

18th April 2023

Harry Manners
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Via email to: harry.manners@montagu-evans.co.uk

Your contact is: Mr Jonathan Markwell, Planning

Dear Mr Manners,

Scoping Opinion Request - EIA Regulations 2017 (as amended)

Enquiry Reference & Address: 230243/SCO - Land at Forbury Retail Park, Forbury Road, Reading, RG1 3HS

Proposal: Request for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Scoping Opinion in accordance with Regulation 15 (2) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) with regard to the proposed redevelopment of land at Forbury Retail Park, Reading, for a residential-led mixed use scheme of up to 820 units and up to 5,500 sqm of commercial uses within buildings up to 12 storeys, with vehicle access to up to 200 car parking spaces at basement level and up to 860 cycle parking spaces, landscaping, sewer diversion and associated works.

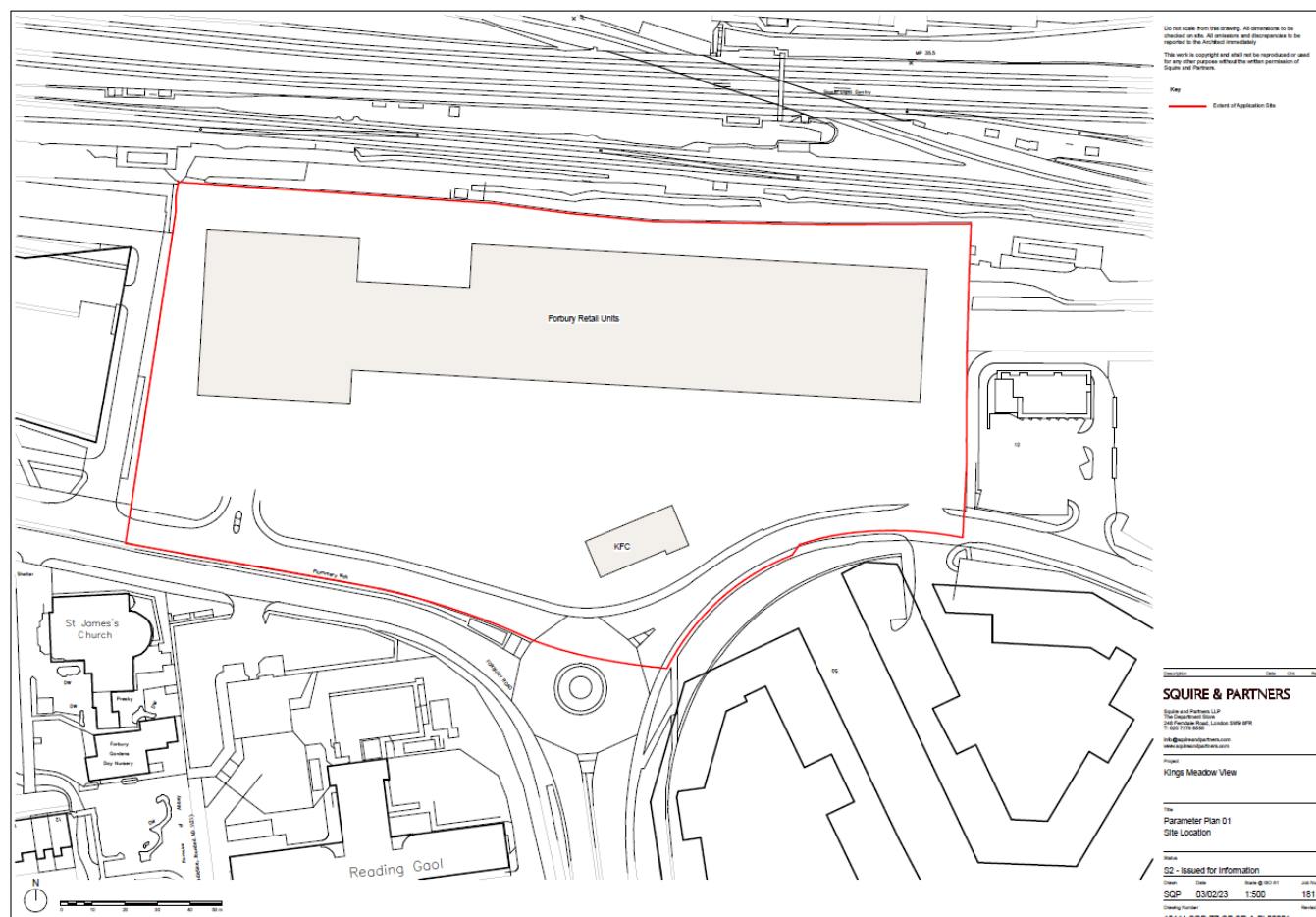
Information considered: Kings Meadow View Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report by Stantec dated February 2023 Ref 332110588 Final, as received 24/02/2023; Letter from Montagu Evans LLP, Ref PD12695 /JS/LB/HM, dated and received 24/02/2023; Email from Montagu Evans 'RE: Forbury Retail Park, Reading - EIA Scoping (230243)' dated & received 27/03/2023; Parameter Plan 01 Site Location 18111-SQP-ZZ-GF-DR-A-PL00001, as received 27/03/2023.

I refer to the formal Scoping Opinion request dated and received 24/03/2023, with regard to Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) (hereafter referenced as the EIA Regs), as to the content of the Environmental Statement (ES) to be prepared in connection with a development proposal at the above site.

In line with Regulation 15 (4) of the EIA Regs it has been agreed that the opinion is adopted by 18th April 2023 (email from Montagu Evans LLP dated 27/03/2023).

For clarity, in line with Regulation 15 (2) (a) (i) and Regulation 15 (3) of the EIA Regs, the local planning authority (LPA) contacted Montagu Evans LLP on 27/03/2023 advising that additional information was required in order to provide a plan which precisely identified the

land, given the inconsistent information within the original submission. Montagu Evans LLP provided a response on 27/03/2023 clarifying the red line boundary would be as per the plan below, with this running adjacent to the listed Plummery Wall, but not within the application site. This plan is consistent with the Site Area Plan in Appendix A of the EIA Scoping Report by Stantec, but contrasts to the Heritage Asset Plan at Appendix D of the same report.



This letter constitutes Reading Borough Council's Scoping Opinion. The local planning authority has taken into account the factors at Regulation 15 (6) of the EIA Regs in adopting this Scoping Opinion. Where matters in the Stantec scoping report are not specifically referenced / responded to, it can be confirmed that the scope of the future ES is agreed, subject to any future comments from consultees who are yet to respond to the consultation and the terms of Regulation 15 (9) of the EIA Regs.

The necessary consultations have been carried out and the Authority's formal Scoping Opinion in accordance with the Regulations is set out below.

Responses from the consultation bodies

As per Regulation 2(1) of the EIA Regs the Marine Management Organisation, Natural England and the Environment Agency have been consulted. These responses are summarised below:

Marine Management Organisation (MMO): The full response from MMO is included as Appendix 1, which should be taken into account.

Natural England: The full response from Natural England is included as Appendix 2, where detailed advice on the scope of the future ES from Natural England's perspective is provided and should be taken into account.

The Environment Agency: The EA has been formally consulted on the scoping request. No response was received within three weeks of the original consultation and therefore an update was sought from the EA. No subsequent response has been received at the time of writing. Should a response be received in due course, it will be forwarded.

Responses from other external consultation bodies

In line with Regulation 2(1) (a) and (c) (iv) of the EIA Regs a series of other external consultations have been undertaken. These responses are summarised below:

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB): It is firstly clarified by Officers that NHS Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) no longer exists and has been replaced by Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) <https://www.bucksoxonberksw.icb.nhs.uk/> . Accordingly, section 7.2.1 of the Stantec report is inaccurate.

BOB ICB's full response is included as Appendix 3, where information contrary to that specified at 7.2.20 of the Stantec report is provided in relation to the nearest GP practice. Moreover, the BOB ICB response identifies that there is insufficient capacity to cope with the significant population growth as a result of the intended development, meaning mitigation will be required to be provided. These comments from BOB ICB should be taken into account in the preparation of any future ES.

The Gardens Trust: Berkshire Gardens Trust have replied on behalf of The Gardens (Officer note: It transpired that the original consultation was not received, meaning this response was provided at relatively short notice), as follows:

Thank you for consulting The Gardens Trust (GT) in its role as Statutory Consultee with regard to proposed development affecting a site listed by Historic England (HE) on their Register of Parks and Gardens as per the above application. The Berkshire Gardens Trust (BGT) is a member organisation of the GT and works in partnership with it in respect of the protection and conservation of registered sites, and is authorised by the GT to respond on GT's behalf in respect of such consultations. We appreciate the effort made to contact us more recently.

Due to unforeseen circumstances we have been given little time to comment and we look forward to being consulted on the application when it is submitted. We are however pleased to submit the following comments on the Scoping Report.

The site lies to the north-east of the Grade II Registered Park and Garden at Forbury Gardens and forms a part of the physical and visual setting of the Park. This is a well loved, popular and well cared for site which was been awarded the Green Heritage Site award in 2021. The Park is an important setting to the Abbey Grounds and Reading Prison and includes a number of listed buildings and structures. These are identified in the Kings Meadow View Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report February 2023. The EIA should cover the effects on the significance of the physical and visual setting of the Park and its listed assets.

There is a close relationship with the assessment of the impact on Forbury Gardens and its listed buildings and structures and the LVIA. Section 13 Townscape and Visual suggests that there would no visual impact on these assets and states: 10.5.5 The changes to the setting and significance of non-designated heritage assets within 500m from the Site are unlikely to be considered significant and will not be considered within the ES.

We consider that there would be views of the proposed development, not least in winter, but also in summer, from the boundary of Forbury Gardens next to the listed Plummery Wall along Forbury Road; from the path which runs within the Park immediately adjacent to the Wall; and from the raised mound, all of which are of historic significance. It may also affect the physical setting of the Plummery Wall and the Shelter at North-East Corner of Forbury Gardens.

We are aware that the land to the immediate north of Forbury Gardens is already developed with high rise development but the current buildings on the site are set well back from Forbury Road and are single storey, reducing the overall scale of development within the northern setting of the Park. We note that the site is not included as suitable for high rise development in the Reading Tall Building Strategy 2008.

The Scoping Report includes a number of policies from the Reading Local Plan but should also refer to Policy EN1 which covers the effect on historic assets.

We ask that the applicant includes the Gardens Trust as statutory consultees in consultation, in addition to Historic England.

I have written to you in haste to meet your deadline of 17 April 2023, and therefore it may be found that we have overlooked some aspects of the potential effect on Forbury Gardens and the listed assets. For this reason, we may wish to raise other issues following receipt of the application under consultation.

These comments from BGT on behalf of GT should be taken into account in the preparation of any future ES.

Historic England: HE has been formally consulted on the scoping request. No response was received within three weeks of the original consultation and therefore an update was sought from HE. No subsequent response has been received at the time of writing. Should a response be received in due course, it will be forwarded.

Network Rail: replied via email, as follows:

Where residential development is situated adjacent or adjoining the railway an assessment should be carried out regarding noise and vibration.

The current level of railway usage may be subject to change at any time without prior notification including increased frequency of trains, night time train running and heavy freight trains. There is also the potential for maintenance works to be carried out on trains, which is undertaken at night and means leaving the trains' motors running which can lead to increased levels of noise.

We therefore suggest that any noise and vibration assessment also includes necessary mitigation measures as part of the proposed development.

FORMER BR LAND

The proposed development also appears to be located on an area of land previously under the ownership of Network Rail. Often these sites are sold and are subject to a demarcation or covenant agreement which may include particular rights in relation to the safe operation of the railway and associated infrastructure. It must be considered when Network Rail has access rights over the development site; access must not be blocked or restricted at any time. The applicant must comply with all post sale covenants in the demarcation agreement and understand the implications this will have on the implementation of this development.

Any representations made are without prejudice to those rights and obligations and on the basis that they do not imply that Network Rail's approval under the demarcation agreement will be given for the proposed development or for any part of it.

These comments from Network Rail should be taken into account in the preparation of any future ES.

Southern Gas Networks: SGN has been formally consulted on the scoping request. No response was received within three weeks of the original consultation and therefore an update was sought from SGN. This was acknowledged by SGN, who advised the local depot will contact the local planning authority directly. No subsequent response has been received at the time of writing. Should a substantive response be received in due course, it will be forwarded to you.

SSE Power Distribution: SSE has been formally consulted on the scoping request. No response was received within three weeks of the original consultation and therefore an update was sought from SSE. No subsequent response has been received at the time of writing. Should a response be received in due course, it will be forwarded.

Thames Water: replied via email (Ref 67350), as follows:

Thames Water are the statutory water and sewerage undertaker for the area and would like to make the following comments:

The EIA Regulations 2017 set out in Schedule 4 that water and wastewater issues may need to be covered in an EIA. Thames Water considers the following issues should be considered and covered in either the EIA or planning application submission:

- 1. The developments demand for Sewage Treatment and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met.*
- 2. The surface water drainage requirements and flood risk of the development both on and off site and can it be met.*
- 3. The developments demand for water supply and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met.*
- 4. Build - out/ phasing details to ensure infrastructure can be delivered ahead of occupation.*
- 5. Any piling methodology and will it adversely affect neighbouring utility services. The developer can obtain information to support the EIA by visiting the Thames Water website*

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/developers/larger-scale-developments/planning-your-development/working-near-our-pipes>

These comments from Thames Water should be taken into account in the preparation of any future ES.

Responses from internal consultees & Officer comments

Internal consultee and Officer comments are incorporated within the following:

It is noted that paragraph 1.2.2 of the Stantec report states *“Following a [sic] an extensive period of pre-application discussions with officers at RBC, the design has now been amended to a near complete stage”*. In response, Officers would not consider discussions to have been “extensive” and have raised significant concerns with the approach of the prospective applicant in seeking to progress such discussions. A number of fundamental elements associated with the emerging proposals are either unresolved or unproven at the time of writing, while numerous other matters have not been discussed in any detail at all, despite Officer attempts to facilitate structured discussions.

Section 2 of the Stantec report (Site Description) omits reference to what are considered to be a number of important site and surrounding area features and characteristics. The series of Tree Preservation Order (TPO) trees along the Kenavon Drive frontage, within the intended application site, are not referenced and should be duly noted and considered. Parts of the site are within areas of known potential for contaminated land, associated with the former Biscuit Factory use in the wider area. The site is also within an area of archaeological potential, which is overlooked within section 2 of the report. No reference is made to other policy designations, such as being part of an allocated site, within a major opportunity area, within the Reading Central Area, within the office core and outside of any tall building area. Furthermore, there is no reference to the Huntley Wharf development of 765 dwellings and 5 commercial units, immediately to the south / south-east of the site, which is part occupied / part under construction at the time of writing. The site is also adjacent to an area safeguarded for Crossrail and an area of identified biodiversity interest. No reference is made to either the nearby River Kennet (to the south) or River Thames (to the north). Whilst a number of these elements are referenced elsewhere within the Stantec report, it would have been expected for them to originally be included in the Site Description section. Many of these elements could have been referenced having considered the proposals map for the Borough: [Planning policy - Reading Borough Council](#) It is considered that all of these matters are given due consideration in the preparation of the future ES.

It is noted for completeness that Table 6.1 of the Stantec report includes what appear to be a number of inconsistencies with the remainder of the document. More specifically, ‘human health’ and ‘material assets’ are both marked with a tick to specify them being scoped in, but then within sections 14.7 and 14.9 (the numbering associated with section 14 also appears not to align with the actual section 14 of the report, but this is assumed just to be a typographical error on the part of the author) the commentary suggests they are scoped out. It is assumed that these sections should have been marked with crosses within table 6.1 and this was an inadvertent error on the part of the author.

In addition with relation to Table 6.1, this states that ‘the inter-relationship between the above factors’ is scoped in, with the explanation provided for this at section 15 of the report.

However, section 15 does not explicitly refer to this, so it is unclear what explanation is provided. For the avoidance of doubt, it is considered that there is merit of this being scoped into the future ES.

Paragraphs 6.2.7 to 6.2.9 references phases of the scheme where likely significant effects could occur, with these identified as firstly during demolition and construction and secondly once the site is operational. Officers would point out that given the size of the site it is likely that any approved development would be implemented in phases, meaning that there is likely to be some overlap between the demolition/construction and operational stages of the development. Accordingly, the effects of demolition/construction of the later stages of any development must take into account the impact on the operation of the early operational stages of any development, to ensure early stage occupiers or users are not significantly effected by the on-going demolition/construction on-going elsewhere at the site. The future ES should include specific measures to minimise and manage these particular effects, particularly as they may require more specialist measures given the physical proximity involved within the site, rather than measures solely being incorporated with nearby occupiers/users outside the site being typically included.

It is noted that paragraphs 6.4.11-6.4.12 of the Stantec report reference approved and undetermined major and EIA applications within 2km of the site, with a list provided at Appendix C. The report also includes a request for other known developments which should be assessed in terms of cumulative impacts to be identified in this Scoping Opinion response.

In response, the list at Appendix C is considered to be incomplete and out of date in a number of areas. In the first instance a review of the Council's latest (December 2022 published Annual Monitoring Report [Annual Monitoring Report 2021-22 \(reading.gov.uk\)](https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=143) should be undertaken, together with details from the local planning authority's recent Planning Applications Committee meetings <https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=143> to ascertain recent permissions. Details on individual applications can also be found via the Council's website at the following link: http://planning.reading.gov.uk/fastweb_PL/welcome.asp

As a starting point (this list is not exhaustive and the prospective applicant should undertake standalone research, as per the links above), the following is noted in response to Appendix C:

- 80 Caversham Road (Ref 182252) was granted outline permission on 29th March 2023.
- Bristol and West Arcade, Market Place (Ref 210163) was withdrawn on 2nd August 2022, not granted as stated at Appendix C of the Stantec report. As such, 210163 should be scoped out. However, prior approval 220579 at 173-174 Friar Street (part of the site) should be scoped in instead.
- 29-35 Station Road (Ref 181930) has lapsed without being implemented, so should be scoped out.
- 52-55 Friar Street (Ref 162210) has lapsed without being implemented, so should be scoped out.
- Former Coopers BMW site (Ref 162166) is now completed.
- 115 Chatham Street (Ref 210349) has been part implemented (demolition), and it is unclear why this is scoped out as Appendix C states. It is considered it should be scoped in, unless reasons as to why it should be scoped out are provided and subsequently agreed.

- Cox and Wyman, Cardiff Road (Ref 171814) - part occupied, part under construction according to AMR. It is unclear why this is scoped out as Appendix C states. It is considered it should be scoped in, unless reasons as to why it should be scoped out are provided and subsequently agreed.
- 20 Hosier Street (Ref 182054) is extant. It is unclear why this is scoped out as Appendix C states. It is considered it should be scoped in, unless reasons as to why it should be scoped out are provided and subsequently agreed.
- North Street (Ref 191659) is under construction. It is unclear why this is scoped out as Appendix C states. It is considered it should be scoped in, unless reasons as to why it should be scoped out are provided and subsequently agreed.
- 119 Henley Road - site address specified is incorrect, as the site is actually 199-203 Henley Road and land to rear of 205-207 Henley Road (Ref 180418) - that permission is not relevant, given later application 190835 was subsequently approved and has been completed.
- Alexander House, Kings Road. 162057, as specified in Appendix C, is expired without being implemented. However, subsequently applications 201536, 210906 and 210902 all approved and extant. It is unclear why this site is scoped out as Appendix C states. It is considered it should be scoped in, unless reasons as to why it should be scoped out are provided and subsequently agreed.

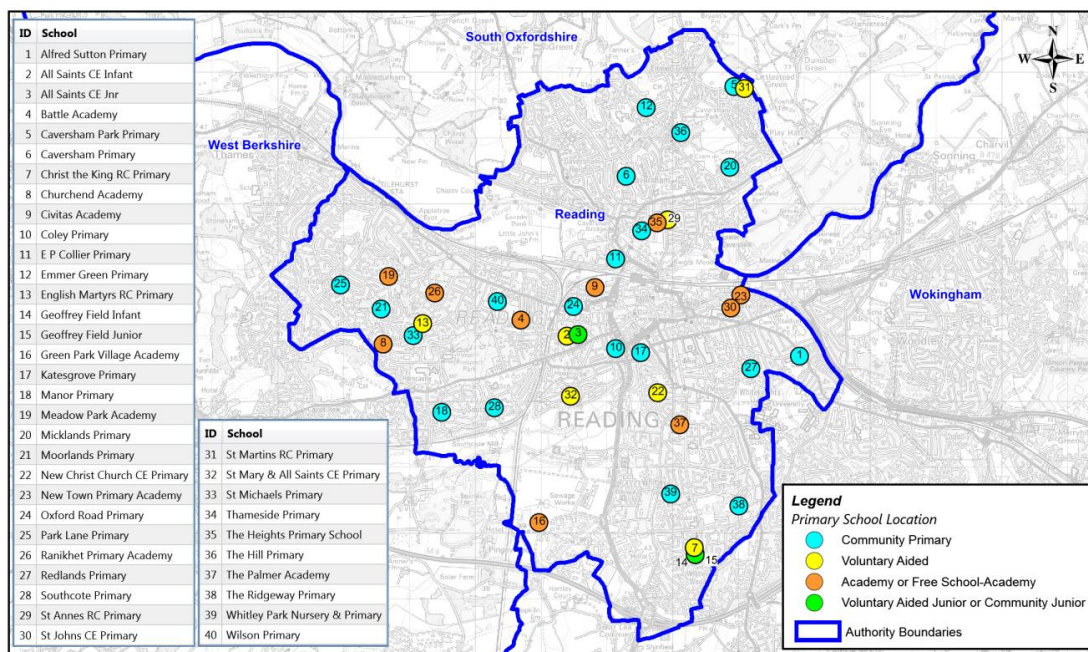
In relation to other major sites within 2km of the site, as a starting point (this list is not exhaustive and standalone research is recommended, as per the links above, with table 13.1 in the AMR being of initial relevance), the following is noted for your review and inclusion:

- 170509 - Kenavon Drive (Huntley Wharf) - part occupied, part under construction. This site should be scoped in.
- 200328 - Vastern Court Retail Park - Currently at appeal. The appeal was heard via Public Inquiry between April and November 2022. The recommendation by the Inspector and subsequent outcome by the Secretary of State is awaited at the time of writing. This site should be scoped in.
- 221324 - 97a-117 Caversham Road - resolution to be granted after consideration by Planning Applications Committee and presently awaiting completion of s106 legal agreement. This site should be scoped in.
- 220922 - 71-73 Caversham Road - resolution to be granted after consideration by Planning Applications Committee and presently awaiting completion of s106 legal agreement. This site should be scoped in.
- 200188 - 55 Vastern Road - allowed on appeal in 2022. Presently unimplemented, but pre-commencement conditions in the process of being discharged. This site should be scoped in.
- 170326 - Weldale St- part occupied, part under construction. This site should be scoped in.
- 201420 - 45 Caversham Road - under construction. This site should be scoped in.
- 201734 - Rivermead, Richfield Avenue - under construction. This site should be scoped in.
- 212061 - Richfield Driving Range, Richfield Avenue. Extant permission. This site should be scoped in.
- 221446 - Soane Place, 6-8 Market Place - resolution to be granted after consideration by Planning Applications Committee and presently awaiting completion of s106 legal agreement. Also needs to be considered within the context of 211261 and 210478 too. So, this site should be scoped in.

- 210639 - Eaton Court, 112 Oxford Road - current application. This site should be scoped in.
- 221405 - Central Swimming Pool site, Battle Street - resolution to be granted after consideration by Planning Applications Committee and presently awaiting completion of s106 legal agreement. This site should be scoped in.
- 221232 - 1-15 Queen Victoria Street and 145-148 Friar Street - resolution to be granted after consideration by Planning Applications Committee and presently awaiting completion of s106 legal agreement. This site should be scoped in.
- 221235 - 138-144 Friar Street - resolution to be granted after consideration by Planning Applications Committee and presently awaiting completion of s106 legal agreement. This site should be scoped in.
- 211636 - 75-81 Southampton Street - resolution to be granted after consideration by Planning Applications Committee and presently awaiting completion of s106 legal agreement. This site should be scoped in.
- 221364 - 36-42 London Street - current application. This site should be scoped in.
- 211614 - 9 Upper Crown Street - currently at appeal. This site should be scoped in.
- 201138 - 12-18 Crown Street - current application. This site should be scoped in.
- 201766 - 40 Silver Street - current application. This site should be scoped in.
- 221916 - The Oracle - current application. This site should be scoped in.
- 221917 - The Oracle - current application. This site should be scoped in.
- 201081 - Dukesbridge House, 23 Duke Street - current application. This site should be scoped in.
- 220933 - 35-39 Friar Street - current application. This site should be scoped in.
- 220189 - 205-213 Henley Road & land to the rear of 205-219 Henley Road. This site should be scoped in.

In response to section 7.2.1 of the Stantec report, the study areas identified are considered to be incomplete and too narrow. It is advised that the scope of the study areas should also include wider community facilities, rather than solely focusing on primary and secondary schools, GP practices and recreation spaces as presently scoped. It is considered that community facilities comprise a wide range of health facilities (e.g. dentists through to hospitals, not just GP practices), education and training facilities at all levels (e.g. pre-school and higher/further education, not just primary and secondary provision), youth and community facilities and meeting places, libraries, places of worship, civic and administrative facilities and recycling facilities and civic amenity sites, sport and recreation facilities (not just open spaces), leisure facilities and public houses. It is considered that a far wider scope of study areas should be incorporated, with the commentary above a guide (linking back to policies and guidance within the RBC Local Plan - e.g. Policy OU1 in terms of defining community facilities) to aid what is considered to be required to enable a more comprehensive assessment of the socio-economic impacts of the intended development.

Paragraph 7.2.18 is said to identify education infrastructure within 2 miles of the site. The information stated is considered to be incomplete, without mention of a host of other Reading Borough primary schools within the stated 2 mile criteria, as per the map below (please note this is from 2018 and is therefore not 100% accurate e.g. The Heights Primary School has relocated):



Title: RBC Primary Schools

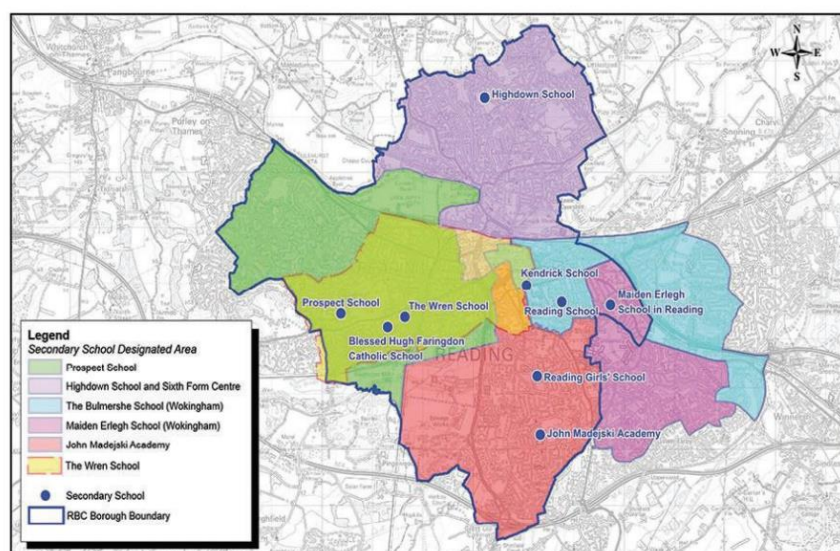
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Date: 06/08/2018 Scale at A4: 1:60,000

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

Ref: 7223\GIS\Mapinfo\Data\Client datasets\Education & Community\School Admissions\updated primary schools

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For the latest information, please see the Council's website: [Schools - Reading Borough Council](#)

The BOB ICB response above has already referenced the inaccuracies within the Stantec report in terms of GP services at paragraph 7.2.20. In this regard, please also see [the Reading Services Guide](#), where local information can be obtained in relation to a variety of matters, including nearest GPs, Dentists and Hospitals.

In response to the 'Recreation' heading at paragraph 7.2.21 please see the Council's website in relation to cycle routes in full [Cycling - Reading Borough Council](#). It is also advised that the River Kennet is to the south of the site, rather than to the north as stated. It is curious that paragraph 7.2.25 references the somewhat distant Kennet Meadows, whilst omitting to reference King's Meadow and the Coal Woodland, Christchurch Meadows, Hills Meadow, View

Island, the Abbey Ruins and Forbury Gardens, which surround the site. Please refer to the Council's website to review this further, [Parks, Outdoor Facilities & Open Spaces - Reading Borough Council](#), with the commentary provided at present not appearing to relate to the anticipated application site.

There are various references within Section 7 of the Stantec report to ONS data and associated population and economic data. It is noted that no specific reference is made to [2021 ONS Census data](#), which is available to view and use. It would be expected for 2021 Census data to be used in the preparation of your future ES, where this is more up to date than other sources of information presently referenced. For example, the 2021 ONS Census data typically means that elements of the [Borough profile information](#) on the Council's website will be superseded.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer raises no objections to the scope of the ES at this stage from this perspective. Accordingly, the scope within the Stantec report in respect of Section 8 (Noise and Vibration) (but please separately consider the Network Rail response above) and Section 9 (Air Quality) are agreed from an Environmental Protection perspective.

As per paragraph 9.3.1 of the Stantec report, Officers await being contacted prior to the submission of the ES in terms of the air quality assessment approach. The initial contact should be via the Planning Officer in the first instance, rather than seeking to liaise directly with the Environmental Health Officer.

Paragraph 10.2.4 of the Stantec report states "*there are no heritage assets adjacent to the site*". This is clearly erroneous, given the Grade II listed Plummery Wall was confirmed in correspondence with Montagu Evans on 27/03/2023 (as per the introduction section above) to be adjacent to the site.

In relation to the map at Appendix 4, as well as this not accurately stipulating the prospective application site boundary, it appears to have omitted reference to the following listed buildings (searches are available via the [Historic England website](#)):

- Reading Station
- 13 & 15 Station Road
- 148, 149 & 150 Friar Street
- 154 Friar Street
- 24-28 Broad Street
- Walls to the west of 44 Watlington Street

The following locally listed building has not been referenced either:

- Gas Works Social Club, Gas Works Road

The full List of Locally Important Buildings is available to view [via the website](#).

It is advised that a re-review of the boundary of the scoped area (given the difference in the boundary with the subsequently confirmed site plan - with a number of heritage assets just outside the 500m radius presently shown, which therefore have the ability to be inside the study area once the red line boundary is updated) and the heritage assets within this area given the omissions identified above. The update to the site location plan will then alter the

totals specified at paragraph 10.2.6 and distances referenced within paragraph 10.2.7 of the Stantec report, increasing the overall numbers and bringing the heritage assets closer to the prospective application site than presently stated.

With regard to section 10.6.1 of the Stantec report, whilst the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is referenced, Officers consider that particular attention should be paid to Section 16(2) of this Act in this instance, which requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

With regard to paragraph 11.2.2, this is factually incorrect, as the Huntley Wharf development actually includes buildings up to 11 storeys in height, not 10 storeys as stated at this part of the Stantec report (which differs to 13.2.11 of the Stantec report, as separately discussed in this opinion).

In response to paragraph 11.3.1 of the Stantec report, which states *“RBC will be consulted about any potential significant effects through the pre-application process”*, it is advised that Officers have not been provided with any technical information concerning the daylight, sunlight, overshadowing, light pollution and solar glare impacts of the latest iteration of the proposed scheme. Accordingly, Officers would welcome and encourage future pre-application discussions in this regard.

Under the ‘Operation’ and ‘Cumulative’ headings at paragraphs 11.4.3 - 11.4.6 of the Stantec report the elements to be ‘scoped in’ are referenced. In addition to those stated, another element which it is considered should be ‘scoped in’ is in relation to the levels of daylight and sunlight for all future occupiers of any residential unit proposed at the site, together with an assessment in relation to levels of sunlight within amenity spaces at the site too. Depending on the proposed massing, this could have substantial impacts at the ‘operation’ stage and therefore it is considered it should be scoped into the future ES. This is in direct contrast to the stated intended approach, as specified at paragraph 11.6.11 of the Stantec report. It is also advised, for information, that at the time of any future application, the local planning authority will seek for the daylight, sunlight, overshadowing, light pollution and solar glare report to be subject to an independent review. This is owing to the highly technical nature of the assessment and the absence of specialist internal expertise within the local planning authority. The independent review will be funded by the applicant, separate from any planning application fee. This is set out in the Council’s [Validation requirements](#) document.

Given the short timeframes for issuing this Scoping Opinion, no independent input on the methodology outlined within the Stantec report has been sought by the local planning authority. However, in respect of paragraphs 11.6.6 and 11.6.7 of the Stantec report, it is advised that at the time of writing it is considered that all blocks within the Huntley Wharf development are substantially constructed, albeit not all are yet occupied. It is not considered that the Huntley Wharf buildings could be described as “not built” or “not yet constructed”, as they are evidently close to completion and occupation at the time of writing. The assessment should be based on the latest BRE guidance (third edition published 2022 - BR 209, which superseded the 2011 second edition).

In response to paragraph 11.6.12, please note as above that the middle and western blocks of Huntley Wharf are constructed and close to occupation. At the time of the future application it is questioned whether they could be considered “future developments”.

Separate from this, it is considered that assessment of the adjacent future developments at land to the east of the site (i.e. the remainder of the CR13b Forbury Retail Park allocation - currently occupied by McDonald's, Hobbycraft, Argos and Decathlon and associated parking and servicing) for residential purposes (as per the site allocation) should be incorporated within the future daylight and sunlight assessment. This will also be required to assist the proposals demonstrating compliance with Policy CR13 vii) (relating to being part of a comprehensive approach to the CR13b sub-area, not preventing neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of the policy). In a similar regard, any residential accommodation close to the eastern boundary of the site should be assessed in relation to a) the existing neighbouring context and b) the possible future neighbouring context as a result of the site allocation, with guidance at section 2.3 of the 2022 BRE document being a starting point for considerations in this regard, with the possible inclusion of imaginary 'mirror image' buildings equal distance from the boundary.

In relation to chapter 12 of the Stantec report (Wind and Microclimate) in the first instance an appraisal of the relevant planning policies within the Reading Borough Local Plan should be undertaken, including Policies CC3 (Adaption to Climate Change), CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) and CR10 (Tall Buildings). In addition, please see section 28 of the [Validation requirements](#) document for guidance as to the nature of information required at application stage. As per this guidance the local planning authority will seek for the Wind and Microclimate report at application stage to be subject to an independent review. This is owing to the highly technical nature of the assessment and the absence of specialist internal expertise within the local planning authority. The independent review will be funded by the applicant, separate from any planning application fee. Given the short timeframes for issuing this Scoping Opinion, no independent input on the methodology outlined within the Stantec report has been sought by the local planning authority.

However, in general terms it is assumed that wind tunnelling tests will be undertaken as part of the future submission. It is presently unclear whether only some seasons will be assessed, or whether the impacts during all four seasons will be presented in the future assessment (the scoping report appears to be silent on this specific matter, so it is unknown what approach will be taken). It is strongly advised that the impacts during all four seasons should be demonstrated to ensure all eventualities are accounted for. Furthermore, if mitigation measures are required, these should be incorporated into the design at the outset (within any perimeter plans if an outline application is submitted). Similar to the daylight/sunlight assessment comments above, in terms of the cumulative assessment, this should consider the possible future development of the site to the east (as per the CR13b allocation) to demonstrate compliance with Policy CR13 vii).

Paragraph 13.2.10 of the Stantec report states "*The proposed maximum heights of the Proposed Development range from 1 storey to 12 storeys*". Previously, paragraph 3.1.4 also stated that "*The Proposed Development is anticipated to be up to 12 storeys*". As a point of clarity, 12 storey building(s) would constitute the development incorporating tall buildings (as per the Policy CR10 definition), with it noted that the anticipated application site is located outside of any of the designated 'areas of potential for tall buildings'. Should tall buildings subsequently be proposed, this is likely to constitute a fundamental concern for Officers, with it likely to be difficult to provide any suitable justification for tall building(s) outside of the areas of potential for tall buildings, given the clear policy position. This has already been communicated in pre-application discussions. It is surprising that Chapter 13 of the Stantec

report fails to even mention Policy CR10 and that the site is located outside of a tall building area.

Paragraph 13.2.11 of the Stantec report also states:

“It is noted that there are existing tall buildings or new tall buildings being built or planned as future development in the area surrounding the Site. For example, to the south east of the Site the Huntley Wharf development will be 12 to 13 storeys”.

In response, this statement is erroneous, with no tall buildings (as per the Policy CR10 definition) either being built or planned surrounding the site. The Huntley Wharf development ranges from 2 to 11 storeys in height, so references to the neighbouring site are inaccurate and the future ES / application submission should be mindful of not including misleading and inaccurate statements such as these.

In addition to the views already referenced at paragraph 13.2.16, it is considered that the following additional viewpoints should be provided:

- Viewpoint 6 - from Caversham Bridge
- Viewpoint 17 - from the A4 (London Road) looking west

Both these views were included as part of the submission documentation for the neighbouring Huntley Wharf scheme (Ref [170509](#)) and are considered to be equally relevant in this instance too.

In respect of section 14.2 of the Stantec report (Transport) it is agreed that Transport can be scoped out of the future ES. In respect of the scope of sites to be included within the future Transport Assessment (TA) (as referenced at paragraph 6.4.12 of the Stantec report) reference should be made to the list of sites referenced earlier in this Scoping Opinion. The scope of the TA as a whole should be subject to further future pre-application discussions via the local planning authority.

The Council's Ecology consultant advises that the letter accompanying the application states that Ecology will be scoped out of the EIA (Section 14.3 of the Stantec report on Biodiversity) and instead, an Ecological Assessment report will be submitted with the planning application. Given the location and current use of the site, the likelihood of the proposals having an adverse effect on ecology is minimal (in the context of an ES) and as such, it is therefore considered that the proposed approach is appropriate. The Council's Ecology consultants comments also covers input (for the purposes of the scoping request) from the Council's Natural Environment team.

In response to section 14.5 of Stantec report (Archaeology), Berkshire Archaeology has confirmed satisfaction that the approach proposed (scoping archaeology out of the EIA but including a desk-based assessment [DBA] with the application) is sound, and the coverage and content of the assessment appears to be as agreed by Berkshire Archaeology's now former Officer. More specifically, Berkshire Archaeology note the intention to rely on the DBA to inform planning decisions; ordinarily Berkshire Archaeology would expect provision to be made for a programme of evaluation works onsite to confirm the findings of the DBA, prior to determination, but note the constraints of the site and the previous phases of development, and notwithstanding the results of the assessment, would expect that any mitigation works

could be carried out post-determination. This does of course leave some risk to the developer in terms of programming and costs, should detailed mitigation works be required, and advise the applicant is aware of this (if not already been made aware by the applicant's own archaeological consultant).

With specific reference to the listed Plummery Wall adjacent to the boundary of the future application site, Berkshire Archaeology advise that it is important to note that below-ground deposits should be considered in addition to the listed upstanding structure. The applicant is advised to consider this as part of any emerging proposals and submission documentation.

In relation to section 14.8 of the Stantec report (Water Environment), whilst it is agreed that this is scoped out, the future application will nevertheless necessitate the submission of a site specific Flood Risk Assessment given the site size exceeds 1ha (see section 10 of the [Validation requirements](#)).

The Council's Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Emergency Planning Unit Officer raises no objections to the scope of the ES from this perspective (e.g. in relation to Accidents and Disasters at section 14.12 of the Stantec report) at this stage.

I trust that this information is of assistance but should any further clarification be required please do not hesitate to contact me. This opinion is without prejudice to any decision that may be made and is given in the context of the planning policies, regulations and guidance applicable today.

Please note that this Scoping Opinion is offered with the caveat that should the form of development deviate to a significant degree from that described and assessed within the Scoping submission, a further application for Scoping Opinion may prove necessary.

Please note that Regulation 15(9) states that the authority which has adopted a scoping opinion is not precluded from requiring additional information from you in connection with any statement that may be submitted by you as an environmental statement in connection with an application for planning permission or a subsequent application for the same development.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Markwell (via email only)

Jonathan Markwell - Principal Planning Officer

JE

Appendix 1 - Marine Management Organisation consultation response:

Marine Licensing, Wildlife Licences and other permissions

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please be aware that any works within the Marine area require a licence from the Marine Management Organisation. It is down to the applicant themselves to take the necessary steps to ascertain whether their works will fall below the Mean High Water Springs mark.

Response to your consultation

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is a non-departmental public body responsible for the management of England's marine area on behalf of the UK government. The MMO's delivery functions are; marine planning, marine licensing, wildlife licensing and enforcement, marine protected area management, marine emergencies, fisheries management and issuing European grants.

Marine Licensing

Works activities taking place below the mean high water mark may require a marine licence in accordance with the Marine and Coastal Access Act (MCAA) 2009.

Such activities include the construction, alteration or improvement of any works, dredging, or a deposit or removal of a substance or object below the mean high water springs mark or in any tidal river to the extent of the tidal influence.

Applicants should be directed to the MMO's online portal to register for an application for marine licence

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/make-a-marine-licence-application>

You can also apply to the MMO for consent under the Electricity Act 1989 (as amended) for offshore generating stations between 1 and 100 megawatts in English waters.

The MMO is also the authority responsible for processing and determining Harbour Orders in England, together with granting consent under various local Acts and orders regarding harbours.

A wildlife licence is also required for activities that that would affect a UK or European protected marine species.

The MMO is a signatory to the [coastal concordat](#) and operates in accordance with its principles. Should the activities subject to planning permission meet the above criteria then the applicant should be directed to the follow pages: [check if you need a marine licence](#) and asked to quote the following information on any resultant marine licence application:

- local planning authority name,
- planning officer name and contact details,
- planning application reference.

Following submission of a marine licence application a case team will be in touch with the relevant planning officer to discuss next steps.

Environmental Impact Assessment

With respect to projects that require a marine licence the EIA Directive (codified in Directive 2011/92/EU) is transposed into UK law by the Marine Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2007 (the MWR), as amended. Before a marine licence can be granted for projects that require EIA, MMO must ensure that applications for a marine licence are compliant with the MWR.

In cases where a project requires both a marine licence and terrestrial planning permission, both the MWR and The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/571/contents/made> may be applicable.

If this consultation request relates to a project capable of falling within either set of EIA regulations, then it is advised that the applicant submit a request directly to the MMO to ensure any requirements under the MWR are considered adequately at the following link

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/make-a-marine-licence-application>

Marine Planning

Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 ch.4, 58, public authorities must make decisions in accordance with marine policy documents and if it takes a decision that is against these policies it must state its reasons. MMO as such are responsible for implementing the relevant Marine Plans for their area, through existing regulatory and decision-making processes.

Marine plans will inform and guide decision makers on development in marine and coastal areas. Proposals should conform with all relevant policies, taking account of economic, environmental and social considerations. Marine plans are a statutory consideration for public authorities with decision making functions.

At its landward extent, a marine plan will apply up to the mean high water springs mark, which includes the tidal extent of any rivers. As marine plan boundaries extend up to the level of the mean high water spring tides mark, there will be an overlap with terrestrial plans which generally extend to the mean low water springs mark.

A [map](#) showing how England's waters have been split into 6 marine plan areas is available on our website. For further information on how to apply the marine plans please visit our [Explore Marine Plans](#) service.

Planning documents for areas with a coastal influence may wish to make reference to the MMO's licensing requirements and any relevant marine plans to ensure that necessary regulations are adhered to. All public authorities taking authorisation or enforcement decisions that affect or might affect the UK marine area must do so in accordance with the [Marine and Coastal Access Act](#) and the [UK Marine Policy Statement](#) unless relevant considerations indicate otherwise. Local authorities may also wish to refer to our [online](#)

[guidance](#) and the [Planning Advisory Service soundness self-assessment checklist](#). If you wish to contact your local marine planning officer you can find their details on our [gov.uk page](#).

Minerals and waste plans and local aggregate assessments

If you are consulting on a mineral/waste plan or local aggregate assessment, the MMO recommend reference to marine aggregates is included and reference to be made to the documents below;

- The Marine Policy Statement (MPS), section 3.5 which highlights the importance of marine aggregates and its supply to England's (and the UK) construction industry.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out policies for national (England) construction minerals supply.
- The Managed Aggregate Supply System (MASS) which includes specific references to the role of marine aggregates in the wider portfolio of supply.
- The National and regional guidelines for aggregates provision in England 2005-2020 predict likely aggregate demand over this period including marine supply.

The NPPF informed MASS guidance requires local mineral planning authorities to prepare Local Aggregate Assessments, these assessments have to consider the opportunities and constraints of all mineral supplies into their planning regions - including marine. This means that even land-locked counties, may have to consider the role that marine sourced supplies (delivered by rail or river) play - particularly where land based resources are becoming increasingly constrained.

If you require further guidance on the Marine Licencing process, please follow the link <https://www.gov.uk/topic/planning-development/marine-licences>

Appendix 2 - Full Natural England response (enclosed as a pdf document, as received)

(Enclosed as a separate pdf document, as per the format received)

Appendix 3 - Full Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) response (enclosed as a pdf document, as received)

(Enclosed as a separate pdf document, as per the format received)