

West Lancashire Borough Council  
Housing And Regeneration  
52 Derby Street  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Ms Kneale

**THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2011  
SCREENING OPINION – ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

**Proposal:** Screening Opinion - Residential development up to 100 dwellings.

**Location:** Site Of Former Sports Centre, Digmaor Road, Digmaor, Skelmersdale

**Introduction**

West Lancashire Borough Council has been asked for a formal screening opinion in relation to proposed residential development of up to 100 dwellings and associated infrastructure at the former sports centre, Digmaor Road, Skelmersdale. This screening opinion is based on the letter of 3rd August 2015.

**The Site**

The request relates to an irregular parcel of land adjoining the western side of Digmaor Road and the northern side of Gillibrands Road, Skelmersdale. The site is currently vacant but previously included a sports centre building and evidence of the associated car park and surfaced sports court remain. The rest of the site is grassed and there are a number of trees and shrubs around the Gillibrands and Digmaor Road frontages. The site extends to approximately 2 hectares and is relatively flat.

To the north is a community hall, to the west are residential properties along Daniels Lane, to the south is Gillibrands Road with houses beyond and to the east is Digmaor Road with houses beyond. The site is within the main settlement of Skelmersdale, approximately 800m from the town centre.

**Proposal**

The proposal is for residential development on the site for up to 100 dwellings, highway and landscaping works, to be developed under a Local Development Order.

## **Assessment**

The proposal does not fall within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations.

The proposal does not meet the applicable criteria as set out in Part 10)b) Infrastructure Projects – Urban Development Projects in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(Amendment) Regulations 2015 (the development is for less than 150 dwellings and the overall area of development is less than 5 hectares).

Schedule 3 of the Regulations provides guidance on how to decide whether the project is likely to have significant environmental effects, thereby requiring EIA under Schedule 2.

### **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

NPPG has now replaced previous guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment as set out in Circular 02/99 and advises:

*When screening Schedule 2 projects, the local planning authority must take account of the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the Regulations. Not all of the criteria will be relevant in every case. Each case should be considered on its own merits in a balanced way and authorities should retain the evidence to justify their decision.*

*Only a very small proportion of Schedule 2 development will require an assessment. While it is not possible to formulate criteria or thresholds which will provide a universal test of whether or not an assessment is required, it is possible to offer a broad indication of the type or scale of development which is likely to require an assessment.*

The NPPG also provides an annex providing indicative screening thresholds. However, it should not be presumed that development above the indicative thresholds should always be subject to assessment, or those falling below these thresholds could never give rise to significant effects, especially where the development is in an environmentally sensitive location. Each development will need to be considered on its merits.

### **Schedule 3 Criteria**

Schedule 3 of the regulations outlines the criteria against which any Schedule 2 development should be assessed.

#### **1. Characteristics of the development**

The proposal is for the development of approximately 2 hectares of land to accommodate up to 100 dwellings.

In assessing the scale of the proposed development, I consider that the proposal would raise no issues that can be considered of more than local importance.

#### **2. Environmental sensitivity of the location**

The site is not located within a Sensitive Area as defined by Regulation 2(1) of the EIA Regulations (i.e. sites designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Parks, World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and sites covered by internal conservation designations) and does not lie within an identified Natura 2000 qualifying habitat or within close proximity to an environmentally sensitive site.

The nearest residential properties are located adjacent to the western boundary of the site on Daniels Lane. Residential properties to the east and south are separated from the site by the busy carriageways of Digmaor Road and Gillibrands Road. An assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the amenities of these neighbouring residents would form part of a full planning application.

In landscape and visual impact terms, the proposed development will no doubt be visible in the wider area but given the nature of the use and compatibility with neighbouring uses, this visibility is likely to be readily assimilated. Considerations of visual impact and impact on landscape character will be a consideration in any planning application.

In assessing the environmental sensitivity of the proposed development, I consider the potential impact to be of no more than local importance.

### **3. Characteristics of the Potential Impact**

When assessed against the criteria within Schedule 3, Part 3 sections a) to e) of the regulations, it is considered that the effects of the proposals would not be significant taking into account the extent of the impact, the transfrontier nature of the impact, the magnitude and complexity of the impact, the probability of the impact and the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.

### **Conclusion**

For the following reasons, it is determined that an Environmental Impact Statement is **NOT REQUIRED** for the above development:

1. The development is not within a 'sensitive area' as defined by Part 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.
2. The environmental impact would not be of more than local significance or result in any impact greater than of local significance.
3. The development itself is not considered to be environmentally sensitive.

4. The development would not result in unusually complex or potentially hazardous environmental effects.

Please note that in giving this opinion, it is recognised that an EIA would not be the only means of gaining the environmental information required to assess an application for planning permission. Planning application consultees such as English Nature, Environment Agency, RSPB, NATS, County Highway, Lead Local Flood Authority and MEAS would no doubt require appropriate highway, landscape, drainage and ecological studies as part of the assessment of any such planning application.

Yours sincerely,

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