

16.0 SUSTAINABILITY

- 16.1 This ES Addendum chapter updates ES Chapter 16 for the revised planning applications.
- 16.2 The applications relating to Church Fields were submitted at a time when a series of national, regional and local policy / guidance documents relating to climate change / sustainability issues were either under review or still in preparation. Although there has been little change in the position relating to general sustainability criteria, a much clearer picture has emerged as to how new development might address the specific issue of renewable energy.
- 16.3 Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (A Supplement to PPS1) published in December 2007, set out how planning should contribute to reducing emissions and stabilising climate change and take into account the unavoidable consequences. The Statement indicated that planning authorities should expect a proportion of the energy supply of new development to be secured from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources. Furthermore, planning authorities are urged to set out a percentage of the energy to be used in new developments to come from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources where it is viable. The Statement made it very clear that any such policies should be set out in a DPD and not SPD.
- 16.4 With regard to Daventry there is no current development plan policy in place which requires a prescribed percentage of renewable energy to be achieved within new developments. However in March 2007 Daventry District Council (in conjunction with South Northamptonshire District Council) adopted its Energy and Development SPD setting out energy requirements which developers are required to achieve, including the following relevant to larger scale development:
- Residential development of 10 or more dwellings shall achieve Code Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

- All non-residential development over 1000 square metres shall incorporate renewable energy equipment to provide at least 10% of predicted energy requirements.

16.5 More recently, in October 2008, West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) approved its Planning Principles ‘Setting the standard’ document which sets out objectives to the effect that any residential units to be delivered between 2010-2012 must meet Code Level 3 as a minimum. The document indicates progressively higher Code targets that WNDC expects to be achieved over time and advises that such targets will normally be achieved through planning obligations. Planning Principles does recognise that attaining higher targets might have social and economic implications, so WNDC propose that further steps in Code levels should remain a matter for Government through the Building Regulations. Planning Principles also seeks to ensure that 10% of energy used on a site is delivered from on-site renewable energy sources and that all non-residential development should at least achieve a BREEAM performance standard of at least “very good”.

16.6 At the regional level, RSS8 (Proposed Changes July 2008) expects development plan documents to include policies which promote and encourage a proportion of the energy supply of new development to be secured from renewable or low-carbon sources. Clearly there is no relevant DPD in place at Daventry and in such instances the emerging RSS8 states:

“In the interim period, before DPDs are in place, all new developments of more than 10 dwellings, or for other uses exceeding 1,000 square metres floorspace, should secure at least 10% of their energy from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, this is not feasible or viable”.

16.7 From the above it is evident that over the last two years a raft of planning policies has begun to emerge which displays some degree of consistency of approach. Nevertheless, apart from national Code criteria, to which the applicant is committed, there remains no definitive energy target / standard that can be applied

to the Church Fields site which straddles the boundaries of two planning authorities. It is understood that on the one hand WNDC is currently preparing a West Northamptonshire Sustainability Manual which will enable the authority to carry out a full assessment of the renewable energy and sustainability merits of proposed developments. On the other hand, DDC is understood to be carrying out a Renewable Energy Assessment which will determine amongst other matters whether a town wide Biomass Combined Heat and Power system, which might serve potential urban extensions, is feasible / viable. Because certain fundamental issues remain unresolved and in the apparent absence of a unified stance between authorities it is considered to be virtually impossible to devise a meaningful detailed energy strategy at this point in time.

- 16.8 The applicant accepts the importance of complying with the requirements of national and local policies, but in the current circumstances there remains a distinct lack of clarity as to what local objectives in particular might be and the impact that hitherto undetermined targets might have on the viability of development. For this reason and because the development in question will take place over a long period of time, the applicant maintains its position that sustainability / renewable energy matters should be dealt with through negotiation with the relevant authorities and subsequently regulated through a combination of planning conditions, planning obligations and Design Code(s).