

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Harworth Group PLC (the "Applicant") is seeking to obtain planning permission for the mixed-use development (the "Proposed Development") of land at the former Ironbridge Power Station (the "Application Site").

The Proposed Development comprises up to 1,000 dwellings, a retirement village, employment land to include offices, light industrial uses, general industrial uses, storage and distribution uses, a local centre (to include non-food retail, a convenience foodstore, and other facilities), allotments, sports pitches, a railway link, leisure uses, a new primary school (to include nursery provision) and a park and ride facility, together with new walking and cycling routes, and associated landscaping, drainage and infrastructure works.

The planning application seeks outline planning consent with matters of landscaping, layout, scale and appearance reserved for future determination and detailed consent for the means of access.

The Application Site is situated largely within the administrative area of Shropshire Council. A small part of the site lies within the administrative boundaries of Telford and Wrekin Council.

This Environmental Statement (ES) presents the findings of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which was undertaken alongside the design for the Proposed Development and various supporting technical studies which have informed the design. It assesses the effects of the proposals on:

- Socio Economic Issues;
- Landscape and Visual Impact;
- Biodiversity;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Archaeology;
- Transport;
- Air Quality;

- Noise and Vibration;
- Hydrology;
- Ground Conditions

APPLICATION SITE AND CONTEXT

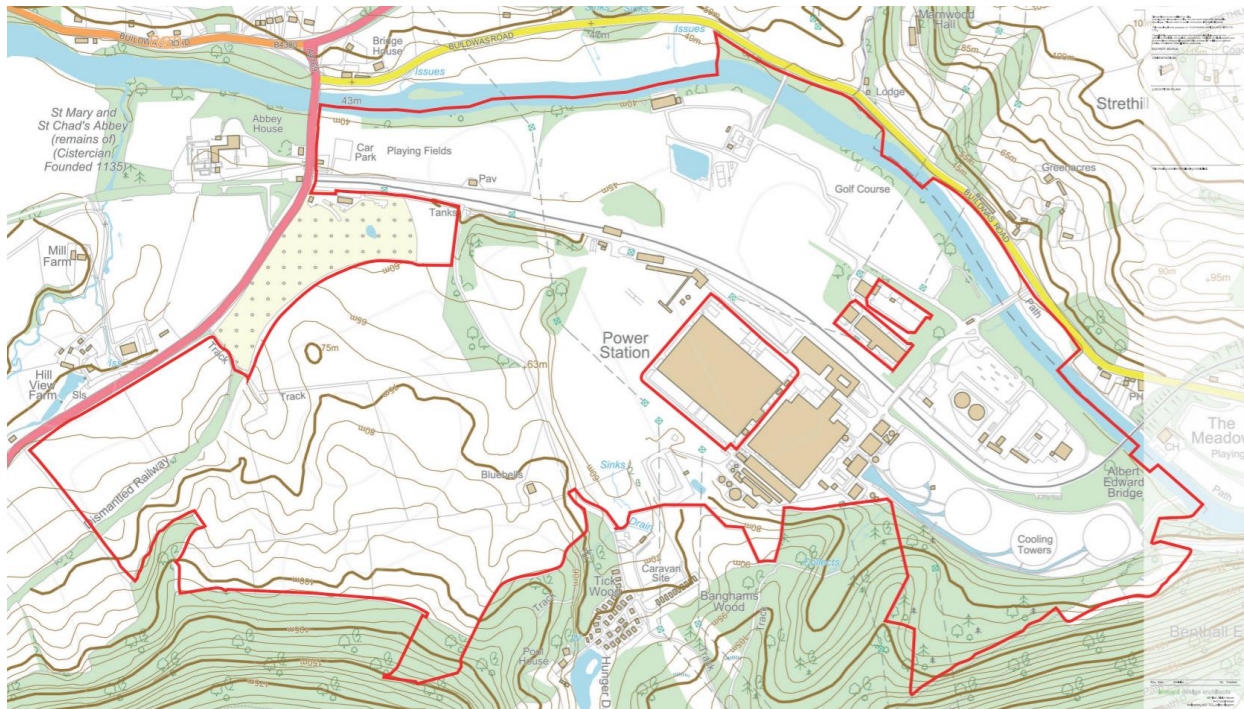
The Application Site comprises land at the former Ironbridge Power Station (the A and B Power Stations), along with associated uses, including redundant sports pitches and a pavilion, borrow pits, Pulverised Fuel Ash (PVA), landfill waste tips, a rail siding and agricultural land. The site is approximately 139.3ha.

The Application Site is located within east Shropshire, near to the boundary with Telford and Wrekin. The large majority of the Application Site lies within Shropshire, with the existing access into the Application Site lying within Telford and Wrekin. To the north and of the Application Site lies the River Severn and Buildwas Road. To the south lies a residential and holiday park and Tick Wood and Benthall Edge SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). To the west lies Buildwas Abbey and a quarry.

The Application Site has been identified as a Strategic Site in the emerging Shropshire Local Plan Review. Shropshire Council consulted on the Strategic Sites Consultation from July to September 2019, and this document includes a series of Site Guidelines for the redevelopment of the Application Site to provide a new settlement.

A separate planning application has been submitted for the extraction of sand and gravel on the western part of the site, following which new development platforms will be created. The baseline position for this assessment assumes that both the decommissioning and demolition of the power station, and the minerals extraction and subsequent restoration are undertaken, and completed in accordance with the submitted minerals application and the approved decommissioning and demolition application.

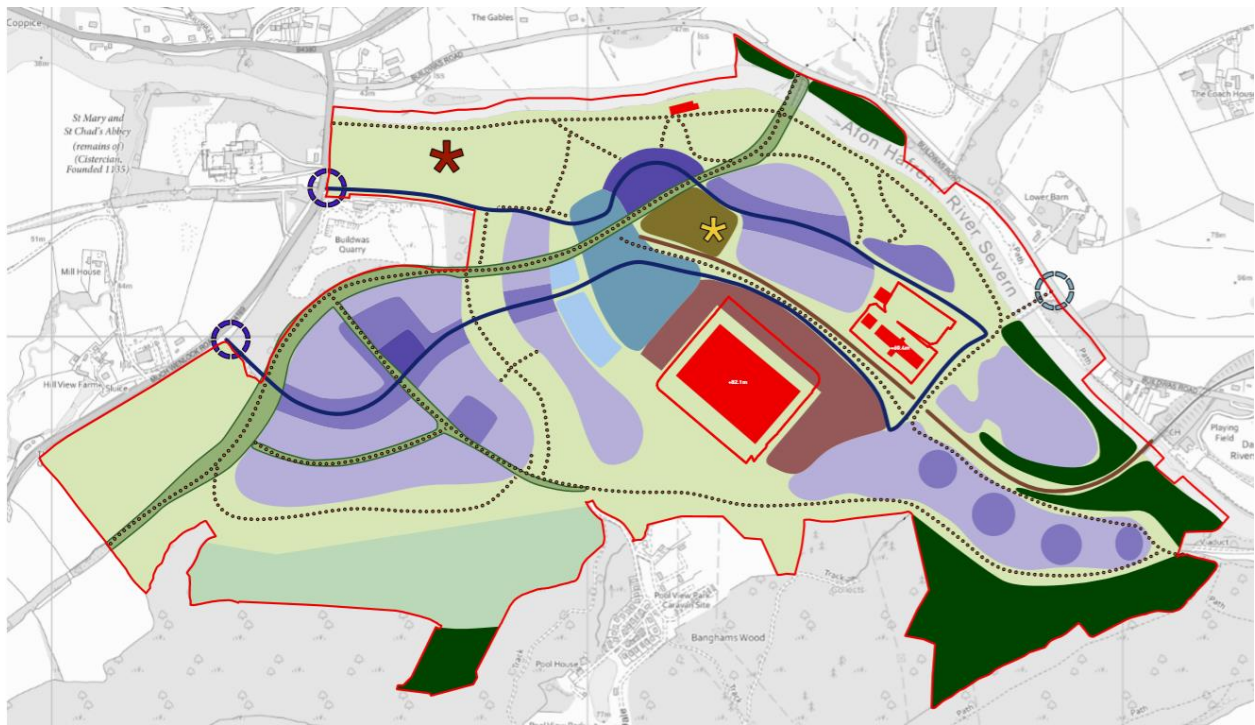
SITE LOCATION PLAN



THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out with regards to a range of development parameters as per the Parameters Assessment Plan. These parameters ensure that the Proposed Development as assessed represents the maximum (i.e. worst-case) scenario, whilst providing some limited flexibility for changes that may arise as the scheme evolves with the benefit of subsequent approvals and/or reserved matters applications.

PARAMETERS ASSESSMENT PLAN



In summary, the Proposed Development comprises:

- **Land use** – the development of up to 1,000 new dwellings, retirement living, employment land (offices, light industry, general industry, storage and distribution), a local centre to include a convenience retail foodstore, other retail and facilities, allotments, sports pitches, a railway link, leisure uses, a new primary school (to include nursery provision) and a park and ride facility, new walking and cycling routes, landscaping, drainage and infrastructure;
- **Building footprints and maximum heights** – the Proposed Development includes a range of height parameters, for the residential elements of the Proposed Development there are three height parameters for built development; up to 2.5 storeys (10.5m), up to 3 storeys (11m) and up to 4 storeys (13m), and for the remainder of the Application Site – employment areas, primary school and local centre – up to 4 storeys (13m) (all heights are from post-mineral extraction levels and to ridge height);
- **Principal means of vehicle access** – the primary means of access to the Proposed Development will be from two new access points from the Much Wenlock Road (A4169), and the existing Power Station access will be used for public transport, pedestrian and cyclists only;
- **Primary Vehicle Access Corridor** – a primary access route connecting the two new access points into the site from Much Wenlock Road, and looping through the Proposed Development;

- **Pedestrian and Cycle Link Corridors** – pedestrian and cycle routes link through the Proposed Development and beyond, providing connections east to west and north to south, providing linkages to the wider footpath network, additionally the internal road layout will promote safe walking and cycling routes;
- **Green Infrastructure and Open Space** – the minimum provision of proposed green infrastructure and open space are set out and include landscaping, ecological mitigation and surface water drainage, along with existing vegetation and green corridors; and
- **Utilities and Infrastructure** – the drainage strategy demonstrates that surface water runoff can be sustainably managed to ensure that the Proposed Development will be safe from flood risk and will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. A combination of Sustainable Urban Drainage features, including permeable surfaces, swales and attenuation basins will be provided.

Construction

The Proposed Development is expected to commence on site during 2021, subject to gaining planning consent and the necessary approvals, and take approximately 15 years to complete. Construction would be phased over the 15-year period.

The Applicant would prepare a Construction Management Plan (CMP) that sets out the agreed methods and procedures for construction, and standard measures and adoption of construction best practice to ensure that the risks to the environment are avoided or and/or appropriately managed. The details of the CMP would be agreed with the Council and monitored, and revised where necessary, throughout the construction phase.

Alternatives

The Applicant has considered the following alternatives to the Proposed Development:

- The 'No Development' Alternative; and
- Alternative Designs.

The No Development alternative refers to the option of not developing the site such that it is retained in its current use and physical state (post-demolition). Given the need to meet housing and employment needs and to deliver a new settlement as per the identification of the Application Site within the emerging Shropshire Local Plan Review, a 'no development' option is considered to be unrealistic.

The only 'alternatives' considered therefore relate to looking at alternative designs and the Design and Access Statement (DAS) that accompanies the planning application which describes the design evolution and concepts in more detail.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE AND ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

Environmental Theme – SocioEconomics

The potential effects of the Proposed Development on socioeconomic issues has been considered.

The existing labour market in Shropshire has grown in recent years compared to employment growth seen in The Marches LEP area, the West Midlands and the UK. Shropshire has a higher rate of economic activity than the LEP, the West Midlands and the UK. The Authority has seen a weaker growth in business numbers in recent years when compared to the region and the UK although business growth was in line with that of the LEP. The area surrounding the Application Site has capacity across health and education services.

There will be up to 220 temporary jobs over a 15-year build period and up to £12.5m of value per year in the Shropshire economy, over the construction period. Once fully built out, there will be an estimated 1,191 economically active/employed residents living on the site, and approximately 622 additional jobs will be created by the Proposed Development. An additional household expenditure of £25.2m per year could be generated, and an estimated £223.3m of gross value added over the next 10 years. These impacts are considered to have a significant beneficial effect.

The creation of jobs through the construction and operational phases and the provision of housing to meet identified needs will have positive socioeconomic impacts. By virtue of the mixed-use nature of the Proposed Development, the development proposals will be sustainable development and will mitigate its own impact; through the provision of services and facilities as part of the Proposed Development, including public open space, a primary school, community facilities, and a local centre (to include a medical centre).

Whilst the Proposed Development may generate a small number of additional commuting flows, this is considered to be outweighed by the other positive effects on the economy.

Environmental Theme – Landscape

The potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape and visual impact have been considered. The Application Site itself does not have any specific landscape

designations, however there are designations within the surrounding landscape; the Shropshire Hills AONB and the Ironbridge World Heritage Site, as well as ancient woodlands, scheduled monuments and listed buildings. The site is located within National Character Area 65 Shropshire Hills, with part of the site lying within 66: Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau.

The landscape strategy has sought to direct development to the brownfield parts of the Application Site, and wherever possible sought to retain and enhance the existing green infrastructure network across the Application Site. A landscape led approach to the Proposed Development has been adopted, which has benefits in terms of other environmental matters, such as biodiversity, heritage and historic aspects of the landscape and consideration of sustainable drainage.

Overall, the Proposed Development will result in some limited impacts at a localised level, however the visual effect in the wider landscape will be generally very limited. On balance, the Proposed Development is considered acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

Environmental Theme – Biodiversity

An assessment of the likely significant effects on important ecological features has been undertaken. The assessment has considered two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Tick Wood and Benthall Edge and Lydebrook Dingle, two Local Nature Reserves: Lodge Field and The Beeches, seven Local Wildlife Sites, a veteran tree, three habitats, a county rare plant, invasive non-native plants, six protected species, and bird species.

The Proposed Development includes a range of mitigation measures. This includes new and retained green infrastructure, woodland, hedgerows, grassland, waterbodies and a great crested newt mitigation area buffer the SSSI's and Local Wildlife Sites. This green infrastructure will maintain connections for species through the site and connections between the river corridor and ancient woodland. There is a minimum 15m stand-off from ancient woodland which buffers from impacts from machinery, including dust and pollution.

Other measures include pollution control measures within the drainage strategy, creation of root protection areas, a sensitive lighting scheme, sympathetic management of habitats (to be agreed with the Council through an Ecological Management Plan), avoiding barriers to species, and the implementation of strategies for breeding birds and otters. Legal measures such as surveys of trees with potential to support roosting bats will be undertaken, as well as the licenced provision of artificial badger setts, and the regular inspection of semi-permanent herptile fencing.

The habitats created within the Proposed Development represent enhancement, as they are above and beyond the required mitigation and compensation. The parameters plan indicates a 48% increase of an important ecological corridor within Shropshire.

With mitigation in place, the effects on important ecological features would be neutral. There is an adverse effect related to little ringed plover and the loss of breeding habitat, however this species will move on to new breeding sites. The Proposed Development is therefore considered acceptable with mitigation measures in place; and the important ecological network in Shropshire is protected and extended.

Environmental Theme – Cultural Heritage

This Chapter considers the potential effects upon the heritage resource from the Proposed Development; focusing on the indirect impacts upon the significance of assets that could arise through changes to the setting. The assessment focuses on a 2km area around the Application Site, in line with Historic England's guidance. The Grade II Listed Albert Edward railway bridge is located within the east of the Application Site, and two non-designated heritage assets associated with the first phase of the power station are located within the north of the Application Site. Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site and Severn Gorge Conservation Area and are located immediately to the east of the Application Site.

Four Scheduled Monuments are recorded within 2km of the Application Site, including Buildwas Abbey, located approximately 15m west of the site. Five Grade I Listed buildings are recorded within 2km of the Application Site, including two within the Buildwas Abbey Scheduled Monument, approximately 155-195m west of the site. Twelve Grade II* Listed buildings are recorded within 2km of the Application Site, the closest of which, The Valley Hotel, lies approximately 1,200m east of the site. Two hundred and twenty-eight Grade II Listed buildings are recorded within 2km of the Application Site, including Bridge House, located approximately 50m north of the site; The Slip, located approximately 150m north of the site; The Folly, located approximately 195m north-west of the site; and, Millhouse Farmhouse, located approximately 250m north-west of the site.

Since the majority of the former power station buildings are consented for demolition, which is ongoing, the assessment was undertaken using post-demolition conditions as a baseline. The Proposed Development is also to be undertaken following mineral extraction in the west of the site so post-extraction conditions were used as a baseline. The above baselines were agreed following consultation with Historic England.

The construction phase is anticipated to result in minimal harm to the significance of the Buildwas Abbey Scheduled Monument, resulting in a minor adverse effect which is not

considered significant. A neutral effect is anticipated in relation to all other heritage assets.

The operational phase is anticipated to result in minimal harm to the significance of the Buildwas Abbey Scheduled Monument, resulting in a minor adverse effect which is not considered significant. The operational phase is also anticipated to result in minor beneficial effects to the significance of non-designated heritage assets within the north of the site (bridge and pumphouse) and to the Grade II Listed Albert Edward bridge in the east of the Site. A neutral effect is anticipated in relation to all other heritage assets.

No mitigation other than what is proposed by design is necessary. The proposed location of the areas of development within the footprint of a quarry in the west and the footprint of the former power station buildings and storage mounds in the east will limit any inter-visibility between the Proposed Development and heritage assets in the vicinity.

Additionally, the proposed revival of the railway line within the site will ensure the long-term upkeep and preservation of the Grade II Listed Albert Edward rail bridge to the east of the site, and the proposed use of the non-designated heritage assets (road bridge and pumphouse) associated with the first phase of the power station in the north, will ensure the upkeep and preservation of these assets.

No effects on heritage have been identified which are considered significant in EIA terms.

Environmental Theme – Archaeology

The Application Site has been assessed for its archaeological potential and is considered to have negligible potential for archaeological assets dating from the Prehistoric, Roman, and Saxon periods, and a low potential for assets dating to the Medieval and post-Medieval periods has also been identified.

Based on the results of the previous stages of investigation, the potential impacts from the Proposed Development are likely to be limited to previously undeveloped areas of the Application Site, currently under agricultural use. In these areas, the Proposed Development would have the potential to truncate or entirely remove any surviving archaeological deposits, and this impact could arise from enabling works, intrusive ground work and hard landscaping.

An agreed staged programme of archaeological investigations in consultation with the Council's Natural and Historic Environment Manager has now been completed. This evaluation was informed by an earlier archaeological watching brief over a site investigation, and targeted the results from a geophysical survey. The aim of these

investigations was to determine the likelihood and potential extent of any impact from the development on archaeological deposits. The results of the final stage, consisting of a trial trench evaluation undertaken in November 2019, will be submitted during the planning application determination period.

Given the largely negative results of desk-based assessment and a staged programme of archaeological investigation, no further work is recommended as mitigation, should consent be granted.

Environmental Theme – Transport

This chapter assesses the changing transport conditions as a result of the Proposed Development. Appropriate mitigation has been included as part of the Proposed Development, including the provision of a traffic signal control, including pedestrian crossing, at the A4169 Buildwas Bank/Much Wenlock Road T-junction. Additional mitigation may be required subject to the results of transport modelling that is ongoing.

The assessment demonstrates that, subject to ongoing transport modelling, the existing and proposed highway infrastructure could satisfactorily accommodate the pedestrian, cycle, public transport and vehicular movements associated with the proposed development.

Appropriate mitigation will ensure that any residual adverse environmental effects would be limited to those of minor or negligible significance. The assessments and conclusions of this Chapter will be reviewed following the availability of the transport modelling results.

Environmental Theme – Air Quality

An air quality impact assessment has been undertaken. The current conditions of the area have been assessed and the current concentrations of key pollutants were below the relevant air quality objective for key pollutants.

Recommendations have been made in relation to a Construction Environmental Management Plan to minimise emissions during construction activities. Subject to this, the impact of construction phase dust emissions is not considered to be significant. Impacts in relation to the excavation and movement of Pulverised Fuel Ash from the former power station have been considered and no human health impacts are anticipated.

A road traffic emissions assessment has been undertaken to consider the impact of traffic from the Proposed Development on local air quality. Changes were predicted to be negligible and there will be no significant impacts on air quality.

Environmental Theme – Noise and Vibration

Operational noise and vibration, including development generated road traffic noise, noise from fixed plant, and equipment and operations associated with the employment uses has been assessed, along with an assessment of the Application Site's suitability for residential and educational uses.

A noise survey has been undertaken and found that the existing noise climate is dominated by road traffic on the surrounding road network, with occasional natural sounds, and noise associated with power infrastructure.

A construction noise and vibration assessment has concluded that there is potential for a significant noise effect prior to mitigation measures being implemented. With recommended mitigation measures implemented, including the preparation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan, the potential impact from noise and vibration can be controlled. With the implementation of these mitigation measures, it is considered that noise and vibration from the construction phase should therefore be 'not significant'.

Noise limits for fixed plant, equipment and operations from proposed noise generative uses have been set, and provided that these limits are achieved, the resultant effect is likely to be 'not significant'.

The effect of development generated road traffic noise on the local road network in both the short term and the long term has been predicted to be 'not significant'.

It has been demonstrated that, with a small amount of localised mitigation, the Application Site is suitable for residential and educational uses, in noise and vibration terms.

Environmental Theme – Hydrology

This Chapter covers the effects of the Proposed Development on the water environment, including surface water bodies, drainage and flood risk. The main waterbodies nearby are the River Severn and Farley Brook, as well as a partially culverted drain passing beneath the Application Site. These main waterbodies currently have a water quality rating of good for chemistry and moderate for ecology.

Potential significant effects that have been identified relating to the water environment have been considered and can be effectively mitigated through design, through the preparation of a surface water management strategy, based on national and local policies, as well as Environment Agency guidance documents and SUDS best practice measures.

The assessment of likely effects has identified minor impacts on surface water, groundwater and flood risk, during the operational phases of the Proposed Development. These impacts can be mitigated through design and the implementation of good practice and management strategies. With these measures in place there are not anticipated to be any residual adverse significant effects in terms of the water environment and flood risk.

Environmental Theme – Ground Conditions and Contamination

The potential effects of the Proposed Development on ground conditions and contamination have been considered.

Ground investigations have identified inorganic and organic soil contamination, including asbestos, to be present over much of the former power station site with localised areas of inorganic and organic groundwater contamination identified. A former landfill situated within Buildwas Quarry, adjacent to the north west of the Application Site, is a potential source of ground gas. A site walkover has identified areas of localised slope movement in the southern part of the Application Site.

The likely significant effects identified are the exposure of construction workers and adjacent site users to chemical and asbestos contamination, and land stability issues, during construction. The likely significant effects upon completion are the exposure to chemical and asbestos contamination, risks to human health from ground gas and land stability issues.

These potential effects can be mitigated through the implementation of additional ground investigation/monitoring works and associated risk assessments and remedial recommendations, the implementation of a remediation strategy, the implementation of good practice and management strategies in accordance with appropriate guidance, and implementation of suitable design solutions for large permanent slopes in line with industry best practice. With these measures in place there are not anticipated to be any residual adverse significant effects on in terms of ground conditions and land contamination.

Conclusions

The Proposed Development will inevitably result in some environmental effects during the construction phase and once the development is built. The Environmental Statement demonstrates that there are no overriding environmental factors which should prevent the delivery of the Proposed Development, subject to the implementation of mitigation measures, as set out within this Environmental Statement.