



PLOT E AND TELECOM HOUSE

Outline Application
Environmental Statement (ES)

Volume 1: Main Text

Waterman
August 2015

Environmental Statement - Volume 1 - Main Text

Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	EIA Methodology
Chapter 3	Land Uses and Activities
Chapter 4	Alternatives
Chapter 5	Description of Development
Chapter 6	Development Programme, Demolition and Construction
Chapter 7	Socio-Economics
Chapter 8	Archaeology
Chapter 9	Transportation and Access
Chapter 10	Air Quality
Chapter 11	Noise and Vibration
Chapter 12	Ground Conditions and Contamination
Chapter 13	Surface Water Drainage and Flood Risk
Chapter 14	Ecology
Chapter 15	Wind
Chapter 16	Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing
Chapter 17	Cumulative Effects
Chapter 18	Summary of Residual Effects

Environmental Statement - Volume 2 – Townscape, Conservation and Visual Assessment

Environmental Statement - Volume 3 – Figures

Figure 1.1	Site Location
Figure 1.2	Site Boundaries
Figure 1.3	Planning Application Boundary
Figure 2.1	Future Baseline
Figure 3.1	Photographs of Land Uses on and Surrounding the Site
Figure 3.2	Existing Surrounding Land Uses
Figure 3.3	Listed Buildings
Figure 3.4	Conservation Areas
Figure 3.5	Residential Units, Future Residential Units and Hotels
Figure 5.0	Parameter Plans: • Planning Application Boundary (Drawing 698_04_210) • Demolition and Retained Buildings (Drawing 698_04_211) • Building Plot Parameters (including maximum and minimum heights) (Drawing 698_04_212) • Public Realm (Drawing 698_04_213) • Vehicle and Pedestrian Access Routes (including car parking) (Drawing 698_04_214) • Ground Floor Uses (Drawing 698_04_215) • Upper Floor Uses (Drawing 698_04_216)
Figure 6.1	Indicative Phasing Plan (Drawing 698_04_202)
Figure 6.2	Construction Routing Plan

Figure 7.1	Spatial Context
Figure 7.2	Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
Figure 7.3	Crime Deprivation
Figure 7.4	Education Facilities Surrounding the Site
Figure 7.5	Healthcare Facilities Surrounding the Site
Figure 8.1	Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monuments
Figure 8.2	Events Within a 500m
Figure 8.3	Prehistoric Monuments
Figure 8.4	Roman Monuments
Figure 8.5	Saxon Monuments
Figure 8.6	Medieval Monuments
Figure 8.7	PostMedieval Monuments
Figure 8.8	Modern and Undated Monuments
Figure 8.9	John Speed's Map of Reading (1611)
Figure 8.10	Reading in the 17th Century, from Hinton
Figure 8.11	Coates' Map of Reading (1802)
Figure 8.12	Child's Map of Reading (1813)
Figure 8.13	Ordnance Survey Map (1879)
Figure 8.14	Ordnance Survey Map (1899)
Figure 8.15	Ordnance Survey Map (1912)
Figure 8.16	Ordnance Survey Map (1931)
Figure 8.17	Ordnance Survey Map (1957)
Figure 8.18	Ordnance Survey Map (1962)
Figure 8.19	Ordnance Survey Map (1973 – 1974)
Figure 8.20	Ordnance Survey Map (1988)
Figure 8.21	Ordnance Survey Map (1993)
Figure 8.22	Ordnance Survey Map (1996)
Figure 8.23	Ordnance Survey Map (2006)
Figure 8.24	Ordnance Survey Map (2014)
Figure 9.1	Pedestrian Accessibility Journey Times
Figure 9.2	Cycle Accessibility Journey Times
Figure 9.3	Reading Central Bus Network
Figure 9.4	Existing Vehicle Access (Strategic Network)
Figure 9.5	Existing Vehicle Access (Local Network)
Figure 9.6	A Transport Plan for Station Hill
Figure 10.1	Site Plan and Receptor Locations
Figure 10.2	Proposed Receptor Locations
Figure 10.3	Local Air Quality Monitoring Locations
Figure 11.1	Noise Monitoring Locations and Noise Sensitive Receptors
Figure 14.1	Habitats Features Plan
Figure 14.2	Breeding Bird Survey Results 1
Figure 14.3	Breeding Bird Survey Results 2
Figure 15.1	Wind Roses (London Heathrow Airport)
Figure 15.2	Proposed Development
Figure 15.3	Configuration 1: Future Baseline, Existing Site with Existing Surrounding Buildings – Windiest Season
Figure 15.4	Configuration 1: Future Baseline, Existing Site with Existing Surrounding Buildings – Summer Season
Figure 15.5	Configuration 2: Demolished Site with Existing Surrounding Buildings – Windiest Season

Figure 15.6	Configuration 2: Demolished Site with Existing Surrounding Buildings – Summer Season
Figure 15.7	Configuration 3: Completed Development with Existing Surrounding Buildings – Windiest Season
Figure 15.8	Configuration 3: Completed Development with Existing Surrounding Buildings – Summer Season
Figure 17.1	Cumulative Schemes
Figure 17.2	Configuration 4: Completed Development with Cumulative Surrounding Buildings – Windiest Season
Figure 17.3	Configuration 4: Completed Development with Cumulative Surrounding Buildings – Summer Season

Environmental Statement - Volume 4 – Appendices

Appendix 2.1	EIA Scoping Report (February 2012)
Appendix 2.2	EIA Scoping Opinion (April 2012)
Appendix 2.3	EIA Scoping Letter (May 2014)
Appendix 2.4	EIA Scoping Opinion (October 2014)
Appendix 2.5	Updated EIA Strategy Letter and Response (June 2015)
Appendix 8.1	Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (August 2015)
Appendix 8.2	Berkshire Historic Environment Record Data
Appendix 9.1	Transport Assessment
Appendix 9.2	Transport Statement
Appendix 9.3	Framework Travel Plan
Appendix 9.4	Access Statement
Appendix 10.1	Air Quality Modelling Study
Appendix 11.1	Glossary of Acoustic Terminology
Appendix 11.2	Baseline Noise Monitoring Data
Appendix 11.3	Construction Noise Assessment
Appendix 11.4	Assessment of Residential Amenity
Appendix 11.5	Road Traffic Noise Assessment
Appendix 11.6	Noise Assessment for Temporary Flexible Event Space
Appendix 12.1	Preliminary Environmental Risk Assessment (July 2015)
Appendix 12.2	Geo-Environmental and Geotechnical Assessment (September 2014)
Appendix 12.3	Post Demolition Ground Investigation: Specification (July 2015)
Appendix 13.1	Flood Risk Assessment (July 2015)
Appendix 13.2	Surface Water Drainage Strategy: Temporary Flexible Events Space (March 2013)
Appendix 14.1	Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre: Biodiversity Report (June 2014)
Appendix 14.2	Black Redstart Survey Report (September 2012)
Appendix 15.1	Pedestrian Level Microclimate Assessment (July 2015)
Appendix 16.1	Drawings of the Future Baseline scenario, the Proposed Development scenario, Consented Scheme scenario, and the Cumulative Development Scenario
Appendix 16.2	Analysis results of the daylight and sunlight assessments within the residential properties surrounding the proposed Development for the Existing v Proposed, Consented v Proposed, and Cumulative.
Appendix 16.3	Daylight and Sunlight Potential Assessment (July 2015)
Appendix 16.4	Transient and Overshadowing Assessment (July 2015)
Appendix 16.5	VSC and APSH Impact Assessment (July 2015)

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In January 2015, Sackville Developments (Reading) Ltd (hereafter referred to as the Applicant), received outline planning permission for the mixed use redevelopment of approximately 2.14 hectares (ha) of land to the south of Reading Mainline Station (Planning Application Reference: 130436/OUT). The development, known as Station Hill 3 (and hereafter referred to as the SH3 Scheme), encompasses land between Station Hill, Greyfriars Road, Friar Street and Station Road (hereafter referred to as the SH3 Site). The SH3 Scheme includes the demolition of all the existing buildings and structures within the SH3 Site, excluding the existing multi-storey NCP car park, and replacement with four new commercial buildings (referred to as Building Plots A - D) and two new primarily residential buildings (referred to as Building Plots E and F). The existing NCP Car-Park would be reconfigured and refurbished.
- 1.2. At the same time as submission of the application for the SH3 Scheme in March 2013, the Applicant also submitted a full application for a Temporary Flexible Event Space on 0.35 ha of land within the north east of the SH3 Site (Planning Application Reference: 130440/FUL). The Temporary Flexible Event Space would operate as an interim condition prior to construction of the SH3 Scheme. The Temporary Events Space was granted planning permission by RBC in January 2014.
- 1.3. Since submission of the outline planning application for the SH3 Scheme in March 2013, the Applicant has acquired a plot of land adjacent to Plot E of the SH3 Scheme, known as the Telecom House Site, and wishes to obtain outline planning consent for a development which encompasses both the Telecom House Site and Plot E (hereafter referred to as the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme).
- 1.4. The Telecom House / Plot E Scheme occupies approximately 0.77 ha of land bounded by Garrard Street to the north, 40 Friar Street to the east, Friar Street to the south and 52 Friar Street to the west. The proposals comprise demolition of 41 to 51 Friar Street and the buildings behind (4 to 20 Garrard Street) and erection of new buildings to provide residential uses and, a range of town centre uses including retail and related uses.
- 1.5. A plan showing the location of the SH3 Site and Telecom House / Plot E Site (hereafter collectively known as the Site) is presented as Figure 1.1 and a plan showing the Telecom House / Plot E application boundary, the Temporary Events Space application boundary and the wider SH3 Scheme application boundary is presented as Figure 1.2. A plan of the red line boundary for the Development assessed as part of this ES is presented as Figure 1.3.

Previous Environmental Information Submitted in Relation to the SH3 Scheme and EIA Strategy

- 1.6. An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken of the SH3 Scheme and an Environmental Statement (ES) prepared to accompany the outline planning application submitted in 2013 (hereafter referred to as the 2013 ES). Following submission of the 2013 ES, an ES Addendum was prepared and submitted in September 2013 (referred to as the 2013 ES Addendum) to address comments raised by consultees and undertake an additional townscape and visual assessment of cumulative schemes. Together, the 2013 ES and 2013 ES Addendum form the ES for the purposes of the SH3 Scheme.

- 1.7. Due to the links between SH3 and the proposed Telecom House / Plot E planning application, it is not considered appropriate to undertake an EIA on the Telecom House / Plot E application in isolation. This is because the Telecom House / Plot E scheme application requires the removal of Plot E from the consented SH3 Scheme (by means of a Section 73 Application) and therefore may alter the environmental effects of the SH3 Scheme as reported in the 2013 ES and 2013 ES Addendum as well as potentially generate environmental effects itself. Furthermore, the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme and the remainder of the SH3 Scheme are closely linked and accordingly are considered to comprise one project for EIA purposes. It has therefore been agreed with RBC that a new updated ES will be prepared to consider the effects of the consented SH3 Scheme, minus Plot E (via the Section 73 Application), plus the new Telecom House / Plot E Scheme (via the Outline Application). These are hereafter collectively referred to as the 'proposed Development'.
- 1.8. The proposals for the Temporary Flexible Events Space would remain the same, irrespective of the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme. However, the phasing of the demolition of the wider SH3 Scheme and construction of the Temporary Events Space has changed. This has meant that, whereas within the 2013 ES, it was assumed that only demolition of the Station Hill Parade (including 26 to 58 Station Hill) would be demolished to facilitate construction of the Temporary Events Space, demolition of the wider SH3 Site has already started meaning that the northern part of the SH3 Site, to the north of Garrard Street (excepting Xafinity House and the NCP car park) would be demolished prior to construction of the Temporary Events Space. This has therefore been addressed within this ES. In most cases, this has been addressed qualitatively in line with the 2013 ES and as agreed with RBC.

Development Context

Planning Context

- 1.9. The Reading Local Development Framework (LDF) Plan Core Strategy was adopted in January 2008¹ and updated in 2015. The Core Strategy identifies the Reading Mainline Station/River Project Area as a Major Development Area (Policy RC1) and promotes the Site for mixed use development including offices, retail, leisure and housing.
- 1.10. The Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP)² was adopted in January 2009, and also as part of the LDF. The RCAAP's vision for the Station/River Major Opportunity Area is as follows:
- "A flagship scheme, extending the centre and providing a mixed use destination..."*
- 1.11. Policy RC1 of this document relates to Development in the Station/River Major Opportunity Area (within which the Site is located) and promotes a high density development suitable for a mix of uses including retail and leisure use. It also seeks greater pedestrian and cycle permeability than at present and requires the safeguarding of space for public transport proposals.
- 1.12. The RCAAP identifies the northern part of the Site (to the north of Garrard Street) as RC1c, Station Hill, specifying that this area will be developed for a mix of uses at a high density, including retail and leisure on the ground and lower floors and residential and offices on higher floors. The RCAAP encourages enhanced links through the various sites identified within the RCAAP, and a network of streets and spaces, with key routes through the Site to provide active uses.

- 1.13. The southern part of the Site (to the south of Garrard Street) is identified within the RCAAP as RC1b, Friars Walk and Greyfriars Road. Within this area, development is sought to be of a mixed-use with a significant leisure element, and active retail and leisure uses on the ground floor, particularly along Friar Street. A mix of uses on higher floors is also encouraged. As for RC1c the RCAAP seeks enhanced linkages in a north-south direction at a single level into the Station Hill area and through to Reading Mainline Station.
- 1.14. The Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief³, adopted in 2007, sets out specific urban design and planning principles for the Site and is adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.15. In addition to the above planning policy, the Reading City Centre Framework⁴, 2008 and the Station Area Framework⁵, 2010 set out design principles for the area within the context of the RCAAP and Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief, 2007.

Background to the Current Planning Application

- 1.16. In 2004, Land Securities developed plans for the mixed-use redevelopment of the Site. However, a planning application was not made and the Site was subsequently sold to Sackville Developments (Reading) Limited.
- 1.17. An outline planning application was submitted in February 2007 (Planning Application Reference: 07/00188/OUT) for a mixed-use development located in the area that now comprises the northern area of the Site (between Garrard Street and the Reading Mainline Station and Station Hill). This outline planning application is referred to as 'Station Hill 1' (SH1). However, additional land was subsequently acquired around Friar Street and the application was subsequently withdrawn to enable a complete redesign of the scheme.
- 1.18. In 2009 an outline application (Ref 09/01079/OUT) was made for the Site (hereafter referred to as 'Station Hill 2 (SH2)'). RBC subsequently granted planning permission in October 2011 for this mixed used scheme comprising residential development (Use Class C3), offices (Use Class B1a), retail (Use Classes A1-A4), community space (Use Class D1), cultural/leisure space (Use Class D1/D2), bowling alley (D2), and health and fitness (Use D2) and associated car and cycle parking, landscaping, infrastructure and public realm works.
- 1.19. Further details of these former schemes are provided in Chapter 4: Alternatives.
- 1.20. In light of market conditions, the consented SH2 Scheme was not considered deliverable and a new outline planning application for the Site (known as the SH3 Scheme) was prepared by the Applicant and its design team. The revised outline proposals were for a lower rise, lower density development, complementing the redevelopment of Reading Mainline Station and other neighbouring sites. As described above, this scheme was granted planning permission in January 2015.

Nature of the Applications

- 1.21. The following applications are relevant to this ES:
 - The consented SH3 Scheme which was the subject of an outline planning application with matters of appearance, landscaping, layout, scale and access reserved;

- The consented Temporary Events Space which was the subject of a full planning application in 2013;
- A new outline planning application for the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme with matters of appearance, landscaping, layout, scale and access reserved; and
- A new Section 73 Application to amend the consented SH3 Scheme to remove the Plot E from the SH3 Scheme in order to accommodate the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme within an enlarged SH3 proposal.

1.22. The planning application forms define the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme application as follows:

“Outline Application for mixed use redevelopment of Plot E of the Station Hill site and neighbouring Telecom House Site (48 to 51 Friar Street & 4 to 20 Garrard Street) to comprise the demolition of existing buildings and erection of new buildings/structures to provide residential units, a range of town centre uses including retail and related uses (Use Class A1-A5), associated infrastructure, public realm works and ancillary development (all matters are reserved).”

1.23. The consented SH3 Scheme was defined on the planning application forms as:

“Outline Application for mixed use redevelopment of the site through the demolition and alteration of existing buildings and erection of new buildings/structures to provide Offices (Use Class B1), a range of town centre uses including retail and related uses (Use Class A1 - A5), leisure (Use Class D2) and residential units, associated infrastructure, public realm works and ancillary development (all matters reserved).”

1.24. The planning application forms define the Section 73 Application to amend the SH3 Scheme as:

“Section 73 application to vary conditions 2, 5, 6, 54 and 57 of Outline Planning Permission 130436 in order to remove Plot E.”

1.25. The consented Temporary Events Space was defined on the planning application forms as:

“Demolition of Station Hill Retail Parade (including 26 to 58 Station Hill) to create a multipurpose events space for temporary uses (Use Classes A1 to A5, D1, D2 & Sui Generis). Works of hard and soft landscaping and other incidental works.”

Format of the Environmental Statement

1.26. The ES is divided into three volumes, comprising the main text of the ES, figures and a series of appendices. A Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the ES is also provided as a standalone document. The content of these volumes is described below.

Volume 1: Environmental Statement - Main Document and Volume 2: Environmental Statement – Townscape, Conservation and Visual Assessment

1.27. These documents provide the full text of the ES in accordance with the EIA Regulations.

1.28. Regulation 2 (1) of the EIA Regulations identifies that an ES should amongst other matters, contain information that is:

“...reasonably required to assess the environmental effects of the development and which the applicant can, having regard in particular to current knowledge and methods of assessment, reasonably be required to compile”.

Volume 3: Environmental Statement - Figures

- 1.29. This volume provides a set of figures and illustrations in support of the main text of the ES presented in Volume 1. This volume includes a set of the Parameter Plans.

Volume 4: Environmental Statement - Appendices

- 1.30. A number of appendices are presented and are provided in a separate volume to supplement the main ES text. The appendices are numbered according to the number of the corresponding Chapter in Volume 1.

Environmental Statement - Non-Technical Summary

- 1.31. This comprises a summary of the ES in ‘non-technical language’ as required under the EIA Regulations. Its objective is to provide a concise and balanced summary of the ES without excessive technical detail or scientific language so as to be readily understood by consultees and members of the public not familiar with EIA terminology. The Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is produced as a separate document to facilitate wider public distribution.

Project Team

- 1.32. The EIA has been co-ordinated by Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd (Waterman IE), who has compiled this ES in conjunction with the Applicant and a team of specialist consultants. These consultants are presented in Table 1.1 along with their respective disciplines and contributions to the EIA.

Table 1.1: EIA and Design Team

Organisation	Expertise/EIA Input
Sackville Developments (Reading) Ltd	Applicant
Quod	Planning and socio-economic consultants
Allies and Morrison	Architect
Foundations Archaeology	Archaeological consultants
Faithful & Gould	Cost Consultants
GIA	Daylight, sunlight and overshadowing assessors
Hoare Lea and Partners	Building services engineer, drainage consultant, and energy and sustainability consultants
Peter Brett Associates (PBA)	Highway consultants and sewer diversion advisors
RWDI	Wind microclimate consultants
Tavernor Consultancy	Townscape and Visual Assessors
Cityscape	Visualisations

Organisation	Expertise/EIA Input
Waterman IE	EIA co-ordinators, air quality, noise and vibration, ecology, land quality, and flood risk consultants
Waterman Structures	Structural engineers
Waterman IE	Flood risk consultants

ES Availability and Comments

- 1.33. The ES is available for viewing by the public during normal office hours at the Planning Department of RBC. Comments on the planning application should be forwarded to RBC at the following address:

Development and Control Manager
Reading Borough Council
Civic Centre
Reading
RG1 7AE

Tel: 0118 937 3737

- 1.34. Additional copies of the NTS are available free of charge. Copies of the full ES are available for purchase. For copies of these documents, please contact:

Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd
Pickfords Wharf
Clink Street
London SE1 9DG
Tel: 020 7928 7888

email: ie@watermangroup.com

References

- ¹ Reading Borough Council, 2008, Local Development Framework, Core Strategy, RBC, Reading
- ² Reading Borough Council, 2009, Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP), RBC, Reading
- ³ Reading Borough Council, 2007, Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief, RBC, Reading
- ⁴ Reading Borough Council, 2008, Reading City Centre Framework, RBC, Reading
- ⁵ Reading Borough Council, 2010, Reading Station Area Framework, RBC, Reading

2. EIA Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1. This Chapter sets out the general approach to, and methodology for undertaking the EIA. The Chapter describes the legislative framework within which the EIA has been undertaken and identifies key guidance. The EIA scoping process is also described, together with a description of the general methodology applied to assess the likely significant environmental effects. The Chapter also sets out the structure of the assessment chapters which form this ES. More specific methodologies are described for each of the specific topics that are assessed in Chapters 7 to 16 inclusive.

General Approach

- 2.2. This ES has been prepared to comply with the 2011 EIA Regulations¹ which implement the European Council Directive 2001/1/92/EU². Reference has also been made to currently available EIA good practice guidance, including Good Practice Guidance from the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)^{3,4} and topic specific guidance, detailed where appropriate in the relevant technical chapters.
- 2.3. The EIA has considered the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed Development, utilising current knowledge of the Site and the surrounding environment.
- 2.4. Based on the findings of the studies undertaken as part of the EIA, methods of avoiding, reducing, or offsetting likely significant adverse effects (collectively known as ‘mitigation measures’) have been identified. Such mitigation measures are set out in each relevant technical chapter of this ES. Measures to enhance the environmental effects of the Development have also been identified, where appropriate.
- 2.5. In line with best practice guidance, a Scoping Study was undertaken at the start of the assessment process to identify the key environmental issues to be addressed in the ES. Further details of this study are provided later in this Chapter.
- 2.6. Detailed technical studies have been on-going throughout the design process, providing information about environmental issues and constraints that may affect the proposed Development. In addition reference has been made to studies undertaken previously to support the outline planning applications for SH1, SH2 and SH3. The Applicant and the design team have therefore taken these environmental issues and constraints into account during the design evolution and sought to ‘design out’ potentially adverse effects wherever possible. Further details are provided in Chapter 4: Alternatives.
- 2.7. The EIA has considered both likely significant beneficial and adverse effects of the proposed Development during the demolition and construction works and once the Development is complete and occupied. In line with legislative and best practice requirements, direct, indirect, cumulative, short, medium, long-term, permanent, beneficial and adverse effects have been addressed where applicable. The approach taken in the assessment of cumulative effects is set out within Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects.

Approach to the Assessment of the Outline Planning Application

- 2.8. As described in Chapter 1: Introduction, the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme is, and the SH3 Scheme was the subject of applications for outline planning permission with matters of appearance, landscaping, layout, scale and access reserved. The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (DMPO)⁵ sets out the minimum information that should be provided with an outline planning application.
- 2.9. Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (hereafter referred to as the 'EIA Regulations')⁶ prohibits local planning authorities (LPAs) from granting planning permission without having first taken the environmental information into consideration. In accordance with the minimum requirements required by the DMPO, and to provide sufficient information such that the likely significant effects of the Development can be identified whilst providing the Applicant with sufficient flexibility to enable a high quality and viable redevelopment a series of 'parameters' were defined for the Development. These parameters are set out on Parameter Plans, with additional commitments set out in a written Development Specification and Framework document and Design Codes.
- 2.10. The Development Specification and Framework defines and describes the principal components of the proposed Development, including the form and content of the planning application as well as the parameters for future detailed applications to be submitted under reserved matters. Compliance with the Development Specification would be secured by means of a suitably worded planning condition.
- 2.11. A series of Design Codes have also been submitted in support of the proposed Development, which sets out supplementary information on the design and appearance of the outline proposed Development including materials, and texture. The Design Codes are also anticipated to be secured by planning condition or obligation.
- 2.12. The Parameter Plans together with the Development Specification and Framework and Design Codes have therefore formed the basis of the EIA reported within this ES.
- 2.13. A list of the parameter plans and full description of the Development is provided in Chapter 5: The Proposed Development.
- 2.14. The majority of the technical assessments in this ES identify the likely significant effects of the Development based on the 'maximum' parameters of the built form, as these typically represent the likely 'worst case' scale and magnitude of effects. Where this is not the case, such as for assessment of employment, the assessment of effects also considers 'minimum' parameters in order to represent the 'worst case scenario'.

Future Baseline

- 2.15. As part of the 2013 ES, a future baseline scenario was considered because the Reading Mainline Station located immediately north of the Site was being redeveloped at that time (Planning Application Refs: 10/01270/LBC and 10/01269/FUL). These upgrade works have now been completed and are therefore included in the baseline conditions.
- 2.16. However, a number of other schemes within the vicinity of the Site are currently under construction. Given that these schemes have consent, are funded and are in the process of being implemented,

they have been considered as the 'future baseline'. The future baseline therefore accounts for the full implementation of these schemes and where relevant, the Technical Assessments have taken account of them. The future baseline schemes are shown on Figure 2.1 and comprise:

- **Phase 2, Land at Chatham Place (Application Ref. 12/00798/FUL):** Detailed planning application for Phase 2 of the Chatham Place redevelopment comprising one nine storey and one nineteen storey building to accommodate a total of 184 residential units and ground floor retail uses (Use Classes A1, A2 or A3), together with basement car parking, public and private amenity space, public realm works and landscaping and alterations to existing vehicular access;
- **21 Caversham Road (Application Ref. 110628):** approved 09/02/2012): Demolition of existing building and erection of 11 x 1-bed flats;
- **Energis House, Forbury Road (Application Ref. 12/01856/FUL):** approved 03/06/13 Demolition of existing building and construction of two new office buildings (Use Class B1) with associated access, car parking, servicing, landscaping and engineering works;
- **Thames Tower (Application Ref: 141043):** approved 13/10/2014: refurbishment and recladding of the existing building, construction of four additional storeys of offices (use class B1), change of use of the ground floor to flexible office and retail uses (classes A1, A2, A3 and B1), rooftop plant and associated works;
- **Aldwych House 2 Blagrove Street Reading RG1 1AZ** (Application number 101300 – approved November 2010): Demolition of existing office building and construction of new 6-storey office building (total approximately 13,500 sqm) with associated basement car park and external works.

- 2.17. However, with regard to the Site itself, although demolition is currently on going, in order to provide RBC with a reasonable comparison of effects between those of the currently consented SH3 Scheme and those of the consented SH3 Scheme minus Plot E, plus the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme, and given that the demolition itself forms part of the Development being assessed, the on-site baseline will be that prior to commencement of demolition.

Temporary Flexible Events Space

- 2.18. Planning permission was granted in January 2014 for a Temporary Event Space, which is proposed to be located in the north eastern part of the Site (broadly on Building Plot C). These proposals comprise demolition of the former Station Hill retail parade (including 26 to 58 Station Hill) to create a landscaped area and multipurpose events platform for temporary uses (Use Classes A1 to A5, D1, D2 and *Sui Generis*). In addition, works of hard and soft landscaping and other incidental works are proposed.
- 2.19. The works are likely to be implemented in late 2015, following demolition of some buildings within the northern part of the SH3 Site (to the north of Garrard Street) but in advance of construction of the main SH3 scheme. The Temporary Flexible Events Space is likely to remain in situ until the construction works start on Building Plot C.
- 2.20. Due to the relationship of the Development with the Temporary Events Space, a description of the potential significant effects, mitigation measures, and likely significant residual effects of the Temporary Flexible Events Space are set out within each technical chapter.

Comparison with the Consented SH3 Scheme

- 2.21. In order to provide RBC, other statutory consultees and interested parties with an understanding of the differences between the effects of the consented SH3 Scheme and those of the proposed Development, that is the consented SH3 Scheme, minus Plot E plus the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme, each technical chapter of the ES has included a summary, in the summary and conclusions section and where appropriate, throughout the chapter, of the differences between the effects of the consented SH3 Scheme and those of the proposed Development. In addition, to enable a meaningful comparison between the effects, the conditions on the Site have been assumed to be those pre-demolition. Furthermore, in some cases, guidance regarding assessment methodologies have been updated since undertaking the 2013 ES. However, where appropriate, the updated guidance has not been fully adopted within this ES to enable a comparison of effects. Where this is the case, this is clearly stated within the relevant technical chapter of this ES.

Scoping the EIA

- 2.22. 'Scoping' is an important component of the EIA process, and involves focusing the study (and hence the ES) on those issues of greatest potential significance. It is also important in identifying all of the potentially significant effects of the Development through design, demolition and construction works and once it is complete, to ensure that appropriate mitigation options are considered.
- 2.23. A Scoping Study was undertaken by Waterman EED (now Waterman IE) together with technical specialists on the SH3 Scheme. Based on this study, an EIA Scoping Report was prepared and submitted to RBC in February 2012 together with a request for a formal Scoping Opinion on the issues to be included within the ES.
- 2.24. The Scoping Report set out the overall approach to the EIA and identified the likely environmental effects that may arise from the Development. The proposed scope of the assessments was guided by the outcomes of the EIA process undertaken for SH1 and SH2 together with an understanding of the emerging proposals for SH3.
- 2.25. A Scoping Opinion was received from RBC on 17th April 2012. Following consultation with statutory consultees, the Scoping Report and Scoping Opinion confirmed that the following key environmental issues should be addressed as part of the EIA:
- Townscape, Conservation and Visual Assessment (Volume 3);
 - Socio-Economics (Chapter 7);
 - Archaeology (Chapter 8);
 - Transportation and Access (Chapter 9);
 - Air Quality (Chapter 10);
 - Noise and Vibration (Chapter 11);
 - Ground Conditions and Contamination (Chapter 12);
 - Surface Water Drainage and Flood Risk (Chapter 13);
 - Ecology (Chapter 14);
 - Wind (Chapter 15);

- Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing (Chapter 16); and
 - Cumulative Effects (Chapter 17).
- 2.26. The Scoping Report and Scoping Opinion received from RBC are included as Appendix 2.1 and 2.2 respectively. To summarise, in their Scoping Opinion, RBC stated:
- “It is the formal opinion of the Local Planning Authority that the issues and recommendations covered in the document ‘Station Hill 3, Reading: EIA Scoping Report’ are appropriate and necessary and should be included in any subsequent Environmental Statement”*
- 2.27. Key issues that arose as a result of the Scoping Study in relation to the ES and how these issues have been addressed are presented in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Key Issues Raised in the Scoping Response of April 2012

Topic	Key issues raised in the Scoping Response	Response
Townscape, Conservation and Visual Assessment	RBC made no comments on the Townscape, Conservation and Visual Assessment in their scoping opinion. They were consulted separately to agree the proposed viewpoints.	Further detail is set out in Volume 3: Townscape, Conservation and Visual Assessment.
Archaeology	Berkshire Archaeology agreed that the Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) undertaken for SH2 should be updated to account for changes in policy and both the findings from a small field investigation that was undertaken since the last DBA was written. Berkshire Archaeology highlighted that archaeological deposits are known to survive on the Site, though likely to be in a truncated state. Berkshire Archaeology stated that if the evaluation should demonstrate that relatively intact Viking fortifications are present within the site that these deposits may be required to be preserved in situ.	The Desk Assessment has been updated to take account of recent investigation. Further detail is set out in Chapter 8: Archaeology.
Transport	RBC Transport Strategy were consulted on the EIA Scoping Report and Transport Assessment Scoping Report. No significant comments were made in relation to the scope of either assessment. However, minor comments were made in relation to the detailed methodology relating to use of 2011 Census data if available, residential trip generation and modal share.	Further detail is set out in Chapter 9: Transportation and Access and Appendix 9.1: Transport Assessment.
Air Quality and Noise	No comments were made in relation to air quality or noise, and the assessment was undertaken in line with the methodology set out in the scoping report.	The results of the assessments are set out in Chapter 10: Air Quality and Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration respectively.
Ground Conditions and Contamination	The EA suggested further environmental investigation would be required of soils and groundwater on the basis of historical potentially contaminative land uses. Sufficient information is available for the purposes of identifying the significant effects in accordance with the EIA Regulations. The Site Investigation would therefore	Further detail is set out in Chapter 12: Ground Conditions and Contamination

Topic	Key issues raised in the Scoping Response	Response
	be carried out following demolition and secured by planning condition	
Flood Risk	The Environment Agency stated they were satisfied with the proposed scope of the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The response encouraged the use of innovative SuDS techniques within the drainage network. The response also encouraged the continued use of the proposed exemplar SuDS drainage scheme for a high density urban redevelopment in the previous outline application. The reduction of runoff rates to below that of brownfield conditions were encouraged.	A summary of the outline drainage strategy is provided in Chapter 13: Surface Water Drainage and Flood Risk together with Appendix 13.1: Flood Risk Assessment.
Ecology	RBC set out in the Scoping Report that there is anecdotal evidence that peregrines may nest on the buildings and black redstarts have nested at the Site in the past. Therefore the EIA should consider these species as possible receptors and a nesting bird survey should be undertaken.	A Black Redstart and Nesting Bird Survey was undertaken in the summer of 2012 to determine the presence of these species. Peregrine Falcons were not found to be nesting on the Site. The results of these surveys, the effect on these species and proposed mitigation is set out in Chapter 14: Ecology.
Wind, Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing	No objections were made to the proposed methodology. However, RBC requested that consideration was given to the effects of the Development with consented and emerging proposals in the surrounding area.	The assessments set out in Chapter 15: Wind and Chapter 16: Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing assess the scheme against the baseline context (existing context with redevelopment of the Station). A cumulative assessment is set out in Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects.
Cumulative Effects	The list of proposed schemes requiring consideration as part of a cumulative assessment as set out in the Scoping Report were agreed. Subsequently, a further review was undertaken to determine additional schemes which have been consented since the drafting of the Scoping Report. As a result of this review, four additional schemes have been included. The revised list was considered acceptable by RBC.	The cumulative assessment is set out in Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects.

- 2.28. Prior to commencement of this updated ES, a Scoping Letter was submitted to RBC in June 2014 setting out the proposed approach to this updated EIA and how each of the Technical Chapters may have been affected by the inclusion of the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme. The Scoping letter is included as Appendix 2.3. A Scoping Opinion was received in October 2014 and is presented in Appendix 2.4. A summary of the responses is provided in Table 2.2.
- 2.29. Due to the subsequent time that elapsed since submission of the Scoping Request in June 2014 and submission of the application, a further letter setting out the proposed approach to the EIA was submitted in June 2015. This letter is included in Appendix 2.5. A formal response was not requested or received from the Council due to the timescales to submission. However, informally,

RBC confirmed that the proposed approach was acceptable and provided updates in relation to the cumulative schemes (29-35 Station Road and Garrard House) which has been incorporated into this EIA.

Table 2.2: Key Issues Raised in the Scoping Response of October 2014

Topic	Comment from RBC	Response
General	A number of changes to sensitive receptors had occurred since the 2013 ES and new change of use to residential developments had been made in the vicinity of the Site. RBC recommended that these were taken into account in the EIA.	An updated list of sensitive receptors and new future sensitive receptors is provided in Chapter 3 of this ES. All technical authors have considered these receptors where appropriate.
Development Programme and Construction	The chapter will need to be updated to reflect the inclusion of the Revised Scheme and to confirm how/if this alters the proposed phasing of the overall scheme.	Chapter 6 has been updated accordingly.
Socio Economics	It should be noted that the socio economics chapter in the 2013 ES did not assess the effect of the additional office floor space on the Borough and wider area in terms of affordable housing. The socio economic effects should be assessed in terms of their impact on the Borough as a whole, not just Abbey Ward.	Chapter 7: Socio Economics
Archaeology	Telecom House falls within an Area of Archaeological Potential. Fieldwork may be required in advance of the application submission.	Noted: Chapter 8 and DBA updated informed by information from the existing buildings and further knowledge of the archaeological potential in the vicinity of the Site.
Transport and Access	Liaison should be undertaken with the Highway Authority in relation to the total number of car parking spaces.	Noted. The transport consultant has liaised with the Highways Authority regarding the scope of the Transport Assessment.
Noise	No comments.	
Air Quality	The use of 2011 baseline data should be fully justified.	Noted. Liaison has been undertaken with the Environmental Protection Officer at RBC and a response has been provided in the letter of June 2015 justifying the use of the data.
Townscape, Visual and Heritage Assessment	The impact, including cumulative impact on heritage assets including Greyfriars Church, St Marys church etc will need to be re-evaluated.	Noted. Further detail is provided in Volume 3: Townscape, Visual and Heritage Assessment.
Ground Conditions and Contamination	A walkover survey is unlikely to be sufficient. A full detail Site Investigation may be required.	Liaison has been undertaken with the Environmental Protection Officer at RBC and it has been agreed that a site investigation is not required at this stage. A site investigation will be undertaken post demolition but a scope will be submitted as part of the EIA. This is presented in Appendix 12.3.

Topic	Comment from RBC	Response
Surface Water Drainage and Flood Risk	No comments	N/A
Ecology	The assessment needs to include potential impact on Black Redstart, Peregrine and bats.	Noted. Further detail is provided in Chapter 14: Ecology
Wind	No comments	
Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing	The testing will need to include an assessment of the sites to the west of the Telecom House Site.	Noted. Further detail is provided in Chapter 16: Daylight, Sunlight and Overshadowing.
Cumulative Assessment	A number of changes to the list of cumulative schemes submitted as part of the scoping request were provided.	The cumulative schemes have been updated in line with the comments received. In addition, further changes have been made, as set out in the letter of June 2015 due to changes in the status of certain cumulative schemes such that they are now considered future baseline.

Evaluation of Significance

- 2.30. The EIA process aims to focus attention on the topics which are likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment. The purpose of the EIA is to identify and mitigate the likely significant adverse effects of a project.
- 2.31. Environmental effects have been predicted with reference to definitive standards and legislation, where available. Where it has not been possible to quantify effects, qualitative assessments have been carried out, based on available knowledge and professional judgement. Where uncertainty exists, this has been noted in the relevant assessment Chapter.
- 2.32. The significance of predicted effects has been determined with reference to assessment criteria for each environmental topic considered. These criteria apply a common EIA approach of classifying effects according to whether they are substantial, moderate or minor effects as well as adverse, negligible or beneficial.
- 2.33. Specific criteria for each issue have been developed, giving due regard to the following:
- Extent and magnitude of the effect;
 - Duration of the effect (whether short, medium or long term);
 - Nature of the effect (whether direct or indirect, reversible or irreversible);
 - Whether the effect occurs in isolation, is cumulative or interactive;
 - Performance against environmental quality standards or other relevant pollution control thresholds;
 - Sensitivity of the receptor; and
 - Compatibility with environmental policies.

- 2.34. For issues where definitive quality standards do not exist, significance has been based on the:
- Local, district, regional or national scale of value of the resource and/or receptor affected;
 - Number of receptors affected;
 - Sensitivity of those receptors; and
 - Duration of the effect.
- 2.35. In order to provide a consistent approach to expressing the outcomes of the various studies undertaken as part of the EIA, and thereby enable comparison between effects upon different environmental resources or receptors, the following terminology has been used throughout the ES. Effects have been expressed as:
- **Adverse:** Detrimental or negative effect to an environmental resource or receptor;
 - **Negligible:** No significant effect to an environmental resource or receptor; and
 - **Beneficial:** Advantageous or positive effect to an environmental resource or receptor.
- 2.36. Where adverse or beneficial effects have been identified, these have generally been assessed against the following scale:
- **Minor:** Slight, limited duration and frequency or highly localised effect/ limited numbers of receptors affected;
 - **Moderate:** Limited effect (by extent, duration or magnitude) which may be considered significant; and
 - **Substantial:** Considerable effect (by extent, duration or magnitude) of more than local significance or in breach of recognised acceptability, legislation, policy or standards.
- 2.37. Each of the technical chapters provides the specific criteria, including sources and justifications, for quantifying the different levels of effect. Where possible, this has been based upon quantitative and accepted criteria for example, the air quality standards contained in the National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) or noise assessment guidelines set out by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, together with the use of value judgements and expert interpretations to establish to what extent an effect is environmentally significant.
- 2.38. In the context of the Development, short term effects are considered to be those that last less than 5 years, primarily those associated with demolition and construction and long-term effects are those lasting more than 10 years and are primarily associated with the completed Development. Local effects are those affecting receptors within and in proximity to the Site, whilst effects upon receptors within the wider RBC boundary are considered to be at a district level. Sub-regional effects are those affecting adjacent boroughs, whilst effects upon the south-east of England are considered to be at a regional level. Effects upon different parts of the country, or England as a whole, would be considered to be at a National level. Finally, effects across national boundaries would be considered at an International level. No National or International effects have been identified within this ES.

Other Developments and Cumulative Effects

- 2.39. Effects that result from incremental changes caused by other, present or reasonably foreseeable schemes together with the Development are known as cumulative effects. The EIA therefore takes account of the proposed Development together with other developments in the area.
- 2.40. The assessment of cumulative effects deals with two types of effects:
- **Type 1 Effects:** The combination of individual effects, for example noise and dust from one development on a particular receptor; and
 - **Type 2 Effects:** Effects from several developments, which individually might be insignificant, but when considered together could result in a significant cumulative effect.
- 2.41. Both types of effects are considered within Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects. Type 1 effects have been assessed using the findings of all technical assessment included within this ES and professional judgement. The developments considered as part of the Type 2 effects were agreed with RBC as part of the Scoping process and these developments were included in the technical assessments where appropriate. Further details pertaining to the Cumulative schemes and the results of the cumulative assessment are presented in Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects.

Structure of Technical Chapters

- 2.42. Through the EIA process, the likely significant environmental effects of the Development have been assessed. Each environmental issue has been assigned a separate Chapter in the ES (Chapters 7 - 16), and within each of these Chapters the assessment has been structured in the following way:

Introduction

- 2.43. The Introduction provides a brief summary of what issues are considered in the Chapter, states the author and highlights relevant appendices which accompany the Chapter.

Legislation and Planning Policy Context

- 2.44. This section includes a short summary of national, regional and local policies that are directly relevant to the particular environmental issue and assessment. Legislation is also identified where applicable.

Assessment Methodology and Significance Criteria

- 2.45. The methods used in undertaking the technical study, together with an explanation of the approach to defining the significance of likely environmental effects are outlined in this section with reference to published standard guidelines, best practice and relevant significance criteria. The limitations applicable to the technical assessment are also defined in this section of each chapter. Furthermore, it sets out any limitations to the assessment or any uncertainty.
- 2.46. This section of each Chapter also describes the specific consultation to agree the scope and methodology of the assessment.

- 2.47. In addition, this section of each Chapter describes the basis of the assessment of the outline planning application with reference to the use of minimum and maximum parameters and relevant sections of the Development Specification and Framework document and Design Codes.

Baseline Conditions

- 2.48. In order to assess the effects of the Development, it is necessary to determine the environmental conditions that exist on the Site, in the absence of redevelopment. These are known as baseline conditions. For the purposes of this ES, it has been agreed with RBC that the on Site baseline conditions are those that existed prior to commencement of construction to allow a meaningful comparison of the effects of the Development with those of the consented SH3 Scheme. In addition, the demolition works form part of the Development being assessed.
- 2.49. A summary of the baseline conditions, including future baseline conditions, relevant to each assessment is provided within each technical chapter.

Potential Effects

- 2.50. This section identifies the likely significant effects from the Development as proposed in the outline planning applications and considers the effects during demolition and construction, and once the Development is complete and operational. It also summarises the effects of the Temporary Events Space application, which would be constructed prior to the wider Development. The way in which effects are assessed is described in general terms in the following sections of this Chapter.

Mitigation

- 2.51. One of the main aims of the EIA is to develop mitigation measures to prevent, reduce and where possible, offset any significant adverse effects of a development. An iterative approach has been adopted towards the design of the Development, which has evolved alongside the EIA process. This has enabled many mitigation measures to be effectively designed into the Development, thereby reducing the need for further mitigation. Mitigation measures can relate to design, construction or the activities associated with completed Development. Examples include:
- **Design:** Such as the position or orientation of buildings within the Site. These have predominantly been incorporated into the Development as it has evolved and are therefore described in Chapter 4: Alternatives;
 - **Construction:** Commitment to undertake the construction works in a specific way, for example the use of particular plant, phasing of the works, regular monitoring and implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP); and
 - **Completed Development:** Inclusion of specific features such as water, waste and energy efficiency design of buildings.
- 2.52. Where significant adverse environmental effects have been identified, the Applicant has committed to implement the mitigation measures as set out in the relevant technical Chapter. Since the proposed Development is submitted in outline form, many of the mitigation measures would need to be incorporated in the detailed design.

Residual Effects

- 2.53. This section identifies the remaining residual effects of the Development and Temporary Events Space and summarises the residual effects assuming implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. It includes an assessment of the significance of those effects in accordance with the criteria set out later in this Chapter.
- 2.54. A summary of the residual effects is included at Chapter 18: Summary of Mitigation and Residual Effects.

Summary and Conclusions

- 2.55. This section provides a brief summary of the chapter findings.

Assumptions and Limitations

- 2.56. The principal assumptions that have been made, and any limitations that have been identified in undertaking the EIA, are set out below. Assumptions specifically relevant to each topic have been set out in each chapter:
- The assessments contained within each of the technical chapters are based upon the Parameter Plans, Development Specification and Framework, Design Code documents and land use schedules submitted as part of the outline planning application for both SH3 and the Telecom House / Plot E Scheme;
 - The assessments are based on the SH3 Scheme and Telecom House / Plot E Scheme being linked such that one would not be built out without the other;
 - The assessment of demolition and construction effects are based upon the indicative demolition and construction timetable, phasing and methodologies as provided by the project team and agreed by the Applicant (refer to Chapter 6: Development Programme Demolition and Construction);
 - Baseline conditions have been established from a variety of sources, including Site surveys and historical data, but due to the dynamic nature of certain aspects of the environment, conditions may change during the construction and operation of the Development;
 - The on Site baseline conditions are those that existed prior to commencement of demolition to allow a meaningful comparison of the effects of the Development with those of the consented SH3 Scheme. In addition, the demolition works form part of the Development being assessed;
 - Future baseline conditions surrounding the Site assume that the consented schemes currently under construction would be constructed in accordance with the relevant planning consents, and completed and operational prior to or at the same time as that of the proposed Development;
 - Future interim conditions assume the implementation of the Temporary Flexible Event Space proposals within the Site;
 - All of the principal existing land uses adjoining the Site remain substantially unaltered, with the exception of the future baseline and cumulative schemes as described above and in the Cumulative Effects Chapter;
 - Information received from third parties is accurate, complete and up to date;

- The design, construction and operation of the completed Development will satisfy environmental standards consistent with contemporary legislation, practice and knowledge as a minimum;
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be discussed and agreed with RBC after the planning application is determined, to control subsequent construction activities. This CEMP will be enforced and monitored during all key stages of the works. The key elements of the CEMP are set out in Chapter 6: Development Programme Demolition and Construction; and
- For the purposes of the ES, a year of completion of 2018 has been used throughout the ES to be consistent with the ES of the SH3 Scheme although it is likely that the year of completion including Telecom House would likely be 2019 or 2020. However, the assessments are considered to remain valid for this later year of completion on the basis that the forecast traffic data is valid up to 2026 (refer to Chapter 9: Transportation and Access).

References

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- ¹ HMSO, 2011 'Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011, SI 2011/1824'. London.
 - ² 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 on the environment.
 - ³ Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA). (2004) Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment
 - ⁴ Timothy Smith (2006) Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment 2006 Updates
 - ⁵ OPSI ,2015, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Statutory Instrument 2015 No.595.
 - ⁶ HMSO, 2011, 'Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 SI 2011/1824'. London.

3. Land Uses and Activities

Introduction

- 3.1. This Chapter provides a summary of the historical, existing and future land uses and activities on the Site and within its surrounds. This includes a summary of designations and environmental conditions, thereby enabling potentially sensitive receptors that could be affected by the Development to be identified. Future potentially sensitive receptors within the Development and surrounding area are also identified and set out in this Chapter.
- 3.2. A full description of the baseline conditions relevant to each technical assessment undertaken as part of the EIA is provided in the respective technical Chapters of this ES (Chapters 7 to 16 inclusive).
- 3.3. This Chapter should be read in conjunction with Figures 3.1 to 3.5.

Site Location and Setting

- 3.4. The Site is centred on National Grid Reference 47137, 17369 and is located within the administrative boundary of Reading Borough Council (RBC). As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the Site is located in the northern part of Reading town centre, immediately to the south of Station Hill and Reading Mainline Station, forming an important gateway to Reading town centre. The planning application boundary of the SH3 Site and Telecom House Site are shown on Figure 1.2.
- 3.5. The Site occupies an area of approximately 2.53ha (2.14ha for the SH3 Site and 0.39ha for Telecom House Site) and is bound by Station Hill to the north. Thames Tower and Station Road demarcate the northern part of the eastern boundary of the Site whilst Greyfriars Road bounds the northern part of the western boundary. South of Garrard Street, the Site is bound to the east and west by retail units and offices, of which some were vacant at the time of undertaking the EIA. Merchants Place runs parallel to the eastern boundary of the Site to the south of Garrard Street, and connects Friar Street with Garrard Street. A number of retail units, offices and a block of residential apartments are located on Merchants Place. Friar Street, which is lined by a combination of leisure, office and retail units, forms the southern boundary of the Site.
- 3.6. Levels across the Site vary from approximately 38m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) to 46m AOD, and typically the Site rises in a south-easterly direction. Site levels in the west of the Site lie at a minimum of 38.35m AOD on Greyfriars Road and along the west of Garrard Street. Along the northern boundary of the Site, the gradient rises west to east to a height of 43.5m AOD in the north-east corner of the Site. In the southern area of the Site, the ground level rises north to south from approximately 38.35m AOD on Garrard Street to a maximum of 45.75m AOD along Friar Street, at the southern boundary of the Site.

Historical Land Uses at the Site

- 3.7. In the early 19th century, the Site was undeveloped comprising gardens and / or fields. At this time, Friar Street, which comprises a thoroughfare dating back to medieval times, comprised a number of residential properties. However, following the construction of the Great Western Railway and station to the north of the Site in the mid to late 19th century, the Site and surrounding area was intensively developed. By the late 19th century, the south-western corner of the Site was occupied by terrace housing, whilst further housing and a timber yard were constructed on the western boundary of the Site. A large malt-house and coal yard were constructed towards the centre of the

Site, whilst livery stables occupied the north-eastern area of the Site. The Telecom House Site was occupied by a Veterinary Infirmary.

- 3.8. During the early to mid-20th century, the Site had been partially redeveloped to accommodate a large garage and also industrial type buildings. The Site was comprehensively redeveloped between the 1950s and 1980s, which included the construction of a bus station, commercial premises, including Western Tower, a bingo hall and later a multi-storey car park and Friars Walk Shopping Centre. The Telecom House Site was constructed in its current form by the 1960s. More recently, the bus station, Western Tower, Friars Walk Shopping Centre and the office element of Telecom House have been vacated, and the buildings have fallen into a state of disrepair.
- 3.9. A detailed description of the historical development of the Site and surrounding area is included in Chapter 8: Archaeology; and Chapter 12: Ground Conditions.

Existing Land Uses at the Site

- 3.10. The Site is dominated by vacant retail, office and leisure buildings and the disused Friars Walk Shopping Centre, together with Friars Walk multi-storey car park, road infrastructure and hard-standing as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Friars Walk Shopping Centre and the bingo hall have been closed and unoccupied for a number of years. Office space provided in Western Tower, above Friars Walk Shopping Centre and above the retail units on Station Hill as well as the office uses in Telecom House above the retail uses facing onto Friars Walk are also vacant. Consequently, much of the Site is underused, derelict, and in a general state of disrepair.
- 3.11. The operational uses on the Site are limited to the NCP Friars Walk multi-storey car park which is accessed by vehicles from Garrard Street, Xafinity House offices in the western part of the Site and a small number of small-scale retail units fronting Friar Street.
- 3.12. As shown on Figure 3.2, a small area of vegetation exists in the north-western corner of the Site between Xafinity House and Station Hill, comprising a few ornamental shrubs and trees.
- 3.13. The main vehicular access to the Site is from Garrard Street, a one-way street, which is accessed from Greyfriars Road to the west of the Site. Access to Friars Walk NCP car park, the former bus station and Merchants Place can be gained from Garrard Street. No vehicle access to the Site is available from Station Hill and Friar Street to the north and south of the Site. Greyfriars Road is accessed from the Inner Distribution Road (IDR) (A329) which circumnavigates Reading town centre.
- 3.14. There are currently no on-street parking spaces within the Site. However, car parking spaces are also provided as follows:
- Garrard Street Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP) – 950 spaces;
 - Friars Walk – 94 spaces located on the roof that can be accessed from the Garrard Street MSCP. However, these have been inaccessible for some time;
 - Western Tower – 280 spaces;
 - Xafinity House – 81 spaces; and
 - Telecom House – 58 spaces.
- 3.15. Pedestrians can access the Site from footpaths on all roads adjacent to, and within the Site. From Reading Mainline Station, pedestrians can access the Site via Station Road, Greyfriars Road and (prior to the current demolition works) the elevated pedestrian walkway between Western Tower and the former bingo hall connecting Station Hill to Garrard Street. Access through the southern part of the Site to Garrard Street would have been through Friar's Walk Shopping Centre; however

this access is now locked up and disused. There is however, access from Garrard Street to Friar Street via Merchants Place to the east of the Site.

- 3.16. Pedestrian permeability through the Site is currently poor owing to the built form and vacant nature of the Site. Following the closure of Friars Walk Shopping Centre and the associated Friars Walk elevated walkway no public access is provided in a north-south direction between Reading town centre and Reading Mainline Railway within the Site.
- 3.17. Pedestrian permeability through the Site in an east – west direction between Station Hill and Greyfriars Road is limited to Garrard Street.
- 3.18. Further details on transport and access issues are provided in Chapter 9: Transport and Access and the appended Transport Assessment.
- 3.19. A summary of existing buildings on the Site and their associated use is provided below in Table 3.1, with Site photographs provided in Figure 3.1.

Table 3.1: Summary of Existing Site Buildings and Uses

Building	Location within the Site	Description and Land Use
Xafinity House	Xafinity House is located in the north-western part of the Site, along Greyfriars Road.	Xafinity House is a six-storey 'L-shaped' red-brick structure with ground floor parking. This building is currently occupied by a variety of commercial office uses and is a fairly well maintained building.
Former Bus Station and Mecca Bingo Hall.	The former bingo hall and bus station are located towards the north-western area of the Site. The former bus station is located at grade with Garrard Street beneath the former bingo hall, which is raised on columns above ground.	The former bus station and Mecca Bingo Hall comprise a pitched corrugated roof concrete structure. The Mecca Bingo Hall is disused and is in a state of disrepair. At the time of undertaking the EIA, the bus station was being used by taxi's queuing to reach the temporary taxi rank.
Western Tower, connecting to a low rise block on Station Hill.	Western Tower is located in the north of the Site, adjacent to Station Hill. The adjacent connected low rise block (units 20-58 Station Hill) extends eastwards along Station Hill situated adjacent to the northern boundary of the Site.	Western Tower is a fifteen-storey (above ground level) rectangular tower block which is connected to a three-storey low rise block. The building elements represent an architectural style of the early 1970s. Western Tower has been unoccupied for a number of years and is in a state of disrepair. Similarly, the office space on the upper floors on the low rise block connecting to Western Tower is unoccupied. However, the ground level of the three-storey low rise block is partially occupied by small scale retail outlets.
NCP car park.	The NCP car park is located in the central area of the Site, largely to the north of Garrard Street, from which access to the car park is gained. The NCP car park extends over Garrard Street and occupies the roof level of Friars Walk Shopping Centre to the south of Garrard Street.	The NCP car park is an eight-storey rectangular concrete structure. It provides 950 public parking spaces over ten floors of split-level car parking space.

Building	Location within the Site	Description and Land Use
Friars Walk Shopping Centre.	Friars Walk Shopping Centre is located between Garrard Street and Friar Street.	Friars Walk Shopping Centre is a 1970s five-storey construction. All units in the shopping centre and the offices located over the units are now disused.
Friars Walk	Friars Walk is located above Garrard Street.	Friars Walk is an elevated walkway connecting the multi-storey car park with Friars Walk Shopping Centre and Friars Street beyond. The walkway is no longer accessible to the public.
Telecom House	Located between Garrard Street and Friar Street immediately west of Friars Walk Shopping Centre	Telecom House is a largely vacant 1960s/1970s building with retail uses at ground floor level fronting onto Friar Street and 5 levels of office uses above.

3.20. The quantum of existing land uses on the Site is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Quantum of Land Uses on the Site (Pre-Demolition)

Use Class	Gross External Area (m ² GEA)		
	SH3 Site	Telecom House Site	Total
Office	15,576	5,697	21,273
Retail & Related Uses (Use Class A1 – A5) m ²	14,020	613	14,633
Leisure m ²	3,568	0	3,568
Residential m ²	0	0	0
Total Floor Space Area	33,164	6310	39,474
Car Parking spaces	1311*	58	1369

* This figure excludes the 94 spaces provided in Friars Walk as these have been inaccessible to the public for some time

Existing Land Uses Surrounding the Site

- 3.21. The Site is located in the northern part of Reading town centre. The surrounding area currently comprises predominantly a mix of commercial, retail and leisure uses. However, residential uses and hotels are located within the vicinity. Residential properties include Projection East and Icon House on Merchants Place approximately 15m east of the Site, terraced housing is on Stanshawe Road and Vachel Road, approximately 45m and 55m west of the Site, and Malcolm Place a modern residential apartment block, approximately 130m west of the Site on Caversham Road. In addition, a number of prior notification applications have been submitted to RBC for change of use from predominantly offices to residential uses. There will therefore be future sensitive receptors present if these change of use consents are implemented. Hotels include the Novotel and Ibis on Friar Street and Malmaison on Station Road.
- 3.22. Reading Mainline Station is located approximately 50m north-east of the Site, and includes an elevated walkway over the railway tracks to Vastern Road. RBC's two new transport interchanges are located to the north and south-west of Reading Station. These along with the south-eastern interchange all include access to taxis and buses within close vicinity of the Site.

Sensitive Receptors

- 3.23. An appraisal has been undertaken to identify the properties, buildings and people that should be considered as being sensitive to the construction and operation of the Development. Potential effects on these 'receptors' have been considered as part of the EIA. Potentially sensitive receptors are listed in Table 3.3 with future sensitive receptors listed in Table 3.4. Both existing and future sensitive receptors are identified on Figures 3.2 - 3.5. Further details on sensitive receptors are provided in the baseline conditions section of Chapters 7 to 16, inclusive.

Table 3.3: Potentially Sensitive Receptors

Category	Existing Sensitive Receptor/Land Use	Nearest Approximate Distance from the Site Boundary
Residential Properties	The Gateway Public House, 31 Greyfriars Road, with residential use at first floor level	15m west
	Malthouse Public House, 53 Greyfriars Road/Tudor Road junction, residential uses above the pub.	15m west
	Projection West, Merchant's Place (flats and serviced apartments)	20m south east
	Projection East, Merchant's Place (flats and serviced apartments)	30m south east
	Icon House, Merchant's Place	50m east
	25a-25b Friar Street	100m south east
	32-34 Friar Street	35m east
	1 st Floor Flat, 125 Friar Street	20m south
	136-137 Friar Street (Building to the rear of)	50m south east
	144 Friar Street	80m south east
	Bridewell House/Samuel House (student accommodation), junction of Friar Street/Greyfriars Road	60m west
	Terrace Housing Stanshawe Road	35m west
	Terrace Housing, Vachel Road	65m south east
	54 Russell Street	750m south west
	107 Castle Hill	650m south west
	Alms House Castle Street	475m south west
	41 Bath Road	1500m south west
	96 Berkeley Avenue	1500m south west
	88 Queens Road	900m south east
	Grantley Heights	890m south east
	90 Kings Road	800m south east
	119 Caversham Road	400m north
	20-30 New Bright Street	650m south
	10-20 Hieatt Close	1100m south east
	44 Crown Street	825m south east
	6 Tilehurst Road	850m south west

Category	Existing Sensitive Receptor/Land Use	Nearest Approximate Distance from the Site Boundary
	Blenheim Terrace, Castle Street	675m south west
	162 Castle Hill	815m south west
	31a Vastern Road	370m north
	68 George Street	890m north east
	10 Trinity Place	600m south west
	33 Caversham Road	120m west
	Kennet House, 80-82 Kings Road	680m south east
	5 to 21 Tudor Road	60m west
Hotels	Malmaison, Station Road	70m east
	Novotel, Friar Street	85m east
	Ibis, Friar Street	85m east
Commercial properties	Occupants of existing office and retail premises adjacent to the Site, including on Station Road, Friar Street and Greyfriars Road.	Adjacent east, south and west.
Educational	Forbury Gardens Day Nursery	600m east
Local Views	Views to and from the Site, (including those associated with listed buildings, conservation areas, Scheduled Monuments and historic parks and gardens).	Not applicable.
Places of Worship	Greyfriars Church (Church of England).	120m south-west.
	St Laurence's Church.	280m east.
Built Heritage	Reading Abbey Scheduled Monument and associated Forbury Gardens Historic Park and Garden.	300m east.
	High Bridge Scheduled Monument	480m south-east
	Forbury Gardens Historic Park and Garden	300m east
	Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.	120m east.
	St. Mary's Butts/Castle Street Conservation Area.	250m south-west.
	Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area.	350m south-west.
	St Peter's Conservation Area	850m north
	Grade I listed Reading Abbey and Associated Forbury Gardens	400m east
	Grade I listed Greyfriars Church.	120m south-west.
	Grade I Church of St Laurence	280m east
	Grade II listed Abbey Mill ruins in Abbey Square.	495m south-east.
	Grade I listed St. Mary's Church in St. Mary Butts.	245m south-west
	Grade II* listed Town Council Chamber and Offices with Clock Tower	280m east
	Grade II* listed Church of St Peter	950m north
	Grade II listed St Giles' Church	700m south

Category	Existing Sensitive Receptor/Land Use	Nearest Approximate Distance from the Site Boundary
	Grade II listed 39 Friar Street	Adjoins south-east corner of the Site
	Grade II listed (Three Guineas Public House) Reading General Station, Station Hill.	30m north
	Grade II Listed High Bridge, London Road	450m south east
	Grade II listed statue of King Edward VII.	30m east
	Grade II listed Great Western House	50m south-east.
	Grade II Listed 13 & 15 Station Road	60m east
	Grade II Listed Quadrant Walls and Railings to Former No.64 (Greyfriars Vicarage)	100m south-west
	Grade II listed The Mitre Inn	125m south-west
	Grade II listed Regent Place	130m west
	Grade II listed WI Palmer Memorial Hall	130m south-west
	Grade II Listed 11, 12, 13, 14 & 15 Friar Street	230m east
	Grade II listed 147 Friar Street.	150m south-east
	Grade II listed 154 Friar Street	230m east
	Grade II listed 155 Friar Street	230m east
	Grade II listed 1-31 & 2-32 Queen Victoria Street, 148, 149 & 150 Friar Street and 24-28 & 35-38 Broad Street	220m east
	Grade II listed Reading Prison	690m east
	Grade II listed Church of St James	690m east
	Grade II listed 29 & 31 Caversham Road	160m west
	Grade II listed 35 and 37 St Mary's Butts	240m south-west
	Grade II listed 55 and 55a St Mary's Butts	240m south-west
Archaeology	Potential archaeological remains beneath the Site; the southern part of the Site between Garrard Street and Friar Street is located within an Archaeology Priority Area.	On-Site.
Transportation	Users of Reading Mainline Railway Station and taxi rank on Station Road.	Adjacent north and north-east.
	Pedestrian, cyclists and other road users in the local area.	Adjacent in all directions.
	Users of buses including the bus interchanges located on Station Hill, Station Road and to the north of Reading Station.	Adjacent to the north and east.
Controlled Waters	Principal Aquifer (Seafood Chalk Formation)	Beneath the Site.
	Secondary A Aquifer (Alluvium and the Taplow Gravel Formation)	Beneath the Site
	River Thames.	400m north-east.
	River Kennet / Kennet and Avon Canal.	500m south-east.
Habitats and Species	Black Redstart observation in 2012.	On-Site.
	Peregrine Falcon observation in 2012.	On-Site.

Table 3.4: Future Potentially Sensitive Receptors

Category	Future Sensitive Receptor/Land Use	Nearest Approximate Distance from the Site Boundary
Residential Properties	Proposed: Residential Buildings Plot E and F	On Site
	7-11 Station Road (Application Number: 141529)	80m east
	Summit House, 49-51 Greyfriars Road (Application Number: 141751);	20m west
	136-137 Friar Street Reading RG1 1EX (Application Ref: 150068);	50m east
	30-31 Friar Street, Reading (Application Ref: 150829, pending).	35m east
	29-35 Station Road (Application Ref 141275).	80m east
	Garrard House, 30 Garrard Street, (Application ref 141277).	Immediately adjacent to the Site

4. Alternatives

Introduction

- 4.1. This Chapter, prepared by Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd (Waterman IE), describes the considerations and constraints influencing the layout, massing and outline design of the Development. The Chapter also describes the main alternatives to the Development which have been considered by the Applicant.

Site Considerations and Constraints

- 4.2. A range of considerations and constraints have been identified which influenced the final design and layout of the Development and the Temporary Event Space proposal. A summary of the main considerations and constraints is provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Site Considerations and Constraints

Issue	Specific Consideration and Constraints
Surrounding built environment	The Development has given due consideration to the existing urban grain defined by Station Hill, Station Road, Friar Street and Greyfriars Road. As identified within the Reading Central Area Action Plan¹ (RCAAP) Reading Borough Council (RBC) has an aspiration for a cluster of tall buildings at the Site. The relationship of such tall buildings with the surrounding range of urban forms has been a key consideration in influencing the siting, scale and massing of the Development.
Surrounding land uses	The commercial land uses surrounding the Site have been considered in the provision of a suitable and complementary mix of land uses which would not lead to adverse commercial competition.
Surrounding redevelopment	Redevelopment works have recently been completed at Reading Mainline Station. In conjunction with these works, RBC undertook public realm upgrades along the length of Station Hill. A major component of the works was to lower the present ground level of Station Hill by demolishing the raised podium. The Development has been designed to complement these proposals. In addition, the refurbishment and addition of 4 stories onto Thames Tower, immediately to the east of the Site is currently ongoing. The Applicant and SH3 design team have undertaken consultation with the Thames Tower team to ensure that the proposed redevelopment of the Thames Tower site and the Development would provide a consistent approach to the scale and design of the two proposals and to ensure that public realm proposals are coordinated and complementary. Other ongoing redevelopment proposals in the surrounding area include Chatham Place, 21 Caversham Road, Energis House/ Forbury Place and Aldwych House. These developments have been considered in the assessments undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment.
Site levels	The Site presents a steep gradient, sloping upwards from west to east. Levels have been considered to ensure inclusive access to all parts of the Site by all users. Addressing the level changes has also been a key driver in the appropriate design of the public realm.
Townscape and views	The Site is not affected by any statutory or non-statutory designated views, however, the design has given due consideration to maintaining and where possible improving the character, quality and context of local, middle and long distance views.
Built heritage	The design of the Development has carefully considered maintaining and where possible improving the setting, character, quality and context of the Site's surrounding three conservation areas and numerous listed buildings including the former station

Issue	Specific Consideration and Constraints
	ticket office on Station Road (now the Three Guineas Public House), 39 Friar Street, the statue of King Edward VII and Greyfriars Church.
Archaeology	Archaeological evidence has previously been recorded within the Site in the form of a pit and two layers, and the line of the Civil War ditch crosses the Site. The southern part of the Site lies within the RBC designated Area of Archaeological Potential. Whilst the Development proposes excavation for the construction of the lower ground level, appropriate archaeological safeguarding and mitigation would form an integral part of the ground work phase, prior to the construction of the Development.
Transportation and access	The Site has excellent links to public transport facilities. Maintenance and enhancement of these public transport links have been a key consideration of the Development design, particularly in allowing for the accommodation of RBC's public transport improvements. Pedestrian permeability through the Site is considered essential to the Development's success. This has been considered in the layout of the proposed buildings and the design of the public realm.
Noise and vibration	In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)², the presence of a nearby existing highway network, the railway and other busy town centre activities has required the consideration of the appropriateness of the Site for residential dwellings. The construction and future operational use of the Development has also been considered in terms of potential noise generation and nuisance both within and outside the Site.
Ground conditions	The presence of potential contamination from previous Site uses has required consideration with respect to ground works and the potential need for remediation.
Surface water, drainage and flood risk	There are no watercourses or water bodies on the Site and the nearest watercourse (the River Thames) is located approximately 420m north of the Site. Accordingly, the Site has a low flood risk potential. Nonetheless, the Development has considered the need to minimise increases in surface water run-off through the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). Groundwater is likely to be encountered at approximately 4-6m below ground level (bgl) on the Site. The depth and design of underground infrastructure (including piling foundations) has considered groundwater levels and flows.
Ecology	The Site is currently of predominantly low ecological value. However, the protected black redstart (<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>) and peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>) have been recorded on the Site during surveys conducted in 2012. The landscape proposals for the Development have considered opportunities for biodiversity enhancements including providing habitat for black redstarts. As such, several living roofs (brown roof and green roofs) have been included within the final Development design.
Wind	The suitability of the local wind environment has been considered in terms of the comfort levels required for particular pedestrian activities in and around the Site. This is of particular relevance to the Development's provision of public realm and pedestrian routes.
Daylight, sunlight and overshadowing	The dense urban massing of the Development presents a potential constraint in terms of the daylight, sunlight and overshadowing to neighbouring residential properties and within the Site itself. The massing of the Development has been carefully considered to minimise such effects.
Utilities	There are a number of existing services across the Site which pose physical constraints to the Development. In particular, a mains trunk sewer beneath the Site.

Issue	Specific Consideration and Constraints
	Utility constraints have been considered in the construction phasing to minimise disruption to existing services.

Alternatives

- 4.3. Under the EIA Regulations³, an Environmental Statement (ES) is required to provide:
"an outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant ... and an indication of the main reasons for his choice, taking into account the environmental effects".
- 4.4. The development of the design commenced with a detailed review of the constraints summarised in Table 4.1. Since the EIA progressed in parallel with the design process, iterations to the design were also made to minimise potential environmental effects which were identified from the baseline surveys and analysis.
- 4.5. The main alternatives to the Development that were considered by the Applicant include:
- The 'Do-Nothing' alternative;
 - The 'Do Minimum' Alternative;
 - Implementation of Consented Station Hill 2 (SH2) Scheme alternative;
 - Temporary Event Space;
 - Implementation of the Consented Station Hill 3 (SH3) Scheme Alternative; and
 - Alternative Designs.
- 4.6. In addition, for completeness a summary is included of the SH1 proposals.
- 4.7. It should be noted that from the outset, the Development has been designed to respond to the relevant planning policy objectives as set out in Chapter 1: Introduction for the mixed use redevelopment of the Site. Accordingly no alternative sites or alternative land uses have been considered by the Applicant. In addition, whilst the 'do-nothing' alternative has never been truly considered by the Applicant, guidance on the preparation of EIAs suggest that it is good practice to consider the evolution of a site in the absence of specific proposals i.e. the 'Do-Nothing' alternative. This is discussed below prior to the consideration of the main alternatives listed above.

The 'Do-Nothing' Alternative

- 4.8. The 'Do-Nothing' alternative refers to the option of leaving the Site in its current state. This option would result in a number of negative outcomes. These can be summarised as follows:
- Continued deterioration of the existing Site buildings and general Site environment with time;
 - Continued under-utilisation of the existing Site buildings. For example, the Western Tower is vacant and has been for some time, reflecting its inability to deliver commercial floorspace of a size and quality to suit the current market;
 - Continued increasing maintenance costs of the small proportion of occupied and operational on-Site buildings;
 - The existing buildings would be difficult to let over time;

- National and local planning objectives would not be met in terms of facilitating sustainable development through the intensive regeneration of town and city centre sites;
 - The local and regional socio-economic benefits of regeneration in terms of housing provision, employment and other commercial opportunities would not be achieved;
 - Significant opportunities to improve the quantum and quality of public open spaces, pedestrian permeability, together with the creation of Site vitality, a sense of place and community would be lost; and
 - The perception of crime at the Site would continue to blight this strategic location.
- 4.9. In addition to the above, if redevelopment is not taken forward, the existing Site presents little opportunity for natural ecological succession. The Site would simply deteriorate. As a result, the beneficial outcomes of leaving the Site in its current state are limited to:
- Zero costs associated with redevelopment;
 - The absence of disruption to Site neighbours during the demolition and construction works; and
 - No potential disruption to finite archaeological resources.
- 4.10. Overall, it is considered that the negative effects as a result of leaving the Site undeveloped considerably outweigh the beneficial effects that would arise from the status-quo. The expectation is that given RBC's and the Government's priorities for brownfield redevelopment and the local policy support provided by the Reading Central Area Action Plan, the Station Hill South SPD⁴ and Station Area Framework⁵ for the redevelopment of the Site, that the Site would be redeveloped in the medium to longer term, even in the absence of the current Development proposals.

The 'Do Minimum' Alternative

- 4.11. The 'Do Minimum' alternative would include the renovation and refurbishment of the existing buildings on the Site. However, this option would not include the comprehensive redevelopment of the Site and with limited new buildings there would be few opportunities to improve permeability through the Site. The negative issues associated with the Site (as set out above) would not be resolved and the aspirations and vision of RBC for this area (as defined in the adopted planning policy for the area as set out in Chapter 1: Introduction) would not be realised. Therefore this option was not considered by the Applicant to be a viable redevelopment solution.

Station Hill 1

- 4.12. An outline planning application was submitted in February 2007 (Planning Application Reference: 07/00188/OUT) for a mixed-use development located in the area that now comprises the northern area of the Site (between Garrard Street and Station Hill).
- 4.13. This development known as Station Hill 1 (SH1), proposed 6 buildings to provide up to 75,504m² of new office space, between 577-624 residential units, retail, community, leisure and cultural land uses, together with associated public open space, car parking and public transport improvements.
- 4.14. The Applicant subsequently acquired additional land around Friar Street and the application was withdrawn to enable a complete redesign of the scheme encompassing these additional areas of land.