has also considered high level issues of viability and therefore delivery of policy compliant new development. The IDP is split into development areas and identifies the various interventions necessary within each area.
- 24.5 The majority of infrastructure requirements are triggered by residential development and don't apply to the site given the current proposal. The proposed leisure centre itself is a substantial investment in community facilities.
- 24.6 ECC Highways and Transportation identified the need to provide enhanced bus infrastructure and have requested the provision of real time display information via a highway agreement and £22,000 to provide for ongoing maintenance for a 10-15 year period.
- 24.7 Subject to the infrastructure interventions as noted in the previous section being secured through appropriate planning obligations, the proposal is compliant with policy D1 of the LPSV.

## **25. Employment and skills**

- 25.1 Part (v) of paragraph F of Policy SP 2 of the LPSV seeks to ensure that suitable training and skills development opportunities are provided for local residents to equip them with the skills they need to access future employment opportunities.
- 25.2 The Council is committed to ensuring that local residents get the best possible opportunities for training and employment in relation to this development proposal and as such an employment and skills plan (ESP) is proposed to be secured via legal obligation. The ESP will ensure liaison with the Council on employment opportunities, provide training opportunities and seek appropriate level of apprentices are provided as part of the construction works.
- 25.3 Subject to the delivery of the measures identified in the ESP, Officers consider that the development proposal will provide for significant opportunities for new jobs, apprenticeships and training for the local community.
- 25.4 The precise details of these schemes can be secured through a planning obligation as part of the section 106 legal agreement. Subject to the inclusion of the proposed planning obligation, the proposal will be compliant with Part (v) of Paragraph F of Policy SP 2 of the LPSV and will provide significant economic benefits to the local area.

## **26. EQUALITY DUTIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

- 26.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires that a public authority must exercise its functions having due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation) and persons who do not share it, and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.
- 26.2 In making this recommendation, due regard has been given to this Public Sector Equality Duty and the relevant protected characteristics. It is considered that there will be no specific implications and that, if approving or refusing this proposal, the Council will be acting in compliance with its duties.
- 26.3 The Human Rights Act 1998 makes it unlawful for a public authority to act in a way which is incompatible with any of the Convention rights protected by the Act unless it could not have acted otherwise. Careful consideration has been given to the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular Article 6 (right to a fair trial); Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life; Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination); and Article 1 of the First Protocol (right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions).
- 26.4 The Council is of the opinion that the recommendation does not interfere with any such rights except insofar as is necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others. The

Council is permitted to control the use of property in accordance with the public interest and the recommendation is considered a proportionate response to the submitted application based upon the considerations set out in this report.

## **27. CONCLUSION**

- 27.1 The application site has been proposed for allocation (ref: EPP.R7) in the Epping Forest District Local Plan Submission Version (LPSV) to provide new residential accommodation to meet an identified need. The proposal for a leisure centre on the site is contrary to this site allocation, however, the applicant is to make good the shortfall in residential provision via the use of the Land at St John's Road site as a 'donor site'. Subject to securing the planned for residential accommodation via the s106 planning obligations the principle of the use is supported.
- 27.2 The new facilities provide a replacement and enhancement to those provided at the existing Epping Sports Centre, which will continue in operation until the proposed centre is opened.
- 27.3 The site is a sustainable town centre location and the proposal will support the vitality and viability of the wider town centre. The high quality architecture will contribute positively to the setting and the development will enable much improved public realm and town centre connectivity. The provision of a 'green' roof supports an overall biodiversity net gain on the site.
- 27.4 Potential impact on the amenity of adjoining residential properties is suitably mitigated through the boundary treatment, orientation of the buildings, restrictions on plant noise and construction management conditions.
- 27.5 It has been concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the development will not result in an adverse impact on the integrity of the Epping Forest SAC subject to mitigation measures and site-specific conditions and obligations that will be imposed.
- 27.6 The proposal is targeting a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' which is within the top 10% of non-domestic UK buildings. The proposal provides a 58% reduction in CO2 emissions over the requirements of Building Regulations Part L and will utilise renewable sources of energy thus contributing to the Districts carbon neutral by 2030 targets.
- 27.7 Taken together, the application has demonstrated its compliance with the requirements of the LPSV, the Adopted Local Plan and the NPPF. It is therefore recommended that planning permission is granted subject to the imposition of suitably worded planning conditions and obligations.

***Should you wish to discuss the contents of this report item please use the following contact details by 2pm on the day of the meeting at the latest:***

***Planning Application Case Officer: Nick Finney***

***Direct Line Telephone Number: 01992 564 371***

***or if no direct contact can be made please email:***

***[contactplanning@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:contactplanning@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)***

**Appendix 1a – Planning conditions and informative**

**Appendix 1b – Listed Building Consent conditions and informative**

**Appendix 2 – Neighbour representations summary**

**Appendix 3 – Statutory and technical consultee responses**

**Appendix 4 – QRP feedback summary**