CHAPTER 2:

THE SITE

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2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter describes the Site, its location and its context as well as providing an overview of its existing land uses and features. It also identifies the key receptors which are considered potentially sensitive to the construction and operation of the Proposed Development. More detailed description and analysis is available (in the form of the individual baseline assessments) within the technical assessments of the ES **(Volume 2: Chapters 6 to 13, and Volume 3: Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)).**

2.2 Site Context

2.2.1 The Site is approximately 12.15 ha. It is located at Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid Reference (NGR) SU715767. The location of the Site can be seen its wider geographical context in **Figure 1.1** in **Volume 2, Chapter 1: Introduction.** The blue line boundary in Figure 1.1 shows the wider former Reading Golf Course site at 30 ha (excluding the land to be developed). The Site context is shown in **Figure 2.1.**

2.2.2 The predominantly residential area of Emmer Green is the northern most suburb of Reading, situated approximately 3 km to the north of Reading Town Centre. Beyond Emmer Green to the north is the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and to the south is the suburb of Caversham.

2.2.3 Peppard Road and Emmer Green Road provide access northwards to Sonning Common and Henley on Thames. Peppard Road also extends southwards towards Reading. The 23, 24 and 25 bus routes serve the area surrounding the Site, providing access to Reading, Caversham and the wider Emmer Green area.

2.2.4 The main sources of noise incident on the Site, and other receptors nearby, are road traffic from the surrounding road network and occasional overhead aircraft. The Site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The nearest AQMA to the Site is the Reading AQMA for NO_2, approximately 1 km to the west and 1.7 km to the south.

2.2.5 The Site is within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone – the Site is circled by 7 SSSI's and a SAC, however all of these are at least 5 km away from the Site boundary. Reading Golf Club (east) Local Wildlife Site (LWS) exists 100 m to the north of the Site within the wider landholding of the former Reading Golf Course. Areas of Ancient Woodland and Replanted Woodland are also present in the landscape to the north (namely Cucumber Wood).

2.2.6 There are no designated heritage assets within the Site, although there are low grade listed buildings in close proximity to the south of the Site, approximately 200 m west of the southern area, along Highdown Hill Road. There are 4 further grade II listed buildings within a 1 km radius.

2.2.7 There are no scheduled monuments on or near the Site, and there are no known non-designated heritage assets within the Site. The Site is not located in a designated area of Archaeological Interest, nor near any areas of Archaeological Potential.

2.2.8 The Site is classified as urban land and is within Flood Zone 1, which is an area of land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river or sea flooding (<0.1%). There are no water courses present or near the Site. However, there are areas susceptible to surface water flooding. In particular, there is an area of high risk towards the

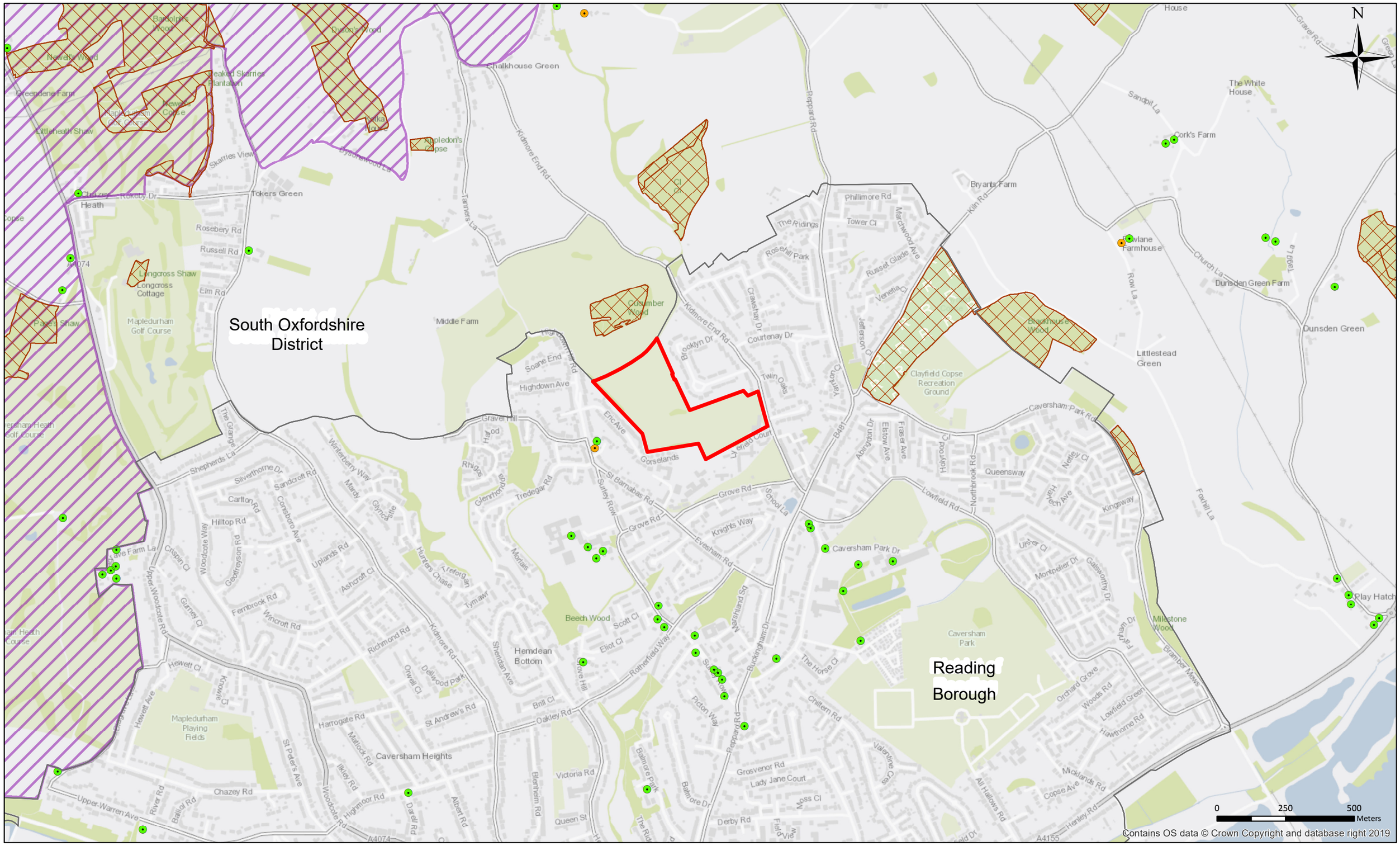
centre of the Site, and a low flood risk flow path running north east / south west through the north of the Site.[1]

2.2.9 Constraints on the Site are displayed in **Figure 2.1.**

2.3 Site Description

2.3.1 The Site forms part of the southern section of the former Reading Golf Course and occupies the area wholly within Reading Borough Council administrative area. It is bound by the wider former golf course to the north (within South Oxfordshire District Council administrative area); Kidmore End Road, with dwellings on Chalgrove Way and beyond to the east; Emmer Green Primary School, Emmer Green Play Fields and a retirement home on Lyefield Court to the south; and dwellings along Eric Avenue and Highdown Hill Road to the west. The eastern section of the Site is identified as a proposed residential allocation site in the 2019 Local Plan.

[1] Environment Agency Flood Risk Mapping – Extent of flooding from surface water https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/longterm-flood-risk/map?easting=471916&northing=176772&address=310062734&map=SurfaceWater



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Project: Reading Golf course Development

Client: Fairfax Reading Ltd

Reading Golf course - Site Constraints

Legend

- Site Boundary
- District Councils
- Ancient Woodland Inventory
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Local Nature Reserves

Listed buildings

- Grade II*
- Grade II

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2.4 Site Context by Topic

2.4.1 The sections below provide a brief description of the baseline conditions at the Site and the site context by topic. More detailed description and analysis is available (in the form of individual baseline assessments) within the technical chapters **(Volume 2, Chapters 6 to 13).**

Socio-Economics

2.4.2 The Reading Borough Local Plan was adopted in November 2019. The Local Plan for Reading is the document that contains the policies for how Reading will develop up to 2036. The Site is part of an ongoing wider policy consideration that looks to provide residential uses (on part of the Golf Club) dependent on ensuring the future use of the remaining land for golf, in line with the need to protect important sports and leisure facilities set out in Policy RL6 and CA1b (within the Local Plan). The Site aims to deliver up to 223 new dwellings which is approximately 32% of RBC's annual requirement (689 dwellings per annum) and 1.4% of RBC's total housing requirement over the plan period (15,847 dwellings between 2013-2036).

2.4.3 There are 20 lower super output areas (LSOA's) in the Study Area, with the Site being located amongst the 10 % most affluent areas in England. Out of the other 19 LSOAs within the Study Area, two LSOAs are amongst the top 40 % most deprived areas in England. The remaining 17 are amongst the 50 % most affluent areas in England.

2.4.4 Furthermore, 10 out of the 20 LSOAs within the Study Area are amongst the 10% most affluent LSOAs in England according to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Finally, the average household size in this Study Area was 2.46 compared to a Borough average of 2.48, according to the 2011 Census.

2.4.5 The Site sits on the edge of the wider urban area of Reading, with the more rural South Oxfordshire District Council to the north. Because of the rural nature of the SODC land to the north it is unlikely that it will provide community facilities to any development at the Site. The exception is education, as there is one secondary school and two primary schools in villages to the north of the Site.

Traffic and Transport

2.4.6 Reading Rail Station is located 3.5 km to the south of the Site and provides fast and frequent services into Oxford, Basingstoke, London Paddington and other railway stations in London, and the wider regions. The Site has good public transport accessibility with bus services 23 and 24 routing along Kidmore End Road adjacent to the Site and service 25 routing along Peppard Road.

2.4.7 The Site is located in a residential area with a network of streets with footways and footpaths providing access to local facilities. At present, no public rights of way (PRoWs) run through the Site. However, several footpaths and bridleways can be found in the surrounding area. RBC branded cycle routes R40 and R41 provide a connection to Reading Station and Town Centre.

2.4.8 The Elizabeth Line, currently under construction, will provide further connections between Reading and London. Moreover, from December 2019 Transport for London (TfL) started running stopping services between Paddington mainline and Reading ahead of the service becoming part of the Elizabeth Line.

Air Quality

2.4.9 Reading Borough Council (RBC) and South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) have investigated air quality within their areas as part of their responsibilities under Local Air Quality Management regime. RBC has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) encompassing Reading Town Centre and areas along the major radial routes, due to exceedances of the annual mean NO_2 objective. SODC has declared three AQMAs due to exceedances of the annual mean NO_2 objective. The closest AQMA to the Site is the Reading AQMA, approximately 1 km to the west.

Noise and Vibration

2.4.10 The noise environment at the Site is influenced by several sources including:

- Road traffic from Kidmore End Road, Grove Road, Buckingham Drive/Peppard Road, Brooklyn Drive, Highdown Hill Road, and Eric Avenue
- Outdoor activities associated with Emmer Green Primary school directly south of the Site; and
- Intermittent aircraft noise.

Water Resources and Flood Risk

2.4.11 The Site is located in Flood Zone 1. There is a very low risk of pluvial flooding across the majority of the Site. An area in the south eastern corner of the Site is considered to be medium to high risk, however, this area represents only a relatively small percentage of the overall Site area and is likely to be a result of surface water accumulating in a local depression.

2.4.12 The EA's Flood Map for Surface Water indicates that a surface water flow pathway runs along the northern part of the Site, which flows form the south west to the north east. Surface water runoff from the Site is likely to drain (at least in part) to this surface water feature.

2.4.13 An existing Thames Water foul sewer is also present in the northern most part of the Site and this sewer broadly follows the alignment of the surface water flow pathway mentioned above. It is anticipated that this foul sewer will either be incorporated into the Proposed Development or diverted as appropriate.

2.4.14 The underlying bedrock geology is classified as a Principal Aquifer where the bedrock is comprised of the Seaford Chalk and a Secondary (A) Aquifer where the bedrock is formed of the Lambeth Group. The Site is located within a ground Source Protection Zone (SPZ) III (Total Catchment).

Ecology

2.4.15 The Phase 1 Habitat Survey and protected species assessment for bats, reptiles, breeding birds and badgers at the Site was undertaken in 2019 and is in **(Volume 4, Appendix G: Ecology)** of this ES.

2.4.16 The Site does not presently support reptiles or any active badger setts. Bat activity was relatively poor overall, however passes by the Barbastelle bat and Nathusius pipistrelle were recorded and represent species of greater conservation.

2.4.17 The breeding bird interest at the Site is relatively poor and of 'local importance' only, though a nesting pair of Red Kites were identified, and this is a Schedule 1 species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

2.4.18 The dominant habitats present at the Site include amenity grassland that makes up the fairways and mixed parkland/scattered trees. These habitats are valuable at a Site level only.

Archaeology and Built Heritage

2.4.19 The existing baseline has been determined through the preparation of a desk-based assessment (DBA), which accompanies the technical ES Chapter **(Volume 2, Chapter 12)** as an Appendix in **(Volume 4, Appendix H: Archaeology and Built Heritage).**

2.4.20 The existing historic landscape character is a modern golf course, originating between 1914 and 1936, flanked by modern suburban development. Prior to that it was agricultural ground.

2.4.21 The Site does not contain any designated heritage assets of an archaeological or built heritage nature. There are 26 listed buildings with the wider study area, but the Site does not lie within the setting of any due to intervening residential developments screening indivisibility.

2.4.22 The Site does not contain any known non-designated heritage assets. However, examination of the local archaeological context indicates a general scatter of prehistoric artefacts in the surrounding area. A Bronze Age barrow cemetery and an Iron Age settlement site are recorded south of the Site, with further evidence for Romano-British settlement recorded to the west.

Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions

2.4.23 The EIA Regulations 2017 have introduced the requirement to consider climate as part of the EIA process, and require a consideration of the 'impact of the project on climate' and 'the vulnerability of the project to climate change' (Schedule 4, paragraph 5(f)).

2.4.24 The Site is currently used as a golf course, with a club house on-site. It is predominantly undeveloped with regards to buildings and infrastructure. As such there are limited CO_2 emissions associated with its use and the operation of the club house.

Landscape Visual Impact Assessment

2.4.25 The Site is bounded by the wider golf course to the north (within South Oxfordshire District Council administrative area); Kidmore End Road, with dwellings on Chalgrove Way and beyond to the east, Emmer Green Primary School, Emmer Green Playing Fields and a retirement home on Lyefield Court to the south; and dwellings along Eric Avenue and

Highdown Hill Road to the west. The eastern section of the Site is identified as a proposed residential allocation site in the Local Plan.

2.4.26 The Site lies within the defined settlement boundary and comprises a highly managed and designed section of the Golf Club, with a series of treebelts and trees on the fairway. The Site lies on a broad ridge line, consistent with the surrounding built form.

2.4.27 With the exception of the Area Tree Preservation Order (TPO) covering the entire Site a small linear portion at the northern edge of the Site which is identified as a Local Wildlife Site / Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in the current Local Plan (and which is connected to the wider areas through a network of green links through the residential areas), there are no other landscape related designations that cover the Site. Furthermore, the Site is not designated as public open space, nor is it publicly accessible, Under the Emerging Local Plan Policy EN12, a Green Link is proposed north, south and east to west of the Site.

2.4.28 Within the Study Area, the land use can be broadly split north and south, with that to the north being mixed farmland, and the south being settled irregular urban grids. The skyline is formed by built form in close proximity to the settlement edge and creates a strong contrast between the rural field patterns beyond the north and the suburban edge to the south.

2.4.29 Buildings in close proximity to the Site are predominantly two to three storeys in height. Land uses are predominantly residential, interspersed with a school, a play area, local shops and facilities and a series of green spaces.

2.4.30 The combination of built form, topography and layers of vegetation limit views of the Site to those within the close proximity to the Site. Views predominantly comprise of amenity green space set in the surrounding built form context. Open views to the Site are limited to the rear elevations of the residential receptors which bound the Site immediately to the east, south and west, and the transient receptors using Kidmore End Road. Views from further away are truncated by the undulating built form and the layers of vegetation.

2.5 Potential Key Sensitive Receptors

2.5.1 The key receptors which are considered potentially sensitive to the construction and operation of the Proposed Development have been identified and summarised in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Potential Key Sensitive Receptors

Category	Potential Sensitive Receptor / Land Use
Residential	Surrounding residential areas; Users of the Site and the surrounding roads / footpaths / cycleways.
Commercial	Commercial operations associated with the medical centre.
Community	Schools (primary schools within 2km and secondary schools within 4km):Emmer Green Primary School; The Hill Primary School; Caversham Park; Primary School; Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre; Health facilities (GP Surgeries and NHS dentists within 1km road travel distance to the Site); Community and Leisure Facilities within 1km of the Site; and Former users of the Reading Golf Club.

Category	Potential Sensitive Receptor / Land Use
Ecological	Trees located within the Site; Potential bats within the Site; Potential for protected bids within the Site; Potential for invertebrates within the Site; Reading Golf Club LWS; Clayfield Copse Local Nature Reserve; and Tree Preservation Order 4/18 (type A1) for an area of trees within the Site.
Archaeological assets	Potential archaeological remains (buried assets).
Heritage assets	There are no designated or non-designated built (above ground) heritage assets within the Site itself; Listed Buildings close to the Site: • Old Grove House (II*); and • Barn to the north east of Old Grove House (II).
Landscape and views	Local landscape character; Views towards the Site; and Designated views and landmarks.
Utilities	Existing and proposed utilities within the Site such as Thames Water infrastructure (sewers, water mains, existing drainage) and electrical utilities.