



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared on behalf of Richborough in connection with an outline planning application for the development of land at Body's Farm, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood.

1.1.2 The ES presents the results of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the potentially significant environmental effects (beneficial and adverse) arising from the proposed development. The ES is submitted with the planning application to inform the decision making process.

1.1.3 The planning application is being submitted to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in its role as the Local Planning Authority. The formal description of development proposed for the application is as follows:

"Outline planning permission is sought with all matters reserved for future determination, save for the means of access via Basingstoke Road, for: up to 420 dwellings (Use Class C3), an 80 bed care home (Use Class C2), 1ha of employment land (Use Class E(g), primary school (Use Class F1), local centre (Use Class E(a), (b) and (c)), GP Surgery (Use Class E(e), sports pitch and changing facility, public open space, SANG provision and associated infrastructure."

1.1.4 The application site ("the site") is edged red on the submitted Application Boundary Plan (Figure 1.1). An overview of the site and its surroundings is set out in Chapter 3 of the ES and details of the proposed development are described in Chapter 4. This includes the quantum and parameters for the outline proposals, which have formed the basis of the EIA. A Development Framework Plan is also submitted.

1.2 Environmental Impact Assessment

1.2.1 EIA is a process, the aim of which is to protect the environment, by ensuring that a local planning authority, when deciding to whether to grant planning permission for a project which is likely to have significant effects on the environment, does so in the full knowledge of the likely significant effects, and takes this into account in the decision making process.



1.3 Requirement for EIA - Legislation

- 1.3.1 The requirement for EIA derives from European Union Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by 2014/52/EU), which is enacted into English legislation through the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The EIA for the proposed development has been carried out in accordance with the Regulations, as amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018.

1.4 EIA Screening

- 1.4.1 The 2017 Regulations include Schedule 1 developments, listing developments for which EIA is mandatory. EIA is required for Schedule 2 development above certain threshold criteria, where it is likely to give rise to significant environmental effects. Selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development are set out in Schedule 3 of the Regulations.
- 1.4.2 The Proposed Development instead falls for consideration under Schedule 2 of the Regulations. The Applicant submitted a formal request for an EIA Screening Opinion on 17th May 2024, to confirm this interpretation and whether, in the Council's opinion, EIA was necessary. A copy can be found at **Appendix 1.1**.
- 1.4.3 WBC issued its formal Screening Opinion on 20th June 2024 (LPA reference 241261) (copy at **Appendix 1.2**). This stated that, in the Council's view, the development could be considered to be likely to have significant effects on the environment, by virtue of factors such as its nature, size and location, in relation to impacts on:
- 1) Population and Human Health - the site is located within Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) and the development would result in a significant increase in population that would result; and
 - 2) Visual - the proposed development would be a significant urban extension to Spencers Wood, have a significant urbanising effect beyond the settlement boundary and be highly visible compared to the existing, whereby parts of the site are likely to be sensitive to the proposed development.



- 1.4.4 The Council therefore concluded the proposed development was EIA development, resulting in a positive Screening Opinion (that EIA was required).

1.5 EIA Scoping

- 1.5.1 An EIA Scoping Request was submitted to the Council on 14th June 2024, to help determine the extent of issues to be considered in the EIA and reported in the ES. A copy of the Scoping Opinion request submitted to the Council can be found at **Appendix 1.3**.
- 1.5.2 WBC adopted its formal Scoping Opinion on 16th July 2024, a copy of which can be found at **Appendix 1.4**. The Scoping Opinion confirmed that a focused EIA was appropriate in this instance. The Scoping Opinion has informed the EIA process and the production of this ES.

1.6 Structure of the Environmental Statement

- 1.6.1 This ES reports the findings of the EIA, and forms part of the information that WBC will rely on to decide the outline planning application, in consultation with any statutory consultees and others.
- 1.6.2 It has also been prepared having regard to the EIA Regulations and associated guidance, including the Planning Practice Guidance. The scope of the EIA has been agreed with the Local Planning Authority.
- 1.6.3 The ES comprises three volumes and a Non-Technical Summary (NTS), as follows:
- Non-Technical Summary
 - Volume 1 – Environmental Statement
 - Volume 2 – Figures
 - Volume 3 – Appendices
- 1.6.4 Table 1.1 below provides an overview of the ES Structure and who in the Applicant's professional team was responsible for producing each chapter.

Table 1.1 – Overview of ES Structure		
Chapter	Author	Appendix
Chapter 1 – Introduction	Marrons	1
Chapter 2 – EIA Approach and Methodology	Marrons	N/A
Chapter 3 – Site and Surroundings	Marrons	N/A
Chapter 4 – Description of Proposed Development	Marrons	N/A
Chapter 5 – Landscape and Visual	Pegasus Group	5
Chapter 6 – Human Health Effects arising from location within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ)	Katmal Limited and Mike Thorne Associates	6
Chapter 7 – Summary of Environmental Effects	Marrons	N/A

1.6.5 The ES includes several appendices, and each appendix is numbered against the chapter in which the item is first referred to, for ease of reference.

1.6.6 In addition, a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) is provided at the front of the ES. The NTS is also available as a standalone document. A glossary of technical terms is provided as **Appendix 1.5** of the ES.

1.7 Other Application Documents

1.7.1 The outline planning application is supported by a suite of technical documents, which where appropriate have informed the EIA process and production of the ES.

1.7.2 The other relevant technical reports submitted as part of the outline planning application are listed below.

- Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment;
- Air Quality Assessment;
- Built Heritage Statement;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment;



- Ecological Impact Assessment;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy;
- Foul Sewage & Utilities Assessment (including Broadband Connectivity Assessment);
- Habitat Regulations Assessment;
- Land Contamination Assessment;
- Lighting Assessment;
- Noise Impact Assessment;
- On Site Emergency Plan;
- Phase 1 Geo Environmental Assessment;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- Energy and Sustainable Design Strategy;
- Transport Assessment and Travel Plan; and
- Tree Survey.

1.8 ES Availability

1.8.1 The outline planning application and ES is available to view online at: (<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning/existing-planning-applications/comment-planning-application>). Comments on the planning application and all supporting documents, including the ES, can be submitted to the Council via this webpage.

1.8.2 Copies of the ES can also be purchased from the Planning team at Marrons, the costs for which £500 for the full ES; or £250 for the Main Statement. An electronic version of the full ES on a memory stick can be purchased for £20.

1.8.3 Copies of the NTS or ES can be purchased from:

Marrons, Bridgeway House, Bridgeway, Stratford upon Avon, CV37 6YX

Tel: 01789 416 400



1.9 Statement of Competence

1.9.1 Regulation 18(5) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations states,

“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; and

(b) the environmental statement must be accompanied by a statement from the developer outlining the relevant expertise of such experts.”

1.9.2 The EIA and preparation of the ES has been co-ordinated by Marrons, and staff who are members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). Marrons are experienced in co-ordinating EIAs for development projects of this scale and nature.

1.9.3 The technical chapters of the ES have been prepared by an appropriate team of technical experts, as described in Table 1.1 above. Each consultant's experience in undertaking EIA is set out in the opening paragraphs of each ES chapter.