

Date: 19 February 2025
Application: 250277



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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Screening or Scoping Response Letter

**Application
Number:** 250277

**Site
Address:** Shinfield Park, Shinfield Road, Shinfield, Berkshire

**Expiry
Date:** 26 February 2025

Proposal: Screening Opinion application for an Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed redevelopment of Shinfield Park.

Dear Susie,

Thank you for your request for a Screening Opinion for the proposed redevelopment of Shinfield Park. The application has been screened in accordance with Regulation 6 (2) of the EIA Regulations 2017 (Town and Country Planning Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017) and the supporting Planning Practice Guidance and this is set out in Tables 1 and 2 below.

In summary, due to the existing land use and context of the application site, it is not considered at this stage and based on the information submitted that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should accompany any forthcoming planning application.

Yours sincerely,

Benjamin Hindle

Site description and background information

The site, known as Shinfield Park, is located in Reading and is approximately 5.5 hectares in size. It is located within the administrative boundary of WBC, close to the boundary with Reading Borough Council to the north. The Site is locally known as “Shire Hall” and was originally built as the County Hall for Berkshire County Council.

The Site currently contains a 23,730 m² geometric-shaped office building that extends up to four storeys, with additional basement parking. Until recently, there was also a 3,219 m² detached three storey modular office building on the Site, which had a long-term temporary planning permission but has since been removed so is not included within the baseline conditions of the Site. The office buildings are served by extensive parking facilities, with the existing provision accommodating 1,520 spaces.

The Site is situated near the B3270 (Lower Earley Way) and is accessed via Whitley Wood Way to the east. It also includes internal access roads, surface level car parking, and several established trees. The surrounding environment includes ancient woodland, such as Nores Hill Wood to the north, and local wildlife sites.

Screening Opinion:

Before submitting an application, developers who are in doubt as to whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required, may request a screening opinion from the Local Planning Authority in accordance with Regulations 6 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations) 2017 (the ‘2017 Regulations’). The request seeks to determine whether or not the proposal is for a form of development that is covered by Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations and whether or not EIA is required.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 set out that Environmental Impact Assessment’s (EIA’s) are needed for certain developments whereby the proposal is to have likely significant effects on the environment. The application seeks a Screening Opinion to be considered in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Regulations 2017). The key issues for consideration are:

- whether the proposed development would comprise a Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 development for the purposes of the Regulations; and if so,
- whether the development is EIA development requiring any future planning application to be accompanied by a full Environmental Statement being mindful of factors such as the nature of the development, size and location and the requirements of Schedule 3 of the Regulations.

In undertaking the assessment, the applicant is obliged to provide enough information about the proposed development for the Council to make an adequate assessment, such as providing a description of the development and a plan of the site location. Such information in combination with an agreeable preliminary screening table has been received for this submission against these requirements.

National Planning Practice Guidance

Paragraphs 033, 057 and 058 of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provide guidance on whether significant effects are likely. In general, the more environmentally sensitive the location, the lower the threshold will be at which significant effects are likely. Paragraph 033 states that all developments in, or partly in, such areas should be screened. These are:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest and European sites;
- National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and
- World Heritage Sites and scheduled monuments.

The site is not located within those designated areas outlined above. The provisions of Schedule 2 apply given the nature of the proposal.

Schedule 1 Development:

It is not considered that the proposed development falls within any of the categories of development listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulations, which comprise potentially the most significantly harmful forms of development in terms of environmental risk. As such an assessment of the proposal is required to determine whether it falls within the remit of Schedule 2 of the Regulation.

Schedule 2 Development:

Schedule 2 development is deemed to be those forms of development listed within Schedule 2 of the Regulations which:

- has any part of the development located wholly or partly in a 'sensitive area' as defined in Regulation 2(1) or
- meets one of the relevant criteria or exceeds one of the relevant thresholds listed in Schedule 2. In having regard to criteria i) above,

As above, it is not considered that the proposal constitutes Schedule 1 development. Table 1 below sets out the indicative criteria as per Schedule 2(ii), thresholds and key issues to be considered in determining whether a development is likely to be EIA development identified in the Planning Practice Guidance.

Table 1:

Development Type	Schedule 2 Threshold	PPG Threshold	Key Issues
10(a) Industrial Estate development projects	(i) The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares.	Site area of the new development is more than 20 hectares.	Potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise.

Whilst Officers note the proposal would sit larger than the 0.5 hectare threshold as outlined within Schedule 2, it would sit notably below the indicative PPG threshold of 20 hectares at c5.5 hectares. Furthermore, as above, the development is not located within a sensitive area as defined by the regulations. However, as per the PPG the key issues to consider are potential increases in traffic to the highway network, emissions and noise.

Planning History

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
001991	Proposed erection of building for b1 use with related alterations to access and car parking.	Approved – 11/04/2001
062435	Proposed erection of a building to provide additional office accommodation.	Approved – 05/04/2006
081258	Proposed erection of a building to provide additional office accommodation. (renewal of consent F/2006/6836)	Approved - 31/10/2008
110624	Proposed variation to condition 1 of planning consent F/2008/1861 to allow the retention of the existing modular building for a further 10 years.	Approved – 09/12/2011
213196	Application to vary conditions 1, 3 and 4 of planning consent 110624 (VAR/2011/2182), which relates to 'the variation of condition 1 of planning consent 081258 (F/2008/1861) for the proposed erection of a building to provide additional office accommodation'. Condition 1 refers to the retention of the existing modular building for a further 10 years, and the variation is to enable the retention of the temporary building for a further 3 years. Conditions 3 and 4 relate to the habitat management and travel plans and the variation is to provide amended plans.	Approved – 19/01/2022
220928	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed replacement of 3no. boiler flues to the main roof.	Approved – 18/05/2022

Screening Assessment

Table 2 below sets out the screening assessment for the site for the purpose of an EIA with reference to the preliminary screening table provided by the applicant, which is agreeable by the LPA.

Natural resources				
1.1 Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	Yes	The development proposed will result in physical changes in the topography of the site. Earthworks will be necessary to prepare the site, such as grading, excavation, and the installation of erosion control measures such as silt fences and sediment basins. The operation phase will maintain these changes, with the addition of built structures and infrastructure altering the natural landform.	No	Erosion control measures such as silt fences, sediment basins, and vegetation cover will prevent soil erosion during and after construction. Revegetation of disturbed areas will help stabilise the soil naturally. With mitigation measures in place (including landscaped design), no significant environmental impacts will arise.
1.2 Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources above or below ground such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy which are non-renewable or in short supply?	Yes	Through excavation and grading the development will disturb soil and sediment. However, as the site is previously developed (brownfield), this is likely to be limited. Construction of the development has been stated to include material such as 'concrete, steel, and aggregates', which are non-renewable. Furthermore, an element of water consumption will be evident to suppress dust, undertake wheel washing and mix concrete/aggregates. Energy consumption will be from non-renewable sources such as petrol, diesel and electricity to power construction machinery, contractor vehicles and equipment. Turning to the operational phase, the development will require energy and water for heating, cooling, lighting, landscape maintenance and individual consumption etc which may utilise energy which is non-renewable.	No	The development at construction level will inevitably utilise non-renewable energy, however, this will be aimed to be reduced with sustainable measures incorporated in line with best practice. Whilst earthworks will be required to carry out the development, the retention of natural landforms will be preferred during the plan making and construction phase and sustainable design principles (i.e. natural soil stabilisation) will be integrated to minimise this potential impact. During operation, the project has been outlined to be designed to achieve BREEAM Excellent and EPC A ratings as a minimum, ensuring high standards of environmental performance. Taking the development as a whole, significant impacts to the use of natural resources are unlikely to arise. This can be managed through the planning process, combined with best practice guidance followed by the applicant.

1.3 Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, e.g. forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?	Yes	As per the applicant's submission, the area around the project site contains several important, high-quality, or scarce resources that could be affected by the Proposed Development. The development lays within a close proximity to ancient woodland to the north. This is listed on the Priority Habitat Inventory as Deciduous Woodland and includes areas of Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat. There is also an area of Priority Woodland Habitat to the south-west. Furthermore, the development site itself contains existing ponds in the southwest. In terms of habitat provision (to be discussed later within this screening opinion), these resources are locally important, and the project will need to consider measures to mitigate any potential adverse effects to these areas.	No	Significant environmental impacts are not envisaged to arise. Appropriate buffer zones from the Site boundary will be set to safeguard ancient woodland and protected valued trees, as well as provide water quality protection and flood management for the River Loddon and its floodplain. These matters can be controlled and assessed within the planning process.
Waste				
2.1 Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes	The development would give rise to waste arising from the materials from demolition such as concrete, bricks, metal, and glass. Further waste is inevitable at construction phase, via material packets, cut offs etc. During construction, waste will be generated from activities such as site clearance, excavation, and building works. This includes materials like soil, concrete, bricks, and packaging. Much of this material can be recycled or repurposed by aggregate recycling companies, many of which are located in close proximity to the site. During the operational phase, the facility will produce waste from daily activities, including office waste, maintenance waste, and potentially small volumes of hazardous waste (dependent on the operations conducted). Additionally, the development will generate solid wastes typical of commercial developments, such as general and recyclable waste.	No	During demolition and construction, a waste management plan will be implemented to address waste generation, segregation, storage, and disposal, prioritising re-use and recycling where possible. During the operational phase, a waste management plan will focus on minimising waste generation from day-to-day activities and promoting sustainable practices. Significant impacts arising from construction and operation waste unlikely and can be adequately controlled by construction and operational management plans and by following best practice guidance.
Pollution and nuisances				

3.1 Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	No	Construction/ Demolition - There is a potential for dust emissions to occur. Dust generation can be exacerbated by dry and windy conditions, which may give rise to fine particles becoming airborne and impacting air quality in the surrounding area. This is particularly important as the site is located north of Wokingham Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Further, emissions of pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and particulate matter from construction and operational vehicles/ equipment may impact this area. There is also expected to be a forecast increase at this stage of 114 daily Heavy-Duty Vehicle (HDV) movements as a result of the Project. These often utilise diesel which will be released into the environment as well as trigger dust spreading if not correctly managed. The Proposed Development is primarily for employment land use which is not expected to release hazardous substances or toxic emissions to air. There is not anticipated to be a requirement to store large volumes of hazardous materials. Any such materials required to be used as part of the employment floorspace would be stored and handled in accordance with relevant legislation.	No	Details pertaining to a demolition and construction management (including dust suppression, dust sweeps, ground damping, site and vehicle management with regular site inspections and wheel washing systems) will be included within the Air Quality Assessment submitted within the planning application. Given the increase in HDV trips associated with the proposed industrial estate compared to the existing office development, emissions from road traffic will be assessed in an Air Quality Assessment which will be submitted and assessed with the planning application to identify effects and any appropriate mitigation measures. Turning to vehicle management, a Travel Plan will be submitted with the planning application which will set out measures such as vehicle routing and the promotion of sustainable transport modes rather than single occupancy vehicle movements. In contrast to the use of HDV's, the proposed Development is expected to generate fewer Light Duty Vehicle (LDV) trips compared to the existing office development, with a reduction at this stage forecast to be 209 LDV trips daily. This is combination with the travel plan and construction management/ AQM plan will limit any significant environmental impacts arising from the release of pollutants. Overall, there is expected to be an overall reduction of 95 daily traffic trips compared to the existing use and this change will be considered within an Air Quality Assessment. In line with the mitigation accompanying a planning application, significant effects on air quality associated with the Proposed Development are not expected.
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3.2 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes	The development is likely to cause some noise, vibration and light during the demolition and construction phase due to the use of heavy machinery and construction activities. This could affect nearby sensitive receptors north and west of the site. During the operational phase, the project may generate noise and light, particularly from vehicle movements, car parking and yards on the site and vehicles on the surrounding road network. Operational vibration impacts are not expected due to the nature of the proposed use and the distances to the nearest vibration sensitive receptors.	No The applicant outlines that a FCEMP will be prepared and implemented by the construction contractors. Best practice measures will be applied to noise, vibration and light mitigation techniques to minimise their impact and generation. No significant effects are expected from these matters. A noise impact assessment will be undertaken to inform the design of the scheme, accounting for noise sensitive receptors. Mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce noise impacts if and as necessary. Offsite adverse noise impacts from traffic movements are not expected to be significant and will be assessed as part of the noise impact assessment. Operational lighting will be designed to the minimum standard for health and safety so light is provided only where and when it is needed. Any obtrusive light will be limited to levels established by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance. With mitigation measures in place, likely significant environmental effects are not anticipated.
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3.3 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	Yes	The applicant has outlined that the Geoenvironmental and Geotechnical Assessment outlined potential sources of contamination including made ground from previous development and fill material, which may contain metals, PAH, TPH, asbestos, and ground gas. Additionally, the applicant has outlined that a diesel storage tank and electrical transformers on site has potential to release TPH and polychlorinated biphenyls, respectively. Active pathways for these contaminants include dermal contact or ingestion with soil and groundwater, contact with buried services, and migration of ground gas into buildings. The site is underlain by a secondary aquifer, making groundwater moderately sensitive to contamination, and nearby surface water features, such as ponds, may be in hydraulic continuity with the groundwater.	No	Based on Geoenvironmental and Geotechnical Assessments, the project is not expected to lead to significant contamination risks with mitigation measures in place. Such mitigation measures have been stated to include: • Using engineered hardstanding and clean capping to prevent soil contact; • Confirming appropriate water supply pipework with the local water company, and; • Assessing materials for off-site disposal according to WM3 guidelines. A materials management plan will be required for reused or imported materials. Ground improvement techniques will mitigate settlement risks and prevent contamination migration. Potential groundwater on site will be managed through localised pumping and pre-treatment if necessary. Relic foundations and subterranean structures will be removed and backfilled to prevent contamination pathways, which address potential contaminants like metals PAH, TPH, asbestos, and ground gas, ensuring protection of human health and the environment. The Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) strategy outlined in the Hydrology Note will manage surface water using lined permeable paving, rain gardens, bio-retention areas, filter strips, and below-ground tanks to minimise the impact on runoff quantity and quality.
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				Further groundwater monitoring will be conducted to clarify the groundwater regime at the site. The project is not expected to lead to significant risks of contamination, provided the proposed strategies are effectively implemented and managed.
3.4 Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage, e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	The Project lies to the north of the Wokingham AQMA.	No	An Air Quality Assessment will be undertaken to assess existing pollution levels and identify sensitive receptors. It will also detail air quality management measures that will mitigate against impacts of air pollution. With this information submitted as a part of the planning application, no significant impact to the environment is envisaged to arise from the proposal.

Population and human health

4.1 Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?	Yes	The Proposed Development will not be registered as Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Site under the regulations and therefore is not at risk of major accidents during demolition, construction or operation. The site is located within the Outer Consultation Zone of the detailed emergency planning zone (DEPZ). Planning applications for any re-use or re-classification of an existing development that will lead to a material increase in the size of an existing development (greater than 500 persons) requires consultation from the ONR/ EPO.	No	Whilst located within the OCZ and the fact that the proposals constitute re-classification of an existing office use, the proposal would not significantly increase the non-residential population of those on-site. Accordingly, no significant impacts to risk/management of the DEPZ will arise from the proposal.
4.2 Will the project present a risk to the population (having regard to population density) and their human health during construction, operation or decommissioning (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)	Yes	During the construction phase, activities can release dust, fumes, and particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) can cause respiratory issues and other health problems for nearby residents and workers. There is also a risk of pollutants, such as oils, chemicals, and construction debris, contaminating local water sources through surface runoff and accidental spills.	No	Dust control measures, such as using water sprays, dust suppressants, and covering materials, will be employed to reduce dust emissions during construction. A management plan can be secured within the planning process to oversee these aims.

		The applicant has outlined that in the operational phase, ongoing activities may contribute to air pollution through emissions from vehicles and equipment, affecting air quality and posing health risks to the local population. Additionally, operational activities could lead to accidental releases of pollutants into water sources, impacting both groundwater and surface water quality. The site is located within the Outer Consultation Zone of the detailed emergency planning zone (DEPZ). Planning applications for any re-use or re-classification of an existing development that will lead to a material increase in the size of an existing development (greater than 500 persons) requires consultation from the ONR/ EPO.	Water management measures, including silt fences, sediment traps, and proper storage of hazardous materials, will prevent surface runoff and spills. As above, A management plan can be secured within the planning process to oversee these aims. Proper disposal and management of waste materials will also be used to prevent contamination. Additionally, ensuring that all workers are trained in health and safety practices and equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE) will help protect their health and safety. The implementation of the above measures is likely to prevent significant environmental effects arising from the development. Whilst located within the OCZ and the fact that the proposals constitute re-classification of an existing office use, the proposal would not significantly increase the non-residential population of those on-site. Accordingly, no significant impacts to risk/ management of the DEPZ will arise from the proposal.
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Water resources			
5.1 Are there any water resources including surface waters, e.g. rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?	No	The Site is in Flood Zone 1, indicating a low risk of flooding from rivers. There is no risk of coastal flooding. There is a low susceptibility to surface water flooding, which must be managed to prevent adverse impacts to the site and surrounding area.	No Through a mixture of erosion and sediment control, SuDS and Ancient Woodland hydrology significant adverse effects on water resources are not expected. Further groundwater monitoring will be conducted to ensure the effectiveness of these measures.
Biodiversity (species and habitats)			
6.1 Are there any protected areas which are designated or classified for their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, or any non-designated / non-classified areas which are important or sensitive for reasons of their terrestrial, avian and marine ecological value, located on or around the location and which could be affected by the project? (e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other water-bodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, undesignated nature reserves or parks. (Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local)).	Yes	Several protected and sensitive areas around the project site that could be affected. These include Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and one Local Nature Reserve (LNR) 300m east of the site: • Shinfield Park • Nores Hill LWS • The Grove LWS • Pearmans Copse LWS No Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are present within 2 km of the site. The only international designated site for nature conservation is the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA), the nearest component of which lies over 6 km from the site. No adverse impact will arise from this separation. Habitats of note include: Ancient woodland (bordering the site to the northwest and additional areas to the north and east), Priority Habitat Inventory areas of Deciduous Woodland, Woodpasture and Parkland BAP Priority Habitat Veteran Oak tree (on the western site boundary).	No An Ecological Appraisal (including bat and GCN surveys) alongside a Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Metric will detail appropriate mitigation measures, to manage and mitigate impacts on ecology and biodiversity. Furthermore, the applicant intends to implement buffer zones, protective fencing, habitat management, and regular monitoring. Subject to the implementation of appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures above, no important ecological features are likely to be significantly affected by the development.

6.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?	Yes	Habitats within and adjacent to the site have potential to support protected species including roosting bats, great crested newt, dormouse, hedgehog, reptiles and nesting birds. Vegetation clearance, demolition works and general disturbance from construction activities could affect protected species. The applicant is preparing suitable surveys to determine the presence/likely absence of protected species at the site. To date, these have outlined the likely absence of great crested newt, reptiles and roosting bats from the site.	No	Where possible, construction activities should be scheduled outside the breeding season for birds to minimise disturbance. The applicant has outlined that safeguards will also be implemented during clearance works to minimise potential impacts on dormouse, reptiles and hedgehog. The implementation and adherence to the FCEMP will help ensure the safeguarding of biodiversity. The opportunity exists to create new habitat on-site and provide faunal enhancement features. Subject to implementation of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures, significant effects on protected species are assessed unlikely.
Landscape and visual				

7.1 Are there any areas or features on or around the location which are protected for their landscape and scenic value, and/or any non-designated / non-classified areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the project?¹ Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	The River Loddon Valued Landscape is located 1 km east of the Site. As above, the areas surrounding the site (but not overlapping it) are also in part designated locally for their habitat value. A Special Character Area is designated around St Mary's Church on Church Lane in Shinfield, 700m south of the Site. Further, the centre of Arborfield (circa 4km to the south-east), contains a high concentration of listed buildings and is designated as a Conservation Area. The site shares no intervisibility with either of these areas. PRoW SHIN16, 17,18 and 20 traverse an undulating area of farmland between Three Mile Cross, Spencer's Wood and Shinfield. From elevated sections of these paths there are views across the M4 to Reading in which parts of the existing development on the Site are visible above the surrounding trees. A cricket pitch on the edge of Shinfield at Brookers Hill shares a similar elevation and view towards the woodland surrounding the Site.	No	The proposal is well screened behind dense, existing vegetation and would replace the existing development. It is proposed that this vegetative screening will be enhanced alongside the development. However, given the site's proximity to the valued landscape (locally designated) and priority habitats a limited degree of harm will arise to their existing character. Notwithstanding, the visual impact would be limited, particularly due to the lack of intervisibility the site has with surrounding undulating land forms. It is considered that with careful siting and design as indicated, the proposal could provide an enhancement on the character of these surroundings when contrasted to the existing development. Overall, there is good potential for effective mitigation to be implemented in order to limit adverse effects and potentially improve the character of protected surroundings.
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¹ See question 8.1 for consideration of impacts on heritage designations and receptors, including on views to, within and from designated areas.

7.2 Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people? (If so, from where, what direction, and what distance?)	Yes	High degrees of visibility of development on the Site are experienced from the B3270 road/cycle way for a distance of 400 m between the Site and the Old Shinfield Road Roundabout, for 100 m along Whitley Wood Lane and for a length of 300 m along PRoW SHIN10 following the northern edge of the Site. The development would be visible to users of Shinfield Park Nores Hill LWS including PRoW SHIN10, users of the cycle route that passes the eastern site boundary, users of the B3270 and Whitley Wood Lane, and residents of properties on Pascal Crescent, Cirrus Drive, and Greenwich Road. In the medium distance (100-500m), there is potential for parts of Proposed Development on the Site to be visible to users of PRoW SHIN8, SHIN8A, and SHIN9, users of the cycle route at the western end of Cutbush Lane in Shinfield, and residents of properties within this range. The rear of properties to the north of Brookers Hill at Shinfield have the most convenient vantage point in this direction although there is likely little to no visibility of the development except for glimpses of the roofline in winter conditions. In the long distance (over 500m), only the tallest parts of the existing Proposed Development are visible to users of PRoW SHIN3, SHIN4, SHIN5, and SHIN6 within the River Loddon valued landscape area, users of PRoW SHIN23 and SHIN24 within the Spencer's Wood Southern Ridge valued landscape area, and residents of Little Lea Cottage (Grade II listed) 1.3km to the west of the Site. Long distance panoramic views toward the Site are available from PRoW SHIN16, SHIN17, SHIN18 and SHIN20 to the south- west, with the tallest parts of the existing built form within the Site visible as a landmark above the woodland canopy.	No	Whilst there are likely to be effects on a few of these receptors, the majority are expected to experience effects that are not significant, due to several mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the design and planning of the Proposed Development. Visual screening techniques, such as planting, will help to reduce the visibility of the Proposed Development from key viewpoints, particularly from nearby residential areas and public rights of way. The applicant has shown that the design of the buildings will be sensitive to the local context, with careful consideration of scale, massing, and materials to ensure they complement the surrounding landscape and townscape. Buffer zones will be established around sensitive areas, such as the Local Wildlife Site and ancient woodland, to protect these valuable habitats from potential adverse effects. Overall, it is predominantly local visual receptor that are most likely to be affected by the Proposed Development, and there is potential for effective mitigation to be implemented in order to limit adverse effects, so overall significant adverse effects are unlikely.
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Cultural heritage/archaeology

8.1 Are there any areas or features which are protected for their cultural heritage or archaeological value, or any non-designated / classified areas and/or features of cultural heritage or archaeological importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project (including potential impacts on setting, and views to, from and within)? Where designated indicate level of designation (international, national, regional or local).	Yes	Grade II Listed lodge to Meteorological Office is located approximately 215 m northeast of the site, and has historical associations with the RAF. The Shire Hall building, while of some historic and communal interest, does not met the criteria for identification as a designated or non-designated heritage asset. Nores Hill Wood, ancient woodland located to the north-west of the site has been disturbed by past activities, with any remains being of low to negligible heritage significance.	No	The redevelopment would not harm the heritage significance of the Grade II Listed lodge due to the lack of intervisibility, the severed historical association and retention of its heritage interests and setting. The demolition of Shire Hall is not considered a heritage concern as it does not meet the criteria for heritage designation. As per the LPA's internal GIS mapping, the potential for archaeological remains and paleoenvironmental deposits to be present within the Site is considered very low if not negligible. With mitigation measures in place, likely significant environmental effects are not anticipated.
Transport and Access				
9.1 Are there any routes on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities which could be affected by the project.	Yes	There is an existing footpath (SHIN10) running through and adjacent to the site. This footpath provides a route from Whitley Wood Lane to Railton Close. There are shared footway/cycleways connecting the site with the wider area, including residential areas to the northeast and south, which provide good pedestrian links to residential areas in all directions.	No	Consideration will be given to potential enhancements to the PRoW to encourage use and benefit existing users. No likely significant impacts on the environment will arise from the development in this respect.

9.2 Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project	Yes	The site is well located for access to the M4 J11 via the B3270, which could be susceptible to congestion, particularly during peak hours. There was an internal bus stop with a limited service on one of the park and ride routes (603), but this service has been amended and no longer serves the site. Another bus stop on Shinfield Road provides more frequent services, which could be impacted by increased traffic from the development.	No	The development would generate fewer trips than the existing office development could generate and affords frequent and desirable existing bus, pedestrian and cycle links. It is of note as per the applicant's submission that the existing office use will share its peak usage with the surrounding highway network, whereas the types of occupier the Proposed Development will attract typically generate fewer network peak hour trips due to differing shift patterns; this is particularly true of any businesses operating 24/7. Therefore, it is considered that a degree of congestion limitation could arise from the development. It is not considered the proposal would give rise to any significant environmental impacts in line with increased congestion.
Land use				

10.1 Are there existing land uses or community facilities on or around the location which could be affected by the project? E.g. housing, densely populated areas, industry / commerce, farm/agricultural holdings, forestry, tourism, mining, quarrying, facilities relating to health, education, places of worship, leisure /sports / recreation.	Yes	Pascal Crescent, Cirrus Drive, Greenwich Road, and Grebe Court are residential areas that lay adjacent to the site.	No	The development would afford notable landscape buffer zones and native planting combined with landscape retention to screen the development from visual residential receptors. Furthermore, the buildings are designed in a fashion that blends into the existing environment without acting as a visual eyesore. Best practices during construction will minimise disturbances through noise, air and light, and monitoring will ensure the effectiveness of these measures. No detrimental impact to the sensitive receptors adjoining are anticipated to arise from the proposal subject to careful design and suitable screening/ buffering.
10.2 Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?	No	Future land use plans around Shinfield Park include the extant South of the M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL), which aims to be completed by 2026. The proposal is unlikely to have any significant impact on this wider development allocation.	N/A	
Land stability and climate				
11.1 Is the location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	No	The site is not located within an area of any known earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions. The Site is within Flood Zone 1, with limited susceptibility to surface water flooding and remaining unaffected by extreme climatic conditions. Surface water will be managed by SuDS (accounting for climate change. Ground stability will be monitored and potentially enhanced throughout the course of the development.	N/A	
Cumulative effects				

12.1 Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?	No	Future land use plans around Shinfield Park include the extant South of the M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL), which aims to be completed by 2026. The proposal is unlikely to have any significant impact on this wider development allocation.	N/A	
Transboundary effects				
13.1 Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?²	No		N/A	

Requirement for an EIA

The proposal is considered to fall under category 10(a) of Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The development site is greater than 0.5 hectares. At 5.5 hectares, the Site falls above the indicative criteria and the third screening threshold.

However, the screening assessment undertaken by the LPA with reference to the applicant's submission identifies that the principal potential for environmental effects arising from the proposed development are both localised and temporary, mainly arising from the demolition and construction phases of development. As set out in Table 2, none of these effects are considered to have the potential to be significant in the context of the 2017 Regulations.

All effects can either be prevented, mitigated or compensated for through the planning process, following construction best practice guidance and through the sensitive design and siting of the development (including the provision of green infrastructure, land management and drainage).

Based on the submitted information and site background, the proposed development is not considered to be EIA development. This view is in accordance with Schedule 3 (Selection Criteria for Screening Schedule 2 Development) as well as the criteria provided in the Planning Practice Guidance.

Conclusion

In summary, it is not considered that an Environmental Impact Assessment should accompany any forthcoming application for the site.

Yours sincerely,

² The Regulations require consideration of the transboundary nature of the impact. Due to the England's geographical location the vast majority of TCPA cases are unlikely to result in transboundary impacts.

Benjamin Hindle
Principal Planning Officer

Authorised by:



Connor Corrigan – Head of Strategic Development

19.02.2025

