
Vastern Road, Reading

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

December 2018



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Excellence in EIA

Vastern Road, Reading

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Prepared on behalf of Berkley Homes (Western) Limited

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by Barton Willmore, Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) qualified assessors and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Quality Mark registrants, on behalf of Berkley Homes (Western) Limited. The report accompanies a request to Reading Borough Council (RBC) to adopt a screening opinion to determine whether the proposal to demolish a number of buildings and structures on the site of the former Scottish & Southern Electricity (SSE) complex on Vastern Road, Reading (the "site") and the erection of up to 240 residential units, with a maximum 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 (the 'Proposed Development') constitutes EIA development.
- 1.2 This report reflects the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended)¹ (the "EIA Regulations") and in accordance with Regulation 6 of the EIA Regulations, this report contains:
- a plan sufficient to identify the land;
 - a description of the development, including in particular:
 - (i) a description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works;
 - (ii) a description of the location of the development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected;
 - a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;
 - to the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from-
 - (i) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and
 - (ii) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity; and
 - such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the proposed development or any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.

¹ SI 2017/571 as amended by SI 2018/695

Requirement for EIA

- 1.3 To determine whether the Proposed Development is 'EIA development', regard must be had for the EIA Regulations and supporting Planning Practice Guidance².

- 1.4 EIA development is defined by the EIA Regulations as development:

"likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location".

- 1.5 EIA development falls into two Schedules of the EIA Regulations. EIA is mandatory for developments listed within Schedule 1. Schedule 2 developments require EIA if they would lead to likely significant effects on the environment.

- 1.6 In deciding whether a Schedule 2 development is EIA development, Regulation 5(4) states:

"Where a relevant planning authority ... has to decide under these Regulations whether Schedule 2 development is EIA development, the relevant planning authority ... must take into account in making that decision-

- (a) any information provided by the applicant;*
- (b) the results of any relevant EU environmental assessment which are reasonably available to relevant planning authority... ; and*
- (c) such of the selection criteria set out in Schedule 3 as are relevant to the development."*

- 1.7 To allow RBC to determine the need for EIA, this report provides a description of the site and Proposed Development, a review of the EIA Screening Criteria based on the EIA Regulations and the PPG, a completed EIA Screening Checklist, and a site location plan at Appendix 1.

² DCLG, 2015, online access: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/environmental-impact-assessment/>

2 SITE AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Site Context

- 2.1 The site (see location plan at Appendix 1) is located in an urban area in the centre of Reading between the A329 Vastern Road and the River Thames, north of Reading Railway Station. The OS grid reference for the site is 471550, 174133 and the nearest postcode is RG1 8DJ.
- 2.2 The site is bounded by: A329 Vastern Road to the south with shops and Reading Station multi-storey car park beyond; Lynmouth Road and residential dwellings to the west; the River Thames and Towing Path to the north; and essential retained SSE Apparatus, Thames Court and Sovereign Court Offices to the east.

Site Description

- 2.3 The site extends to approximately 0.73 hectares (ha) and is irregular in shape, orientated approximately north-east to south-west and is accessed from A329 Vastern Road on the southern boundary.
- 2.4 The site comprises a substantial amount of strategically-important electricity infrastructure, which is surrounded by hardstanding and car parking. The infrastructure represents a very important element in the power transmission network for Reading and the wider Thames Valley and includes substantial cabling, transformers and substations which will remain on the site.

Proposed Development

- 2.5 The Proposed Development will comprise demolition of a number of structures on the site and the erection of a new residential scheme (up to 240 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 (the 'Proposed Development'). The planning application will be submitted in full for all matters to be determined.
- 2.6 The access to the Proposed Development will be via A329 Vastern Road or Lynmouth Road and will accommodate two-way vehicle movements. Pedestrians and cyclists will be able to gain access from A329 Vastern Road or Lynmouth Road, as well as the tow path and Christchurch Bridge over the River Thames. The Proposed Development will incorporate a

permeable layout, thus promoting walking opportunities for new and existing residents and users of the area.

Mitigation

- 2.7 Standard best practice measures have been considered an integral part of the Proposed Development to minimise adverse effects during demolition, construction and operation. This includes adherence to best practice measures and guidance during the demolition and construction phases, such as through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP).
- 2.8 In addition, during operation the following measures will be embedded into the Proposed Development:
- The Proposed Development will be designed through careful use of materials and scale of the buildings to be complementary to the surrounding urban environment to minimise and where possible enhance visual and heritage effects;
 - The landscape masterplan accompanying the planning application will ensure that hard and soft landscaping materials will be appropriate to and will reinforce, the character of the new buildings. The landscape masterplan will also include planting to create visual and ecological enhancements to the area;
 - The Framework Travel Plan accompanying the planning application will provide a strategy to accommodate the demand for travel to and from the Proposed Development in the most sustainable way possible by including the provision of a Travel Plan Co-ordinator who will promote sustainable travel options to everyone using the Proposed Development;
 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be used within the Proposed Development to reduce flood risk and improve water quality;
 - The Proposed Development will be constructed to be compliant with the current building regulation standards³ by being energy efficient and incorporating low carbon and renewable energy technologies where appropriate;
 - The Proposed Development will provide appropriate opportunities for the efficient collection and recycling of waste and a site-specific plan will be prepared that will set out ways to minimise waste production from the completed development during detailed design. Adequate space for refuse and recycling facilities will be provided within the Proposed Development as required by RBC; and
 - A lighting strategy will be prepared in accordance with best practice guidance to enable external lighting within the site, to be carefully designed to satisfy the requirements of

³ <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/buildingregulations/approveddocuments/>

crime prevention and to limit light pollution.

3 SCREENING ASSESSMENT

Introduction

- 3.1 In determining whether the Proposed Development constitutes EIA development, consideration should be had to the following:
- If the development is of a type listed in Schedule 1;
 - If not, whether it is listed in Schedule 2;
 - Is it located within a sensitive area;
 - If it meets any of the relevant thresholds and criteria set out in Schedule 2; and/or
 - Would it lead to likely significant effects on the environment.
- 3.2 These points are explored further in this section with reference to the EIA Regulations and supporting Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Schedule 1 Projects

- 3.3 EIA is mandatory for projects listed in Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations. Schedule 1 developments are large scale projects for which significant effects would be expected and comprise developments such as new airports and power stations. The Proposed Development is not of a type listed in Schedule 1.

Schedule 2 Projects

- 3.4 EIA is discretionary for projects listed in Schedule 2. If the development proposed is of a type listed in Schedule 2 then it may be classified as EIA development depending on the location of the development (i.e. if it is within a sensitive area) and/or whether it meets any of the relevant thresholds or criteria in Column 2.
- 3.5 Sensitive Areas are defined in the EIA Regulations as:
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European Sites;
 - National Parks, the Broads, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
 - World Heritage Sites and Scheduled Monuments.
- 3.6 In certain cases, local designations which are not included in the definition of sensitive areas, but which are nonetheless environmentally sensitive, may also be relevant in determining whether an assessment is required. Furthermore, in considering the sensitivity of a particular

location, regard should also be had to whether any nationally or internationally agreed environmental standards (e.g. air quality) are already being approached or exceeded.

- 3.7 The Proposed Development falls within Category 10 of Schedule 2, 'Infrastructure Projects', sub-section (b) 'Urban Development Projects'. The site is not in a sensitive area and therefore the thresholds should be applied.
- 3.8 The thresholds for urban developments as set out in Schedule 2 relate to developments that "*include more than 150 dwellings or the overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares*" or '*the development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development*'. The Proposed Development is over the threshold for number of residential dwellings at up to 240 dwellings but does not exceed 5 ha as the site is 0.73 ha.
- 3.9 Accordingly, this screening assessment has been prepared to determine whether the Proposed Development will be likely to result in significant environmental effects. To achieve this, Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations and the Planning Practice Guidance need to be taken into account. Information on these is set out below.

Schedule 3

- 3.10 Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations sets out selection criteria which relate to specific matters including: the characteristics of the development; the location of the development; and the characteristics of the potential impact. These factors should be taken into account as part of the screening process and are set out below:

Characteristics:

- the size and design of the whole development;
- cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;
- the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- the production of waste;
- pollution and nuisances;
- the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge; and
- the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).

Location:

- the existing and approved land use;
- the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources

(including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground; and

- the absorption capacity of the natural environment.

Potential Impact:

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

Consideration of Cumulative Effects

- 3.11 Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations requires consideration of a proposed development cumulatively with other existing and/or approved development. Guidance on the consideration of cumulative effects in the EIA screening process is set out in the PPG, which echoes the requirements of the EIA Regulations:

"Each application (or request for a screening opinion) should be considered on its own merits. There are occasions where other existing or approved development may be relevant in determining whether significant effects are likely as a consequence of a proposed development. The local planning authorities should always have regard to the possible cumulative effects arising from any existing or approved development."

- 3.12 The Applicant is aware of the nearby committed development presented in Table 1. However, the committed development is not anticipated to result in likely significant cumulative effects with the Proposed Development. It is however understood that RBC will consider the potential cumulative effects of the Proposed Development alongside any other relevant committed developments when forming its Screening Opinion.

Table 1: Committed Developments

Application	Details	Decision/Status
80 Caversham Road, Reading (Ref. 110024)	Outline planning application with all matters reserved with the exception of means of access, for the demolition of existing buildings; site preparation; and redevelopment of the application site for a mix of uses from amongst employment and business uses (use class B1) and residential accommodation (C3); Hotel (C1), retail floor space (A1), food and drink uses (A3, A4 and A5), leisure uses (D2), car parking, public and private open space, landscaping works, highways, access and associated works.	Application Permitted (March 2012)

- 3.13 Table 2 presents a nearby development that has been submitted for planning permission but are not yet approved. However, the development is not anticipated to result in likely significant cumulative effects with the Proposed Development.

Table 2: Submitted Developments that are not Currently Approved

Application	Details	Decision/Status
St Martins Precinct Church Street Caversham, Reading (Ref. 180499)	Application for full planning permission for the development of a 5 storey mixed use scheme comprising 16 residential apartments (1x studio, 9 x 1 bedroom, 6 x 2 bedroom), a Cinema / Leisure facility (Use Class D2) and retail and restaurant units (Use Class A1 and Use Class A3).	Awaiting Decision

Planning Practice Guidance

- 3.14 Paragraphs 057 and 058 of PPG provide guidance to help determine whether significant effects are likely. In general, the more environmentally sensitive the location, the lower the threshold will be at which significant effects are likely. Table 3 below sets out indicative criteria and thresholds identified in the PPG along with some of the issues that are most likely to need to be considered in determining the whether a development is likely to be EIA development. The Proposed Development is under the indicative criteria and thresholds.

Table 3: Planning Practice Guidance Indicative Screening Criteria

Development type	Indicative criteria and threshold	Key issues to consider
10 (b) Urban development projects, including the construction of shopping centres and car parks, sports stadiums, leisure centres and multiplex cinemas	Environmental Impact Assessment is unlikely to be required for the redevelopment of land unless the new development is on a significantly greater scale than the previous use, or the types or impact are of a markedly different nature or there is a high level of contamination. Sites which have not previously been intensively developed: (i) Area of the scheme is more than 5 hectares; or (ii) It would provide a total of more than 10,000 m ² of new commercial floorspace; or (ii) The development would have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area	Physical scale of such development, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise.

Development type	Indicative criteria and threshold	Key issues to consider
	(e.g. a new development of more than 1,000 dwellings).	

- 3.15 Table 4 sets out a review of all the above criteria and requirements and specifically addresses the Proposed Development at the site.

Table 4: Screening Assessment for Development at Vastern Road, Reading

SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEVELOPMENT	
(a) Size of the development	
Will the development as a whole be out of scale with the existing environment?	The brownfield site is located in an urban area north of Reading General Railway Station adjacent to the River Thames and close to the centre of Reading. The site comprises the former Scottish & Southern Electricity (SSE) office and industrial depot complex surrounded by hardstanding and car parking. The site is surrounded by residential, community, retail, restaurants, cafes and commercial buildings of varying heights and therefore the scale and type of development with its associated landscaping is considered suitable for the site and will not be out of scale.
Will the design of the development as a whole fit in with the existing environment?	The area surrounding the site comprises a mixture of residential, community, retail, restaurants, cafes and commercial buildings of varying sizes and architecture. The Proposed Development will be complementary to the existing environment.
Will it lead to further consequential development or works?	No. The Proposed Development is a discrete proposal and includes all necessary works, including access.
(b) Accumulation with other development	
Are there potential cumulative impacts with other existing development or development not yet begun but for which planning permission exists?	Developments with planning permission or pending decision are listed in Tables 1 and 2. No existing or approved developments which are likely to have a significant cumulative effect, in combination with the Proposed Development have been identified.
Should the application for this development be regarded as an integral part of a more substantial project? If so, can related developments which are subject to separate applications proceed independently?	No. The Proposed Development is a discrete project and could proceed independently.
(c) Use of natural resources	
Will construction or operation of the development use natural resources such as land, water, material or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?	The demolition, construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development will use resources in terms of land, water, material and energy as would be expected for an urban residential development of this type and scale.
(d) Production of waste	
Will the development produce wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Demolition and construction waste will be reused and recycled where possible. A Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP) will be produced and implemented by the contractor(s) in accordance with best practice. Operational waste will be disposed of in line with RBC's requirements and managed in accordance with all applicable legislation.
(e) Pollution and nuisances	

SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
Will the development release any pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Dust generated during demolition and construction will be managed in accordance with standard best practice measures, enforced through a CEMP and therefore dust is not anticipated to generate significant adverse effects. There will be emissions associated with plant and vehicles during demolition and construction and from vehicles during the operation of the Proposed Development. The planning application will be supported by a Transport Assessment. The Proposed Development will comprise residential dwellings which are not associated with hazardous substances or toxic emissions to air. There is not anticipated to be a requirement to store large volumes of hazardous materials. Any such materials will be stored and handled in accordance with relevant legislation.
Is there a potential risk from leachates or escape of wastes of other products/by-products that may constitute a contaminant in the environment?	The site comprises the former SSE office and industrial depot complex surrounded by hardstanding and car parking. A Phase I-II Geo-Environmental Site Assessment has been undertaken for the site and will be submitted with the planning application. The Assessment identified some elevated levels of contamination in near surface samples and groundwater samples. A Remediation Method Statement has also been undertaken which stipulates a number of mitigation measures which would be required to mitigate the risks identified by the Geo-Environmental Site Assessment. Prior to the Proposed Development, the mitigation measures, including soil capping, installation of vapour and gas membranes within buildings and removal of contamination hotspots on the site, will be undertaken to ensure that the site is suitable for residential use. The land uses proposed will not be highly contaminative and it is not expected that there will be a high risk of contaminants being released into the environment. Appropriate measures, in accordance with all relevant legislation, will be used to prevent accidental spillages of contaminants during demolition, construction or operation of the Proposed Development.
Will the development cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	The existing noise climate is mainly influenced by road traffic on the nearby roads and the noise from the adjacent Reading General Railway Station and trains travelling along the railway line. The potential exists for intermittent and temporary noise effects to result from the demolition and construction activities. These effects will be managed in accordance with best practice measures, implemented through the CEMP and are not anticipated to generate significant adverse effects. During operation, noise from the operational plant items will enable defined acoustic design targets to

SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
	be achieved. An acoustic report will accompany the planning application. During demolition and construction, the potential exists for light pollution (at night) associated with demolition and construction activities. These effects will be managed in accordance with best practice measures which will be implemented through a CEMP and therefore are not anticipated to generate significant adverse effects. Lighting during demolition, construction and operation will also be designed carefully in accordance with relevant British Standards and Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP)⁴ and Bat Conservation Trust⁵ guidance. No electromagnetic radiation, heat or energy releases are expected other than those associated with normal urban development of this type and scale.
Will the development lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	During demolition and construction, hydrocarbons including plant and vehicle fuel and lubricants will be used as part of the demolition and construction phase. Their use will be controlled through the implementation of the CEMP and will not result in any significant adverse effects to land or water. Surface water run-off and foul water drainage will be managed on-site during the demolition, construction and operational phases. Best practice measures will be incorporated as appropriate into the sustainable drainage (SUDS) design for the Proposed Development to avoid significant adverse effects on the nearby surface and ground water. Details are included within the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) that will support the planning application.
(f) Risk of major accidents and/or disasters, including those caused by climate change and also having regard in particular to substances or technologies used	
Will there be a risk of accidents during construction or operation of the development which would have effects on people or the environment?	During demolition and construction, the contractor(s) will implement measures in accordance with Health and Safety legislation/requirements, and best practice to minimise the risks of accidents that could have adverse effects on people or the environment. All such measures will form part of the CEMP. There are no anticipated significant risks of accidents during operation as the Proposed Development will not involve users dealing with hazardous substances.
Will the development involve use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to people or the environment (flora, fauna, water supplies)?	During demolition and construction, certain materials may be present on the site which may be harmful to the environment. However, it is considered that through the implementation of appropriate environmental control measures within the CEMP and remediation strategy in line with the relevant legislation there will be no significant environmental effects. During operation, the Proposed Development is not expected to involve the use, transport, storage or

⁴ Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance and Standards (<https://www.theilp.org.uk/home/>)

⁵ Bat Conservation Trust (June 2014). Artificial lighting and wildlife. Interim Guidance: Recommendations to help minimise the impact of artificial lighting.

SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
	production of substances or materials which could be harmful to the environment.
(g) Risks to human health	
What are the risks to human health such as from water contamination or air pollution?	During demolition and construction, potential adverse effects to the quality of surface and ground water and air will be minimised through the effective implementation of the CEMP. In addition, ground contamination present from existing and past land uses will be assessed and remediated to a safe level appropriate to the proposed land use. During operation, the Proposed Development will be of a type and scale not anticipated to cause any likely significant effects on human health.
Other characteristics	
Potential physical changes (topography, land use, changes in water bodies etc) from construction, operation or decommissioning of the development?	The principal land use will change from an office and industrial depot complex surrounded by hardstanding to residential development. There will be no significant changes to the topography of the Site although there will be localised cut and fill as required for the design of the Proposed Development. Although the River Thames is on the northern boundary of the site, it will not undergo any significant physical changes during any phase of the Proposed Development.
2. LOCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT	
(a) Existing and approved land use	
Are there existing land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the development, e.g. residential, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying?	The site currently comprises the former SSE office and industrial depot complex surrounded by hardstanding and car parking. The Proposed Development is not considered likely to affect the surrounding areas as these comprise similar urban land uses.
Is the development located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield land?	No, the site is on brownfield land.
(b) Relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area and its underground*	
Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the development? • soil • land • groundwater resources • surface waters • biodiversity • forestry • agriculture • fisheries • tourism • minerals	The site is on brownfield land. The site is in an area of high groundwater vulnerability and Zone 3 Total Catchment area of a Source Protection Zone, over a Secondary A Aquifer in the superficial drift deposits and a principal bedrock aquifer⁶. The central area of the site is within Flood Zone 1⁷ while the edges of the site are in Flood Zone 2 associated with the adjacent River Thames. There are no high quality or scarce soil, land, biodiversity, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism or minerals resources that could be affected by the Proposed Development.
(c) Absorption capacity of the natural environment**	
Are there any areas on or around the location which are protected under international or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the development?	There are no statutory designations within or adjacent to the site i.e. there are no Scheduled Monuments, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Parks,

⁶ www.magic.gov.uk

⁷ <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), or Ramsar Sites. The nearest statutory historic designation is Reading Abbey: a Cluniac and Benedictine monastery and Civil War earthwork Scheduled Monument which is 430m to the south-east. There is also the Main Building of Reading General Station Grade II Listed Building which is approximately 240m to the south and Kings Meadow Swimming Pool Grade II Listed Building approximately 400m to the east. No. 55 Vastern Road adjacent to the Site is on the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures. The statutory historic designations and their settings are separated from the site by intervening buildings of varying heights and most of them by the railway and will not be significantly affected by the Proposed Development. There are no SPAs, Ramsar or SSSIs within 10km of the Site. The nearest statutory nature conservation designation is Lodge Wood & Sandford Mill SSSI which is approximately 6.4km to the east. In addition, Lousehill Copse Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located approximately 3km to the south-west. None of the statutory and non-statutory ecologically designated sites will be significantly affected by the Proposed Development during demolition, construction or operation. There are no statutory landscape designations within close proximity to the Site.
Are there any other areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of: • Wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths; • coastal zones and the marine environment; • mountains and forest areas; • nature reserves and parks; • European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation; • 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; • Densely populated areas; • Landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.	There are no sensitive features within the site. The sensitive areas in proximity to the site are: • Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument 430m to the south-east; • Main Building of Reading General Station Grade II Listed Building approximately 240m to the south; • Kings Meadow Swimming Pool Grade II Listed Building approximately 400m to the east; and • Lodge Wood & Sandford Mill SSSI approximately 6.4km to the south-west. The site is in an urban area but the area surrounding the site is not densely populated. No other sensitive areas have been identified.
Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, migration, which could be affected?	The habitats on the site comprise buildings and hardstanding. Along the northern boundary is the tow path and banks of the River Thames. The habitats on the site potentially provide limited opportunities for nesting birds as well as roosting and foraging bats which are unlikely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development.
Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected?	The central area of the site is within Flood Zone 1⁸ while the edges of the site are in Flood Zone 2 associated with the adjacent River Thames. The

⁸ <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
	central area is therefore at low probability of flooding while the edges are at medium probability of flooding. The site is located in an area of high groundwater vulnerability and Zone 3 Total Catchment Area of a Source Protection Zone over a Secondary A Aquifer in the superficial drift deposits and a principal bedrock aquifer. As there will be no infiltration associated with the Proposed Development there will be no effects on the aquifers. The River Thames is located along the northern boundary of the Site, however it will not be significantly affected by the Proposed Development. The Proposed Development will discharge to the existing culverted watercourse adjacent to Vastern Road and potentially to the River Thames at a rate that will not affect the quality or flow of water in the river.
Are there any groundwater source protection zones or areas that contribute to the recharge of groundwater resources?	The site is located in an area within High Groundwater Vulnerability area and Zone 3 Total Catchment Area of a Source Protection Zone.
Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected?	No.
Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected?	The roads surrounding the site including the A329 Vastern Road will be subject to marginal changes in traffic delays during peak hours associated with demolition, construction and operation of the Proposed Development. These effects will not be significant. The towpath along the south bank of the River Thames, Christchurch Bridge and the footways adjacent to the surrounding roads will be temporarily and locally subject to visual, noise, lighting and air quality effects although none of these effects will be significant during demolition and construction. There will be no significant effects on these routes during operation.
Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected?	Demolition and construction will involve changes to traffic movements (e.g. use of HGVs). There is also likely to be an increased number of vehicles using the local road network once the Proposed Development is operational. The increase in traffic flow as a result of the Proposed Development is not anticipated to significantly affect the flow of traffic on the surrounding roads. A Transport Assessment and Framework Travel Plan will be submitted in support of the planning application. Given the proximity of Reading town centre and the railway station, it is considered likely that future residents will make use of non-car based transport modes and the Framework Travel Plan would encourage this.
Is the development in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	The potential for local views of the site exist from adjacent and nearby roads, public footways, the towpath, the Christchurch Bridge over the River Thames and buildings (including residential properties to the west and east) especially when the higher sections of the building are constructed and

SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
	operational. Due to intervening buildings and structures the effects on views will not be significant.
Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location which could be affected?	The nearest statutory historic designation is Reading Abbey: a Cluniac and Benedictine monastery and Civil War earthwork Scheduled Monument which is 430m to the south-east. There is also the Main Building of Reading General Station Grade II Listed Building which is approximately 240m to the south and Kings Meadow Swimming Pool Grade II Listed Building approximately 400m to the east. Furthermore No. 55 Vastern Road is on the List of Locally Important Buildings and Structures. The statutory historic designations and their settings are separated from the site by intervening buildings of varying heights and most of them by the railway and will not be significantly affected by the Proposed Development.
Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built up, which could be affected?	The site is located within an urban area with residential dwellings to the east and west of the site. Noise and dust from the Proposed Development is likely to arise from demolition and construction plant however this will be managed and minimised in accordance with standard procedures implemented through a CEMP. During operation, the main source of noise and gas emissions will be from traffic accessing and egressing the Proposed Development and operational plant. However, this will be a small-scale increase and where necessary will be addressed at the detailed design stage to mitigate any potential effects.
Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected?	The site is located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) which encompasses Reading Town Centre, areas along the major radial road routes into Reading (including J11 of the M4) and along the railway lines where they pass through built-up areas due to exceedances of nitrogen dioxide thresholds. Due to the implementation of the CEMP during demolition and construction and the implementation of the Framework Travel Plan during operation, significant effects on the AQMA are considered unlikely.
Is the location of the development susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the development to present environmental problems?	The central area of the site is within Flood Zone 1⁹ while the edges of the site are in Flood Zone 2 associated with the adjacent River Thames. The central area is therefore at low probability of flooding while the edges are at medium probability of flooding. An FRA will be submitted in support of the planning application. The site is located within an AQMA. The site is not considered susceptible to any other hazards.
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACT	
(a) Extent and nature of the impact	
Will the effect extend over a large area?	No. This is confined to the site (approximately 0.73 ha) and the land immediately adjacent.
Will many people be affected?	Users of the surrounding road network, River Thames and residents/occupiers of surrounding properties and

⁹ <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
	buildings have the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development during demolition, construction and operation.
What will be the nature of the impact?	Visual impacts during demolition, construction and operation; increase in HGV traffic movements; increase in noise, particularly during site construction; minor impacts upon air quality from additional traffic movements and potentially upon biodiversity (birds and bats).
(b) Transboundary nature of the impact	
Will there be any potential for transboundary impact? (n.b. Development which has a significant effect on the environment in another Member State is likely to be very rare. It is for the Secretary of State to check Environmental Statements to decide whether there is likely to be such an effect in each case).	No.
(c) Magnitude and complexity of the impact	
Will there be a large change in environmental conditions?	No.
Will the effect be unusual in the area or particularly complex?	No.
Will many receptors other than people (fauna and flora, businesses, facilities) be affected?	This is considered to be unlikely.
Will valuable or scarce features or resources be affected?	No.
Is there a risk that environmental standards will be breached?	No.
Is there a risk that protected sites, areas, and features will be affected?	No.
(d) Probability of the impact	
Is there a high probability of the effect occurring?	The effects of the Proposed Development can be clearly established, and the probability of any effects determined with reasonably confidence.
Is there a low probability of a potentially highly significant effect?	As above.
(e) Expected onset, Duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	
What will result in the onset of the impact?	The Proposed Development will commence following the discharge of pre-commencement conditions attached to the planning permission and the issue of any environmental permitting.
Will the effect continue for a long time?	Demolition and construction effects will be short term in duration and the operational effects will be long term.
Will the effect be permanent rather than temporary?	Demolition and construction effects will be temporary and the operational effects will be permanent.
Will the impact be continuous rather than intermittent?	Demolition and construction – intermittent Operation – continuous
If intermittent, will it be frequent rather than rare?	Frequent.
Will the impact be irreversible?	Demolition and construction – Yes Operation – No
Will it be difficult to avoid or reduce or repair or compensate for the effect?	No.
(f) Possibility of effectively reducing the impact	
What is the possibility of the likely impacts arising from the Proposed Development being effectively reduced?	The implementation of the CEMP, SWMP and Framework Travel Plan as well as measure integral to the design of the buildings, external landscaping and lighting will effectively reduce any likely significant adverse effects. Appropriate remediation measures will also be undertaken prior to the proposed

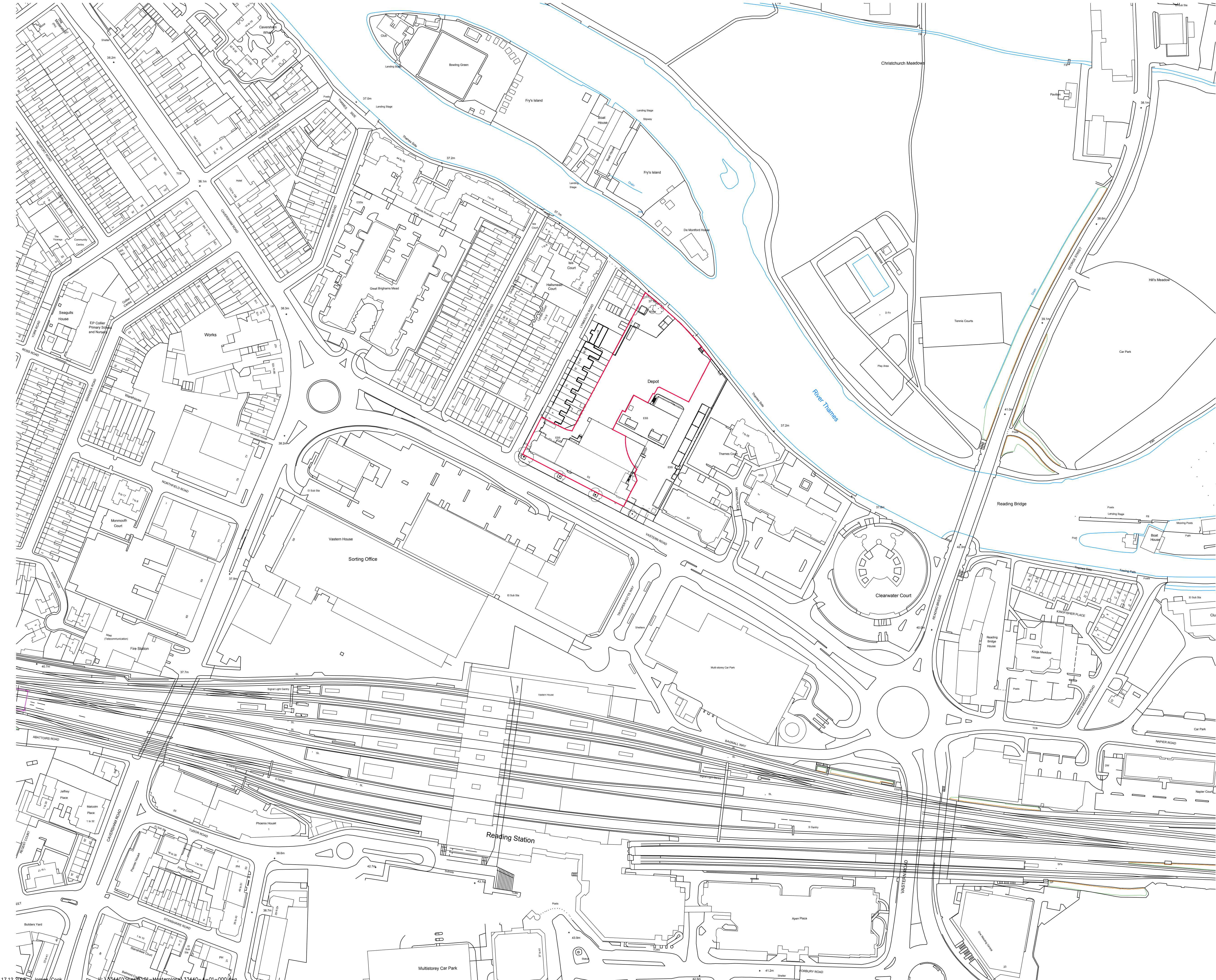
SCREENING CRITERIA	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
	development to remove contamination hotspots on the site and to ensure that the site is suitable for residential use.

4 CONCLUSION

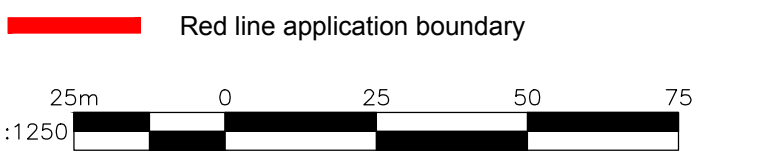
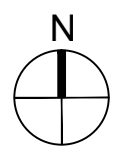
- 4.1 The screening assessment has considered whether the proposal to demolish a number of structures on the site of the former SSE complex on Vastern Road, Reading and construct up to 240 residential units with a maximum height of 11 storeys (up to 36m above ground level) including a new north south pedestrian link, connecting Christchurch Bridge to Vastern Road towards the station as well as drainage infrastructure and landscaping is likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment.
- 4.2 The Proposed Development falls within Schedule 2, 10 (b) of the EIA Regulations, as an urban development project. The site is not located within a sensitive area as defined by the EIA Regulations, and it is over the threshold for number of residential dwellings at up to 240 dwellings but does not exceed 5 ha as it has an area of 0.73 ha.
- 4.3 With regard to the indicative criteria and thresholds identified in the PPG (set out in Table 2 above) the Proposed Development is below the indicative criteria and thresholds. In addition, the Proposed Development will be located on a previously developed brownfield site and will not have significant urbanising effects.
- 4.4 The screening assessment has identified that significant effects on the environment are not considered likely either alone or in combination with other development. The proposals will be small scale and effects will be managed in accordance with standard methods. The Proposed Development is therefore not considered to be formal EIA development as defined by the EIA Regulations.

APPENDIX 1

SITE LOCATION PLAN



Contractors and consultants are not to scale dimensions from this drawing



Revision	Date	Description

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Client
Berkeley Homes Western
Project
**SSE Site,
Vastern Road, Reading**
Description
Location Plan

Status
PRELIMINARY
Scale
1:1250@A1
Job Number
33440
Drawn By
jc
Drawing Number
A-01-000
Date
Aug '18
Revision
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