

Beacon Park Local Development Order (LDO)

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion

October 2021



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1. Introduction

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Beacon Park Local Development Order (LDO) requires a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended). To do this, the LDO has been assessed against a range of criteria as set out in Schedule 3 of the above legislation.
- 1.2 Although no individual developments that require full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be permitted under the LDO, the level of overall cumulative development permitted by the Local Development Order exceeds the relevant thresholds set out in Schedule 2 of the regulations (currently 5 hectares for Industrial Estate Development Projects).

Local Development Orders (LDOs)

- 1.3 A Local Development Order is one of a number of mechanisms that simplify and speed up the planning process. An LDO is a locally focused tool that grants planning permission for specific types of development within a defined geographical area, and by doing so, removes the need for a planning application to be made. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have powers to create LDOs.
- 1.4 The procedures for making a Local Development Order are set out in [sections 61A to 61D](#) and [Schedule 4A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#), as amended, and [articles 38 and 41 of the Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#).

2. Beacon Park Local Development Order

Site Location

- 2.1 The LDO for Beacon Park comprises 16.7 hectares of land occupied by business units and undeveloped land bounded by landscaping (see Appendix 1). Approximately 5.7 hectares remain undeveloped and available. The area is designated as one of the Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft Enterprise Zone sites. The site area itself has been slightly extended (from that of the area identified in 2012) in the south-east corner to include all of the employment uses.
- 2.2 The site is located to the south west of Gorleston-on-Sea on Norfolk's east coast. Gorleston-on-Sea is a suburb of Great Yarmouth, an internationally renowned centre for the offshore energy industry which also has a high-tech electronics sector. Great Yarmouth's 24-hour port handles a range of cargoes, offering an effective gateway to Northern Europe.

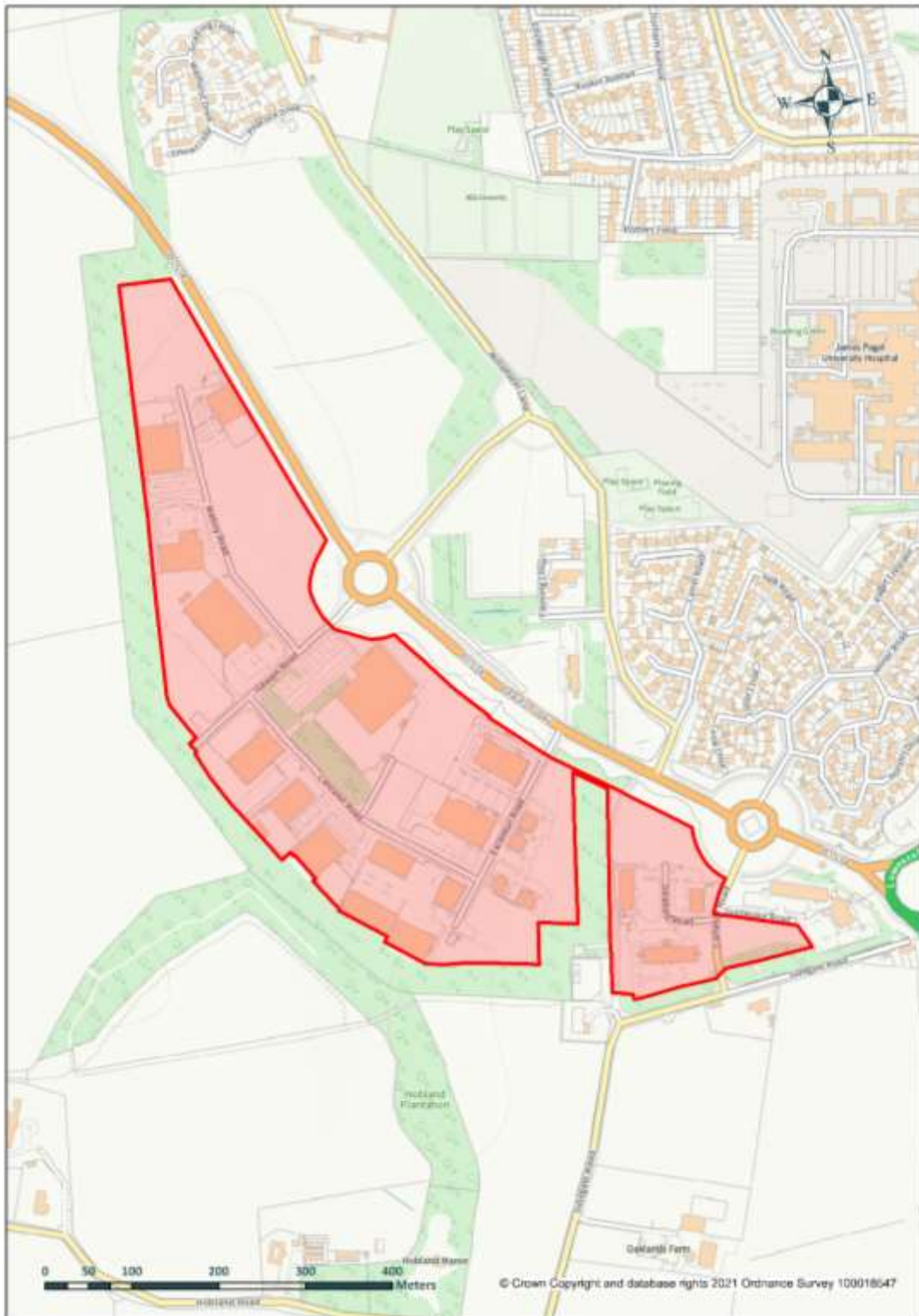


Figure 1 - Beacon Park Local Development Order

- 2.3 Beacon Park lies adjacent to the A47 corridor between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, which provides excellent access to both of these settlements. While a larger area comprising a new residential development is also referred to as ‘Beacon Park’, for the purpose of this LDO, Beacon Park refers only to the existing business park south of Beaufort Way. The majority of

the site is now developed following the success of the 2012 LDO. The development to date has been well-designed set within high quality landscaping.



Figure 2 - Aerial Photograph of Beacon Park Local Development Order

Development description

- 2.4 Great Yarmouth Borough Council (GYBC) has created this LDO to help enable the further development of Beacon Park. The intention is to allow greater permitted development rights for new business-related development within Beacon Park. The aim is to foster economic growth and provide the opportunity for service, high-tech/research and development sector businesses, particularly those associated with the off-shore energy industry to prosper and grow, through a simplified planning process created by the LDO. The LDO was originally

adopted in March 2012 for this site, of which this updated LDO will replace. It has been very successful in encouraging inward investment and development on the site with the majority of the site now developed.

- 2.5 The retention of an LDO for the site will continue to reduce the number of planning applications required for business related development on the site, thereby providing the opportunity to speed up the planning process whilst ensuring a suitable measure of quality control. This will continue to be a major benefit to businesses wishing to locate to the area and will provide a degree of certainty as to the type of development which will be acceptable, thereby saving prospective occupiers time and money.
- 2.6 As part of the work associated with the creation of the original LDO adopted in March 2012, a detailed design code specific to Beacon Park was produced. In producing the design code, the existing character of the area was carefully assessed together with the Council's aspirations for the area, thereby providing a clear understanding of the general types of development which would be considered acceptable. The March 2012 LDO has resulted in the creation of a high quality business environment. Therefore, this new LDO retains and updates the detailed design code to ensure future development meets this standard.
- 2.7 The updated LDO provides an opportunity to review and amend the type of development permitted and accordingly revise the design code. Generally, the permitted use within the order has remained unchanged, the main change being an added restriction to prevent change of permitted use from office use to other Class E uses, following changes to the national use classes order. The design code has been updated to reflect and follow the headings of the recently published [National Model Design Code](#).
- 2.8 The LDO grants planning permission for the following classes of development:
 - Class 1: Site Investigation
 - Class 2: Offices and Light Industrial
 - Class 3: Electronic Communications
- 2.9 The permissions are subject to conditions and limitations contained within the LDO. Development under Class 2 and Class 3 must be in accordance with the requirements of the accompanying Design Code. Of particular relevance to this SEA screening report, permission will not apply to Schedule 1 or 2 (where significant effects have been identified through a screening assessment) EIA development. There are also other limitations relating to highway works and mineral and waste matters. The design code itself sets out the parameters which detailed plans must meet for LDO consent to be formally granted.

Relevant Local Plan Policies

- 2.10 The Local Development Order will help implement Policies CS6 (of the Core Strategy) which seeks to support economic growth across the Borough and Policy GN4 (of the Local Plan Part 2) which reserves land at Beacon Park for new, extended or replacement business uses. Policy GN4 particularly encourages developments which promote higher value technology, research and development and those supporting services associated with the offshore energy industry.

3. Environmental Assessment

EIA Context

- 3.1 As part of the screening exercise, the LDO (and accompanying design code) has been assessed for likely significant effects upon the environment across a range of criteria set out in the Government's template EIA Screening Matrix.
- 3.2 The LDO has a further safeguard in that individual projects which come forward under the LDO which exceed the Schedule 2 threshold are only permitted under the order if a further Screening Opinion is undertaken prior to commencement which concludes no significant effects. Individual projects under the threshold are not required to undertake a further screening opinion.
- 3.3 In setting the context and baseline conditions, it is important to acknowledge that the business park is largely built out and therefore the additionality from vacant plots or change of use of existing plots is limited.

Consultation

- 3.4 The LDO preparation process requires consultation with the public and the Statutory Bodies. The final report will take into account comments and will be revised where necessary.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

- 3.5 Alongside this Screening Assessment, a Habitat Regulations Assessment has been prepared. This is required to meet [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 \(as amended\)](#), to consider the impact of proposals on National Site Network Habitat Sites.

EIA Screening Criteria

Natural Resources

- 3.6 The site is in existing use as a business park. The site is largely developed with only 5.7 hectares of undeveloped land remaining. The land is classified as Grade 1 Agricultural Land. The original assessment in locating the business park considered alternative sites but concluded that the loss of high grade agricultural land was unavoidable but limited in scale given the shortage of alternative land when considering other constraints. The remaining undeveloped parcels are no longer suitable for active farming given the plot sizes and location within the business park which is in use.
- 3.7 The topography of the site will remain as it currently exists as the roads and other infrastructure serving the business park effectively constrain any significant changes to the topography of the site. The study site has bedrock geology of Crag Group – detrital sand and gravel sedimentary bedrock. The accompanying Design Code to the LDO encourages the on-site re-use of any sand and gravel extracted as part of the development.
- 3.8 The conclusion in relation to this environmental criterion is that there will be **no likely significant effect**.

Waste

- 3.9 The LDO consent does not grant consent for waste management activities, or general industrial activities. Any development proposal which is considered under 'County Matters'

will be determined by Norfolk County Council as the Local Planning Authority, this includes waste management based development. It is, however, possible that some activities under light industrial may produce waste during the construction and operational phases. However, effects are not considered to be significant or abnormal during construction or operational phases.

- 3.10 The conclusion in relation to this environmental criterion is that there will be **no likely significant effect**.

Pollution & Nuisances

- 3.11 The site is not within an Air Quality Management Area. With the limited additionality and appropriate mitigations in place, the LDO will have extremely limited potential to impact upon air quality from construction and operational phases.
- 3.12 The LDO only permits light industrial uses which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit and associated works to enable access and egress, parking, and installation of services to buildings. (I.e. under what is now Use Class E of the Use Classes Order).
- 3.13 Operations may require extra lighting to support activities. The surrounding use to the north and east is urban mainly residential, and there is a substantial woodland landscape buffer to the west minimises impacts across open countryside. The Design Code requires that lighting design keeps glare to a minimum by ensuring that the main beam angle of all lights directed towards any potential observer is not more than 70°. Where upward lighting is required the Design Code requires light trespass to be minimised by directional luminaries and light controlling attachments.
- 3.14 Traffic noise is most likely to impact on Beaufort Way which serves the business park with access to the A47 to the east and the A143 to the west. In terms of commercial/industrial noise sources all existing uses within the business park have appropriate enclosing or screening mitigation of noise sources. With the limited additionality and appropriate mitigations in place, the LDO in the longer term would only result in a low noise impact, but in the shorter term this would be negligible.
- 3.15 The LDO permits electronic communications subject to design and operational requirements. Condition vi) of that class ensures that the development itself and any cumulative exposure will meet International Commission for Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines for public exposure. This condition ensures that electromagnetic radiation will be maintained at acceptable levels.
- 3.16 Beacon Park is situated on a Principal Aquifer which is particularly sensitive to pollution. To address this the Design Code restricts deep soakaways for surface water. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) will be implemented across the site ensuring that flood mitigation is dealt with on site and avoids artificially altering the hydrological cycle.
- 3.17 The conclusion in relation to this environmental criterion is that there will be **no likely significant effect**.

Population & Human Health

- 3.18 There is not considered to be any risks of major accidents associated with the construction, operation or decommissioning of any of the development permitted under the LDO.
- 3.19 Human health can be affected by potential emissions from operations and traffic associated with activities permitted through the LDO (covered in the above 'pollution & nuisances' criterion). These effects are not considered significant for the reasons stated above.
- 3.20 The site provides decent walking routes for recreation, particularly around the planted tree boundary. The site is also serviced by walking and cycling infrastructure to support healthy commuting. Activities on the business park will provide jobs either net new to the Borough or through re-location. There are clear social, economic, and environmental benefits associated with human health that can be achieved through development under this LDO.

Water Resources

- 3.21 Beacon Park is located approximately 1.2km inland from the North Sea along the East Coast of Norfolk. It is approximately 1.4km east of the nearest large waterbody, Fritton Lake. Further northwest is the Broads network with Breydon Water, the River Yare, River Bure and River Waveney. Beacon Park is situated on a Principal Aquifer which is particularly sensitive to pollution. To address this through the LDO, deep soakaways for surface water are not permitted. The implementation of SUDS measures will limit the potential for any pollution/contamination to these water bodies (see the above 'pollution & nuisances' criterion).
- 3.22 Based on the conditions in place, the LDO will have **no likely significant effect** on water resources.

Biodiversity (Species & Habitats)

- 3.23 The site itself has extremely limited ecological value, with much of the existing site already built up and serviced by access roads. The site has a substantial tree boundary planted around it to reduce the visual impact of the urban edge on the surrounding countryside, which may well provide local habitats. The trees are an important feature of the business park and will be retained.
- 3.24 Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Local Plan found that new residential and tourist development has the potential to increase recreational disturbance at nearby National Site Network habitat sites. The closest terrestrial site is Breydon Water SPA, approximately 4.3km north of the site, with the closest marine site, the Outer Thames Estuary SPA and the Southern North Sea SAC, located approximately 1.2km east of the site. No impact pathway was established between new planned employment activities (including the allocation of Beacon Business Park under Policy GN4) and nearby National Site Network habitat sites. This EIA Screening is supported by a HRA Screening that comes to the same conclusion, that **no adverse effects** will result on the integrity of National Site Network habitat sites from development permitted through the LDO.
- 3.25 In conclusion, the LDO will have **no likely significant effect** on biodiversity including protected habitats and species.

Landscape & Visual

- 3.26 The undeveloped part of Beacon Park is still considered to be greenfield, albeit that the plots are already serviced by road and the land is safeguarded/allocated for employment use. To the north is a new residential development and the James Paget University Hospital. The site is otherwise surrounded by arable fields on all other sides, with a substantial tree boundary running along the western edge to minimise the visual impact of the business park on the surrounding countryside. The site is highly visible from public viewpoints along Beaufort Way. However, the context of these views is already a mixture of commercial and residential development. Therefore, the additional development permitted by the LDO is unlikely to result in a material change to the visual experience of the area.
- 3.27 The 2016 Settlement Fringe Study identifies that the area has a very low landscape sensitivity and low landscape value and that the area therefore has a very high landscape capacity. To address potential impacts from the appearance, scale, layout, and design of proposed units, the LDO is supported by a design code that sets clear parameters to be met for consent to be issued.
- 3.28 Based on the existing measures that have been taken, the LDO will have **no likely significant effect** on this environmental criterion.

Cultural Heritage & Archaeology

- 3.29 There are no national, regional, or local designations affecting the site itself or within the immediate vicinity.
- 3.30 Beacon Park lies within an extensive area of cropmark evidence of field systems and enclosures of Iron Age to Roman and later. Archaeological Excavations undertaken in 2011 in the western area of the site located a pit containing finds from the late Neolithic to early Bronze Age dates. The extent of the cropmark evidence indicates that there is a high potential that important archaeological remains will be present across the whole of the Local Development Order area. To address this the Design Code includes an Archaeology Protocol which must be followed. This sets out a process which must be followed when undertaking excavations in relation to potential finds.
- 3.31 The conclusion in relation to this environmental criterion is that there will be **no likely significant effect**.

Transport & Access

- 3.32 The site is accessed from the relatively new B1535 Beaufort Way link road that connects with the A47 Lowestoft Road in the east to the A143 Beccles Road in the west. The A47 provides the strategic north-south route between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft to the south. The A47 continues west from Great Yarmouth towards Norwich. The A143 provides a principal route connecting with the A47 to the north and running in a south-westerly direction towards Beccles, Diss and Bury St Edmunds.
- 3.33 The existing Beacon Business Park is accessed from Beaufort Way via Excalibur Road and Gawain Road. Excalibur Road forms a priority junction with Beaufort Way and Gawain Road is the south-west arm of a four arm roundabout further along Beaufort Way to the north-west of Excalibur Road. Lancelot Road connects Excalibur Road to Gawain Road within the Business Park. Malory Road is a cul-de-sac off Gawain Road and serves the northern plots. There is clear road infrastructure and capacity to support the transport needs of the remaining plots.

- 3.34 The nearest bus stop to the proposed extension site is located on Beaufort Way, adjacent to and opposite Excalibur Road. This bus stop is served by routes X11 and 580. The X11 bus service runs between Belton and Norwich via Gorleston and Great Yarmouth. Approximate journey times are 11 minutes to Belton, 9 minutes to Gorleston town centre, 21 minutes to Great Yarmouth and 64 minutes to Norwich. The 580 bus service is operated by Borderbus and runs between Bungay and Great Yarmouth, via Beccles, with a frequency of approximately one bus per hour during the working day.
- 3.35 Within the immediate vicinity of the site there are sections of shared pedestrian and cycle routes along the existing Beacon Business Park roads and along Beaufort Way. These routes link with the wider network of footways in the general locality and provide a comprehensive and well defined footway network to all local services, facilities and public transport nodes supporting the potential for commute by non-motorised means.
- 3.36 The LDO will not result in the closure of any of these streets or footpaths. The limited additional development proposed by LDO will unlikely have any impacts on congestion on these streets to the extent there will be environmental problems. Additionally, conditions attached to the LDO require compliance with a Travel Plan to maximise travel by sustainable modes and therefore limit the impact on congestion.
- 3.37 The conclusion in relation to this environmental criterion is that there will be **no likely significant effect**.

Land Use

- 3.38 The business park effectively forms part of an urban extension to the south-west corner of Bradwell. Bradwell is connected to Gorleston-on-Sea and Great Yarmouth, forming the main urban conurbation within the Borough. North of the site is the residential extension of Bradwell, a further 1,000 properties separated by Beaufort Way (and landscaping along the top edge of the business park). To the north-east is the James Paget University Hospital. To the east of the site is the residential area of south Gorleston separated by the A47 (and landscaping along the eastern edge of the business park).
- 3.39 The LDO only permits light industrial uses which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit and associated works to enable access and egress, parking, and installation of services to buildings. See the conclusions under 'Pollution & Nuisances' above.
- 3.40 Based on the conditions in place, the LDO will have **no likely significant effect** on surrounding land uses.

Land Stability & Climate Change

- 3.41 The location of the land is not susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems.
- 3.42 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for Great Yarmouth identifies a few small pockets where surface water flooding may be present, but that the site is generally at low risk of flooding (including consideration for climate change).

- 3.43 The conclusion in relation to this environmental criterion is that there will be **no likely significant effect**.

Cumulative effects

- 3.44 While the business park effectively forms part of an urban extension to the south-west corner of Bradwell, the residential and employment elements have been constructed in phases over the past nine years. This has reduced the potential for nuisance effects. Potential effects associated with pollution, water resources and flooding, landscape and visual, archaeology and transport have been addressed through conditions in place through the LDO consent process.
- 3.45 There are several employment sites across Great Yarmouth, including South Denes which also forms part of the Enterprise Zone. However, all of these sites have been safeguarded/allocated since the Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted in 2015, and most of them are largely developed out. The net amount of remaining vacant sites is low, and therefore the potential for any pollution, transport or other cumulative impacts is also low. The Sustainability Appraisals supporting the Core Strategy and Local Plan Part 2 both concluded that cumulative impacts associated with planned new development would be minimal upon the baseline.

- 3.46 The conclusion in relation to this environmental criterion is that there will be **no likely significant effect**.

Transboundary Effects

- 3.47 The site is located on the East Coast of England, the UK. There will be no transboundary effects as there are no nearby international boundaries. The conclusion in relation to this environmental criterion is that there will be **no likely significant effect**.

Scheduled Development under EIA

- 3.48 The EIA Regulations categorise development types as either 'Schedule 1' developments or 'Schedule 2' developments. Developments listed in Schedule 1 will always require an EIA. None of the permitted LDO uses are included on the Schedule 1 list. Should any development permissible under the LDO hit a Schedule 2 threshold, a specific scheme EIA screening will be required and development is only permitted where a further Screening Opinion concludes no significant effects.

Conclusions

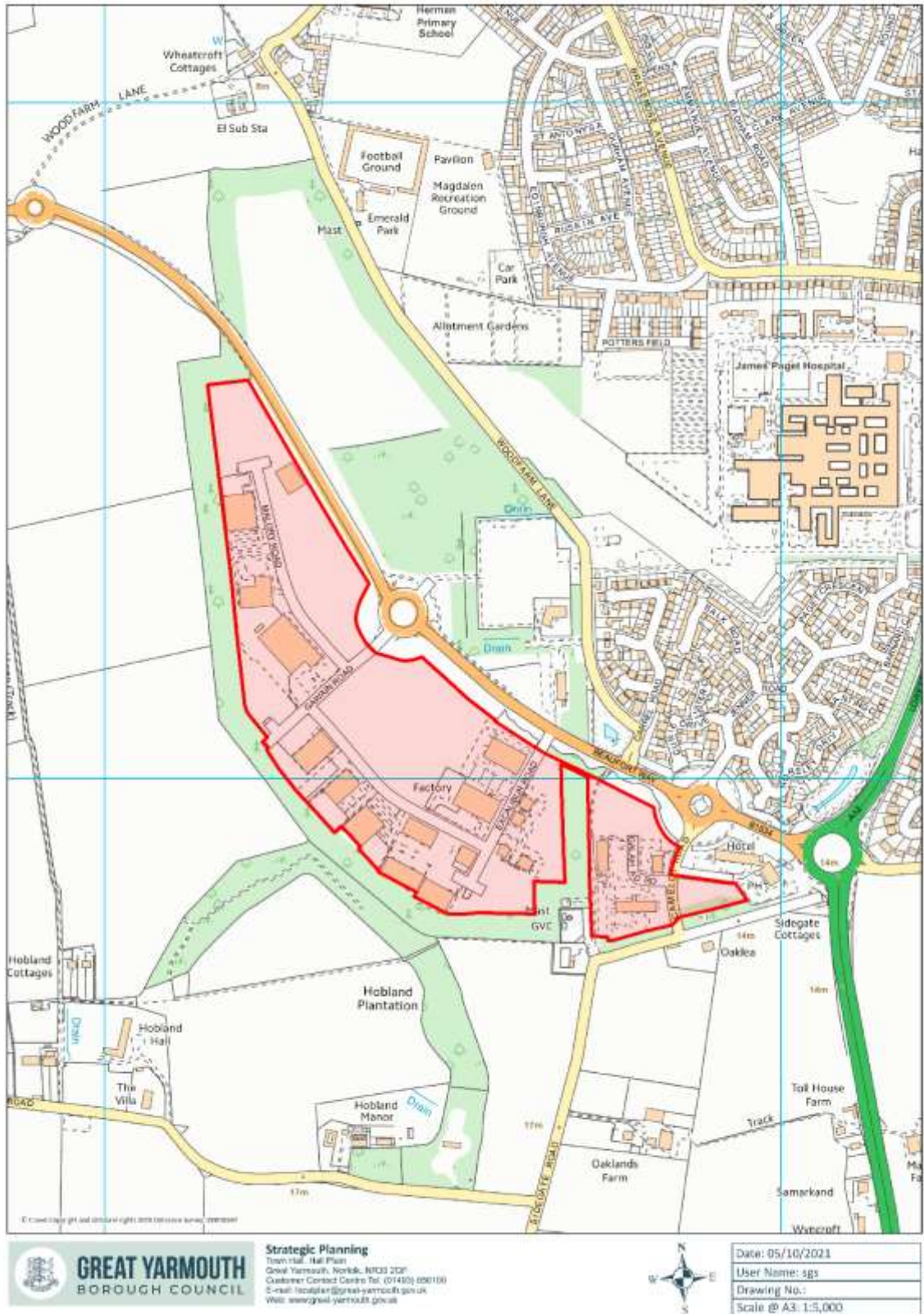
- 3.49 The NPPG states that EIA "will only apply to a small proportion of projects considered within the town and country planning regime". The uses that could emerge through the LDO are of a similar nature to the existing development on the site with the remaining space and potential for impacts extremely limited. The LDO requires that any proposed developments that could be considered EIA development will need to be individually screened, and if EIA development is concluded, LDO consent will not apply.

4. EIA Screening Decision

It is concluded that the Beacon Park LDO will not have likely significant impacts, therefore a full Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

5. Appendix 1 – Site plan & Aerial plan

Beacon Park LDO



Beacon Park LDO



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