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Via email to: neil.purvis@bartonwillmore.co.uk

Your contact is: Mr Jonathan Markwell, Planning

Dear Mr Purvis,

Scoping Opinion Request - EIA Regulations 2017 (as amended)

Enquiry Reference & Address: 190451/SCO - Land at 55 Vastern Road, Reading, RG1

Proposal: Request for an 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 Vastern Road, Reading, involving demolition of a number of structures on the site and the erection of a new residential scheme (up to 210 units), with a max height of 11 storeys (up to 36m above ground level) including a new north south pedestrian link, connecting Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road towards the station as well as drainage infrastructure and landscaping.

Information considered: 55 Vastern Road, Reading - Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report dated March 2019 Ref 28876/A5/EIAScoping, as received 19/03/19; Letter from Barton Willmore, Ref 28876/A5/EIA, dated 18/03/19 & received 19/03/19; Email from Barton Willmore '28876 - 55 Vastern Road - cumulative schemes for photomontages' dated & received 03/05/19.

I refer to your formal Scoping Opinion request dated 18/03/19 & received 19/03/19, with regard to Regulation 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended), as to the content of the Environmental Statement (ES) to be prepared in connection with the development proposed at the above site.

In line with Regulation 15 (4) of the EIA Regs 2017 (as amended) it has been agreed that the opinion is adopted by 10th May 2019 (email from Berkeley Homes (Western) Ltd dated 02/05/19).

Frances Martin
Executive Director for Economic Growth and
Neighbourhood Services

Civic Offices, Bridge Street,
Reading, RG1 2LU

☎ 0118 9373787

Our Ref: 190451/SCO

Your Ref: 28876/A5/EIA

Direct: ☎ 0118 9372458

e-mail: jonathan.markwell@reading.gov.uk

8th May 2019

This letter constitutes Reading Borough Council's Scoping Opinion. Where matters in the Barton Willmore scoping report are not specifically referenced / responded to, it can be confirmed that these matters are agreed.

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

External consultations have been carried out and are summarised below:

Environment Agency (EA) - response received on 08/05/19. The EA is not seeking any revisions to the scope of the ES. However, the EA hope that the advice provided will be taken into consideration during the design process. The advice provided relates to flood risk, biodiversity, contaminated land and water quality and guidance concerning an environmental permit. The full EA response is included at Appendix 1 and you are duly advised to take all EA advice into account. Relevant cross-references are also made in the 'internal consultee comments' section below too.

Historic England - response received on 23/04/19. Summary: On the basis of the information available to date, Historic England does not wish to offer any comments. Historic England therefore suggested that RBC seek the views of our specialist conservation and archaeological advisers, and other consultees, as relevant.

Marine Management Organisation - replied via email on 08/04/19, summarised at Appendix 2.

Natural England - response received on 05/04/19. Summary: The scoping request is for a proposal that does not appear, from the information provided, to affect any nationally designated geological or ecological sites (Ramsar, SPA, SAC, SSSI, NNR) or landscapes (National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts), or have significant impacts on the protection of soils (particularly of sites over 20ha of best or most versatile land), nor is the development for a mineral or waste site of over 5ha.

Consideration should be given to the potential impacts on the adjacent/nearby Thames pathway National Trail. The National Trails website www.nationaltrail.co.uk provides information including contact details for the National Trail Officer. Appropriate mitigation measures should be incorporated for any adverse impacts.

At present therefore it is not a priority for Natural England to advise on the detail of this EIA. Natural England would, however, like to draw your attention to some key points of advice, presented in annex to this letter, and would expect the final Environmental Statement (ES) to include all necessary information as outlined in Part 4 of the Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

The full response from Natural England is included as Appendix 3.

Southern Gas Networks - An initial reply dated 04/04/19 sought more details regarding the proposals, which were duly provided. No subsequent response was received. Should a further response be received in due course, it will be forwarded to you.

SSE Power Distribution - No response received. Should a response be received in due course, it will be forwarded to you.

Thames Water: replied via email on 09/04/19, summarised 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://developers.thameswater.co.uk/Developing-a-large-site/Planning-your-development>

Internal consultee & officer comments

Internal consultee and officer comments are incorporated within the following:

In relation to paragraph 1.9 of the scoping report (and repeated at paragraph 2.8), it is advised that the site is actually partly in Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3a/3b, rather than solely 1 & 2 as identified by you. The Flood Zone 3a & 3b (10% of the site) elements are at parts of the northern (Flood Zone 3b) and western (Flood Zone 3a) boundaries of the site.

This is confirmed by the Reading Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (June 2017) and Reading Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 (December 2017) documents. Please see links to these documents at Appendix 4. It is also verified by the EA consultation response too (Appendix 1).

With regard to cultural heritage matters (paragraphs 2.4 - 2.5 of the scoping report), the Council's **Historic Buildings Consultant** is content with the approach suggested and therefore confirms agreement to this being scoped out of the ES from this perspective. In terms of archaeology, Berkshire Archaeology has confirmed that submitting an archaeological desk-based assessment with any future application is a reasonable approach. This is given the size of the site area and its location within the archaeologically rich Middle Thames Valley. Furthermore, Berkshire Archaeology advises that the desk-based assessment should establish the archaeological potential of the site, the likely impacts of any proposal on buried remains, if any archaeological mitigation measures are merited and, if so, what form they might take.

In terms of paragraph 2.6 of the scoping report (Transport and Access) the Council's **Transport Development Control Manager** is in agreement with the approach detailed by you. Accordingly, transport matters can be scoped out of the ES. The various documents referenced by you will nevertheless be required to be submitted as part of the overall planning application.

The Council's **Environment Protection Team** has confirmed that contaminated land matters (paragraph 2.7 of the scoping report) can be dealt with via planning condition(s) and therefore can be scoped out of the ES. In this regard, you are also advised to take into account the separate comments made by the EA under the 'contaminated land and water quality' heading at page 3 of the EA response.

In terms of flood risk and water resources matters (paragraph 2.8 of the scoping report), although it is agreed that these matters can be scoped out, it will be expected for the to-be-submitted documents to take into account the site-specific information at pages 5-10 of the [SFRA Level 2 Appendix B](#) document, such as the design recommendations for example. Moreover, consideration to the EA flood risk advice should also be made. Your future submission should make clear whether it has been based on current information, or on the soon to be publicly released modelling referenced by the EA.

The Council's **Ecologist** has reviewed the Scoping Report. Paragraphs 2.9 and 2.11 of the scoping report seek to scope biodiversity and lighting matters out of the ES. Put simply, this is not agreed and instead it is considered that biodiversity and related matters (including lighting for example) should be scoped into the ES. This response is over and above observations made by the EA in the first paragraph under the biodiversity heading (page 2). You will recall that a positive screening opinion was adopted (Ref 182212), with it being specifically mentioned at the time that this was owing to factors including:

- the nature of the location (in particular being adjacent to the River Thames, a Major Landscape Feature)
- potential effects on the landscape and visual environment (e.g. the adjacent landscape feature and important areas of open space) and biodiversity (species and habitats)

These matters were further referenced in the screening matrix report written at the time of the screening opinion (and available to view via the [Council's website](#) since 01/02/2019). Set within this context it is consequently surprising to officers, including the Council's Ecology Consultant, that such matters are sought to be scoped out.

It is therefore advised that the scope of the ES be amended to include an assessment of the impact of the proposals on the adjacent River Thames and the wildlife that uses it, paying particular attention to light sensitive species, such as bats. The assessment should include a baseline survey of light levels around the site and assess how these will change as a result of the development, how any effects will be minimised and what impact this will have on bats and other wildlife. The assessment should also assess impacts in terms of the effect of

matters such as overshadowing, noise, pollution during construction, and an assessment of the effect of the proposals on the function of the river as a wildlife corridor.

The second to fourth paragraphs of the EA response under the biodiversity heading (page 3) should be taken into account.

With regard to townscape and visual effects (section 3 of the scoping report), officers are content with the scope of the assessment. Officers have separately advised on specific viewpoints.

The Council's **Environment Protection Team** has confirmed satisfaction with the proposed scope of the air quality assessment (section 4 of the scoping report).

The Council's **Environment Protection Team** is generally satisfied with the proposed scope of the noise assessment (section 5 of the scoping report). However, in paragraph 5.7 of the scoping report, it is advised that BS4142 should also be referred to as a method to assess the suitability of the site for new residents. This is with particular reference to noise from the substation. It is advised that this is incorporated within any future submission.

In terms of wind microclimate matters (section 7 of the scoping report) the following comments are made:

- It is not clear whether wind tunnelling tests are to be undertaken as part of the future submission; this should be considered in this instance owing to the nature and location of the proposals;
- If mitigation measures are required, these should be incorporated into the design of the scheme as submitted at planning application stage, rather than the report just describing them and these not being 'joined up' into the actual proposals.
- Ensure that suitable locations are tested are both within and outside of the red line of the application site, especially given the nature of the proposals and the nature/use of the site/surrounding area.
- Further to commentary at paragraph 7.4 of the scoping report, the report should be clear as to whether it is taking into account the massing of the existing or possible future surrounding area? It is suggested that both scenarios are tested. In terms of the future surrounding area, land to the south of the site is likely to be coming forward shortly (the prospective applicant is encouraged to liaise with the nearby landowner) and application 182252 (80 Caversham Road) is a current application under consideration, so the publicly available information for that proposal can be fed into your future assessment.
- Further to commentary at paragraph 7.8 of the scoping report, it is strongly suggested that the wind assessment considers all four seasons, rather than just summer and winter (as suggested), to ensure all eventualities are accounted for.

It is advised that these comments / action points should be incorporated into your future assessment.

In response to table 9 and paragraph 8.3 of the scoping report, it is advised that the following should also be taken into account:

- There are a number of current applications at Station Hill (refs 190466 / 190441 / 190465 / 190442) which you should take into account (where relevant).
- As noted in your email of 03/05/19, there is a current application at 80 Caversham Road (ref 182252) which you should take into account.
- The Thames Quarter application (ref 182196) was determined on 25/04/19.
- Other 'significant' nearby (within 2km - as per your stipulation) developments (either with planning permissions & unimplemented / under construction / submitted & awaiting decision) include:
 - o 170326 - Land between Weldale Street and Chatham Street
 - o 180319 - Land at Portman Road
 - o 171814 - Cox & Wyman, Cardiff Rd
 - o 140997 - St Martin's Precinct
 - o 101656 - 5-9 Berkeley Avenue
 - o 190627 - Gas Holder, Alexander Turner Close
 - o 162057 - Alexander House
 - o 181652 / 181653 - North Street / Weldale Street
 - o 180909 - 59/75 Queens Road
 - o 181659/SCR - River Thames (the EA response references this at page 4, advising you to contact Jon Mansbridge (Funding and Benefits Realisation Manager for the Reading and Caversham Scheme) on:
reading&cavershamscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk

On the basis of the above, changes are considered to be required in relation to table 1 at paragraph 2.1 of the scoping report.

I trust that this information is of assistance but should you require any further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me on the above telephone number. 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 under the Regulations, once a request has been made for a scoping opinion, the Environmental Statement (ES) must be "based on" that opinion.

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

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Appendix 1 - Full Environment Agency response

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

Appendix 2 - Marine Management Organisation consultation response:

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

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. 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 England and parts of Wales. The MMO is also the authority responsible for processing and determining harbour orders in England, and for some ports in Wales, and for 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.

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 these regulations.

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.

Marine Planning

As the marine planning authority for England the MMO is responsible for preparing marine plans for English inshore and offshore waters. 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. Marine plans will inform and guide decision makers on development in marine and coastal areas. On 2 April 2014 the East Inshore and Offshore marine plans were published, becoming a material consideration for public authorities with decision making functions. The East Inshore and East Offshore Marine Plans cover the coast and seas from Flamborough Head to Felixstowe. For further information on how to apply the East Inshore and Offshore Plans please visit our Marine Information System. The MMO is currently in the process of developing marine plans for the South Inshore and Offshore Plan Areas and has a requirement to develop plans for the remaining 7 marine plan areas by 2021.

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. For marine and coastal areas where a marine plan is not currently in place, we advise local authorities to refer to the Marine Policy Statement for guidance on any planning activity that includes a section of coastline or tidal river. 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.

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

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

Appendix 4 - Links to Strategic Flood Risk Assessment documents on the RBC website

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/planningpolicy>

http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/7330/Main-report/pdf/SFRA_main_June_17.pdf

http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/8140/27560RBCL2SFRAReportDec17/pdf/27560_RBC_L2_SFRA_Report_Dec17.pdf

http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/8138/27560-4009-001RBCL2SFRADec17AppA/pdf/27560-4009-001_RBC_L2_SFRA_Dec17_AppA.pdf

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