

## **PROPOSED NEW SETTLEMENT: ISLEY WOODHOUSE IW1/EMP70**

### **Location**

The site is located to the south of East Midlands Airport, Donington Park Circuit and to the west of Diseworth.

The A453, which marks the northern extent of much of the site, connects to M1J24 to the east and M42J14 to the south.

### **Site description**

The site comprises a large tract of agricultural land of some 316Ha. The A453 runs along the northern edge of the site but then cuts across the western extent of the land parcel in a broadly north-south direction.

To the east, lying at a lower level, is Diseworth and Breedon on the Hill lies further away to the south-west, although Breedon Church is visible from large parts of the site. East Midlands Airport and Donington Park Racing Circuit lie to the north.

The site surrounds the hamlet of Isley Walton, Brooklet Farm and Glebe Cottages to the east, south and west. The White House, High Barn Farm and Woodhouse Farm are within the site boundary.

The site rises up from the south-west corner towards Donington Park and East Midlands Airport which lie at a higher level. The area around the settlement of Isley Walton is relatively flat and forms a plateau. The east part of the site is more undulating and there are two valleys which converge just beyond the eastern boundary of the site.

There are mature hedgerows and trees throughout the site. The Dumps Plantation, which is subject to a TPO, is located towards the south of the site and comprises four circular areas of dense mature trees. There are two small ponds adjoining the corner of the site to the south east of The Dumps Plantation.

A watercourse runs along the site's western boundary and as such this edge of the site is within Flood Zones 2/3. Diseworth Brook runs along part of the eastern boundary which then travels diagonally across the site and runs to the west of Woodhouse Farm. A portion of the woodland by the brook just beyond the site's western boundary is a candidate Local Wildlife Site (Diseworth Brook Woodland and Diseworth Brook Oak).

There is a network of Public Rights of Way crossing the site, L98 and L89 run north to south and L89a and L98a run east to west whilst L90, part of the Cross Britain Way, runs along a portion of the site's southern edge, close to Woodhouse Farm.

The land is of Grade 3 agricultural land quality (Natural England regional records).

There are no listed properties within the site but Isley Walton contains three listed properties; the Manor House, the Toll House and the Church of All Saints (all Grade II). Warcroft Grange (Grade II) lies just to the east of the site and beyond it are numerous listed buildings and the Conservation Area of Diseworth village.

## Proposal

The site is being promoted for development as a new mixed-use village of some 4,500 homes with approximately 23,000sqm of employment floorspace, local centres (convenience shopping, pub/restaurant/cafe, GP, community venue etc) and primary and secondary schools.

## Sustainability Appraisal

SA Objectives																
Health and Wellbeing	Inequalities	Community	Housing	Economy	Town/Village centres	Employment	Sustainable travel	Air, Light & Noise	Flooding	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape	Land-use efficiency	Historic Environment	Water & Soil	Waste	
SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5	SA6	SA7	SA8	SA9	SA11	SA12	SA13	SA14	SA15	SA16	SA17	
--	--	+	++	?	--	?	-	-	+	--	--	--	-	0	0	

The site has a significant positive score for the provision of housing. The scores under SA1, SA2 and SA6 reflect the site's location in relation to existing centres, facilities and services but the proposed development is of a scale that these key facilities will be provided as part of the comprehensive approach. Employment uses are proposed for the site but, pending the detail being known, the site scores uncertain for SA5 and SA7.

Whilst there are limited bus services running past the site (SA8), these will need to be substantially upgraded to serve the new settlement. There is some prospect of noise from the airport and Donington Park Circuit impacting on residents (SA9) and this will need to be addressed as part of the detailed proposals for the site. The significant negative score for biodiversity (SA12) signals that there is the prospect of both on-site and off-site biodiversity impacts which require further investigation. The overall scale of development on this greenfield site results in significant negative scores for SA13 and SA14. There are a number of listed properties and Diseworth Conservation Area outside, but close to, the site boundary and the negative score for SA15 highlights that potential impacts on their setting is a matter to be addressed.

## Key planning considerations

### Landscape

An appraisal of the potential impact of development upon the landscape was undertaken in February 2020<sup>1</sup>. At that time the site was being promoted as two separate sites, sites A (the western half of this site) and B (the eastern half of this site). The study considered both landscape and visual sensitivity. In terms of landscape sensitivity both sites were judged as having a medium impact. In terms of visual sensitivity, site A was judged as being medium-high impact and site B as medium.

In terms of site A, The Dumps plantation is a distinctive feature in the landscape whilst land in the north west corner is more rolling than elsewhere in the site. The landform rises to the east to a

<sup>1</sup> [Appraisal of Sites A B C D.pdf \(nwleics.gov.uk\)](#)

plateau. This part of the site is of higher visual susceptibility due to exposed topography and lack of screening. There are views to Breedon Hill and Grade 1 Listed Church of St Mary and St Hardulph for which the site provides a setting. The site is of limited recreation value, but there are features that provide sense of place. The study identifies potential mitigation measures including avoiding development on the plateau area, framing views to Breedon Hill, protecting the Dumps Plantation, creating a green corridor along the western boundary and buffer planting to Isley Walton and to minimise views to East Midlands Airport.

In terms of site B the landscape is open with a low level of tree cover and containment limited to the tributaries of the Diseworth Brook which are identified as being important features in the landscape. The higher areas, including the plateaued area, are more susceptible to change. There are areas of tranquillity along the tributaries of the Diseworth Brook, but the northern area is impacted by the A453 and East Midlands Airport. There are some long-distance views in the west part of the site towards Breedon Hill and Grade 1 Listed Church of St Mary and St Hardulph, as well to the south. Topography at the site edges provides a sense of enclosure for much of the site, whilst the plateau and the north facing slopes around Woodhouse Farm in the south of the site are areas of higher visual susceptibility. There is limited intervisibility with Diseworth to the east. Mitigation measures include avoiding development on the plateau area, framing views to Breedon Hill and to screen views of Donington Park and East Midlands Airport. The Diseworth Brook provides an opportunity for green corridor and there are opportunities to enhance footpath links to the Dumps Plantation and to the Cross Britain Way.

### **Highways.**

A development of this scale will have a significant impact upon the local and wider road network, including the M1, A42 and A453 road network. This will be quantified through transport modelling which will also need to take account of committed and proposed major developments both within and beyond the district.

As part of the overall master planning approach for the new settlement, the council, the site promoters and highways authorities (principally National Highways and Leicestershire Highways and also Nottinghamshire CC Highways and Derbyshire CC Highways) will need to work constructively together to quantify the highways impacts and to identify a range of mitigation measures.

### **Access to services and community facilities (incl. by sustainable transport)**

The site is not currently within a reasonable walking distance of community facilities and services such as a convenience store, schools and GP surgery. As would be expected with a development of this scale, these will be provided as part of the comprehensive scheme for the site to include excellent walking and cycling links to limit the number of shorter trips taken by car.

There are existing bus stops on A453 at Isley Walton (9 service – EMA to Burton, approximately hourly; 125 service – Castle Donington to Leicester, twice daily). Again, these will need to be substantially upgraded in terms of both frequency and destinations and routed to serve the new settlement itself.

## Infrastructure

A study commissioned in 2020<sup>2</sup> assessed the infrastructure which might be required as part of sites A and B. It concluded that “We have not identified any unmitigable constraints, but significant new infrastructure provision and/or mitigation is likely to be required”.

The following infrastructure was identified as being required:

- Improvements to gas supply in the vicinity of the site, to alleviate capacity issues;
- The provision of a new primary electricity substation;
- Enhancement works to Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTW) – likely to be either an increase in capacity at Kegworth WwTW, or the relocation and enlargement of Castle Donington WwTW;
- The provision of new onsite primary education provision;
- The provision of significant new secondary education capacity at Castle Donington College, or potentially the provision of a new onsite secondary school;
- The provision of a new onsite GP surgery;
- Appropriate measures to mitigate flood risk, and ensure a betterment in existing flood risk for properties at risk of flooding further downstream from the site within Diseworth and Long Whatton;
- Appropriate mitigation for air pollution arising from the adjoining A453, to be considered through an air quality assessment;
- Appropriate mitigation for risks to the safety of aircraft and operations at East Midlands Airport; including glare and reflection, artificial lighting and bird habitats.

## Ecology

The site is located within Donington Park SSSI Impact Risk Zone.

There is the potential for badgers and Great Crested Newts (GCN) to be on site. Water voles are recorded from the brook in the south. The trees, grassland, ponds, stream and hedgerows may be potential BAP habitats. It is also possible that the grassland (ridge and furrow) may be a potential BAP habitat.

There would need to be ecological surveys undertaken; a Phase 1 habitat survey and also surveys for badger, water voles, GCN and a hedge survey.

Proposals would also need to achieve national biodiversity net gain requirements as a minimum.

## Heritage

The site lies adjacent to the small settlement of Isley Walton, which contains three Grade II Listed buildings (Church of All Saints, Manor House and The Toll House), and lies between the Conservation Areas of Wilson, Tonge and Diseworth, which all contain Listed buildings. In addition, a further Grade II Listed building lies beyond the Conservation Area on the western side of Diseworth in the vicinity of the site (Wartoft Grange), and the Grade II\* Listed Langley Priory lies to the south of the site. The site is also visible from close to the Grade I Listed Church of St Mary and St Hardulph at Breedon on the Hill.

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[https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/files/documents/potential\\_strategic\\_sites\\_infrastructure\\_study/Potential%20Strategic%20Sites%20Infrastructure%20Study.pdf](https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/files/documents/potential_strategic_sites_infrastructure_study/Potential%20Strategic%20Sites%20Infrastructure%20Study.pdf)

The Council's Conservation Officer considers that the proposed development may affect the setting of heritage assets including (from west to east) Breedon hill fort and parish church, Tonge conservation area, Langley Priory and Wartoft Grange. He considers that development should be excluded from land in the southernmost field adjoining the A444 near Tonge and no development within 200 metres of NGR SK 4420 2466 so as to avoid harm to the above-mentioned buildings respectively and Tonge Conservation Area.

Any development should engage with Isley Walton and use it as the basis for a characterful and distinctive development.

### **Flooding/drainage**

The vast majority of the site (99.5%) falls within Flood Zone 1. Along the western boundary of the site a small area falls within Flood Zone 2 and the construction of housing on this part should be avoided unless, by means of the sequential and exceptions tests (NPPF paragraphs 157-163), it can be demonstrated as acceptable to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency.

There are small areas across the site at low to high risk of flooding from surface water, however, in general the site itself is currently considered to be at a low risk from surface water flooding. However, there are issues further downstream (particularly in Diseworthj) where flooding has been a recurring problem. Consideration of the layout of site, existing surface water flow routes and drainage strategy is necessary to ensure there is sufficient land to manage runoff from the development to avoid off-site problems in the future. A Flood Risk Assessment will be required.

### **Amenity**

As described above, the proposed site includes at least 3 properties and surrounds a number more. The overall planning of the development must give full consideration to the amenity of these properties including in terms of overall siting, access and the prospect of disturbance during construction phases.

Both East Midlands Airport and the Donington Park Racing Circuit generate a significant amount of noise. The 2020 Infrastructure Study recognises this, although it is not considered to be a fundamental barrier to development. The study recommends that a full noise assessment would be required as part of any future planning application.

### **Agricultural Land Quality**

Natural England Regional Records classify the land as being of Grade 3 agricultural land quality. The fields appear to be largely in arable use.

In view of the scale of the development, an up-to-date survey will be required as part of any planning application to give more definitive information about agricultural land quality. The findings should also be used to inform the site proposals with the aim of limiting the loss of better quality land.

### **Noise**

In addition to noise from East Midlands Airport, there is also likely to be noise from the Donington Park Race circuit which lies to the north-east of the site. The 2020 study notes that the site lies at a lower level than Donington Park which would suggest that noise should be a lesser issue for this site. Nevertheless, a full noise assessment would be required at planning application stage.

## Housing

The site could potentially accommodate about 4,500 dwellings. At this time the Council considers that about 1,900 of these could be built in the plan period up to 2040, with the remainder coming forward thereafter. The site promoter has suggested a more ambitious build out rate, but this matter will need to be refined through further discussions having regard to any infrastructure requirements and other considerations.

The scale of the site is such that it should be able to provide the full range of house types, sizes and tenures. This includes different types of affordable housing, the provision of which will be essential if the site is to realise its potential to offer an opportunity for people to live in close proximity to the many existing and potential employment opportunities in the vicinity. The site is also likely to be attractive to those interested in building their own homes and again the scale of the site should be able to support this.

In addition to general housing, there may be a need for other types of housing including extra care and sheltered housing. Discussions will need to be had with the County Council Adult and Social Care services regarding the type of provision that may be required, but also its timing.

## Employment

Including an element of general employment uses as part of the development mix will help improve the sustainability credentials of the new settlement, giving some people the potential to live very close to where they work. The location has good road connections which is an advantage for firms seeking to locate to the area.

Initial estimates suggest that the site could accommodate in the order of 23,000sqm of general needs employment floorspace (offices, industry and smaller scale warehousing) with this phased to come forward in parallel with residential development.

## Availability/Achievability

The land is being promoted for the comprehensive development of a new settlement by a consortium acting on behalf of the landowners. On this basis the land is considered to be **AVAILABLE**.

As outlined elsewhere, the infrastructure costs associated with bringing forward a stand-alone settlement will be considerable and it will be important that these are planned and phased so they can be successfully and viably delivered. Policy requirements for the site such as affordable housing, aiming for carbon neutrality and ambitious standards of design will also need to be balanced against what can reasonably be funded through development. This will all require much further work and, pending this, the site is judged to be **POTENTIALLY ACHIEVABLE**.

## Conclusion

The Isley Woodhouse site is the only realistic candidate for a new settlement in the district.

The site is of a sufficient size to enable the creation of a standalone settlement with the potential for up to 4,500 new homes in total, across all tenures and house types, as well as employment, schools and other key services, including shops and health services. It provides an opportunity to create a high quality and sustainable development.

In order to do this, there will need to be a masterplan which establishes how the site will be developed. A key part of the masterplan will be to consider how, where and when the new infrastructure required to support the new community will be delivered. The overall infrastructure requirements are likely to be significant covering not just transport but also education, health, and recreation and much of this will need to be funded by the development itself. This means that any new infrastructure will have to be phased across the lifetime of the development and policy requirements carefully considered so that development remains viable, consistent with national policies.

In order to ensure that people working in the locality can live close by if they wish, it is important that a) employment floorspace is part of the development mix; and b) a range of house types, sizes and tenures are provided. This includes affordable housing as many of the existing jobs locally are relatively low paid. If sufficient affordable housing is not secured there is a risk that the new settlement will be predominantly for those commuting to work elsewhere.

In order to ensure that any future development is genuinely sustainable, the design and layout of the new settlement needs to be of an exceptional quality, reflecting its setting within the wider rural landscape.