

**THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL
ADOPTED SCREENING OPINION
19/2106/EIA**

Date request received: 15 October 2019

Date decision required: 5 November 2019

Request for a 'Screening Opinion' in respect of the following development:

Development of two Warehouse Units (Class B1C / B2 / B8), comprising a total Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 16,140 m² (including 1,986m² ancillary B1c office space), access, landscaping and associated works, at Development Site, Maple Lodge, Maple Lodge Close, Maple Cross.

Introduction:

The Council has received an application for the above, and are required to complete a formal screening opinion under Regulations 5 and 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 in respect of these proposals.

Is the project Schedule One? **No**

Is the project Schedule Two? **Yes**

Industrial estate development projects (the area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectares)

Or

Urban development projects, including the construction of shopping centres and car parks, sports stadiums, leisure centres and multiplex cinemas (the development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development).

Is the project in or adjacent to a sensitive area? **No**

Note: Regulation 2(1) defines 'sensitive areas', these are:

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

Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017:

In respect of Schedule 2 development, an assessment will only be required if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 require regard to be had to Schedule 3 of the Regulations when considering whether an Assessment should be required.

1. Characteristics of development

The characteristics of development must be considered with particular regard to—

- (a) the size and design of the whole development;
- (b) cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;
- (c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- (d) the production of waste;
- (e) pollution and nuisances;
- (f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;
- (g) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).

2. 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;
- (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;

(c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas—

- (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
- (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;
- (iii) mountain and forest areas;
- (iv) nature reserves and parks;
- (v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation;
- (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;
- (vii) densely populated areas;
- (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

3. Types and characteristics of the potential impact

The likely significant effects of the development on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in paragraphs 1 and 2 above, with regard to the impact of the development on the factors specified in regulation 4(2), taking into account—

- (a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- (b) the nature of the impact;
- (c) the transboundary nature of the impact;
- (d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;
- (e) the probability of the impact;
- (f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- (g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development;
- (h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact

Consideration of selection criteria in Schedule 3

1. Characteristics of the development:

The development would provide 2 no. warehouse Class B1c/B2/B8 units totalling 16,140 sqm including 1,986 sqm ancillary B1a office space; 141 car parking spaces; 39 HGV (lorry) parking spaces; 40 long-term cycle parking spaces; integrated landscaping works, and associated technical works including widening of the existing access road.

Unit 1 would be located to the north of the site with Unit 2 to the south. Both Units would be accessed via the access road to the east via 3 access points. Parking and servicing areas are proposed to the north and east of Unit 1 and east of Unit 2. Cycle storage and refuse and recycling storage is also proposed.

Some existing trees are proposed to be felled to facilitate works. Existing planting would be supplemented with landscaping around the perimeter of the site.

Highways works proposed include the widening of the existing access road to provide a new footpath and provision of three vehicular crossovers to access the site.

The proposal would not be of a scale to require the need for significant infrastructure, nor result in significant cumulative impacts that cannot be considered with detail submitted under a planning application.

The proposal would not result in the production of waste, but could result in pollution and nuisances from the movement of vehicles using the site and parking on the site. However, these would be no greater than would result from any development of the site and currently there are no adjoining occupiers who would significantly be impacted by the fumes and noise. The risk of major accidents is considered to be minimal.

The characteristics of the development are not considered to give rise to significant environmental impacts in this case.

2. Location of development:

The site comprises an undeveloped open grassed area of approximately 3.4 hectares. Mature trees and vegetation align the eastern, southern and western site boundaries, some of these are protected. The site is accessed via an existing access road leading from the A412 (Denham Way). There is informal pedestrian access to the site but no existing vehicular crossovers. The access road serves the Thames

Water Treatment Works that lie to the south east beyond a further undeveloped site. Further south, there is a locally designated nature reserve and wildlife site, Maple Lodge Nature Reserve.

To the north of the site is an area of land which fronts the A412 (Denham Way) that benefits from an extant planning permission that has been implemented (but not built out) for the erection of a hotel. To the east are open fields, while to the north east there are two hanger style buildings that are established commercial premises. There are residential and commercial properties to the west of the site.

To the north and west of the site is Maple Cross/Maple Lodge Employment Site, a designated employment area within the Site Allocations Local Development Document (adopted October 2014) (site ref. E(d)) and of which the application site forms part.

The A412 (Denham Way) runs north to south through Maple Cross connecting Rickmansworth to the north and West Hyde to the south. It also provides access to Junction 17 of the M25 (approximately 1.5km north of the application site).

Whilst the majority of the site is outside of the Metropolitan Green Belt, the Green Belt does overlap the eastern site boundary and a narrow strip that links to Maple Lodge Close to the south. The Green Belt adjoins the southern and eastern site boundaries. The majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1; however, a narrow strip to the eastern and southern boundaries lies within Flood Zone 2. The site lies within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 1. Maple Lodge Farm Ditch Main River runs along the west boundary of the site. The site is located within the Colne Valley Park. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Central River Valleys Landscape Area is located to the east.

The site is not located within a 'sensitive area' as defined by Regulation 2(1).

3. Types and characteristics of potential impacts

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

Changes will occur to the area as new buildings and hard surfaced areas are being constructed on land where no buildings currently exist, although there are buildings in the immediate vicinity of the site. While these impacts would largely be localized, there are public viewpoints of the development site at some distance from the site e.g. bridleways close to M25 junction 17.

The development site is located immediately adjacent to a residential area, but this has a relatively small population and the majority of impacts would only affect this localized population. However, as set out above residential properties in Mill End may have limited views of the site. The impacts regarding traffic would affect drivers passing through the area. Impacts on groundwater and the Groundwater Source Protection Zone would have implications for a wider area and larger population through the supply of public drinking water.

(b) the nature of the impact;

The development of the site with two buildings for commercial purposes, service yards, car parking and ancillary work would result in some impact on the visual amenity and character of the area / landscape. A landscaping scheme is also proposed to supplement retained planting. The application is accompanied by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). The LVIA suggests that the impact on the landscape would not be adverse and that existing and proposed tree planting would provide screening.

The height and visual impact of the proposed buildings would also be considered as part of any application.

There is the potential for impacts on trees within the site, as some existing trees are proposed to be felled to facilitate works. Existing planting would be supplemented with landscaping around the perimeter of the site.

There is also the potential for impacts on ecology and biodiversity, given the location of the site, as there is potential for wildlife to be present on site. The site is located adjacent to a watercourse and Maple Lodge Nature Reserve, a Local Wildlife Site is also located to the south of the site. A number of surveys have been submitted as part of the current planning application (including Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Phase 1 Habitat Survey and various species-specific surveys).

The proposed development would be likely to result in changes to traffic movements to and from site with an increase in traffic movements as a result of the development. The planning application currently under assessment is supported by a Transport Assessment, Construction Logistics Management Plan and Framework Travel Plan.

The proposal could result in impacts in respect of noise, not only during the construction phase, but also when the development is operational as the proposals include service yards to both buildings where lorries are likely to be manoeuvring and the units would be operational 24 hours per day.

There could be impacts in respect of air quality due to increased vehicle movements and the nature of traffic.

With regards to contamination, in respect of both land and groundwater, the proposal could result in impacts. The planning application is accompanied by a site investigation and while this did not identify concentrations of chemical contaminants, it did identify concentrations of asbestos in the soil. The site is in a Groundwater Source Protection Zone and the development must be carried out to ensure there is no risk of pollution to groundwater and thus local water supplies.

There is potential for impacts on flooding as the site lies within Flood Zones 1 and 2.

From 6 April 2015, changes to the planning system have required the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) for the management of surface water in all new major developments. Given the scale of the buildings, their service yards and car parking areas, the development has potential to cause effects in regards to drainage.

There are two Listed Buildings to the south west of the site on Maple Lodge Close. Maple Lodge Barn is a Grade II Listed Building located on the corner of Longmore Close. Mapelodge Farm to the east includes a Grade II Listed detached brick built dwelling dating from the early nineteenth century. There may be views of the proposed development from the Listed Buildings.

(c) the transboundary nature of the impact;

Traffic is most likely to have an impact on the wider area, as could any impact on groundwater and public water supply.

Depending on the heights of the buildings proposed, the proposed development may be visible from the wider area. Existing trees will provide some screening as would the additional landscaping proposed as part of the planning application.

(d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;

&

(e) the probability of the impact;

There is likely to be an impact due to additional urbanization compared to the existing situation due to the impact of built development/hard surfacing compared to the existing situation.

The magnitude of the visual impact of the development will be assessed through the submitted LVIA. Landscaping is also proposed as part of the planning application. The magnitude of impact on protected trees will need to be assessed as part of the application, although some trees are proposed to be felled.

The proposed development would be likely to result in changes to traffic movements to and from site with an increase in traffic movements as a result of the development. The planning application currently under assessment is supported by a Transport Assessment, Construction Logistics Management Plan and Framework Travel Plan. It is noted that highway improvement works are proposed, which include the widening of the existing access road to provide a new footpath and provision of three vehicular crossovers to access the site. The impact on highway safety and the road network will be fully assessed as part of the planning application.

There is also the potential for impacts on ecology and biodiversity, given the location of the site, as there is potential for wildlife to be present on site. The site is located adjacent to a watercourse and Maple Lodge Nature Reserve, a Local Wildlife Site is also located to the south of the site. A number of surveys have been submitted as part of the current planning application (including Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Phase 1 Habitat Survey and various species-specific surveys). The submission of these documents with the planning application will allow full consideration of these impacts.

The site is within Flood Zones 1 and 2. Due to the area of the site, as well as the type of development proposed and floorspace to be created, a Flood Risk Assessment is required. Furthermore, due to the changes to the layout, hard surfacing, and the overall size of the development site, issues of flooding and drainage, including SuDS, are assessed in a Flood Risk Assessment submitted with the planning application.

Noise impacts would arise, not only during the construction phase, but also when the development is operational as the proposals include service yards to both buildings where lorries are likely to be manoeuvring and the units would be operational 24 hours per day.

There could be impacts in respect of air quality due to increased vehicle movements and the nature of traffic.

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

The impact of the erection of the two commercial buildings and their service yards and parking areas, together with the creation of the new accesses could not be reversed.

Impact of potential additional traffic movements and noise following occupation of the development.

Construction traffic would have some impact on the locality; this would be assessed as part of the planning application.

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

There is one approved project within 1km of the site of a scale and nature that has the potential to have cumulative effects, the hotel adjacent to the Denham Way (A412) and access road where consent has been implemented, but construction on the hotel has not started.

(h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact

As part of the planning application a significant number of assessments and surveys have been submitted. Furthermore, planning conditions could be attached to any consent if considered necessary and appropriate.

Is the proposal EIA development?

The proposal is considered to be Schedule 2 development that is unlikely, having regard to the nature, location and other characteristics of the development, to give rise to significant environmental effects. As such, it is not considered to be EIA development.

Consideration of information to be included in the ES

Not applicable.

Consideration of need for additional information

Not applicable – information submitted as part of the planning application which is currently being assessed.

Conclusion:

The applicant has requested a Screening Opinion to be carried out.

Whilst the proposal has the potential to increase noise, disturbance, emissions and vibrations resulting from construction and operation of the development (including vehicle movements), changes to the ecology and increased flood risk. These impacts are likely to be relatively limited and thus unlikely to give rise to unusually complex or potentially hazardous environmental effects, other than what would normally be considered in a planning application. Consideration has been given to Schedule 3 of The Regulations and National Planning Practice Guidance to establish whether the proposed development is likely to have significant environmental effects that would necessitate the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment. The development is only considered to have local effects and is not a particularly sensitive or vulnerable site in EIA terms. The development is neither unusually complex nor likely to have potentially hazardous environmental effects therefore the Council do not consider that an Environmental Impact Assessment is required.

This recommendation does not in any way prejudice the outcome of any current/future planning application, which will be subject to full consultation, and assessment of the planning issues.

This Screening Opinion has been adopted by Three Rivers District Council.



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Kimberley Rowley
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On behalf of

Date: 4 November 2019

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