



2.0 EIA APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This Chapter sets out the broad approach and methodology used to undertake the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and to prepare the Environmental Statement (ES).

2.1.2 The EIA has been carried out having regard to Schedule 4 of the 2017 Regulations (Information for Inclusion in Environmental Statements) and other relevant guidance, including the Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

2.2 EIA Methodology

2.2.1 In compliance with Regulation 18(3) of the EIA Regulations, the ES contains the following information:

- (a) a description of the proposed development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;
- (b) a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment;
- (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;
- (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;
- (e) a non-technical summary of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (d); and
- (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.



2.2.2 The ES has also been prepared to meet the requirements of Regulation 18(4), which require that the ES 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);
- (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
- (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.

2.3 Scoping and Consultation

EIA Scoping

2.3.1 To help determine the extent of issues to be considered in the EIA, a formal request for an EIA Scoping Opinion was submitted to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) on 14th June 2024. A copy of the Scoping Opinion request submitted to the Council can be found at **Appendix 1.3**.

2.3.2 The Council adopted its formal Scoping Opinion (reference: 241514) on 16th July 2024. A copy of the WBC Scoping Opinion is included at **Appendix 1.4**. This is the only Scoping Opinion issued by the Council. The Scoping Opinion has informed the EIA process and preparation of the ES.

Pre-application Public and Stakeholder Engagement

2.3.3 The Proposed Development has been informed by public and stakeholder engagement. The details of the consultation undertaken, and the feedback received is summarised in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which submitted as part of the planning application. Where relevant, the matters raised during the consultation have been addressed by the EIA.



2.4 Scope of the EIA

Technical Scope

2.4.1 Informed by Schedule 4 of the Regulations, the Applicant's Scoping Report and the Council's Scoping Opinion, as well as matters raised during the consultation undertaken, the topics included in the EIA and assessments reported in the ES are summarised in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1 – Summary of the EIA Scope	
ES Chapter	Summary of Scope
1. Introduction	Requirement for EIA and the purpose of the ES - Application description - Structure of the ES - ES Availability
2. EIA Approach and Methodology	- Scoping and Consultation - Final Scope of the EIA - EIA Methodology - Types of Mitigation - Cumulative Effects
3. Site and Surroundings	- The Site - The Surroundings
4. Description of Proposed Development	- Description of proposed development - Outline of reasonable alternatives considered - Overview of cumulative developments
5. Landscape and Visual	Assessment of potential - Effects on landscape resources - Effects on landscape character - Effects on views and visual amenity
6. Impact on human health - Atomic Weapons Establishment Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (AWE DEPZ)	Assessment of potential - Effects on the Off-Site Emergency Plan (OSEP) - Impact upon human health within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone.
7. Summary of Environmental Effects	- Summary of effects - Summary of cumulative effects - Summary of 'in combination' effects - Summary of mitigation measures - Delivery of mitigation measures



2.4.2 Table 2.2 below summarises the reasons as to why particular environmental topics were not included (i.e., were 'scoped out') of the EIA. This was where significant environmental effects resulting from the proposed development, were considered unlikely:

Table 2.2 – Environmental topics not included in the EIA	
Topic	Reason 'Scoped Out'
Water and Drainage	The Site is within Environment Agency Flood Zone 1, with a low risk of flooding from surface water sources and runoff. The proposed drainage strategy will mirror existing offsite discharge rates. Run off, velocities, flood risk and flows will mirror or improve upon existing scenarios. Sustainable urban drainage systems will also be introduced to provide water quality enhancement. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy will be submitted with the planning application.
Biodiversity	Most of the site is within the Impact Risk Zone of the Stanford End Mill and River Loddon Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for residential developments of 100 dwellings or more. Although the site is within 3.5km of the Thames Basin Health Special Protection Area (SPA), it does not provide suitable breeding habitat for the birds on which the designated is based, and so no impacts are anticipated. The on-site habitats are largely of limited ecological value, being dominated by cropland, and there is a commitment to retain trees and linear features where possible. Protected species surveys were due to be undertaken to confirm the likely presence / absence of breeding birds, great crested newts, badgers, otter, water vole, and bats (tree roosting and commuting). Potential impacts were not expected to be significant, such that mitigation could be included in the scheme as appropriate.
Air Quality	The site is not within an Air Quality Management Area, the nearest AQMA being 2km north of the site. Monitored annual NO₂ concentrations near to the site are below the relevant targets. Background concentrations for PM₁₀ are also below the relevant air quality objective. Whilst there is potential for dust and PM₁₀ from on-site activities during construction, with appropriate mitigation residual effects would not be significant. Potential impacts from construction traffic are also not likely to be significant. Potential impacts during the operational phase will be determined through modelling undertaken as part of the air quality assessment. Standard mitigation measures are anticipated and will likely include the provision of a Travel Plan, electric vehicle charging points and cycle infrastructure.



Table 2.2 – Environmental topics not included in the EIA

Topic	Reason 'Scoped Out'
Noise and Vibration	A noise assessment will inform the scheme design and noise mitigation measures, which will include the location of gardens on the screened side of dwellings in the parts of the site closest to roads as the main source of noise, but also a suitable glazing and ventilation strategy. Construction phase emissions could be controlled through a suitably worded planning condition and CEMP to minimise the residual impact.
Ground Conditions	No significant effects were anticipated from the proposed development and no mitigation measures in relation to ground conditions were considered likely to be required. The Site has remained as undeveloped agricultural land since early mapping, with only a small farm building located in the north-western corner. With regards to the development that has taken place nearby, the proposed development poses a low risk to human health and controlled due to limited potential sources of contamination being identified.
Climate Change	The site is not particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, in that it is not at risk of flooding from rivers or surface water and runoff, nor is it in an Air Quality Management Area. Impacts during construction are unlikely to change given the short time frame, and a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will manage extreme weather events. Impacts during the operational phase will be mitigated through measures such as sustainable drainage systems; hedgerow retention and commitments to Biodiversity Net Gain; reduced water consumption; building overheating mitigation; and attenuation ponds. The CEMP will include measures to limit the effects of greenhouse gas emissions, through sustainable procurement and management of energy and fuel consumption. A Construction Traffic Management Plan will seek to minimise construction vehicle mileage. Under a worst-case operational phase scenario, emissions are not expected to increase beyond 1% of the total annual Greenhouse Gases rate, which will reduce over time through provision of sustainable design measures. The proposed development will encourage sustainable modes of transport by incorporating designated pedestrian and cycle routes. Given that climate change impacts transcend boundaries, and that the migration of new residents from neighbouring jurisdictions will lead to a net decrease in population elsewhere, the proposed development is not expected to impact significantly on national climate change targets.
Traffic and Transport	A Transport Assessment would assess the Proposed Development against the IEAMA significance criteria for severance of communities; road vehicle driver and passenger delay; non-motorised user delay; non-motorised user amenity;

Table 2.2 – Environmental topics not included in the EIA	
Topic	Reason 'Scoped Out'
	fear and intimidation on and by road users; road user and pedestrian safety; and hazardous / large loads. It was determined that the traffic and movement assessment would likely result in a focus on severance, delay, amenity and safety. Traffic and Transport could therefore be scoped out of the EIA with these matters addressed as part of the Transport Assessment for the outline application.
Cultural Heritage	There are no Work Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings, Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas or Registered Battlefields within the development site. Most heritage assets within the desk-based search area will not be affected by the Proposed Development, because of their distance from the Site and the absence of intervisibility and/or other setting issues. The nearest Scheduled Monument is 550m away; there are 15 listed buildings within a 1km radius (the nearest being 170m distant); the nearest Registered Park and Garden is circa 500-700m to the southeast of the site; there are no World Heritage Sites, or Registered Battlefields, in the vicinity. Although the site falls within two 'Areas of High Archaeological Potential' a geophysical survey indicates that the site has only limited archaeological potential.

Spatial Scope

- 2.4.3 The spatial scope for the EIA is generally the application site, although the cumulative assessments within individual chapters consider the wider Spencers Wood area and other development locations as appropriate. The individual chapters identify if a different scope has been used.

Temporal Scope

- 2.4.4 The indicative construction and operation timescales for the Proposed Development are as follows:
- Estimated determination date of Outline Planning Application – 2025
 - Approval of first Reserved Matters Application – 2026
 - Start on site and first occupations – 2027/28

- Construction duration is estimated to be 7 years up to 2034/35 (based on a delivery rate of c. 60-65 dwellings per annum)
- Scheme Completion – 2035

2.4.5 Each technical chapter distinguishes between short, medium and long-term effects and defines these, taking into account the nature of the effect and the receptor.

2.5 Assessment of Effects

2.5.1 The purpose of the ES is to identify and evaluate the likely significant environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Development.

2.5.2 The effects identified have then been assessed based on the nature of the impact (following mitigation) and the nature of the receiving environment to determine the significance of their effect.

2.5.3 There is no statutory definition of significance. The EIA has generally been based on the following descriptive terms to describe the magnitude of potential effects:

- Substantial
- Moderate
- Minor
- Negligible

2.5.4 The meaning of the terms in relation to the nature of impacts and receptors is set out in the matrix provided at **Table 2.3**. As the nature of the impacts and the receptors varies by topic, the criteria used to predict the significance of effects is set out in the methodology section of each technical chapter.

2.5.5 Where the technical chapters take a different approach, this reflects best practice and professional guidance and is explained in more detail in the respective chapter.

Table 2.3 Assessment matrix

		Nature of Receptor (Sensitivity / Value / Importance)			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
Nature of Impact (Magnitude / Probability / Reversibility etc.)	High	Substantial	Substantial	Moderate	Negligible
	Medium	Substantial	Moderate	Minor	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Minor	Minor	Negligible
	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

2.5.6 The following general terms have also been used to aid the description of the effects:

- **Beneficial** – positive effects
- **Adverse** – negative effects
- **Short / Medium / Long Term** – length of the effect
- **Permanent** – effect cannot be reversed
- **Temporary** – effect can be reversed (e.g. construction impacts)
- **Direct** – effects that are a direct result of the Proposed Development
- **Indirect** – effects that may be a 'knock-on' result of direct effects

2.6 Mitigation of Environmental Impacts

2.6.1 Mitigation measures are set out in each technical assessment chapter. The purpose of mitigation is to seek to avoid, reduce or compensate for potential adverse effect and to maximise potential beneficial effects. These various mitigation measures have been divided into:



- **Inherent mitigation measures** – measures embedded within the scheme and central to its delivery, including key parameters (in this case the Land Use Parameter Plan and Building Heights Parameter Plan, in particular), details submitted for approval (including the detailed access design) and other features central to the design of the proposed scheme (including landscaping strategy).
- **Standard mitigation measures** – those measures that are typically required as part of a new development and typically secured by way of planning condition, for example the need for a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP). Other standard provisions that typically form part of Section 106 Agreements and Section 278 Agreements are also included here.
- **Actionable mitigation measures** – other or additional mitigation that may be required because of the assessment, requiring further mechanisms as part of the consenting process – e.g. via other dedicated planning conditions, Section 106 Agreements, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments and Section 278 Agreements

2.6.2 The determination of the significance of effects in each of the technical chapters is presented based on inherent and standard mitigation measures. Where actionable mitigation measures are identified then a residual assessment is undertaken.

2.7 Cumulative Effects

2.7.1 The EIA Regulations require an ES to consider significant cumulative effects. The cumulative assessment has considered major consented and allocated development projects which could influence the Site's development, including extant allocations and sites with planning consent.

2.7.2 The projects included are as follows.

- **Stanbury House (LPA Ref 212914)** Granted: Approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning consent O/2014/2101 (143279) for the erection of up to 57 new dwellings, to include new access from Basingstoke Road and provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).



- **Land at Kingfisher Grove (LPA Ref 201002)** Granted: Outline application from the proposed erection of 49 dwellings, including 22 units of affordable housing, with new publicly accessible open space and access.
- **Land East of Hayes Drive (LPA Ref 233038)** Refused, Appeal allowed: Outline application for the proposed erection of up to 148 dwellings together with associated infrastructure including public open space, with access only to be considered.
- **Land North of Sheepbridge Court Farm (LPA Ref 232653)** Pending: Full planning permission for a 25ha solar farm for a temporary period of 40 years.

2.7.3 As part of the cumulative assessment, traffic modelling has been undertaken to inform the Transport Assessment. Forecast years have been based on traffic growth assumptions derived from the Department for Transport (DfT) Trip End Model Presentation Program (TEMPro) and the National Transport Model (NTM). These models include planning data which has timescales for the anticipated delivery of permitted housing and employment developments.

2.8 In-Combination Effects

2.8.1 A summary of in-combination effects is included at Chapter 7 of the ES.