

1 Introduction

Introduction

- 1.1 This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared by RPS on behalf of Hermes Investment Management (the Applicant). The ES reports on the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and accompanies the outline planning application for a mixed use development located in Reading, Berkshire, known as Reading Metropolitan (referred to herein as ‘the Proposed Development’).

- 1.2 Planning consent is being sought for

Outline planning application with matters reserved with the exception of “Access” “Landscaping” “Layout” and “Scale” for the demolition of all existing buildings and structures; site preparation; by the redevelopment of the application site for a mix of land uses to include Employment and Business (B1), Residential (C3), Retail (A1), Food and Drink (A3, A4 and A5), Complimentary Social uses (D2), car parking, servicing, public and private open space, landscaping, highways, pedestrian and vehicular access and associated works.

Further details are provided in Chapter 2 *Project Description*.

- 1.3 The Proposed Development site is located in the centre of Reading at National Grid Reference SU71367398 on the northern boundary of Reading train station. The western boundary abuts Caversham Road, the north eastern boundary abuts existing large retail units and restaurant facilities and the western boundary is formed by a multi-storey car park. The site totals approximately 2.2 hectares and is roughly triangular in shape. The site location is shown on Figure 1.1.
- 1.4 A mix of housing types (affordable and market housing) would be provided including studio, one-, two- and three-bed apartments and town houses/duplex. The development would comprise of eight mixed use tower blocks, ranging between eight and 27 storeys high (including ground floor), plus basement level and surface parking. The blocks would be arranged in a graduated manner with lower blocks on the west side and higher blocks on the east side.
- 1.5 Vehicular access would be provided to the site via a new highway (referred to as ‘The Avenue’) to the north of the blocks with a further access provided to the south from Caversham Road. The Avenue would link Trooper Potts Way in the east to Caversham Road in the west. Pedestrian and cycle access would be provided via the same entry points as for vehicles, and the site layout would be designed to maximise pedestrian permeability between the two accesses. Internal footways and an internal road within the site would connect with existing footways outside of the site boundary to the east and west.
- 1.6 The illustrative floorplan (Figure 2.1) provides opportunities for green infrastructure delivery through the public and private amenity spaces including the provision of a public open square (Station Square) and private gardens for residents (including roof top amenity space).

Statutory Framework and Purpose of the Environmental Statement

Purpose of EIA

- 1.7 EIA is a means of identifying and collating information to inform an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of a project. The findings of the EIA process are reported in an ES in order to inform the relevant planning authority and interested parties as part of the decision-making process.

The EIA Directive

- 1.8 The legislative framework for EIA is set by European Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU (collectively referred to as the EIA Directive). Directive 2014/52/EU entered into force on 15 May 2014.

The EIA Regulations

- 1.9 The requirements of the EIA Directive have been transposed into UK legislation through the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 as amended. These regulations are referred to in this ES as 'the EIA Regulations'.

Need for EIA

- 1.10 Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations identifies development types that always require EIA. Schedule 2 identifies development types that require EIA if they are likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as their nature, size or location. Schedule 2 development is defined within the EIA Regulations as development described in Column 1 in the table in Schedule 2 where:

'a) any part of that development is to be carried out in a sensitive area; or

b) any applicable threshold or criterion in the corresponding part of Column 2 of that table is respectively exceeded or met in relation to that development.'

- 1.11 The proposed development falls within Part 10(b) of Column 1 of the table in Schedule 2 (urban development projects).
- 1.12 The site is not located within a sensitive area as defined by the EIA regulations and therefore part (a) would not apply. In relation to part (b) the following thresholds apply:
- i. The development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwelling house development;
 - ii. The development includes more than 150 dwellings; or
 - iii. The overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares.
- 1.13 The proposed development would include more than 150 dwellings and would therefore exceed threshold (ii). The proposed development is therefore considered to be Schedule 2 development.
- 1.14 Schedule 2 developments require consideration against the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations to determine whether EIA is required. The purpose of screening is to identify whether there are likely to be any significant to environmental effects. The criteria set out in

Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations to assist in this regard include the characteristics of the development, location of development and characteristics of the potential impact. In the case of the Proposed Development it is considered that EIA is required.

Content of the ES

- 1.15 This ES has been prepared in accordance with the EIA Regulations. Although there is no statutory provision as to the form of an ES, it must contain the information specified in Regulation 18 and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations. For the avoidance of doubt, the specified information within Regulation 18 and Schedule 4 is provided in Appendix 1.1 of this ES.
- 1.16 This ES provides all information required under Regulation 18 and Schedule 4. The information supplied within this ES is considered to provide a clear understanding of the main and likely significant effects of the project upon the environment.

Structure of the ES

- 1.17 The ES has been structured to allow relevant environmental information to be easily accessible. This volume of the ES (Volume 1) includes the main text of the ES. The description of the project is provided in Chapter 2: *Project Description*. Information relating to the main alternatives considered during the evolution of the project and the reasons for the choices made is found within Chapter 3: *Need and Alternatives Considered*. Chapter 4: *Environmental Assessment Methodology* outlines the approach and methodology adopted for the EIA. The remainder of Volume 1 contains assessment topic by assessment topic environmental information as shown in Table 1.1.
- 1.18 Figures and appendices to accompany the text of the ES are provided separately in Volumes 2 and 3 respectively. Volume 3 includes specialist reports providing relevant background and technical information. A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the ES is contained at the beginning of Volume 1 and is available as a separate summary document.

Table 1.1: Structure of the ES

Structure of ES	
Non-Technical Summary	Summary of the ES using non-technical terminology
Volume 1: Text	
	Glossary
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Project Description
Chapter 3	Need and Alternatives Considered
Chapter 4	Environmental Assessment Methodology
Chapter 5	Historic Environment
Chapter 6	Townscape and Visual Resources
Chapter 7	Geology, Hydrogeology and Ground Conditions
Chapter 8	Hydrology and Flood Risk
Chapter 9	Traffic and Transport
Chapter 10	Air Quality
Chapter 11	Noise and Vibration
Chapter 12	Community and Socio-Economics
Chapter 13	Further Information
Volume 2: Figures	
Including all figures and drawings to accompany the text.	
Volume 3: Appendices	
Including specialist reports forming technical appendices to the main text.	

The Applicant

- 1.19 The Applicant is Hermes Investment Management who would be funding the development. Hermes are supported by Chartplan Ltd (planning consultants), TB Bennett (architects) supported by HED (landscape architects), and environmental consultants RPS to deliver the planning application (see also below). Upon gaining consent Hermes would tender the construction of the development in the open market.

The Assessment Team

- 1.20 The EIA has been managed by RPS, taking into account information provided by the Applicant and design team. RPS is a registrant of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Quality Mark. The authors of the assessment topic chapters of this ES, as outlined in Table 1.2, are suitably qualified experts in their respective fields. A statement setting out how the authors have sufficient expertise to ensure the completeness and quality of the ES is provided in Appendix 1.2.

Table 1.2: Environmental Statement Authors and Project Team

ES Chapter	Main Author / Contributor
ES Chapters 1 – 4 & 13	RPS
ES Chapter 5	Cotswold Archaeology
ES Chapter 6	RPS
ES Chapter 7	RPS
ES Chapter 8	Lanmor
ES Chapter 9	Steer Group
ES Chapter 10	REC Ltd.
ES Chapter 11	DBX Acoustics
ES Chapter 12	Chartplan Ltd
ES Chapter 13	Compiled by RPS

Further Information

- 1.21 This Environmental Statement has been submitted as part of an outline planning application for the proposed development of Reading Metropolitan. The application has been submitted to Reading Borough Council. The planning application, ES and Non-Technical Summary can be viewed during normal office hours at:
- Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU
- 1.22 Copies of the Environmental Statement and planning application documents can be viewed on the local planning authority website:
- <http://www.reading.gov.uk>
- 1.23 Further copies of the ES can be obtained from the following address:
- RPS
20 Western Avenue
Milton Park
Abingdon
Oxfordshire
OX14 4SH
- 1.24 A paper copy of the full ES can be obtained for a cost of £250 plus VAT or an electronic copy (CD) for a cost of £10.
- 1.25 All comments on the ES (and the planning application) should be issued to Reading Borough Council (Planning Department) at the address stated in paragraph 1.21 above.

References

Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects in the Environment.

Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects in the Environment (codification).

Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) (2017 SI No. 571)