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10 February 2021

Your contact is: Mrs Alison Amoah, Planning

Dear Joanna,

SCREENING OPINION ENQUIRY RESPONSE

Enquiry Reference: 201238

Address: Island Road, Reading

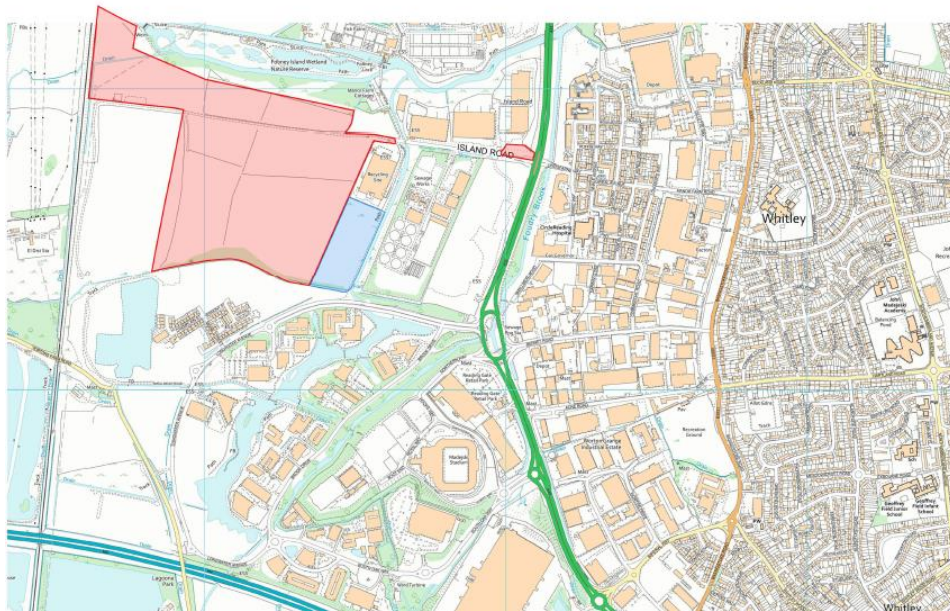
Proposal: Request for Screening Opinion on a site of 42 ha. for the erection of up to 100,000sqm Gross External Area (GEA) of commercial floorspace, comprising Class B8 (storage or distribution) uses, associated landscaping, parking and servicing areas and improvements to the vehicular access to the site from Island Road and the A33.

I write in connection with your request for a Screening Opinion, submitted in accordance with Regulation 6 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended¹) (Referred to below as “The Regulations”) and apologise for the delay in providing this written Opinion.

Proposed Development

The proposal relates to the development of up to 100,000sqm of B8 use on a 42ha site along with associated landscaping, parking and servicing areas and improvements to the vehicular access from Island Road (redline on plan below). The submitted information identifies that the proposed scheme would include four commercial units up to 3 storeys high and there would be an area reserved in the north-east corner to accommodate a plant area for use by Cemex.

¹ The Town and Country Planning and Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 – SI 2018/695; Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure, Listed Buildings and Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 – SI 2020/505



Submitted Information

The following information has been reviewed by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) in making its determination:

Received 3rd September 2020, unless otherwise stated

- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report, September 2020, prepared by Barton Willmore
- Ground Conditions Technical Note, dated July 2020, prepared by Hydrock (Appendix 2 of the Screening Report)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, dated June 2020, prepared by FPRC Environment and Design Ltd (Appendix 3 of the Screening Report)
- Environmental DNA Analysis Assessment, dated June 2020, prepared by ADAS (Appendix 4 of the Screening Report)
- EIA Screening Additional Information Letter, dated 4th December 2020, prepared by Barton Willmore, received 4th December 2020

Screening Opinion

Screening is a procedure used to determine whether a proposed project is likely to have significant effects on the environment. It should normally take place at an early stage in the design of the project. However, it can also occur at the same time or after a planning application has been made. As the LPA we are required to determine whether the project is of a type listed in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 of the Regulations, and whether or not the proposal is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) development, and therefore, whether an Environmental Statement (ES) is required to be submitted with any subsequent planning application.

- if it is listed in Schedule 1 an assessment is required in every case

It is the LPA's opinion that the proposed development of the site for employment purposes does not fall within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations.

- if the project is listed in Schedule 2, the LPA should consider whether it is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

It is the LPA's opinion that the proposed development falls within Schedule 2 Paragraph 10 (a) (Industrial Estate Development Projects).

The proposed development exceeds the criterion of 5 ha. as set out in Schedule 2 Paragraph 10 (a) (amended by 2018 Regs), and accordingly the LPA is required to undertake a Screening Opinion.

It is the LPA's opinion that the proposed development does not fall specifically within the sensitive areas as defined under Regulation 2(1) of the Regulations. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG, Environmental Impact Assessment, May 2020) recognises that local designations, which there are in this case, which may also be relevant in determining whether an EIA is required and it is set out within the submitted information that the site includes part of the Fobney Island Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and the Kennet Valley East Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA).

In order to determine whether a Schedule 2 project is likely to have significant effects a LPA must take account of the selection criteria in Schedule 3 of the Regulations. Not all of the criteria will be relevant in each case and the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG, Environmental Impact Assessment, May 2020) states that *"Each case should be considered on its own merits in a balanced way"*.

The NPPG indicates that for industrial estate development projects the types of impact that are most likely to be significant are the potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise (*included in the submitted Screening Report at Table 3: Indicative Screening Criteria*)

The NPPG states that *"The local planning authority must have regard to the amount of information available, the precautionary principle and the degree of uncertainty in relation to the environmental impact."*

To determine whether a proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment a LPA needs to consider it against the selection criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations as shown below. The LPA has assessed Table 4 within the submitted Screening Report, which sets out the applicants Screening Assessment along with the additional information provided in December 2020.

CHARACTERISTICS OF DEVELOPMENT

1. The characteristics of development must be considered with particular regard to—
 - (a) The size and design of the whole development;
 - (b) Cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;
 - (c) The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
 - (d) The production of waste;
 - (e) Pollution and nuisances;

- (f) The risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;
- (g) The risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).

LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

2.-(1) The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, with particular regard, to—

- (a) The existing and approved land use;
- (b) The relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;
- (c) The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas—
 - (i) Wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
 - (ii) Coastal zones and the marine environment;
 - (iii) Mountain and forest areas;
 - (iv) Nature reserves and parks;
 - (v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation;
 - (vi) Areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;
 - (vii) Densely populated areas;
 - (viii) Landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

TYPES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACT

3. The likely significant effects of the development on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, with regard to the impact of the development on the factors specified in Regulation 4(2), taking into account—

- (a) The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- (b) The nature of the impact;
- (c) The transboundary nature of the impact;
- (d) The intensity and complexity of the impact;
- (e) The probability of the impact;
- (f) The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- (g) The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;
- (h) The possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

Conclusion

It is considered that the proposal does not fall within Schedule 1 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (hereafter referred to as the EIA Regulations 2017). The proposal falls within the description at paragraph 10(b) of Schedule 2 and exceeds the threshold of 5 ha. in column 2. Therefore the LPA considers the proposal to be 'Schedule 2 development' within the meaning of the EIA Regulations 2017.

Accordingly, the LPA has considered if the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. In determining such effects, the LPA has taken into account the criteria for screening Schedule 2 development set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations. These are the characteristics of the development, its location and the types and characteristics of the potential impact. Based upon the description of the development provided and the information provided in your submissions received on 3rd September 2020 and 4th December 2020, the development could be considered to be likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size and location. More specifically, this is owing to the nature of the location (in particular being adjacent to the River Kennet within the locally designated Kennet and Holy Brook Meadows Major Landscape Feature, and including parts of the locally sensitive areas including the Fobney Island Local Wildlife Site and the Kennet Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA)) and the potential effects on, in particular, the landscape and visual environment (the adjacent landscape feature and important areas of open space), pollution (light), biodiversity (species and habitats) and land uses.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) has also been consulted and any further comments will be forwarded under separate cover.

Notwithstanding that the Highway Authority is content that an EIA would not be required when assessed against IEA guidelines, it is advised that a full assessment of transport is included as a chapter within the ES.

In accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended), the LPA hereby considers that the proposed development as described in your request and the documents submitted is 'EIA development' and hence adopt a **positive** Screening Opinion. Accordingly, an Environmental Statement is required to accompany the proposed planning application.

Please note that the advice contained within this letter is that of an officer of the Council and is provided without prejudice to the consideration and determination of any future planning application to which the Screening Opinion relates.

You are advised, by virtue of Part 2 Regulation 6 (10) (b) of the EIA Regulations 2017 that you have the option to make a request to the Secretary of State to issue a Screening Direction if you disagree with this Opinion.

Yours sincerely

A. Amoah

Mrs Alison Amoah
Principal Planning Officer