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**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017

Development Management  
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Dear Sir/Madam,

**The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2016 (Regulation 5) – Request for Screening Opinion: Proposed Residential Development at former St Cyres School, Murch Road, Dinas Powys**

On behalf of our client, Barratt Homes Ltd., please accept this letter as a formal request for a Screening Opinion in relation to proposed residential, community and recreation development at the former St Cyres School site at Murch Road, Dinas Powys. It is anticipated that the application will be comprise up to 225 dwellings with associated access, open space, landscaping, attenuation features and infrastructure. Full planning permission will be sought for the residential component of the proposed development with all other aspects, including on-site community uses and low-impact development, such as recreational areas and allotments, shown in more broad detail. The exact composition of the community uses is to be finalised.

These proposals fall within the criteria identified within Paragraph 10(b), Column 1, Schedule 2 of the Town and County Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2016 ('the regulations'). Accordingly, the proposed development exceeds the applicable thresholds of more than 150 dwellings (ii) and a site area of 5 hectares (iii); it therefore constitutes 'Schedule 2 development' where an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would only be required if it is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as size, nature or location.

**Site Location and Context**

The site comprises seven fields of agricultural land defined by mature hedgerows and hedge trees. The footprint of the former St. Cyres School is situated in the north-eastern part of the site. The former school playing fields are adjacent to the school site.

An Area of Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland known as The Breeches, which is also designated as a Site of Important Nature Conservation (SINC) lies immediately beyond the southern boundary of the site. There are also large areas of dense, deciduous woodland along the site's northern and southern curtilages, while the land immediately to the east of the site is identified as part of a Green Wedge between Dinas Powys, Penarth and Llandough.

In the terms of the surrounding area, existing residential development on the south eastern flank of Dinas Powys is situated beyond the site's north western boundary. Eastbrook and Dinas Powys rail stations are located approximately 800m to the north and west of the site, respectively. In terms of the nearest public services and facilities, St Joseph's RC Primary and Nursery School is situated just 400m to the north-east of the site, while the new St Cyres Comprehensive School and Ysgol y Deri Special Education School are a further 400m to the north. Additionally, Dinas Powys Infant and Junior Schools are located 600m and 400m to the north-west of the site, respectively.



As part of the submission and examination of the VoG Local Development Plan (LDP), the LDP Sustainability Appraisal Report analysed the former St Cyres School site as part of the Stage 3 - Site Assessment. Accordingly, the site received a "largely positive assessment" primarily due to the proximity of existing services and facilities, for which the site would have a 'positive impact' on sustainability.

The only negative score received by the site as part of the LDP Stage 3 Site Assessment related to the generation of waste arising from the proposed residential use, which would naturally be unavoidable. In terms of potential impacts on environmentally sensitive receptors, the assessment identified the presence of existing Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in the north-west of the site, in addition to Pipistrellus bats within or adjacent to the site. It was therefore considered that development at the site would have both positive and negative impacts in this regard. Beyond this, the site received either 'positive' or 'neutral' scores.

### **Description of Development**

It is proposed to develop the site for a new, residential community comprising up to 225 dwellings in a mix of housing types and tenures. There will also be areas of new public open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure. Full planning will be sought for the residential component of the proposed development with all other aspects, including on-site community uses and low-impact development, such as recreational areas and allotments, to be made in outline.

### **Analysis of Potential Impacts**

Schedule 3 of the Regulations sets out the selection criteria, which must be taken into account in determining whether a development is likely to have any significant effects on the environment. It identifies three broad criteria that should be considered, namely the characteristics of the development (e.g. its size, use of natural resources, quantities of pollution and waste generated), the characteristics of the potential impact (i.e. its magnitude and duration) and the environmental sensitivity of the location.

Due to the prevalence of existing, public facilities within the surrounding area, it is not felt that there are likely to be any significant, adverse impacts on the local highway network that would trigger the requirement for an EIA, while any potential effects would be appropriately assessed via a technical Transport Assessment. Meanwhile, according to the Welsh Government's Development Advice Map (DAM) and data provided by Natural Resources Wales, the site lies entirely within Flood Zone A, which is considered to be at little or no risk of fluvial flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) will also show that the proposals would not result in an increase in the risk of flooding elsewhere.

In terms of ecology, the areas of the site with the most intrinsic, ecological value are mature broadleaved woodland blocks in the south and west, which contain mature pedunculated oak trees with some ancient woodland, ground flora. Mature trees within the higher value woodland have potential to be used by roosting bats. The field boundary hedgerows are limited in floristic diversity but provide dense cover and connectivity for fauna, including hazel dormice (a single nest was recorded on-site in 2015). The grassland is species-poor and of recent origin, having developed on recently cultivated agricultural land. Additionally, The Breeches, which is designated as an Area of Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland and a SINCE, is situated immediately adjacent to the site's southern curtilage.

The woodland blocks of highest value, in addition to lower value woodland along the southern, western and northern boundaries will be retained to provide continuous woodland canopy cover. Enhancement of retained woodland and planting of new, broadleaved woodland with tree and shrub species of value to dormice will help mitigate the loss of dormouse habitat from hedgerow removal. A buffer will also be provided between the development and dormouse habitat, where light spill will also be avoided to maintain its use as a foraging habitat and flight line for bats. Consequently, it is considered there are unlikely to be any significant, adverse impacts on identified habitats or priority species.

With respect to archaeology and built heritage, the Grade II\* Listed St Peters Church is located around 320m south-east of the site, while the Grade II-Listed Nos. 1-6 Little Orchard lie immediately north of the site. However, the nature of the surrounding topography, heavy tree screening within and around the site, in conjunction with the high levels of surrounding, post-war built development indicates that much of the surrounding built heritage within the vicinity shares no inter visibility and possesses no apparent, functional relationship with the site. While there are no archaeological heritage assets within the site itself, the surrounding area has a rich archaeological background, with Prehistoric, Roman, Post-Roman/early-Medieval and Medieval features and finds recorded. The archaeological potential of the site is likely to be low for anything other than remains of Stonylands Farm, as the main local centres of Prehistoric and historic activity are well documented.

It is understood, however, that given the archaeological assets present in the surrounding area, the local planning authority archaeological advisors require investigations to establish the archaeological potential of the site prior to determination of the planning application. These investigations are likely to take the form of geophysical survey, followed by trial trenching targeted on the results of the geophysical survey.

In terms of topography, the site occupies a small hill that rises gently towards the south-west of the site Murch Road along the eastern curtilage, before falling more steeply in a north-westerly direction towards the existing built-up area of Dinas Powys with gradient of approximately 1:9. The site is contiguous with the existing urban edge of Dinas Powys and is heavily screened by existing, dense vegetation. Consequently, it is felt that any landscape and visual impacts would be minor in degree and extent, which could be adequately addressed by an appropriate Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to be submitted as part of the application submission.

### **Conclusion and Summary**

Although it is considered that there is the potential for some, limited impacts as a result of the proposed development, it is our view that any environmental effects are unlikely to be significant and could be suitably addressed via accompanying, technical documentation. Moreover, the proposed scale and quantum of development is only slightly above the screening threshold for the requirement for an EIA, while the LDP Sustainability Appraisal assessed the site positively. Therefore, in the context of the Regulations, an EIA is not felt to be required.

In any case, the application and supporting statements will fully address any environmental issues raised by the proposal and will consider these in the context of the adopted Development Plan. There will also be preliminary surveys and reports in terms of ecology, highways, flood risk, landscape and visual, archaeology and built heritage.

We do, however, consider it appropriate to seek the Council's views as to the need for an EIA and formally request a screening opinion under Regulation 5 for reassurance.

Assuming that you concur with our conclusion that EIA will not be required, we would very much welcome your confirmation that the proposed assessments will be sufficient. We therefore look forward to receiving your formal response within the three weeks provided under the Regulations.



In the meantime, if there is any further information we can provide to assist you in the Council's consideration, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,  
**For RPS**



**Darren Parker**  
Operational Director

Cc: Zoe Aubrey, BDW South Wales