

1.0 Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 The Oracle Limited Partnership (the Applicant) is applying for full planning permission (through two planning applications) for the redevelopment of two parcels of land both located at the eastern end of the Oracle Shopping Centre in Reading town centre (the Site). The Site, located in the administrative area of Reading Borough Council (RBC), extends to 1.53 hectares (ha) and is shown on Figures 1.1 and 1.2. The two applications comprise:
- A mixed-use development comprising part demolition of the former Debenhams department store, and construction of a new building comprising primarily residential dwellings with some commercial uses (the Yield Hall Place 1 Development); and
 - A mixed-use development comprising demolition of existing buildings including the former Vue Cinema, and construction of a new building comprising a replacement cinema, residential dwellings, and commercial uses (the Yield Hall Place 2 Development).
- 1.2 A full description of the Site and the Development (taken to mean the Yield Hall Place 1 and Yield Hall Place 2 proposals collectively) is provided in Chapter 3 'Site and Development Description' of this Environmental Statement (ES).

Planning History

- 1.3 The Applicant submitted two planning applications on the 19th December 2022 for development at Yield Hall Place 1 and Yield Hall Place 2 (under respective RBC planning application references 221916 and 221917). This ES has been prepared in support of the planning applications. Further information is provided in Chapter 3 of this ES.

Requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.4 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a systematic process by which development proposals deemed likely to have significant environmental effects are appraised. This helps to ensure that the importance of the identified significant environmental effects, and the scope for reducing them, are properly understood before a planning decision is made. Information on the likely significant effects of the Development has been gathered and is presented in this document, the ES. The ES will inform the decision-maker (in this case RBC) of the likely significant environmental effects of the Development both during construction and once complete and operational, and proposes mitigation measures to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects on the environment.
- 1.5 The Development falls within the category 'Urban Development Projects' (Schedule 2, 10, (b)) of the *Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017*ⁱ (the 'EIA Regulations'). The Site is not located in a 'sensitive area' as defined by the EIA Regulations however the Development exceeds the relevant Screening threshold (more than 150 dwellings). Accordingly, an EIA Screening Opinion was requested from RBC in December 2022 (see Appendix 1.1). On 30th June 2023, RBC adopted an Opinion that the Development could have significant effects on the environment relating to flooding, ecology, heritage, and skyline/townscape (see Appendix 1.2). Therefore, this ES has been prepared to accompany the planning applications for the Development. Further information on the assessment methodology is provided in Chapter 2 of this ES.

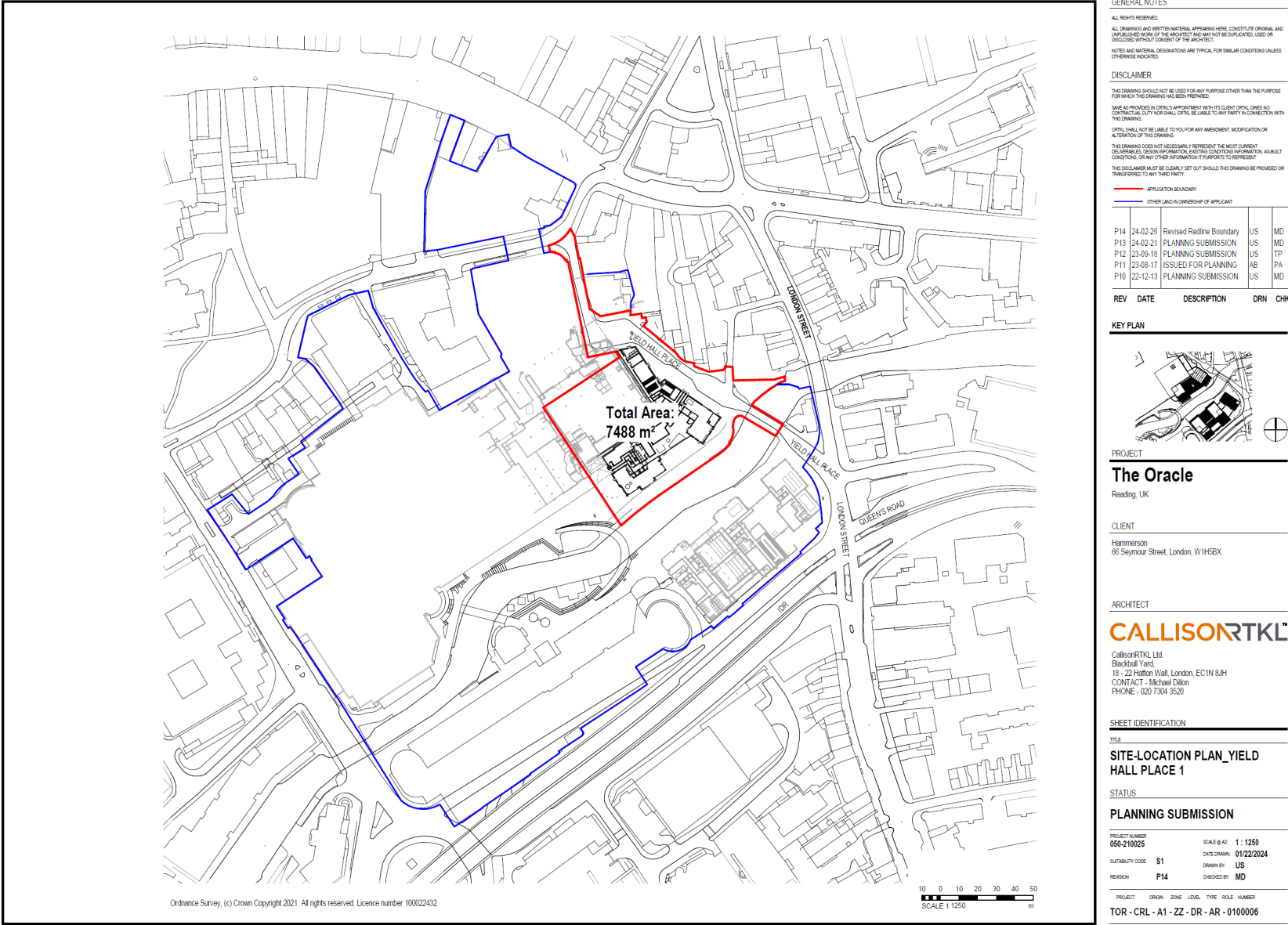


Figure 1.1 Yield Hall Place 1 Site Location Plan

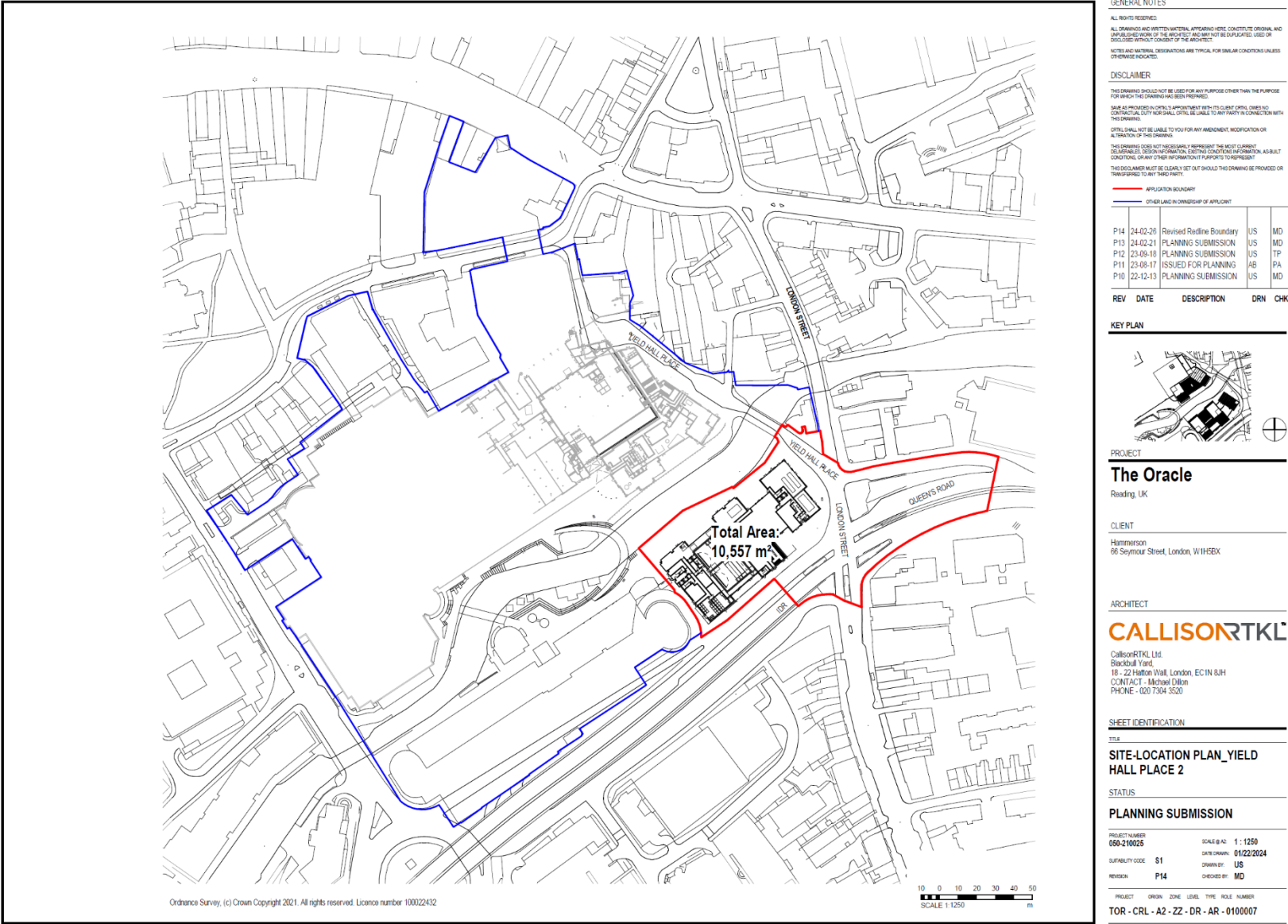


Figure 2.2 Yield Hall Place 2 Site Location Plan

Organisation of the Environmental Statement

- 1.6 Regulation 18 of the EIA Regulations sets out the information that an ES should include. Table 1.1 below shows where the Regulation 18 information has been provided in this ES. In addition, Appendix 1.3 sets out where the information required by Schedule 4 has been provided in this ES.

Table 1.1: Location of Information Required by Regulation 18 of the EIA Regulations

Specified Information		Location within ES
Reg 18 (3) An environmental statement is a statement which includes at least—		
(a)	a description of the proposed development comprising information on the Site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;	Chapter 3
(b)	a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment;	Technical Chapters 6-8
(c)	a description of any features of the proposed development, or measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment	Chapter 3 and Technical Chapters 6-8
(d)	a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment;	Chapter 4
(e)	a non-technical summary of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d);	Separate Non-Technical Summary (NTS) in Volume 2
(f)	any additional information specified in Schedule 4 relevant to the specific characteristics of the particular development or type of development and to the environmental features likely to be significantly affected	Technical Chapters 6-8
Reg 18 (4) An environmental statement must—		
(a)	where a scoping opinion or direction has been issued in accordance with regulation 15 or 16, be based on the most recent scoping opinion or direction issued (so far as the proposed development remains materially the same as the proposed development which was subject to that opinion or direction);	Chapter 2
(b)	include the information reasonably required for reaching a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment; and	Technical Chapters 6-8
(c)	be prepared, taking into account the results of any relevant UK environmental assessment, which are reasonably available to the person preparing the environmental statement, with a view to avoiding duplication of assessment.	No other environmental assessments have been undertaken in support of the planning applications for the Development.
Reg 18 (5) In order to ensure the completeness and quality of the environmental statement—		
(a)	the developer must ensure that the environmental statement is prepared by competent experts;	Each contributor to the ES has set out their credentials in Appendix 1.4 Statement of Expertise.

Specified Information		Location within ES
(b)	the environmental statement must be accompanied by a statement from the developer outlining the relevant expertise or qualifications of such experts.	See Appendix 1.4 Statement of Expertise.

ES Structure

- 1.7 This ES comprises nine chapters, supported by figures and technical appendices. A NTS of the ES is provided within a separate Volume 2. Table 1.2 sets out the structure of the ES.

Table 1.2: ES Structure

Volume 1 – Main Text and Figures		
Chapter No.	Chapter Title	Description
1	Introduction	Introduction to the ES, EIA requirements, details of project team, ES organisation and availability.
2	EIA Methodology	Methods used to prepare each chapter, description of ES structure and content, generic significance criteria, scoping and consultation.
3	Site and Development Description	Site description and details of the Development.
4	Alternatives and Design Evolution	Outline of the main alternatives considered by the Applicant.
5	Construction Methodology and Phasing	Details of anticipated programme for the Development and construction methodology.
6	Biodiversity	Assessment of the Development's effects relating to ecology and nature conservation.
7	Water Resources and Flood Risk	Assessment of the Development's effects on water resources and flood risk.
8	Built Heritage, Townscape and Visual	Assessment of the Development's effects on built heritage, townscape and visual receptors.
9	Summary and Conclusions	Summary of the residual and interactive effects of the Development.
Volume 2 – Technical Appendices		
Standalone Non-Technical Summary		

Project Team

- 1.8 The ES presents the results of technical studies carried out in conjunction with several specialist consultants appointed by the Applicant. The project team is listed in Table 1.3 along with their respective discipline and contribution to the ES. A 'statement of expertise' as required by Regulation 18 (5)(b) of the EIA Regulations, is provided in Appendix 1.4

Table 1.3: Project Team

Organisation	Expertise / Competence
The Oracle Limited Partnership	Applicant
Turley	Planning Consultant; Built Heritage and Townscape Character and Visual Amenity Assessment
Tyler Grange	Biodiversity
Stantec	EIA Coordination; Water Resources and Flood Risk

Environmental Statement Availability

1.9 The ES is available to view online: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-applications/search-planning-applications/>

1.10 Comments on the planning applications can either be made via RBC's website or can be forwarded to the Planning Department during normal office hours at the following address:

Reading Borough Council
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading, RG1 2LU

Tel: 0118 937 3787

Email: planning.adminstration@reading.gov.uk

1.11 Copies of the ES can be purchased from the Environmental Planning Team at Stantec:

Environmental Planning Team
Stantec
10th Floor
8 Cherry Street
Birmingham, B2 5AL

Tel: 0121 633 2900

Email: IEPenquiries@stantec.com

1.12 The ES may be purchases as a whole document or in separate volumes, the costs for which are as follows:

- NTS - £10
- ES Main Text, Figures and Appendices - £250
- Full copy (Volumes 1with NTS) of the ES on a USB device - £20

REFERENCES

ⁱ The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 SI 571, as amended by 2018/659