

Appendix E – Formal SBC EIA Screening Opinion (6 November 2024)

Date request for Screening Opinion received	7 October 2024	Date decision required	21 days: Extension agreed in writing until:
Date Issued	06 November 2024		
LPA Reference:	P/11442/011		

Screening Opinion - The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended).**Site:**

The site is titled Manor Farm which sits to the immediate west of Poyle Road and the Poyle Industrial Estate. The site is outlined as a single planning unit but essentially forms two parcels. The northern parcel (Parcel A as per the letter) is largely previously developed land containing a house in multiple occupation with a number of commercial buildings and associated hardstanding. The southern area (referred to as Parcel B) is an undeveloped area of grassland. The two areas are linked by a smaller parcel of land that contains some buildings. Both parcels have a separate direct access from Poyle Road.

The site is entirely part of designated Green Belt.

Proposal:

The screening request outlines a scheme that seeks to redevelop the site to provide a Data Centre and Battery Energy Storage System. The letter details that the proposed scheme is not fixed which is shown through the local of assicated inforamtion such as substations, access, parking and landscaping.

The letter states that the assumed internal floor areas will be approx. 39,433sqm for the Data Centre and the coverage area for the battery storage is 13,932.50sqm including substation and the guard house.

The proposed data centre will have a maximum height of 30m.

The proposed battery storage will comprise 72 containerised battery units with associated infrastructure.

No details of access are provided as part of the description of development but the letter refers to access to both parcels being obtained from the existing access on Poyle Road.

No plans have been provided as part of the screening request, thus at this stage, the Screening Opinion is solely based on the information provided.

Documents Submitted:

EIA Screening Opinion Request letter by Quod dated 7 October 2024.

Consultees:**SBC Environment Quality**

Air Quality & Environmental Noise Comments:

Demolition and Construction Impacts

As part of the application, the applicant is seeking planning permission for the demolition of the existing buildings. This is expected to produce high levels of dust and noise during this phase, however in most cases associated impacts can be adequately mitigated via the implementation of a Demolition / Construction Environmental Management Plan (D/CEMP). Appropriate dust controls are typically informed by a dust impact assessment that is undertaken as part of the air quality assessment and aligns with measures outlined within the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) guidance. This is applicable to both the demolition and construction phases.

There is also potential for demolition and construction vehicle emissions to contribute towards a worsening of air quality in the local area. As such, the CEMP shall be required to include emission standards that align with the requirements of the Slough Low Emission Strategy (construction vehicles meeting Euro VI and non-road mobile machinery meeting Stage IIIB). It is expected that after implementation of the CEMP, impacts will not be significant.

Operational Impacts

Data Centre

The development includes a data centre with a gross internal area of 39,433sqm with associated car parking, gantry and substation. Within the Screening Opinion Request document, it is stated that the building will feature a parapet height of 23m and a maximum screen height of 30m. Ancillary equipment will be placed in a screened equipment yard at ground level and on a screened platform at roof level. This is stated to be to soften and minimise visual impact. It is expected however that this shall also have benefits on noise propagation and if necessary, be constructed from acoustic materials.

Data centres typically have a number of stand-by generators that are available in the event of energy failure, which are periodically tested both individually for maintenance, and simultaneously to replicate emergency operations. It is not stated in the Screening Opinion Request document how many generators are proposed. The impact of these generators on both noise and air quality will need to be considered by the applicant and assessments submitted as part of the planning application. The contribution of generator emissions towards poor air quality does not appear to have been considered in the 'air quality and odour' section of the report.

Battery Energy Storage System

The development proposal also includes a battery energy storage system. The system will include 72 containerised battery units and associated infrastructure, with an output of 100MW 2hr system. It is understood that this system can provide back up energy in the event of a power failure and these systems help data centre operators to reduce reliance on diesel generators. Under Section C it is stated that "the development will include diesel generators that will only be used if the first two power sources fail", which would result in reduced emissions. This is welcomed.

Both the data centre and battery energy storage system have potential to cause noise disturbance to nearby noise sensitive receptors. Section E, Noise and Vibration, states that

a noise assessment will accompany the planning application and will outline necessary mitigation. Plant noise can be mitigated via a number of different methods, including selection of low noise plant, and physical measures such as screening. This section also mentions a plant noise limit that can be controlled through a planning condition. The Council request that plant noise does not exceed the background sound level at the façade of the nearest noise sensitive receptors, as a minimum. It is agreed that implementation of such a condition and plant noise mitigation, impacts are not expected to be significant.

Transport

It is agreed that data centre developments on previously industrial land typically results in a reduction in vehicle trips. In addition, in line with the Slough Low Emission Strategy, the development will be required to provide electric vehicle charging to a minimum of 10% of car parking spaces, which will help to reduce emissions from transport. As such, it is unlikely that the development will result in significant air quality and noise impacts due to transport. This shall be confirmed however upon submission of the planning application and accompanying transport assessment.

SBC Highways and Transport

No response received.

Lead Local Flood Authority

Had no comments to make.

Thames Water

No response received.

Environment Agency

Had no comments to make.

Contaminated Land Officer

No response received.

Designing Out Crime Officer

No response received.

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

No response received.

Natural England

No response received.

A - Check list	
Question:	LPA Response:
A1. Is the project Schedule One?	No
A2. Is the project Schedule Two?	Yes Category 10a of Schedule 2, 'Industrial Estate Development projects'. (See A4 Below)
A3. Is the project in or adjacent to a sensitive area?	No
A4. Is the project above the exclusion thresholds in Schedule Two?	Yes. The proposal is considered to fall with 10(a) Industrial estate development projects and the site exceeds 0.5 hectares (measured at 8.6 hectares). The proposed development would therefore be above the exclusion thresholds in Schedule Two.
A5. Is the project above the indicative inclusion thresholds in the Annex to the Planning Practice Guidance? An Environmental Impact Assessment is unlikely to be required for the redevelopment of land unless the new development is on a significantly greater scale than the previous use, or the types of impact are of a markedly different nature or there is a high level of contamination	The indicative criteria and threshold for Category 10a is that the site area of the new development would be more than 20 hectares. The proposal would fall under this indicative threshold. The site is outlined as a single planning unit but essentially forms two parcels. The northern parcel (Parcel A as per the letter) is largely previously developed land containing a house in multiple occupation with a number of commercial buildings and associated hardstanding. The southern area (referred to as Parcel B) is an undeveloped area of grassland.

Information submitted with the Screening Opinion application indicates that the proposed development would comprise a data centre with ancillary office space, parking areas, landscaping, boundary treatments, substations, and plant enclosures and a battery storage facility.

Is new development on a significantly greater scale than the previous use?

The proposed development will extend beyond the existing limit of what is regarded as previously developed land. The extent of build up area would therefore be greater than existing.

There are no detailed plans but the applicant states the proposed data centre will have a maximum height of 30m which is notably greater than the height of existing built form at the site.

The applicant states that the transport assessment that will be submitted with an application will demonstrate that there will be less vehicle movements than the existing use at the same time. However, the proposal also states that there could be up to 185 jobs created through the development which would be a far higher employment level than currently experienced at the site.

Notwithstanding however the potential size/massing/height of the proposed development, subject to appropriate assessments, its scale may be reflective of the character of built form to the east of the site on the Poyle Industrial Estate.

The applicant considers that townscape effects are not considered to be significant and that it would be visible and not prominent in the landscape. The application will be submitted with a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, verified views are not finalised.

It is considered that the visual impact of the proposal is significantly downplayed by the applicant's letter. The height of the proposal will, at 30m, result in a visually prominent addition to the

	<p>landscape regardless of the site being previously developed. The proposal will have a visual prominence from both short and longer range views. The council considers that there could be significant effects as a result of the visual impact of development. The applicant's letter provides no detailed consideration of these impacts and is dismissive of the scale of what is proposed.</p> <p>The Council considers that the visual impacts on landscape and townscape can be appropriately assessed with a robust Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment with verified viewpoints agreed with the Council.</p> <p>Are the types of impact of a markedly different nature? (Key issues to consider are potential increase in traffic; emissions; noise)</p> <p>Traffic:</p> <p>The site is accessed from Poyle Road which connects the A3033 and A4, it is a busy, frequently used route for vehicles. Construction traffic, including routing, movements and associated effects would be expected to be managed through a Construction Environment Management Plan. Construction Traffic levels would be anticipated to be high than currently experienced at site but not to the extent that would cause significant environmental impact and the impact of this is temporary.</p> <p>The nature of the proposed uses would infer that traffic movements would be reduced and this is suggested in the screening request letter. However, this does not marry with suggested employment numbers which have been estimated to be as high as 185 employees. The development is unlikely to result in significant traffic and transport effects but the Council expects a robust Transport Assessment to demonstrate this and to promote achievable measures for using sustainable transport methods.</p> <p>The proposal is considered to not result in any significant impact.</p> <p>Emissions/ Air quality/ Noise:</p> <p><u>Air Quality and Odour</u></p>
--	--

In respect of this matter, any impacts from construction would be temporary but the assessment states that there would be no significant effect in any case. Mitigation is proposed through the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan with good practice measures as defined by IAQM Guidance.

No reference is made to operational air quality or odour impacts with respect to the two proposed uses. However, it is considered that it is unlikely that any impacts would be significant. The Council will require an air quality impact assessment with any application and mitigation measures in accordance with the Council's Low Emissions Strategy.

Noise and Vibration

The assessment concludes that noise impacts can be appropriate mitigated and that there is unlikely to be any vibration impacts.

The proposal is considered to not result in any significant impact in this respect, the Council would expect a Noise and Vibration Assessment to be submitted with any application.

The Council's Environment Quality Officer does not consider that there would be significant environmental impacts in these respects.

Contamination:

Geology and Soils

The potential adverse impact from the geological perspective is the possibility to cause damage to high grade agricultural soils if mitigation measures are not incorporated into the proposed construction works. The applicant states the site has been historically used as landfill and Environmental Monitoring has returned no significant concerns. It is not clear if this relates to both parcels or Parcel A only.

The proposal impact is considered to not result in any significant environmental effects and the Council would expect to see as a minimum, a

	<p>Phase 1 desktop Study for contamination with any application.</p> <p>On this basis, in EIA terms it is not considered that the proposed development poses a significant risk to human health in respect to contamination and should any risk be identified, these will be mitigated through an appropriate remediation strategy, to be agreed with the Council.</p>
A6. Are there issues regarding:	
Issue. [Note: no significant effect reliant on specific features or mitigation measures are highlighted bold]	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Natural resources	
Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the topography of the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>
NOTE: It is anticipated that the demolition of the existing buildings and proposed development and associated works would not result in significant changes to the topography of the site. The screening opinion letter makes no reference to this but it is noted that the site appears relatively flat currently.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The screening request acknowledges that the proposal will have a significant energy demand and states that the battery storage will store energy that comes from renewable sources. The applicant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<p>intends to submit an Energy and Sustainability Appraisal with the application.</p>			
<p>The impact is notable however not considered to be significantly adverse with respects to the information provided at this stage.</p>			
<p>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?</p>			x
<p>NOTE: The site is not located in or in close proximity to an area of important, high quality or scarce resources.</p>			
<p>Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are principally localised however detailed technical information will be required with regards to impact to the above matters given the location and scale of development, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms in relation to this issue.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;">Waste</p>			
<p>Will the project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?</p>			
<p>NOTE: There will be waste generated during the demolition of existing buildings and site preparation and construction of the development. The applicant will seek to minimise volumes of waste going to landfill in line with good practice guidance and identifies that some localised impact would be experienced through movement of waste off the site.</p>			
<p>Given the size, nature and context of the site and proposal, it is not considered that it would this will cause any issues of concern.</p>			x
<p>A Demolition and Construction Management Plan and Site Wide Waste Management Plan would be required with any planning application outlining how waste will be dealt with during the demolition, construction and operational phases, especially given the history of the site as former landfill. These will set out how materials will be recycled and reused to minimise waste sent to landfill.</p>			

Any waste generated by the operational phase of the development; are not expected to produce large amounts of waste and as such, significant effects are not anticipated.

Based on the above and the measures highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in relation to this issue.

Pollution and nuisances

Will the project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?

NOTE: Construction traffic, including routing, movements and associated effects would be expected to be managed through a Construction Environment Management Plan. Construction Traffic levels would be anticipated to be high than currently experienced at site but not to the extent that would cause significant environmental impact and the impact of this is temporary.

The nature of the proposed uses would infer that traffic movements would be reduced, and this is suggested in the screening request letter. However, this does not marry with suggested employment numbers which have been estimated to be as high as 185 employees. The development is unlikely to result in significant traffic and transport effects but the Council expects a robust Transport Assessment and Travel Plan to demonstrate this and to promote achievable measures for using sustainable transport methods.

The proposal is considered to not result in any significant impact.

X

The Council's Environmental Quality Officer has reviewed the screening request and finds that any impacts would unlikely to be significant in respect of noise pollution and air quality impacts. They are content that mitigation would be achieved through the implementation of a Demolition / Construction Environmental Management Plan (D/CEMP) and a dust impact assessment that is undertaken as part of the air quality assessment. Please note that there are crane height restrictions in this area due to the proximity of Heathrow Airport.

Based on the above and the measures highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in relation to this issue.

Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?

NOTE: The potential exists for intermittent and temporary noise and vibration effects to result from demolition and construction activities. **During the demolition and construction and operational phases, light levels are not anticipated to exceed those that currently exist on the site. A Design and Access Statement should be submitted with any planning application and consider lighting matters, especially given the proximity to Heathrow Airport and light glare with regard to aircrafts.**

The demolition and construction phases will be temporary, and their effects will be managed in accordance with best practice measures, to be included in a Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan. In terms of vibration, details of how any demolition and construction-related vibration will be monitored and controlled would be detailed in the Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan and would ensure a satisfactory level of environmental protection. The proposed development is not anticipated to cause vibration during the operational phase.

x

A specific section regarding measures to control noise emissions should be included in the Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan.

The scheme would include the stationing of back up diesel generators and regular testing of these would cause noise. **A Noise Assessment to be submitted with any planning application will set out required mitigation measures and would be secured by condition.**

The proposed substation would release electromagnetic fields. **An Electromagnetic Fields Assessment should be provided as part of the planning application.**

Based on the above and the approach highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal would be likely to result in significant effects in relation to this issue.

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?

x

NOTE: Ground investigations will be undertaken as part of any planning application to assess the potential for soil contamination, and if required, appropriate mitigation measures would be proposed to ensure that no pollutants are released to the ground, waterbodies or the air during the demolition and construction phases.

As stated in the supporting information accompanying the Screening Opinion, much of the Site will be covered with new buildings and hardstanding. As such, the risk to receptors (namely human health) is considered to be low and there would be no likely significant effects related to ground conditions or contamination.

It is considered that subject to the submission of appropriate technical reports to support a planning application, including a Flood Risk Assessment, Drainage Strategy/Scheme, Site Investigation/Contamination Study and Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan, and the use of planning conditions, these matters can satisfactorily address the risks of contamination of land or water.

Based on the above and subject to the approach highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal would unlikely result in significant effects in EIA terms.

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?

NOTE: The site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area, but it is in proximity to Spelthorne Borough Air Quality Management Area to the south and there are other AQMAs within the Borough that vehicles would likely travel through as a result of the proposed development. **Although temporary, traffic associated with the demolition and construction phase would be managed through the Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan. Including a traffic routing plan and is not anticipated to result in significant effects. The AQMAs are similarly unlikely to be significantly affected by the proposed development through the operational phase as data centres are not usually associated with large numbers of vehicle trips.**

x

<p>It is considered that potential impacts will be local in nature and could be managed appropriately with technical assessments submitted as part of any planning applications. Transport and Air Quality Assessments, a Drainage Strategy/Scheme, Ecological Report and Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan would be required as part of any planning submission and appropriate conditions should consent be granted.</p> <p>Based on the above and subject to the approach highlighted in bold, the proposal would unlikely result in significant effects in EIA terms.</p>		
<p>Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are relatively localised and subject to the measures highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms. The contamination, noise and air quality and ecological impacts can be considered in relevant supporting documents submitted with any planning application and related planning conditions.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Population and Human Health</p> <p>Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?</p> <p>NOTE: As noted in the supporting information submitted with the Screening Opinion, during the demolition and construction phases measures would be implemented to minimise the risks of accidents that could have adverse effects on people or the environment. All such measures would form part of the Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan to be submitted with any planning application and secured by planning condition.</p> <p>The assessment notes that the data centre would have back up diesel fuel for generators which would be securely stored. The battery storage has a higher fire risk than other development types and the applicant intends to include a Baseline Fire Strategy which sets out measures to take in case of fire.</p>	X	
<p>The site is closely located to Heathrow Airport and the applicant has stated an Aviation Safeguarding Design Advice Report will be included with an application.</p>		

There are risks of accident associated with the proposal but it is not considered to be significant given the intended level of detail to accompany the application.

A Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Assessment would be submitted with any planning application to ensure the proposed development does not increase any flood risk on-site or elsewhere and these would also accommodate an allowance for climate change and extreme rainfall events.

Significant effects as a result of climate change are not anticipated.

Based on the above and subject to the measures highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

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)

NOTE: Air quality, noise, drainage and contamination issues are noted above and subject to the submission of **Air Quality and Noise Assessments, a Drainage Strategy, Flood Risk Assessment, Site Investigation/contamination report and related planning conditions being secured**, the matters highlighted would not pose a risk in EIA terms to the population and human health.

x

Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are relatively local and site specific. Subject to the measures identified within any required assessment and site investigation or remediation/monitoring reports and watching briefs which follow on from the reports highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Water resources

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?

x

NOTE: The site is located in Flood Zone 1. The assessment advises that there would be no adverse impact on groundwater flow and the new installations from the outfall location will serve to reduce flood risk.

The operational proposal would require an increase in potable water and foul water discharge but it is not to a significant scale.

This proposal is considered to not result in any significant impact with respects to the information provided at this stage.

A Drainage Strategy, Flood Risk Assessment and Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan would be submitted with any planning application and the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority consulted on any planning application.

Based on the above and subject to the approach highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Biodiversity

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).

NOTE: There are five Sites of Special Scientific ('SSSI') located within 5km of the Site:

- Wraysbury Reservoir SSSI is located approximately 150m south of the Site;
- Wraysbury No. 1 Gravel Pitt SSSI is located approximately 2.5km southwest of the Site;
- Wraysbury & Hythe End Gravel Pits SSSI is located approximately 2.2km southwest of the Site;
- Staines Moor SSSI is located approximately 4.4km southwest of the Site; and
- Langham Pond SSSI is located approximately 1.7km southeast of the Site.

x

All of the above SSSIs, with the exception of Langham Pond SSSI, are also part of the wider South West London Waterbodies Ramsar site. The Lower Colne Site of Importance for Nature Conservation ('SINC') is located 900m east of the Site. There is a Local Nature Reserve, known as the Arthur Jacob Nature Reserve, approximately 450m west of the Site. The Queen Mother Reservoir is located 1.7km west of the Site. The Queen Mother Reservoir is designated a Local Wildlife Site by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council. An impact assessment with regards to

these sites would need to be carried out to ensure appropriate mitigation should any impacts be identified.

The screening opinion assumes that the site is not suitable for bats due to its circumstances and relationship to the M25 and Heathrow Airport. There is no reference to any other species although it is noted that an Ecological Impact Assessment will be carried out. Given the landscape character of the area and proximity to bodies of water, the Council expects assessments to consider endangered species including Great Crested Newts.

The site has numerous trees within and adjacent to it, the assessment states a number are to be removed. The assessment makes reference to a localised nature of tree removal, it is not clear what this means. The application will be accompanied with an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. The proposal will be subject to the requirements of BNG and an assessment into the value of the site will be required.

The comments suggest that there is not considered to be confirmed significant adverse effects on ecology. It is expected that there will be an impact, but there is nothing to suggest it would be significant adverse with respects to the information provided at this stage.

A Demolition and Construction Management Plan and Air Quality Assessment to be submitted with any planning application would ensure that nearby ecological assets are protected. An Ecological Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment would also be submitted to identify any ecology impacts and any required mitigation and set out net gains in biodiversity. Any proposed landscaping and planting schedule should be biodiversity led to help achieve the required net gains.

Based on the above and subject to the measure highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

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?

x

NOTE: The above matters are noted, and any potential impacts will be accordingly assessed in the planning application. **A Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan and an**

Ecological Impact Assessment covering sensitive species of flora or fauna will be submitted as part of a planning application to determine the impacts and appropriate mitigation.

Based on the above and subject to the measure highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are considered to be relatively local and subject to the assessments and measures set out in the technical reports highlighted in bold, and consultation with the relevant statutory and non-statutory consultees, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Landscape and visual

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).

X

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?)

NOTE: The applicant has confirmed that the site is not located in an AONB, National Park, or Area of High Landscape Value and that with regard to the context of the existing baseline.

The site is in part a long-established commercial/industrial area accommodating buildings of varying height and scale. Any planning application would be accompanied by a **Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Design and Access Statement, which would help evidence the acceptability of the proposed scale of development in the townscape and within the wider landscape, in particular from key local and strategic views including more sensitive residential and historical receptors such as local heritage assets and the wider setting of Windsor Castle and its associated heritage features.**

X

¹ See B2(c) and B3(a) for consideration of impacts on heritage designations and receptors, including on views to, within and from designated areas.

From the information given, we consider that there appears to be minimal impact on the historic environment and therefore an EIA may not be required in relation to the historic environment.

Based on the above and subject to the approach highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are predominantly local and subject to the measures highlighted in bold. The townscape, visual heritage impacts are capable of being addressed within the planning application through the appropriate technical assessments without requiring an EIA. Given this, and the proposed scale of development, it is considered that there are no significant effects in EIA terms.

Cultural heritage/ Archaeology

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).

NOTE: There are no heritage features on or adjacent to the site. The nearest designated heritage asset is Grade II Listed Bridge which to the southeast of the site. Grade I Listed Windsor Castle is located approximately several kilometres to the south.

Having regard to the height of the proposed development, it is considered **potential impacts and any required mitigation can be detailed within a Townscape and Visual and Heritage Impact Assessments in consultation with a conservation specialist and Historic England, as part of any planning application.**

x

The Townscape and Visual Impact and Heritage Impact Assessments should be prepared to support any future application which will establish the acceptability of the scheme to the short, medium and wider context which in particular includes the impact on the townscape, local heritage assets and the setting of Windsor Castle and associated heritage features.

Based on the above and subject to the measures highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Transport and Access

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?

NOTE: The site is at the edge of the urban extent of Poyle and within the Colne Valley Country Park which is not acknowledged by the applicant. The park is accessible and access to it for recreation could be affected by the proposals. Impacts on accessibility to the park are unlikely to be significant in principle. **An application should include an assessment that consider the impacts on accessibility to the Colne Valley Country Park and any mitigation that would be required.**

x

The proposal would generate limited traffic movement as detailed in previous sections. **The transport related impacts and appropriate mitigation will be considered as part of a Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan, Routing Strategy, Transport Assessment, and a Travel Plan to be submitted with any planning application.**

Based on the above and subject to the measures highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

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?

NOTE: The Poyle road and its connecting roads, A4 and A3033 are subject to congestion in particular areas at times due to the nature of surrounding land uses and proximity to the M25.

x

The proposal would likely generate limited traffic movement and previously highlighted and the **transport related impacts and appropriate mitigation would be considered as part of a Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan, Construction Transport Logistics Management Plan, Transport Assessment and Travel Plan to be submitted with any planning application.**

<p>Based on the above and subject to the measures highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.</p>		
<p>Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are relatively local and subject to the measures set out in the technical report highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.</p>		
<p>Land Use</p> <p>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.</p> <p>NOTE: The site is predominantly in commercial use with the majority of the remaining area being countryside and adjacent to an established commercial/industrial estate. The area to the north is characterised by a mix of uses including residential development. Whilst there are established residential uses nearby, it is considered that impacts in respect to visual and residential amenities can be appropriately assess via the Townscape Visual Impact Assessment, Design and Access Statement, Landscape Strategy, and Transport, Air Quality and Noise Assessments.</p> <p>Based on the above and subject to the measures highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.</p>	X	
<p>Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?</p> <p>NOTE: Development opportunities in the area tend to be redevelopment proposals for existing sites in the industrial estate.</p> <p>Further afield within Slough there are plans for large development opportunities at various stages in the development process in the but none within proximity of the site.</p> <p>Given the scale and nature of the proposal and the fact that site forms part of a larger commercial/industrial area, it is considered</p>	X	

that the potential impacts and mitigation associated with the proposal can be assessed as part of any planning submission and specifically within related documentation including the Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan, Design and Access Statement, Townscape Visual Impact Assessment, Heritage Impact Assessment and Transport, Air Quality and Noise Assessments. In addition, appropriate planning obligations and conditions would be imposed on any planning consent to ensure impacts are addressed or mitigated.

Based on the above and subject to the measures highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are local and subject to the required measures set out in the technical reports highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Land stability and Climate

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?

x

Cumulative effects

Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in accumulation of impacts together during the construction/operation phase?

NOTE: Potentially, there could be cumulative effects if the developments are under construction at the same time. **Any planning application would be accompanied by a Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan to consider the potential cumulative impact in relation to other construction activities.**

x

Transport, Air Quality and Noise Assessments, would also be submitted with any planning application and detail where relevant, cumulative impacts and mitigation in relation to construction and operational phases.

The applicant identified nearby development at Jupiter House (Ref: P/09811/001) as requiring consideration as it is 140m from the site.

<p>This approval provides for 7,320sqm of employment use floorspace and while close, would not result in significant effects if implemented alongside any consent granted at this site and would not result in significant effects at operational stage.</p> <p>Based on the above and subject to the measures highlighted in bold, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.</p>		
<p>Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are anticipated to be predominantly local in nature. Subject to the measures and suitability of the methodologies set out in the planning application supporting documentation highlighted in bold, the proposals are capable of being considered in the planning application. It is anticipated that the cumulative impacts would not be of such an extent and complexity that the development would give rise to significant effects of an EIA scale.</p>		
<p>Transboundary effects</p> <p>Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?²</p> <p>NOTE: The site is close to neighbouring authority boundaries. There may be visual impacts in terms of the scale and height of the proposed development, however it is considered a Townscape Visual Impact Assessment and Heritage Impact Assessment would suitably cover this, as would the Transport Assessment, Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan and Construction Transport Logistic Plan in respect potential highway related impacts. The Air Quality, Noise Assessments and Ecological Impact Assessments would similarly consider any transboundary impacts appropriately.</p> <p>Based on the above, and the approach highlighted in bold, it is considered that the proposal could likely result in some significant effects in relation to visual impact and Air Quality/Noise.</p>	<p>x</p>	
<p>Conclusion: The likely impacts in this regard are relatively local and subject to the assessments highlighted in bold, the proposal is capable of being considered in the planning application through the Townscape Visual Impact Assessment, Heritage Impact Assessment, Transport, Air and Noise Assessments and Demolition and Construction Management and Construction Transport Logistics Management Plans. It is considered that the proposals are unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.</p>		

B – Schedule 3 Assessment

An assessment of the criteria in Schedule 3 has been undertaken and submitted for consideration.

B1. Characteristics of the development***(a) Size and design:***

The screening request outlines a scheme that seeks to redevelop the site to provide a Data Centre and Battery Energy Storage System. The letter details that the proposed scheme is not fixed which is shown through the local of associated information such as substations, access, parking and landscaping.

The letter states that the assumed internal floor areas will be approx. 39,433sqm for the Data Centre and the coverage area for the battery storage is 13,932.50sqm including substation and the guard house.

The proposed data centre will have a maximum height of 30m.

The proposed battery storage will comprise 72 containerised battery units with associated infrastructure. The proposed development is considered to be of a significantly greater scale than the existing use and form of development on-site.

However, notwithstanding the potential height of the proposed development, its scale may be considered reasonable subject to appropriate assessments having regard to nature and form of the existing buildings on site and those in the surrounding area.

A Design and Access Statement, Design Code, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Heritage Impact Assessment would be submitted with any planning application to establish the potential impacts of the proposed development in respect to townscape and heritage assets and identify appropriate mitigation.

The resulting impacts in terms of the scale, design and height of the development are considered to be underplayed by the applicant and there are wider views that will be affected beyond a local context. The wider impacts are capable of being addressed within the highlighted reports as part of the planning application and the characteristics of the development on any wider receptors could therefore be analysed without requiring an EIA.

(b) Cumulative Effects

The appropriate assessments and supporting documentation would be submitted with any planning application to ensure that the development in isolation and in the wider context of the Borough is considered carefully.

(c) the use of natural resources

The proposed development would be partly on previously developed land and partly on undeveloped countryside. The biodiversity value of the site is unknown but there are no areas nearby which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, e.g., forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals.

The site is in Flood Zone 1 and its redevelopment would not increase the risk of flooding, providing the approach to drainage/SuDS set out in current national and local planning policy is followed.

The demolition and construction phases of the development would be guided by the Demolition and Construction Environment and Site Wide Waste Management Plans to be submitted with any planning application to ensure the appropriate and responsible use, management of material and waste and contaminants on-site.

The development proposals would be required to be sustainable and assist towards a low carbon future in accordance with national and local planning policies and BREEAM. This would be detailed in an Energy Strategy and Sustainability Statement to be submitted with any planning application.

Having regard to the above matters, it is considered therefore, that the proposal will not have any undue impact on the use of natural resources.

d) the production of waste:

Any waste generated during the demolition and construction phases will be appropriately managed via the Demolition and Construction Environment Management and Waste Management Plans to be submitted with any planning application. During the operational phase, the proposal will generate little waste and provision will be expected to be made for the storage and collection of general, non-recyclable waste, dry recyclable materials and any other waste by the occupier and hazardous waste will be managed. Having regard to this approach, the production of waste is therefore not considered to be of any particular significance for the purposes of deciding whether EIA is required in this instance.

(e) pollution and nuisances:

As detailed in the covering letter accompanying the Screening Request, any planning application for the proposed development will be accompanied by a **Transport Assessment, which will, in part, be expected to assist in minimising the level of peak hour car journeys, particularly single occupancy trips.**

The Transport Assessment would also set out existing and predicted proposed trip generation, tracking (within the site and access junctions) and visibility splays. By virtue of the nature of the proposed development the trip rates are likely to be no worse than the existing uses on-site.

Traffic associated with the development and the standby generators have the potential to raise some local noise and air quality considerations during both the construction and operational phases. These are likely to be of only limited significance when assessed against existing background levels or base conditions.

The site is not identified within an Air Quality Management Area, there are Air Quality Management Areas in the wider area. Noise and Air Quality Assessments would be provided in support of any planning application.

During demolition and construction, providing mitigation measures including dust suppression and wheel washing are followed (to be detailed in the Demolition and Construction Environment Management and Dust Management Plans and secured by a planning condition), the impacts of construction on the local environment would be minimised and controlled to an acceptable level.

Local and statutory consultees including the Highway Authority and the Environment Agency will be involved in the appropriate assessment of any planning application to consider that the environmental externalities associated with a development are acceptable.

Taking account of these matters, it is considered unlikely that there will be any significant pollution or nuisance impacts arising from the proposal (construction and operational phases) enough to justify EIA in this instance.

(f) Major Accidents/Disasters including climate change:

The proposal is a data centre and battery storage development, which will not lead to particularly complex or potentially hazardous substances or disaster scenarios. Battery storage proposals will be accompanied with a fire assessment which addresses overheating risks. Information with the application submission should include any risks and appropriate mitigation with respect to major accidents/disasters including climate change.

(g) Human Health

As detailed above, a range of measures and strategies will be included within any planning application to reduce the risk of pollution and nuisance, all of which are factors that could be considered as risks to human health. Some ground contamination could be identified but this can be addressed as part of site clearance and preparation works if a scheme is approved and as such any contamination will

be addressed such that there will be no risk to human health when the site is developed. **A Site Investigation Report/Ground Contamination report to be submitted with any application.**

It has also been confirmed above that no harmful substances will occur as a result of the proposed uses for the site and that the risk of pollution or contamination of the groundwater is low. It is considered therefore that the proposed development does not propose a significant risk to human health. Human Health issues are capable of being addressed within the highlighted reports within the planning application.

Summary:

The resulting environmental impacts borne from the characteristics of the proposed development are considered and anticipated to be (mostly) local. The impacts are capable of being addressed within the highlighted technical reports as part of any planning application. Impacts to arise out of the characteristics of the proposed development which affect further afield receptors have been identified and can be addressed within the technical reports referred to in this EIA Screening Opinion that will be submitted as part of any planning application. The proposal would therefore be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

B2. Location of development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by development must be considered, with particular regard, to:

(a) the existing and approved land use:

The site comprises previously developed land with existing buildings and undeveloped open countryside and contains no statutorily protected ecology designations or agricultural land and the applicant considers that there is a low likelihood of the presence of any protected species.

An Ecological Impact Assessment would accompany an application to assess the on-site ecology impacts, identify any required mitigation and set out net gains in biodiversity. It would also be the intention for the landscaping and planting schedule to be biodiversity led to help achieve the required net gains.

A Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Heritage Impact Assessment and Design and Access Statement would be prepared to support any future application which will establish the acceptability of the scheme to the short, medium and wider context which in particular includes the impact on the townscape, local heritage assets and the setting of Windsor Castle and associated heritage assets. Future strategies will also be developed that should be pursued through the planning process including building sustainably and responsibly.

(c) The absorption capacity of the natural environment:

The site does not form part of any ecological, geological or landscape designations. In the context of the guidance, the site is not an environmentally sensitive location as set out in the Regulations (Part 1 paragraph 2) or the NPPG on EIAs.

There are unlikely to be any environmental impacts on wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths, coastal zones and the marine environment, mountain and forest areas.

A Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan, Air Quality Assessment, Site Investigation/Contamination Report, Flood Risk Assessment, Drainage Strategy and Ecological Impact Assessment will consider any potential impact and mitigation if required on these matters.

Summary:

Having regard to the existing and proposed land uses, the proximity of nearby natural resources and absorption capacity, the locational characteristics are such that the likely impacts of the development in regard to the above matters are predominantly local and would not be significant in EIA terms. Subject to the measures set out in the technical reports highlighted in this report, the proposal would therefore be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

B3. Characteristics of potential impact

(a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected):

The site contains undeveloped open countryside and is wholly within the Green Belt. It is considered that the proposal will affect the openness of the Green Belt and that Very Special Circumstances will be required to justify it.

However, the scale of the development is not considered to be significant in relation to the EIA regulations. The quantum of development is not significant in EIA terms in this regard, given the site is urban and built up, and densely populated with a substantial level of businesses and commercial activities.

Due to the location and potential scale and height of the proposed development, it would only be highly visible in local and mid-range views. **A Townscape Visual Impact Assessment and Heritage Impact Assessment would be submitted with any planning application to demonstrate the impact on an agreed list of views.**

The development is anticipated to generate noise and release dust and diesel fumes / particulates into the air during the construction and operation of the development. **A Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan, Dust**

Management Plan, Transport, Noise and Air Quality Assessments would form part of any planning application and are considered appropriate to assess such impacts.

Other potential impacts relating to heritage, energy, contamination, and biodiversity, these considered to be relatively modest. **Such issues can be addressed through a Design and Access Statement, Energy Strategy, Sustainability Assessment, Site Investigation/Contamination Report, and Ecological Impact Assessment that would be submitted as part of a planning application.**

(b) the nature of the impact;

The nature of the impact will largely be local but there will be longer visual impacts than are stressed in the applicant's assessment. The proposal will result in the loss of areas of greenfield as well as previously developed land that are designated as Green Belt land. The impacts are not considered to be significant in EIA terms.

The proposal will be visible from numerous viewpoints around Slough but none of these views has any specific statutory or development policy basis of protection other than designated heritage assets which can be dealt with through the Townscape Visual Impact Assessment and a Heritage Impact Assessment.

There is anticipated to be some potential air quality, noise, contamination, and ecological issues during both the construction and operational phases of the development, which can be dealt with by the relevant reports set out in this report. The overall transport impacts are not predicted to be significant in EIA terms.

(c) the transboundary nature of the impact;

The site is close to neighbouring authority boundaries. There may be visual impacts in terms of the height and massing of the proposal and the **Townscape Visual Impact Assessment, in addition to a Heritage Impact Assessment are capable of considering impacts on the Grade I Listed Windsor Castle and Registered Park and Garden (at Windsor Great Park). Air-Quality and Noise Assessments can similarly consider the cumulative impacts as a result of the generator testing.**

(d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;

The impacts are not considered to be of a magnitude that would result in significant environmental impacts in terms of their intensity or complexity.

Although there are some potential impacts anticipated to be typical of an urban development project such as this, there are no other impacts which have potential to

raise unusually intense or complex issues. It is considered that the environmental impacts could be assessed in detail within the scope of technical reports normally submitted as part of a planning application.

(e) the probability of the impact;

It is considered that there is a high probability of the impacts arising if the development proceeds, although some of the impacts could be mitigated subject to appropriate planning controls, with due consideration of the technical assessments that will be submitted in support of the application.

There are precedent examples in Slough of data centre schemes of this size, as similar buildings and uses have been permitted in the Borough. There are no other battery storage facilities in the Borough.

The impacts of the development are not considered to be significant. The impacts that will occur can be predicted with a reasonable degree of accuracy and the normal planning process can ensure that well proven measures can be implemented to avoid significant effects. It is not considered that the development would result in unusually complex and potentially hazardous environmental effects.

(f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;

The proposed development would be permanent and therefore the impacts arising from the development would in the most part have the potential to remain for the life of the development.

Construction impacts will be limited to the construction period and will be controlled by a **Demolition and Construction Environment Management Plan, Dust Management Plan and Construction Logistics Management Plan**. Likely operational impacts are anticipated to be limited and mitigated through **Transport, Air Quality and Noise Assessments, a Travel Plan, and relevant planning conditions and / or obligations**.

(g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;

There could be some cumulative effects in respect to scale and massing, drainage, traffic movement, generator testing but it is considered that these matters can be satisfactorily assessed and appropriately mitigated through the submission of supporting documents including a **Design and Access Statement, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Heritage Impact Assessment, Traffic, Air Quality and Noise Assessments, a Travel Plan, Ecological Impact Assessment and Drainage Strategy/Scheme and the imposition of planning obligations and conditions**.

Based on the above, the proposal would likely result in significant effects in relation to this issue.

B4. Can conditions or additional information deal with the issues identified?

It is considered that conditions and technical supporting documents with the planning application could satisfactorily determine the mitigation needed to address the impact of the development. Appropriate mitigation could include measures/detailed specifications set out in the supporting documents such as the **Design and Access Statement, Construction Management Environment Plan, Dust Management Plan, Construction Transport Management Plan, Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Heritage Impact Assessment, Transport Assessment, Travel Plan, Noise Assessment, Air Quality Assessment, Site Investigation/Contamination Reports, Surface Water Drainage Strategy/Scheme (with management and maintenance regime), Archaeological Investigation Report, Sustainability Statement, Energy Strategy, Ecological Impact Assessment and Electromagnetic Fields Assessment.**

Summary:

The characteristics of the likely impacts are considered to be of an extent that they would be relatively local and not of an EIA complexity or magnitude. Subject to the impacts and mitigation measures being comprehensively and robustly identified in the necessary technical reports to support a planning application as highlighted in bold in this report, and these measures being secured through the planning process, the proposal would be unlikely to result in significant effects in EIA terms.

Application documents

An application will need to be accompanied with a suite of technical information. In such a circumstance, the following documents would be required to be submitted with any forthcoming application.

- Application forms, certificates and fee
- Site location plan and other plans topographic survey of the site
- Details drawings, including any level changes and cross section plans
- Design and Access statement
- Drainage Strategy
- Heritage Assessment
- Archaeology Assessment
- Town and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Heritage Impact Assessment
- Surface Water Drainage Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Contaminated land/Geological Reports

- Energy Statement
- Sustainability Statement
- Planning Statement
- Transport Assessment
- Travel Plan
- Air Quality Assessment
- Dust Management Plan
- Odour Assessment
- Demolition / Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Noise & Vibration Assessment
- Arboricultural Assessment/Strategy
- Landscaping Strategy and Management Plan
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
- Electromagnetic Fields Assessment
- Waste Management Plan

B5. Is the proposal EIA Development?	NO
Delegated sign off date:	05/11/2024

This screening opinion has been adopted by Slough Borough Council

Prepared by Alex Harrison

Checked by Neetal Rajput