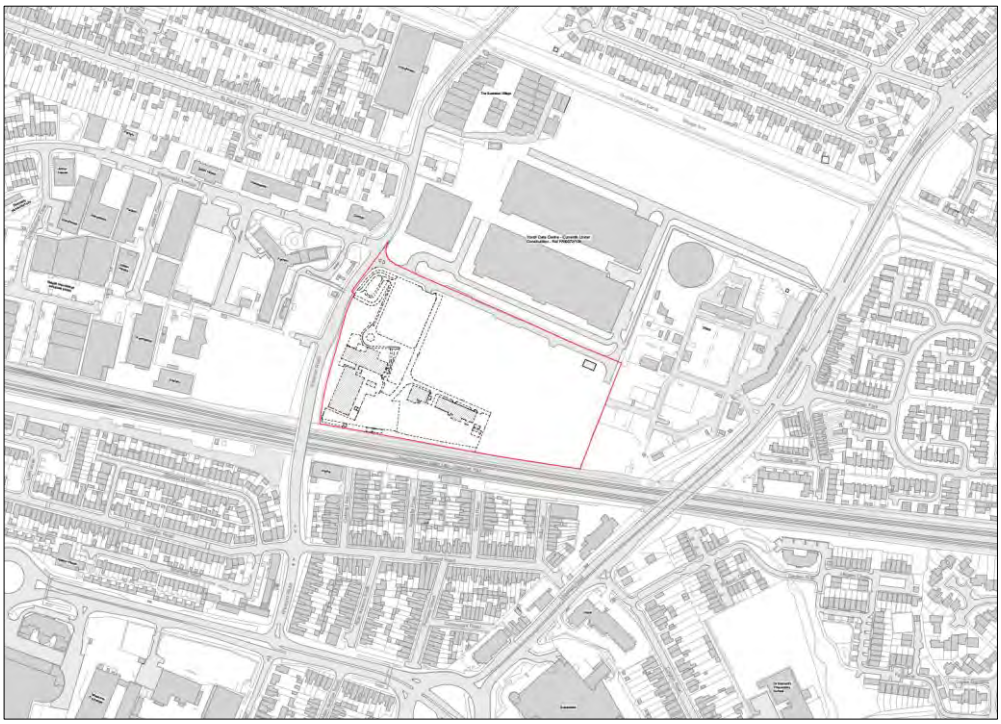
Registration Date:	09 October 2024	Application No:	P/00072/152
Officer:	Martin Cowie	Ward:	Upton Lea
Applicant:	Equinix (LD-A) Limited c/o Agent	Application Type:	Major Development
		13 Week Date:	08 January 2025
Agent:	Mr Robert Purton, David Lock Associates		
Location:	Land at the former Akzonobel Decorative Paints, Wexham Road, Slough, SL2 5DS		
Proposal:	Outline planning permission for the erection of up to 90,614sqm of GEA data centre development including ancillary offices and substation, together with associated additional plant facilities, enclosures and gantries, groundworks, utilities, engineering operations and temporary ancillary uses, and all other infrastructure works. Approval is sought for an emergency means of access on Wexham Road and access points on Technology Boulevard. The proposed development is a phased development with each phase being a separate and severable part of the development. Matters relating to layout, scale, appearance, landscaping, and additional access points along Technology Boulevard, are reserved for subsequent approval (AMENDED PLANS RECEIVED).		

Recommendation: Delegate to Planning Group Manager for Approval



P/00072/152: Land at the former Akzonobel Decorative Paints, Wexham Road, Slough, SL2 5DS

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

1.0 This application has been referred to the Planning Committee for consideration as the application is for a major development.

1.1 Having considered the relevant policies set out below, and comments that have been received from consultees, and all other relevant material considerations it is recommended the application be delegated to the Planning Manager:

A) For approval subject to:

1. The satisfactory competition of a Section 106 legal agreement to secure:

   i. Financial contribution of £1,017,286 towards local skills and employment training and business promotion.
   ii. Financial contribution of £2,358,229.35 towards local economic development initiatives.
   iii. Financial contribution of £2,500,000 towards public realm improvements.
   iv. Financial contribution of £568,013, towards public transport improvements.
   v. Financial contribution of £200,000 minimum towards the provision of a Slough district heating network up to a cap of £500,000.
   vi. Financial contribution of £9,450 Travel Plan monitoring fee.
   vii. Financial contribution of £13,766 s.106 monitoring fee.
   viii. All energy to serve the development to be procured from 100% renewable sources.
   ix. Future connection to a district heating network.
   x. Travel Plan.
   xi. Euro VI construction vehicle emission standards.

2. Agreement of the pre-commencement conditions with the applicant/agent; finalising conditions/informatives; and any other minor changes.

3. Agreement of an updated Design and Access Statement and Design Code.

B) Refuse the application if the completion of the above has not been satisfactorily completed by 26th July 2026 unless a longer period is agreed by the Planning Manager, or Chair of the Planning Committee.

PART A: BACKGROUND

2.0 **Proposal**

2.1 The application, as amended, seeks outline planning permission for the erection of up to 90,614sqm of GEA data centre development including ancillary offices and substation, together with associated additional plant facilities, enclosures and gantries, groundworks, utilities, engineering operations and temporary ancillary uses, and all other infrastructure works. Approval is sought for an emergency means of access on Wexham Road and access points on Technology Boulevard. The proposed development is a phased development with each phase being a separate and severable part of the development. Matters relating to layout, scale, appearance, landscaping, and additional access points along Technology Boulevard, are reserved for subsequent approval.

2.2 Detailed Planning Permission is being sought for vehicle access points from the 'Technology Boulevard' and an emergency vehicle access from Wexham Road. Matters relating to the detailed layout, scale, appearance, landscaping, and additional access points along Technology Boulevard, are reserved for subsequent approval (Reserved Matters).

2.3 'Reserved matters' are those aspects of a proposed development - 'Access', 'Appearance', 'Landscaping', 'Layout' and 'Scale' - which an applicant can choose not to submit details of with an outline planning application, (i.e. they can be 'reserved' and submitted within an agreed period for determination by the Local Planning Authority).

2.4 Reserved Matters are conditioned and guided by a series of 'Parameter Plans', which establish overarching rules and principles for the development, the detail of which will be determined through future Reserved Matters applications. These applications are considered like any other and will be reported to Planning Committee for resolution.

- Parameter Plans:

2.5 The Parameter Plans submitted for approval cover the following matters:

- Development Zone
- Plot Setbacks
- Massing Heights
- Site Access
- Landscape
- Uses
- Development Sections

2.6 The Parameter Plans have been prepared in conjunction with the design and technical documents and assessments submitted in support of the application

including a Design and Access Statement (DAS) and Design Code. The DAS describes the proposed development and explains why its design is considered appropriate having regard to the nature of the site and surrounding area, environmental constraints and opportunities and planning policy. The Design Code sets out a comprehensive series of guidelines to inform the detailed design of the proposed data centre development at the Reserved Matters stage. These complement the Parameter Plans and identify more specific design related requirements covering, for example, building form, plant, external treatment and materials, lighting and landscaping.

2.7 It is not unusual for developments of this scale and complexity to be submitted in outline initially to establish their acceptability, in principle, and then brought forward for consideration at Reserved Matters stage, when designed up in detail. This approach enables key aspects of a proposal to be agreed and inform detailed technical and design work, thereby avoiding potentially abortive time and resource.

2.8 A data centre is a physical facility housing critical IT infrastructure that enables the storage, processing and distribution of critical data, applications and systems. The proposed data centre development comprises a range of accommodation and associated infrastructure including:

- Data halls (containing the IT infrastructure, plant)
- Front of house (offices, reception areas, conference rooms)
- Back of house (storage, workshops, loading bays)
- Sub-station
- Back-up generators
- Heat dissipation plenums
- External gantries/plant/equipment
- Water storage
- Access and parking
- Heat exchange (subject to local heat network)

Data centres have specific design and operational requirements, and these various components are arranged accordingly to optimise their space, efficiency and use of utility services.

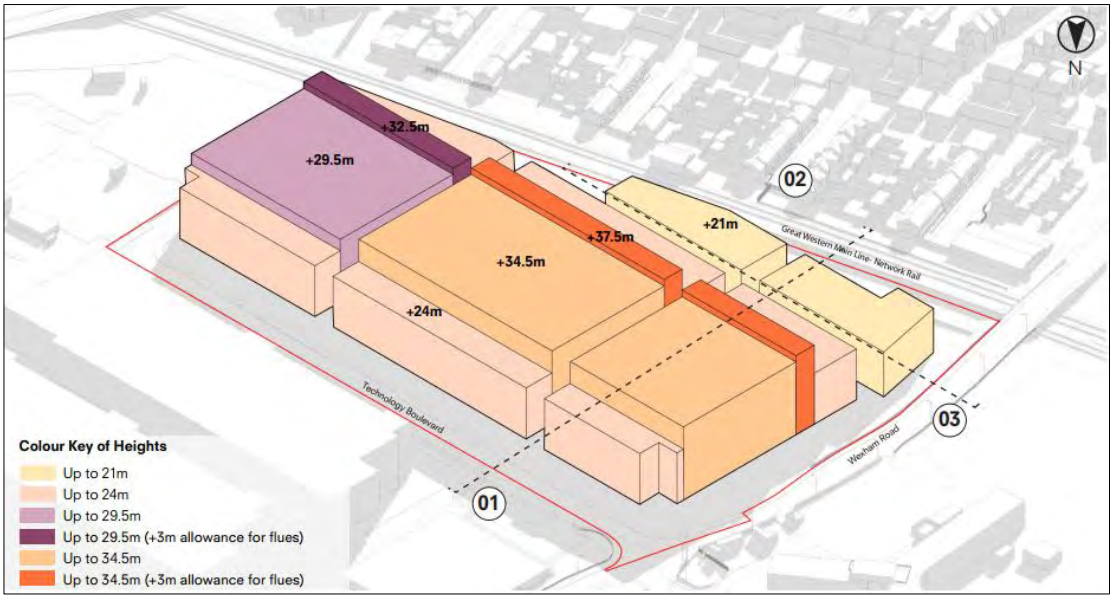
2.9 The proposed development, however, is also designed in response to the constraints of the site and the nature and character of the surrounding area. This includes its existing industrial context, neighbouring residential property and wider townscape/landscape features, namely local heritage assets and Windsor Castle.

2.10 The Parameter Plans set out key principles in relation to the position and scale of the different elements forming part of the data centre facility, in addition to maximum parameters concerning the extent of its footprint, massing and height. The Design Code provides guidance in relation to the detailed configuration and appearance of the development. The design of proposed development at Reserved Matters stage

must adhere to both the Parameter Plans and Design Code to ensure it complies with the Outline Planning Permission.

2.11 As indicated above, approval is sought now for two main access points on Technology Boulevard, and an emergency means of access on Wexham Road near its junction with Technology Boulevard. The two main access points are located at end of the site and would be connected via a route through the development when the layout is agreed at Reserved Matters stage, including additional car, pedestrian and cycle access points along Technology Boulevard as defined in the associated Parameter Plan.

2.12 The Parameter Plans require the main data centre facility to be sited centrally across the length of the site with a frontage onto Technology Boulevard. They also require that the development is split into three separate main building blocks (essentially the data halls plus ancillary accommodation), and that these are set-back from and step down in height towards the boundaries of the site, to break-up its overall massing and respect neighbouring uses. Given the scale of the proposed sub-station necessary to serve the data centre, this is also required to be split into separate building structures behind the data halls and set-away from the site's perimeter. The Parameter Plans ensure that the proposed development presents its main entrances and front of house accommodation onto the main new road frontage and keeps its back of house facilities and plant to the rear of the site, towards the railway.



Proposed building height parameters

2.13 The maximum heights permitted by the Parameter Plans step down from 37.5m and 32.5m (including a 3m+ allowance for plenums) to 34.5m and 29.5m west to east respectively across the central section of the development plot, to 24m at the front and back. The maximum permitted height of the sub-station is set at 21m. By way of context the Yondr data centre buildings erected opposite the site are approximately 24m high. It should be noted that the highest permitted point covers a limited section of the built form relating only to the provision of back-up generator flues which must

be a certain height to comply with environmental regulations. Most of the bulk of the development would be permitted up to a maximum height of 34.5m and 29.5m on its western and eastern sides respectively.

2.14 As indicated above, the Parameter Plans highlight how the built form must not only provide breaks in its massing but be set-back from the boundaries of the site. This includes minimum setbacks of 10m and 15m from Technology Boulevard and Wexham Road respectively and 5m from the railway boundary to the rear (50m from the nearest residential properties to the south of the site across the railway).

2.15 The general configuration of the development has been considered alongside a proposed landscaping strategy for the site which designates areas for the provision of green swathes of planting along Technology Boulevard, Wexham Road and the railway boundary, in particular. The Parameter Plans identify these strategic boundary planting in addition to hard and soft landscaping treatment of all other external areas including vehicle and pedestrian access points, walkways and car parking. The approach also considers ecological enhancements and secures appropriate biodiversity net gains.

2.16 The Parameter Plans also make allowance for the siting of a Heat Exchange in the north-west corner of the site although its specific location and design will be confirmed at Reserved Matters stage. The Heat Exchange would enable the significant amounts of heat generated by the data centres to be channelled into a potential district heating network which could supply new developments nearby with heated water in the future.

- Design Code:

2.17 The Design Code seeks to aid the development of detailed proposals for the site during the Reserved Matters stages taking account of the Parameter Plans, the design requirements associated with the proposed data centre facility, and the nature and character of the site and surrounding area, including local and strategic views. The Design Code will act as continuous point of reference for the ongoing design process beyond the Outline planning application. It focuses on the characteristics of the future development, stipulating design rules for critical elements of the layout and buildings and associated structures and provides examples of how to apply the principles set. The Design Code specifically provides detailed guidance in relation to the following areas:

- Access, routes/circulation space, parking
- Hard and soft landscaping, boundary treatments, lighting, security measures
- Building siting, massing and associated structures/components
- Design principles for key building elements – Front of House facilities, data halls, Back of House facilities, sub-station, plant, gantries
- Façade treatments, materials and colour
- Precedent examples of the design approach/options

- Illustrative scheme demonstrating how the Parameter Plans and Design Code could be applied

- Illustrative scheme:

2.18 In order to support the development of the outline proposals, an illustrative scheme has been developed and has been used throughout the pre-application period to test and validate the Parameter Plans and Design Code. Whilst the illustrative scheme does not form part of the permitted documents associated with the application, unlike the Parameter Plans and Design Code, it serves to demonstrate how the proposed development could appear and relate to its surroundings and comply with the design principles and guidance established at this outline stage.

2.19 The illustrative scheme presents a development comprising of three separate data centre halls with Front and Back of House facilities, two sub-station buildings to the rear and associated access, car parking and landscaping. The three data centre buildings are shown fronting onto Technology Boulevard, 10m apart and set-back behind landscaping and parking areas. The two main access points on the western and eastern ends of the site connect a service route through the development behind the data centre halls. In line with the Parameter Plans and Design Code, the buildings vary in scale and height, stepping down towards the front and rear of the site and incorporate a range of external treatments to reflect their function, layout, orientation and visual impact.

Illustrative Scheme - Technology Boulevard

2.20 The three data buildings align their main entrances and offices with Technology Avenue to provide active and more expressive facades. The Front of House massing mirrors the height of the Yondr buildings at approximately 24m and is lower than the data halls and plant which step back and up towards the centre of the site. The indicative materials across this frontage comprise curtain walling, namely glazing on the offices and bronzed textured cladding panels on the data halls and plant. Pre-

cast concrete is used on the ground floor to provide a solid base. Part of the roofs of the offices are shown as green roofing.

2.21 The roofs of the data halls accommodate significant mechanical apparatus to provide their cooling and electrical equipment. The plant, which is set-in and steps-up in height away from the edge of the data halls is enclosed by metal screening to form a lightweight crown intended to provide some light and views through. These screens extend the height of the proposed data halls on the western end (Wexham Road side) and centre of the site to approximately 32.5m and that on the eastern end to halls to approximately 29.5m high (Uxbridge Road).

2.22 The Back of House facilities including back-up plant to the rear of the data halls vary in form, scale and appearance reflecting their purpose, breaking down their massing and creating visual interest. The back-up generators and associated gantries extend out from each of the data halls at the same height as the offices to the front (approx. 24m) and the associated plenums rise above to form the highest part of the development at approximately 37.5m. The gantries comprise extended mesh and the data halls and base of the plenums feature textured bronzed cladding panels. The top of the plenums change to perforated mesh to provide some transparency at the top of the building. The Back of House accommodation form smaller elements next to the gantries and consist of off-white composite panels with insets where the loading bays are required. As on the offices, green roofs are featured on this ancillary accommodation.

2.23 The side elevations of the data halls facing west to Wexham Road and east to Uxbridge Road echo the treatment of those on the principal front and rear facades with the main material being bronzed textured cladding panels. Elements of curtain walling are featured and interwoven where interior areas can be exposed, such as where offices or circulation cores are located. Additional interest is provided with the use of climbing plants and green walls which also complement the general landscaping across the site.

Illustrative Scheme - View from corner of Wexham Road

2.24 The proposed sub-station is a substantial component, and its size reflects the scale and complexity of the development which it serves to transform and transfer energy from the main grid to the data centre and ensure a reliable power supply. As required by the Parameter Plans, the sub-station forms two distinct structures to the rear of the data halls on the western side of the site. As presented indicatively, the sub-station comprises two rectangular buildings on differing sized footprints, approximately 20m apart and each approximately 21m high. They sit across and along the vehicular access road through the site, and adjacent additional areas of parking. Their external appearance adopts a similar approach to the treatment of the data halls and associated apparatus through the application of a light precast concrete base and a combination of mesh screens, cladding panels and green walls to provide greater texture and depth at the upper levels.

2.25 Given the scale of the proposed development, the design of the buildings seeks to break down and articulate their mass with gaps, setbacks and stepped facades, and by using a range of complementary materials and external treatments. Textured surfacing and earthy tones are used throughout, to assist in blending into the more traditional surrounding townscape, and the sky and Chiltern Hills in long range views from Windsor Castle. The buildings will also incorporate sensitively designed lighting to complement their appearance during darker periods of the day.

Illustrative Scheme - Wexham Road looking north (night-time view)

2.26 The indicative landscaping strategy seeks to ensure the external treatment of site is appropriate and enhances the setting of the data centre and its relationship with the surrounding area. Specifically, as highlighted in the Parameter Plans, it proposes significant areas of planting around the perimeter of the site, in addition to making provision for the greening of the buildings to soften and create interesting and varied views along Technology Boulevard, Wexham Road, and from the residential areas to the south across the railway. As set out in the DAS and Design Code, it provides a planting palette including native trees, mixed species scrub, ornamental and neutral grassland that will develop into robust and varied habitats that also achieves the minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain target and contributes to sustainable urban drainage. The strategy prioritises native species with the management of these

vegetation types outlined within a Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Management Plan (LEMMP) which also supports the application.

2.27 The external treatment of the site also considers hard surfaced areas including amenity/break-out space and seating for employees and visitors, vehicular and pedestrian access routes, car and cycle parking and security measures such as fencing, CCTV, and lighting, in addition to the general maintenance of these facilities. The Parameter Plans, Design Code and illustrative scheme indicate where and how these elements could be delivered as part of the detailed design approach at Reserved Matters stage. These, for instance, indicate provision of pedestrian and cycle access, amenity space, cycle and car parking car parking across the front of the data halls, as part for a comprehensive hard and soft landscaping treatment of this key boundary. As previously noted, they also show the main site access road being provided as a continuous route through the site and cutting through the area allocated for back of house/plant gantries and substation, forming a break in the form of the development.

2.28 Hard landscaping is required for vehicle and pedestrian movement in line with the access points and routes outlined above, and the Design Code advises that routes should separate vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists appropriately using a change of material or other type of demarcation. Although necessary for access and movement, the Design Code stipulates that hard landscaping should be kept to a minimum, with soft landscaping prioritised wherever possible. It suggests a mixture of landscaping techniques should be used to provide relief along all boundaries.

2.29 The proposed site plan indicatively accommodates the optimal number of car parking spaces possible totalling up to 171. This is based on the size of the data centre and comparative precedent examples in respect to trip rates/patterns and numbers of employees and customers when fully operational (estimated at approximately 90 and 180 respectively in this instance). The spaces are shown across the front of the development, and behind the data halls adjacent the main access route, and along the rear landscaped boundary against the railway. Secure cycle parking provision is also indicatively shown for up to 90 bicycles on the front of the site based on a similar rationale.

2.30 Due to the nature of the development, a continuous security fence is required around the site. As with all other aspects of the development, comprehensive and detailed proposals of the permanent security fencing will be submitted at the Reserved Matters Application stage for consideration. As highlighted in the Design Code, the fencing will be designed to ensure an appropriate level of security while maintaining visual transparency, allowing views into the site and for complementary landscaping to soften its appearance and integrate it with the surrounding environment.

- Delivery programme/construction phase:

2.31 The proposed development is intended to be delivered on a phased basis within a period of up to 20 years. Delivery is reliant upon a number of enabling factors which

will also dictate the speed at which the scheme can be completed. The Applicant has highlighted that a critical consideration concerns the availability of utilities, particularly power supply and connection to serve the development. The indicative delivery programme as proposed and set out below is phased essentially around the construction of the three main data hall buildings (referred to as LD 15, 16 and 17):

- **Stage 1a (year 1 - 3)** Vehicle Access – Delivery of the vehicle access supporting the initial development / construction stages;
- **Stage 1b (year 1 - 3)** Advanced site wide Infrastructure and Electrical Substation – Delivery of the electrical plant to receive grid power, to support the first data centre (subject to available utilities connection / supply);
- **Stage 2 (year 2 - 5)** LD 15 Data Centre Development – Delivery of the first data centre block with its access point, and landscaping areas along Wexham Road, and Technological Boulevard and the southern boundaries;
- **Stage 3 (year 5 - 9)** LD 16 Data Centre Development – Delivery of the central data centre, the main electrical substation to receive grid power to support later stages of the development, with its access points and landscaping areas; (subject to available utilities connection / supply and market demand); and
- **Stage 4 (year 9 - 20)** LD 17 Data Centre Development - Delivery of the final data centre block (as soon as adequate power is available), with its access point and landscaping areas and finalisation of the on-site BNG planting.

2.32 The availability of a power supply is therefore a key factor in determining this sequenced construction strategy – currently, there is an incoming power supply to support the first stages of development (Stage 1a, Stage 1b and Stage 2), but subsequent stages are constrained until this initial supply can be sufficiently increased over the next 10-20 years. Additional power will be secured for Stage 3 in 2033 and power for Stage 4 likely by 2038. It should be noted however, as the Applicant has also highlighted, that there is strong national demand for data centre development and therefore the development will be delivered as quickly as possible to meet the demand.

2.33 The detailed nature and appearance of the development will be determined by Reserved Matters applications, which must conform to the Parameter Plans and Design Code, as highlighted previously. As part of this approach, it should be noted that a significant area of soft landscaping must be installed concurrently with the erection of the first data centre on the west end of the site adjacent Wexham Road to ensure key views are established and sensitive uses protected.

2.34 The detailed delivery of the development will be managed and monitored appropriately via a comprehensive Construction Environment Management Plan and associated traffic management measures. These will consider the extended nature of the process ensuring that the development can remain operationally safe as each data hall building is completed.

- *Operational phase:*

2.35 As indicated, the proposed development will be delivered in phases, based on the construction of the necessary infrastructure, the data hall buildings and associated facilities and site wide works. Once complete each data hall will be able to operate independently.

- *Application documentation:*

2.36 In addition to plans and the documents referred to above, the full suite of documents supporting the proposals and which have been used to assess the application against national and local planning policy and guidance, and all other material considerations include:

- Air Quality Impact Assessment
- Arboricultural Impact Appraisal and Method Statement
- Archaeological Investigation Report
- Daylight & Sunlight Assessment and Technical Note
- Design and Access Statement
- Design Code
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Energy and Sustainability Statement
- Heritage Statement
- Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Management Plan
- Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
- Outline Construction Management Plan (OCMP)
- Outline Utilities Assessment (incl. Outline Drainage Strategy Plan
- Overall Biodiversity Gain Plan
- Planning Statement, including draft Heads of Terms
- Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Socio-Economic Benefit Statement
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Technical Note: Summary of Geo-Environmental Reporting
- Telecommunication Assessment Report and Technical Note
- Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- Travel Plan

3.0 **Application Site**

3.1 The application site covers approximately 5 ha of vacant land within part of the wider former AkzoNobel paint coating and manufacturing plant (approximately 12.7 ha), to the north-east of Slough town centre.

3.2 The site is bound by Wexham Road to the west, the Cadent gas facility (formerly Uxbridge Gas Works) to the east, the Great Western Main Line to the south, and to the north by a newly formed access road referred to Technology Boulevard serving the wider former AkzoNobel site. Vehicle and pedestrian access to the site is gained from Wexham Road, via Technology Boulevard.

3.3 The remaining area of the former AkzoNobel site lies to the north of the new access road and is occupied by a significant data centre development, nearing completion comprising of 3 data halls and associated offices, plant, parking and landscaping (total floorspace GEA – 67,337 sqm / 724,809 sq ft).

3.4 The site therefore forms part of long-established industrial area which has accommodated recent commercial related development as noted above. It sits however within an area of mixed urban character comprising primarily of residential streets, business, retail and community related uses including schools and recreational open spaces.

3.5 In terms of accessibility generally, the site has good access to the strategic road network with the M4 (approximately 1.4 miles south) providing easy access to the M25. Slough Railway Station is within a 15-minute walk and provides TfL Rail and Great Western Railway services between Reading and London. There are also bus services available on Wexham Road, with the closest bus stop being located immediately to the west of the site.

3.6 The site is designated within an Existing Business Area as defined by the Council's planning policy proposal map which essentially safeguards the site for employment use.

3.7 There are no designated Listed Buildings, Locally Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments within the site boundary, nor is the site located within a Conservation Area. The closest Listed Buildings are the Grade II Listed Buildings located approximately 600m to the south-west of the site at Slough Station. The nearest Conservation Areas are Sussex Place and Clifton Road Conservation Area and St Bernard's School Conservation Area, several hundred metres to the south and south-east.

3.8 Furthermore, there are no formal landscape or ecological designations within or close to the site. It should also be noted that it is located within Flood Zone 1 (low risk of flooding) and is not covered by an Air Quality Management Area ('AQMA').

3.9 In accordance with permitted works, the site is currently undergoing major decontamination and remediation to facilitate it re-use/re-development.

4.0 **Site History**

4.1 The most relevant planning history for the site and adjoining sites is presented below:

Wider site:

P/00072/096 Outline planning (to include matter of principal points of access), to be implemented in phases, for mixed use development comprising:

a) Demolition of existing buildings and structures and preparatory

works (including remediation) and access from Wexham Road;

b) up to 1,000 residential dwellings (Use Class C3); along with flexible commercial uses including all or some of the following use classes A1 (Shops), A2 (Financial and Professional Services), A3 (Food and Drink), D1 (Non-residential Institutions) and D2 (Assembly and Leisure); car parking; new public spaces, landscaping; vehicular and pedestrian access; and

c) the provision of commercial floorspace including all or some of the following use classes B2 (General Industry), B8 (Storage or Distribution) and sui generis data centre (including ancillary office space and associated plant and infrastructure provision); car parking, landscaping and vehicular and pedestrian access (Matters of Scale, Layout, Appearance, and Landscaping to be dealt with by reserved matters)

Approved with conditions and informatives - 19/11/2020

P/17377/001 Screening Opinion for - Outline and full details applications for the redevelopment of the former ICI Paint Manufacturing facility for the construction of new commercial and residential floorspace, along with associated parking, new/improved pedestrian and cycle links, means of enclosure, landscape infrastructure and associated engineering operations including retaining structures, earthworks and drainage

EIA Required; 20-Aug-2019

<u>Equinix site:</u>

P/00072/128 Planning application for the de-contamination of the site, demolish the remaining buildings, undertake ancillary engineering work to stabilise the ground conditions and the delivery of ancillary retaining walls.

Approved with conditions and informatives – 07/03/2024

P/17377/002 Screening Opinion - The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) - Outline planning permission for the erection of up to 90,640 sqm of GEA data centre development (Sui Generis use), with ancillary office and plant, in addition to associated groundworks, utilities, infrastructure and engineering works. Means of access included, with matters relating to appearance, landscaping, drainage and layout of the development areas reserved for subsequent approval.

EIA not required – 17/11/2023

Yondr site:

P/00072/139 Application for approval of reserved matters following outline approval reference P/00072/096 dated 19th November 2020, for the mixed-use development of land at the former Akzonobel Decorative Paints facility, Wexham Road, Slough SL2 5DB. Reserved matters application for full details of access (internal site arrangements), appearance, layout, scale and landscaping for the final phase of approved commercial floorspace, comprising data centre use (including ancillary offices space and associated plant and infrastructure provision); car parking, landscaping and vehicular and pedestrian access.

Approved with conditions - 12/10/2021

P/00072/118 Variation of condition 1 (Approved Plans) of planning permission P/00072/108 dated 12/10/2021 to provide minor changes to the layout of the site and appearance of the buildings.

Approved with conditions - 16/12/2022

P/00072/108 Application for approval of reserved matters following outline approval reference P/00072/096 dated 19th November 2020, for the mixed-use development of land at the former Akzonobel Decorative Paints facility, Wexham Road, Slough SL2 5DB. Reserved matters application for full details of access (internal site arrangements), appearance, layout, scale and landscaping for the final phase of approved commercial floorspace, comprising data centre use (including ancillary offices space and associated plant and infrastructure provision); car parking, landscaping and vehicular and pedestrian access

Approved with conditions - 12/10/2021

Cadent Gas Works site:

P/00463/018 Demolition of existing offices, workshop and store buildings. Construction of two storey office building and a single storey workshop / store building with mezzanine. Associated service yards, car parking, access, external storage, storage containers, boundary treatment and landscaping works.

Approved with conditions and informatives – 08/11/2022

AkzoNobel Main Offices (on western side of Wexham Road):

P/00072/097 Refurbishment of existing building B154 incorporating R&D Laboratories and write-up areas. Construction of a four-storey plant addition known as the Common Utility Building (CUB) providing the servicing requirements for the lab areas and a new purpose-built warehouse is proposed to replace an existing temporary facility that will be removed.
Approved with conditions and informatives – 22/12/2020

5.0 **Neighbour Notification**

5.1 In accordance with Article 15 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), 20 site notices were displayed around the site on 15/10/2024. The application was advertised as a major application in the 18/10/2024 edition of The Slough Express.

5.2 Following receipt of amended and additional plans and documents, the application was consulted upon again and a further 20 site notices were displayed around the site on 11/06/2025 and advertised again in the 06/06/2025 edition of The Slough Express.

5.3 No representations have been received following public consultation on the application.

6.0 Consultation (amended submission)

6.1 ***SBC Local Highway Authority:***

No objection to the proposed development on highways and transport grounds subject to conditions and informatves.

6.2 ***SBC Urban Design:***

The outline scheme is accompanied by a series of Parameter Plans, a Design Code and an Illustrative Scheme design. These are useful in helping to establish principles of design which should inform future detailed Reserved Matters submissions.

In terms of massing, the Parameter Plans and Design Code set the principles as to how the data centre will be broken-up and articulated. The Design Code provides specific guidance for the design of the data-hall and office components of the scheme. It covers the architecture, materiality and detailing of the outline scheme and includes mitigation measures to address wider townscape impacts on key local and strategic views.

The scheme is supported by a landscape strategy, including the provision of significant areas of landscaping adjacent Wexham Road and the railway. These buffers would include tree planting to partly screen and enhance the setting of the

new buildings. Other landscape features within the scheme are supported from a design perspective.

In addition to the s106 package securing local public realm improvements, the design related provisions within the Outline Planning Application are considered, on balance to be sufficient to enable an appropriate detailed scheme to come forward.

6.3 ***SBC Planning Policy:***

The principle of the use is acceptable given its location in an identified business area. Regarding employment the applicants state economic benefits of a data centre on the local economy are noted but the level of employment in the data centre is limited. Other relevant key strategic policy matters are sustainable travel, car parking, design (re: prominent main road frontage and size of building), effect of tall buildings on the setting of distant heritage assets, energy and climate change and Biodiversity Net Gain.

Broadly support approach to energy including targeting of BREEAM Excellent, use of renewable/low carbon technologies generation (PV/ASHP etc.) and general compliance with Core Policy 8 and Developers Guide part 2 re: climate change.

Important to consider waste heat generated from development and potential to and connect to a nearby district heat system. Applicant should commit to connect if viable and feasible.

6.4 ***SBC Environmental Services:***

Air Quality:

No objections in relation to the amended plans and Air Quality Assessment subject to appropriate safeguarding conditions and informatives.

Noise:

The cumulative impact of +2dB above the background is breaching an existing noise condition at three receptors RO2 +4dB, RO2 + 3dB and RO4 + 4dB, but the report identifies the most affected receptor with a +5 dB cumulative noise exceedance is modelled at R07, which is attributable to the Yondr development exceeding the background noise levels in isolation. The modelling noise levels from the Equinix Development are 10dB below the modelled noise levels from the Yondr which means they do not contribute to the breach.

The impact is considered small magnitude and not significant. However, that judgement must be based on observation and not modelled data in my view to determine if the impact when it arises is of small magnitude. The report suggests the cumulative and resulting impact is mainly from the noise levels emanating from the Yondr site due to its closer proximity. The report proposes the Equinix Development will implement best practical means, so the residual cumulative effects are expected to remain Not Significant. The increase in road traffic noise during the construction

and operation of Stage 4, including cumulative traffic with Yondr, is modelled to be less than 1 dB on all road links which is a Negligible magnitude impact which is considered to be Not Significant.

The issue is whether the background levels recorded in 2019 are likely to reduce as these tend to be dominated by road traffic and rail noise and or are likely to change due to the proximity of the new Yondr datacentre site. These are unlikely to change significantly, however the plant and equipment at Yondr will dominate the background assuming it is operating continually 24/7 as demonstrated by the modelling included in the noise assessment report.

It is therefore appropriate to use the noise monitoring in 2019 for the Equinix noise and vibration impact assessment as the monitoring was conducted in the absence of both sites so presents an existing baseline to be assessed against.

I've reviewed the assessment and note the cumulative specific noise levels at these receptors. The existing ambient noise is higher than the cumulative specific noise and this is suggesting other noise sources are likely to dominate the soundscape. As the modelled noise levels from the Yondr site at residential receptors are significantly higher than the modelled noise from the Equinix site the noise from the Yondr site will mask the noise from the Equinix site.

It is also unlikely that the Equinix site will have character corrections (as defined by BS4142) that will add to the specific noise level, but the noise assessment has conservatively applied a +3dB correction. The report also has not assumed any screening provided by the Yondr development and thus presents a conservative approach. The noise impact has been assessed at 15 receptors surrounding the site and against the existing background levels for Stage 2 and Stage 4.

The mitigation approach for plant, equipment and machinery is outlined in Table 5.1 of the report, and this includes a range of measures, from use of low noise models, equipment fitted with noise attenuators, generators enclosed in acoustic enclosures and fitted with high performance attenuators.

It is clear to see the modelled specific noise impact during normal operation of stage 2 is negligible to low at all residential receptors ranging from -1dB to -22Db above the prevailing background. This is considered not significant.

The normal operation of stage 4 is small but not significant and still compliant with the noise condition +2dB at R4 and R5 at all other receptors it is negligible.

During the emergency operation, power outage at stage 2 the noise levels are significantly higher and lead to a significant adverse impact at R5 and R13 but as it an infrequent occurrence this is likely to be considered acceptable. At stage 4 significant impact at R5, R14, R15 and R16.

All testing of generators should be conducted during the day.

I am satisfied the applicant has demonstrated that noise from the Equinix site will not give rise to unacceptable noise levels at any residential boundaries and therefore will not give rise to a material consideration with regards to determining the planning application. I am also satisfied that the applicant has taken all reasonable steps to contain and/or mitigate noise impact from their development to acceptable levels.

I am of the view that a best practical means condition should be attached to the consent notice to ensure that the developer and operator take all reasonable steps to contain the noise generated on the site. I also of the view that a conditions for daytime testing of the generators is also attached to the consent notice.

6.5 ***SBC Contaminated Land:***

No objection subject to a planning condition.

6.6 ***SBC Lead Local Flood Authority:***

No objection subject to appropriate planning conditions.

6.7 ***SBC BEAMS Heritage Advisor:***

I have reviewed my previous comments (10/2/2025) and note Historic England's latest comments.

The more detailed Design Code provides further detail on how the massing of the building will be broken up and the modest reduction in height will provide a limited visual benefit. However, the proposal will remain a large-scale structure, visible from the North Terrace of Windsor Castle and disrupting long views towards the Chiltern Hills beyond the site.

Material and colour will still need further detailing and will be key in helping to mitigate its visual prominence in the wider landscape.

BEAMS remain of the view that the proposal will result in a low level of 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of Windsor Castle and recommend NPPF para. 215 is engaged in the decision-making process.

BEAMS would agree with the findings of the updated Heritage Statement in relation to local heritage assets (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas).

The proposed development may be glimpsed from some parts of the Sussex Place and St Bernard's School Conservation Areas but will not be an intrusive feature. If there is any harm to the significance of the Sussex Place and Clifton Road Conservation Area and the St Bernard’s School Conservation Area (through

development within their wider setting), it will be at the lower end of less than substantial.

Some enhanced public realm mitigation may help with improving the immediate surroundings of the site.

6.8 ***Environment Agency:***

No objection subject to appropriate planning conditions.

6.9 ***Aircraft Safeguarding****:*

No objection subject to conditions covering bird management, cranes and landscaping.

6.10 ***Canal and River Trust***

The Trust have previously commented on proposals for the former Akzo Nobel site though those schemes related to a wider site area. The current site is set back from the canal corridor and is not within the Trust's notified area. The Trust are therefore not a Statutory consultee in this instance. Nevertheless, on the basis of the amended plans we have the following general advice:

- Considering the setback from the canal and intervening development already approved the visual impact when viewed from the canal would appear limited. It should be ensured that any Flood Risk Assessment considers the potential flood risk to the site from a breach of the canal.

- On the previous scheme for the wider site S106 contributions were secured in relation to the provision of stop planks (£100k) and towpath improvements (£250k-as part of the sustainable transport contribution). The trigger for those contributions is related to the commencement of the commercial development and as this current scheme is on the part of the site previously proposed to be residential, it is understood that there would be no impact on those contributions.

6.11 ***Thames Water****:*

No objection subject to planning conditions and informatives.

6.12 ***Cadent Gas:***

No objection.

6.13 ***Natural England:***

No objection.

Agree with the conclusions of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

6.14 ***Burnham Beeches:***

No objection.

Agree with the conclusions of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

6.15 ***Berkshire Archaeology:***

No objection.

Confirm that no further archaeology is required for this site.

6.16 ***Historic England:***

- *Summary*

Historic England welcomes the more detailed Design Code which we believe helps reduce the appearance of the incongruous scale of the building in long-range views from Windsor Great Park as well as helping to visually break up the appearance of the mass from the Castle. We maintain concerns about the scale and height of the building because it would, to all intents, obscure the Chiltern Hills behind it as seen from the North Terrace and thus contribute to the erosion of the ability to appreciate and understand the Castle within its vast landscape setting.

- *Assessment of proposals*

The proposed amendments to the outline planning application include an updated parameters plan with a reduced height together and an updated Design Code. The amended Heritage Impact Assessment provides a detailed assessment of the indicative proposals both individually and cumulatively with those schemes granted planning permission, and together with the TVIA provides a good level of information to base an assessment of the updated proposals on (nb the original application also contained a good level of information and analysis).

Having reviewed the amended proposals Historic England agrees that the low level of less than substantial harm has been further reduced, primarily through the details in the Design Code. The more detailed Design Code would, as the indictive illustrations suggests, achieve a greater appearance of broken mass when seen from both the Castle (specifically the North Terrace) and within Windsor Great Park, which would help the building appear less incongruous within the wider landscape, and less

likely to be eye-catching and thus challenge the prominence of the Castle within its setting.

However, the proposed reduction in height of the building by a couple of metres is a very minor change for such a large building and in response to the aim of maintaining visibility of the hills beyond. The proposals would result in some erosion of the ability to see a key long-range landscape feature (the Chiltern Hills) and thus (to a degree) affect the ability to appreciate the scale of the landscape within which Windsor Castle was located, a key attribute of how Windsor Castle's setting contributes to its significance as a Scheduled Monument and Listed Building. We continue to recommend that new buildings in Slough should seek to balance optimising use of the site area with the very high heritage significance of Windsor Castle through incorporating clear gaps (of some metres) between building blocks, a meaningful reduction in height in areas of the building (not necessarily across the whole site), or another design solution. As such, we continue to identify that a degree of harm to the significance of the Windsor Castle would result from the proposals.

Finally, we continue to note and have concerns that a large number of residential units once proposed on the site could have to find elsewhere in the borough to be located. There appeared to be a clear intention by the Council for the site (as part of a larger site) to be secured for up to 1000 residential units plus commercial uses through its emerging planning policy in 2020 because it was identified in the Regulation 18 consultation from (see 13.81 of that document), and also part of a published Centre Regeneration Framework from 2020.

We are concerned that not optimising sites in sustainable locations for residential use will result in increased pressure to build taller buildings in the town centre which have a far greater risk of causing a higher level of harm to Windsor Castle and Windsor Great Park (through negative change to their setting). And so, we raise this serious concern with the Council and encourage that this is taken into account, as far as appropriate and in-line with relevant planning policy and legislation, as part of its consideration of this planning application.

- *Relevant Planning Policy*

The Slough Core Strategy 2006-2026 sets out at Core Policy 9 that development will not be permitted unless it enhances and protects the historic environment and respects the character and distinctiveness of existing buildings, townscapes and landscape. The Council is also required to, under paragraph 201 of the NPPF, consider whether harm has been avoided or minimised and, at paragraph 205, give great weight to conservation of heritage assets with more weight the greater the importance of the asset (noting the highest possible significance of Windsor Castle and Windsor Great Park).

The NPPF sets out that any harm or loss of significance should require clear and convincing justification (paragraph 206), and that where harm would be less than substantial it should be weighed against the public benefits (paragraph 208).

- *Conclusion*

In conclusion, we welcome the amendments to the proposals through the updated Design Code which we consider help to reduce the harm that would result from the proposed development of the site by breaking up the appearance of the mass of the building. We continue to identify some harm, as set out above, through largely obscuring the Chiltern Hills across the large east-west extent of the site area from North Terrace vantage points. For the purposes of the NPPF, we judge the level of harm from these proposals to be less than substantial, at the low end of the scale.

It is for the Council to weigh up the relevant harm to heritage identified in the proposals against public benefits from the scheme.

- *Recommendation*

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds.

We consider that the issues and safeguards outlined in our advice need to be addressed in order for the application to meet the requirements of the NPPF.

6.17 ***Thames Valley Police Designing out Crime:***

No objection subject to conditions and further consideration at the Reserved Matters stage.

6.18 ***Network Rail:***

No objection subject to appropriate informatives.

6.19 ***Highways England:***

We provided formal comments to the initial planning application (ref: P/00072/152) in our response dated 30 October 2024, recommending 'No Objection'.

Having reviewed amended document submitted, Transport Assessment Addendum, we note that this was provided in response to the Local Highway Authority's requests for further information.

The document includes further information on the trip distribution of the site and shows that the traffic impact on the SRN is likely to remain similar, to that of the consented development. On that basis, we are satisfied that the proposals will not materially impact the safe and efficient operation of the SRN and have No Objection to the amendments.

6.20 ***Active Travel England:***

No objection subject to conditions.

6.21 ***Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead:***

No comments received.

6.22 ***South Buckinghamshire Council:***

No comments received.

PART B: PLANNING APPRAISAL

7.0 **Policy Background**

7.1 The following policies are considered most relevant to the assessment of this application:

7.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

The relevant chapters within the National Planning Policy Framework are:

Chapter 2. Achieving sustainable development
Chapter 4. Decision-making
Chapter 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
Chapter 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities
Chapter 9. Promoting sustainable transport
Chapter 10: Supporting high quality communications
Chapter 11. Making effective use of land
Chapter 12. Achieving well-designed places
Chapter 13: Protecting Green Belt land
Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that decisions should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development which means:

- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date granting permission unless:
    - the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed (footnote 7); or
    - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Footnote 7 notes that the policies referred to are those in the NPPF (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 180) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 67); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

7.3 The Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, Development Plan Document, (December 2008)

Core Policy 1 – Spatial Strategy
Core Policy 2 – Green Belt and Open Spaces
Core Policy 5 – Employment
Core Policy 7 – Transport
Core Policy 8 – Sustainability and the Environment
Core Policy 9 – Natural and Built Environment
Core Policy 10 – Infrastructure
Core Policy 11 – Social Cohesiveness
Core Policy 12 – Community Safety

7.4 The Local Plan for Slough, Adopted March 2004

EN1 – Standard of Design
EN3 – Landscaping Requirements
EN5 – Design and Crime Prevention
EN6 - Interference with Telecommunication Signals
EN17 - Locally Listed Buildings
EN22 - Protection of Sites with Nature Conservation Interest
EN34 - Utility Infrastructure
EMP2 - Criteria for Business Developments
EMP12 - Remaining Existing Business Areas
T2 – Parking Restraint
T8 – Cycle Network and Facilities

7.5 Slough Local Development Plan and the NPPF

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Annex 1 to the National Planning Policy Framework advises that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

The relevant Local Development Plan Polices in relation to determining this application are largely considered to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

7.6 The Proposed Spatial Strategy (Nov 2020)

Under Regulation 18, the Proposed Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan for Slough was the subject of public consultation in November 2020. This sets out a vision and objectives along with proposals for what the pattern, scale and quality of development will be in Slough.

The consultation document contained a revised Local Plan Vision which supports the Council's vision for Slough as a place where people want to "work, rest, play and stay."
It should be noted that the consultation document for the Proposed Spatial Strategy does not contain any specific planning policies or allocate any sites. It made it clear that the existing planning policy framework for Slough would remain in force until replaced by new Local Plan policies in the future. Nevertheless, it sets out the most up to date statement of the Council's position with regards to strategic planning issues.

7.7 Emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan for Slough

The emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy has been developed using guiding principles which include locating development in the most accessible location, regenerating previously developed land, minimising the impact upon the environment and ensuring that development is both sustainable and deliverable.

A number of strategic housing sites have been identifed as part the Spatial Strategy. This site (AkzoNobel) along with the neighbouring National Grid site were identified as strategic housing sites and aims to enable a comprehensive development between the combined sites. The Spatial Strategy update report (dated 21st February 2018) lists the AkzoNobel as a standalone strategic site for residential and employment uses plus community uses, open space, and road link through the site, (Site 21).

7.8 Other relevant documents

- Slough Local Development Framework Proposals Map 2010
- Slough Borough Council Developer's Guide Parts 1-4
- Slough Low Emission Strategy 2018 – 2025
- DEFRA Technical Guidance TG (16). (Air quality).
- Sustainable Drainage Systems Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (March 2015)

7.9 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 66 of the 1990 Act imposes a general duty on the Council as respects listed buildings in the exercise of its planning functions. In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Council shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

7.10 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)

Under Schedule 7A of the Act, since 2 April 2024 developers of major development and small sites must deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10%, meaning that the development results in more or better quality natural habitat than existed before.

The Local Planning Authority is currently preparing a draft Strategy for Biodiversity Net Gain which will set out in detail the Council's approach to ensure that habitats for wildlife on-site and/or off-site are left in a measurably better state than before development takes place.

7.11 Equality Act

In addition, Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010) which sets a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) came into force in April 2011 and requires the Council to consider the equality impacts on all protected groups when exercising its functions. In the case of planning, equalities considerations are factored into the planning process at various stages. The first stage relates to the adoption of planning policies (national, strategic and local) and any relevant supplementary guidance. In coming to a recommendation, officers have considered the equalities impacts on protected groups in the context of the development proposals as set below in this report.

7.12 The main planning issues relevant to the assessment of this application are as follows:

- Principle of development and land-use
- Design and impact on character and appearance of the area
- Impact on Heritage Assets
- Amenity of neighbouring occupiers / uses
- Transport, highways and parking
- Air quality
- Noise
- Landscaping, ecology and biodiversity
- Safety and crime prevention
- Gound conditions and contaminated land
- Flood risk and drainage
- Economic impact
- Sustainability, energy, design and construction
- Equalities considerations
- Section 106 Requirements

- Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Planning Balance

8.0 **Principle of development and land use**

8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) states that planning system's purpose is to contribute to achieving sustainable development that performs an economic, social and environmental role and makes clear that local planning authorities should approve proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

8.2 The NPPF seeks to ensure that planning policies set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to the national industrial strategy and any relevant Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration. The national strategy - Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, identifies priority for growth and support, with digital and technology businesses highlighted.

8.3 It states that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.

8.4 Planning decisions it further advises should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries (including data centres and grid connections).

8.5 Finally, of relevance the NPPF encourages local authorities to support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, to give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.

8.6 In September 2024, Data Centres were designated as Critical National Infrastructure ('CNI'), by the Government. This has put Data Centres on an equal footing to other critical infrastructure including water, energy and emergency services. Data Centre infrastructure underpins essential services that are critical to the UK economy and our way of life and will only become more vital as technologies like AI require greater data centre and cloud capacity.

8.7 In relation to local planning policy, Core Policy 1 (Spatial Strategy) sets out the overall strategy for growth and development. Development is directed towards built-up areas and on previously developed land, while proposals for comprehensive regeneration of selected key locations will be encouraged at an appropriate scale. This policy also states that some relaxation of the polices or standards in the Local Development Framework may be allowed where this can be justified by the overall environmental, social and economic benefits that will be provided to the wider community.

8.8 Core Policy 5 (Employment) protects Existing Business Areas, such as the former AkzoNobel site against non-employment generating uses. Major warehousing and distribution development will be directed towards the eastern part of the Borough and Existing Business Areas that have good access to the strategic road and rail network.

8.9 Core Policy EMP2 (Criteria for Business Developments) requires business developments to be of a high-quality design and appropriate scale for its location. Development should not significantly harm the character of the surrounding area, result in a loss of neighbouring amenity (noise, overlooking etc) or significantly reduce the variety or range of business premises. Development should also incorporate appropriate landscaping, servicing and suitable access and turning for delivery vehicles and will not cause additional congestion to the existing highway network.

8.10 Policy EMP12 (Remaining Existing Business Areas) allows for a range of business developments within the Existing Business Areas with the proviso that B1(a) independent offices will only be permitted in accordance with a sequential test and where it would not increase the number of parking spaces.

- Assessment:

8.11 Data centres are essential data infrastructure that play a vital role in supporting the rapidly expanding digital economy and emerging technological change. Digitisation in the way people live, work and play has grown exponentially in recent years, with a growing demand for the storage and use of personal and commercial data.

8.12 Locational requirements are a key consideration in identifying suitable locations for data centres and Slough is an internationally recognised location for such uses due its market-leading access to a secure, fast data network and resilient power supply. There are approximately 300 commercial data centres in the UK, and around 10% of these are in Slough (live or under construction).

8.13 Data centres also require sufficient space to optimise economies of scale, given the specialist nature of the accommodation and facilities they provide. This not only includes the data halls housing the IT equipment, and associated office/administrative space but areas for mechanical and electrical plant providing ventilation and cooling, sub-stations, back-up power generators, cabling, and

storage. In addition, they need parking, servicing/delivery yards, easy access for emergency services and appropriate security arrangements.

8.14 The application site is a sizeable, rectangular plot of land covering approximately 5 ha in an established industrial/commercial area. Until relatively recently, it has accommodated significant chemical and paint manufacturing and distribution facilities since the 1920's as part of the larger former AkzoNobel site and is designated an Existing Business Area in the Local Plan.

8.15 The wider site (including the application site), as noted in the planning history above, had previously secured outline planning permission in November 2020 (ref: P/00072/096) for the mixed-use development of up to 1,000 homes and commercial and industrial uses. This permission established the principle of the various commercial land uses proposed, including the proposed data centre, now nearing completion by Yondr. It should be noted however that the consent does not safeguard, and nor does planning policy any residential development in this location.

8.16 The extant outline permission had specifically reserved the application site for the development of up to 1,000 homes and up to 1,500sqm of flexible retail, leisure and community uses. However, this element of the planning permission was never implemented by the previous landowners, Panattoni. Instead, the site was acquired by the Council, and subsequently sold to Equinix, the Applicant. Since that time, the Applicant has continued to decontaminate and remediate the site, works that were completed in part by Panattoni.

8.17 As described earlier, the site benefits from good connectivity to the surrounding pedestrian and cycle network, as well as local public transport services, trunk roads and motorways. It lies next a main road and railway, the Cadent Gas Works and now sits opposite a large data centre facility, nearing completion. The site presents an opportunity to deliver a viable long-term and appropriately scaled development (with associated supporting infrastructure), which optimises the space available and is responsive to its immediate and wider environment and townscape.

8.18 The proposed data centre would cover over half of the site including ancillary works, incorporate substantial soft landscaping and provide up to 90,614sqm (GEA) of floorspace including ancillary office/administrative space. Although data centres accommodate fewer employment numbers in relation to traditional industrial/manufacturing and office uses, they are important employment generating concerns and have significant wider economic benefits. The Applicant has stated that the development, when all the data halls are fully operational will create and safeguard almost 1,450 jobs in Slough with approximately 100 based on-site. These represent direct, indirect and induced employment within the local data economy and unrelated service sectors e.g. retail/hospitality, and of the 1,450 jobs, 756 will be FTEs. The Applicant also estimates that the development could create up to 163 additional related jobs nationally and over the extended construction period, approximately 10,000 jobs will be secured.

8.19 Having regard to the location and nature of the site, the proposed data centre is considered to represent, on balance, an appropriate redevelopment which would secure its longer-term commercial use and provide and wider economic and environmental benefit. The scheme, which is classed as 'Critical National Infrastructure' aligns with the policies in the Local Plan which promote new investment and employment opportunities within existing business areas, and policy advice contained within the NPPF which seeks to support economic growth and resilience to meet the needs of a modern economy, and more specifically to make provision for clusters or networks of knowledge or data driven industries and new facilities to support such sectors.

8.20 Based on this assessment, the proposed development and use are acceptable in principle and compliant with local and national planning policy and guidance.

8.21 Positive weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

9.0 **Design and impact on character and appearance of the area**

9.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

9.2 The National Design Guide 2021 acknowledges that well-designed places do not need to copy their surroundings in every way. However, the National Design Guide advises that well designed new development is based on a clear understanding of the architecture prevalent in the area, including the local vernacular to inform the form and scale of new development.

9.3 The National Design Guide states that well-designed tall buildings play a positive urban design role in the built form. They act as landmarks, emphasising important places and making a positive contribution to views and the skyline. Proposals for tall buildings (and other buildings with a significantly larger scale or bulk than their surroundings) require special consideration. This includes their location and siting; relationship to context; impact on local character, views and sight lines; composition - how they meet the ground and the sky.

9.4 Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy sets out that in terms of design, all development should:

a) Be of high quality design that is practical, attractive, safe, accessible and adaptable;
b) Respect its location and surroundings;
c) Provide appropriate public space, amenity space and landscaping as an integral part of the design; and
d) Be in accordance with the Spatial Strategy in terms of its height, scale, massing and architectural style

9.5 Policy EN1 of the Adopted Local Plan states that all development proposals are required to reflect a high standard of design and must be compatible with and/ or improve their surroundings in terms of scale, height, massing/ bulk, layout, siting, building form and design, architectural style, materials, access points and servicing, visual impact, relationship to nearby properties, relationship to mature trees; and relationship to watercourses. Poor designs which are not in keeping with their surroundings and schemes that overdevelop the site will not be permitted

9.6 Policy EMP2 (Criteria for Business Developments) states that business developments will only be permitted if they comply with a number of criteria including:

a) the proposed building is of a high-quality design and is of a use and scale that is appropriate to its location;
b) It does not significantly harm the physical or visual character of the surrounding area and there is no significant loss of amenities for the neighbouring land uses as a result of noise, the level of activity, over looking, or overbearing appearance of the new building;
c) the proposed development can be accommodated upon the existing highway network without causing additional congestion or creating a road safety problem; d) appropriate servicing and lorry parking is provided within the site;
d) appropriate contributions are made to the implementation of any off-site highway works that are required and towards other transport improvements such as pedestrian and cycle facilities;
e) the proposal incorporates an appropriate landscaping scheme.

- Assessment

9.7 The site forms part of a long-established industrial area having accommodated paint and chemical manufacturing facilities since the 1920s and has now been largely cleared when AkzoNobel, the last occupier moved in 2018. Whilst operational however, the site was comprised of a number of red brick industrial buildings primarily located along the main industrial road bounding the site and Wexham Road, with smaller ancillary buildings closer to the railway. The tallest building on the site was approximately 22m tall.

9.8 The site is in a mixed-use urban area just to the north-east of Slough Town Centre sitting between Wexham Road and Uxbridge Road and surrounded by commercial areas to the north, west and east. These include the Yondr Data Centre buildings nearing completion directly opposite to the north, at approximately 24m high, a large industrial estate located across Wexham Road including the AkzoNobel HQ offices at 5-storeys, and the Cadent gasworks site to the east comprising a newly built three-storey offices. To the south, the site is bounded by the railway and traditional residential areas beyond.

9.9 The wider area encompassing the Town Centre, is characterised by a significant range of land-uses and forms of development. These include retail, commercial, leisure, educational and faith related uses in buildings of varying types and scale. It should also be noted that the area features the Slough Arm of the Grand Union

Canal forming the northern boundary to the Yondr Data Centre and several parks/open spaces.

Uses in the surrounding area

9.10 This part of the Borough is subject to significant ongoing and planned redevelopment that will transform the character and appearance of the of the Town Centre and its environs. This includes the current residential led redevelopment of the former Horlicks Factory site, approximately 1km west of the site and 500m north-west of the High Street. The project involves the construction of nearly 1400 homes in buildings of up to 17-storeys, approximately 40m tall. Similarly, works will commence shortly on the comprehensive mixed-use redevelopment of the Queensmere Shopping Centre on the High Street for up to 1600 homes in a series of buildings rising to 19-storeys, approximately 65m high. The former Thames Valley University site to the west of the High Street is being planned for another major, residential led development comprising over 1000 homes in multiple high-storey blocks (North West Quadrant). Other potential substantial development opportunities nearby relate to The Future Works proposals for offices of 11 and 12-storeys in height, reaching a maximum height of 50m.

Building heights in the surrounding area

9.11 The nature, character and appearance of the surrounding area reflect this existing and emerging context, presenting a varied townscape and significant opportunities for long-term change and improvement.

9.12 The proposed development seeks to optimise the use of the site to secure a substantial long-term investment opportunity in an established industrial/commercial location. Its layout, scale and design, in Outline form have been carefully considered to accommodate the specific technical requirements associated with data centres and enable the delivery of high-quality scheme that, on balance with appropriate mitigation would not unduly harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area including wider strategically significant landscape e.g. Windsor Castle and Windsor Great Park.

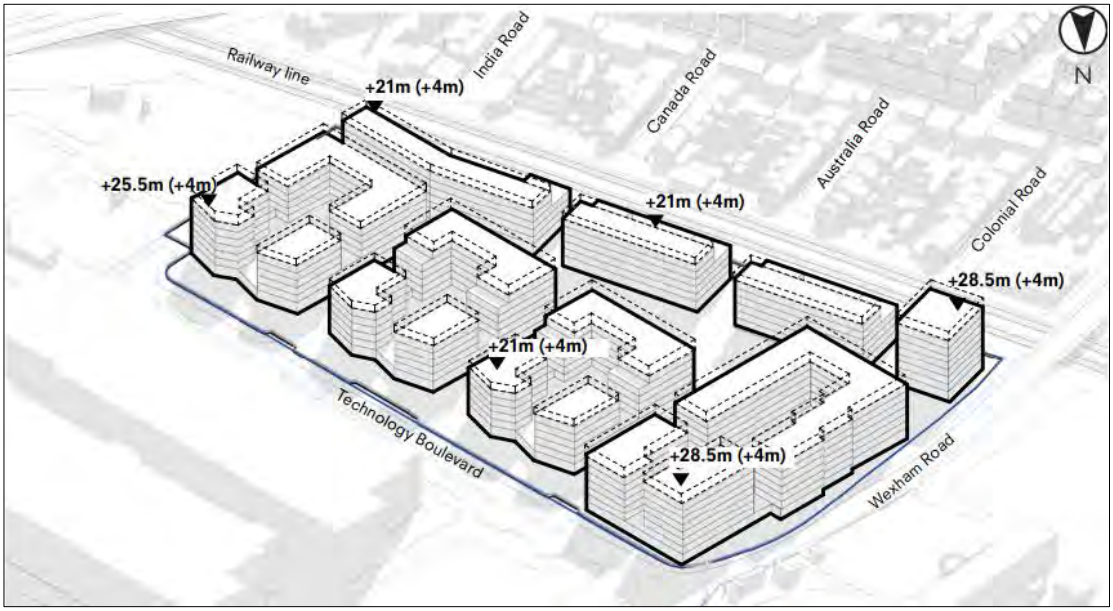
Consented Outline Planning Permission – Illustrative Masterplan

9.13 The proposals have been informed by a thorough understanding of the site's existing and emerging context including the use, scale and design of neighbouring development, the nature and quality of the public realm locally, and the character and appearance of the wider townscape and key views. They have also considered the previous consent for the site which included the wider AkzoNobel industrial facility.

9.14 This permission as noted above (ref: P/00072/096), granted Outline Planning Permission in November 2020 for the comprehensive redevelopment of the wider site to provide up to 1000 dwellings, retail/business related uses, and larger scale general industrial/storage and distribution uses. It also enabled preparatory works (including remediation) and secured access from Wexham Road. Part of the consent has been implemented with the provision of Technology Boulevard and the construction of the Yondr data centre, nearing completion on the northern half of the

site. These elements have been delivered in accordance with the principles and parameters established by the Outline Planning Permission.

9.15 The southern half of the wider site, subject now to the current application, was allocated for the residential led element to provide up to 1000 homes. The Parameter Plans consented under the Outline Permission set out a series of development zones/blocks across the site and a development 'envelope' reaching a maximum building height of 28.5m, with an additional 4m allowance for roof plant, providing an overall maximum height of 32.5m. The highest points permitted for the development were predominantly concentrated along the key boundaries and on key corners, introducing active street frontage and varied built form within the townscape.



Masterplan of residential element of consented Outline Planning Permission

9.16 Heights facing the railway and housing beyond were limited to 14.5m and 21m to respect the lower scale of neighbouring development. The main landscape provision was located to the centre and on the perimeter of the site with external amenity spaces provided within podium courtyards.

9.17 The Outline planning application under consideration is supported by a range of design related documentation including Parameter Plans, an Illustrative Scheme, a Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA), Heritage Statement, Design and Access Statement (DAS) and Design Code and has been informed by detailed technical assessments in respect to environmental and transport related matters.

9.18 The plans and documents demonstrate how the proposed layout, massing and design of the development have considered the existing and emerging context described above to address and/or mitigate its impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

9.19 The Parameter Plans set out key principles that the detailed layout and form of the development must adhere to at Reserved Matters stage. They cover the position and

extent of access points/routes, building plots, uses, landscaping and heights. Building uses/structures are arranged for instance to address public facing boundaries and maximum heights and set-backs have been outlined according to the location of uses and built-form on-site and their proximity to the perimeter. The purpose of this approach is to ensure active and interesting facades, where most visible and a visual stepping up of height across the site, providing the lowest heights and relief at the boundaries, whilst helping to define clear zones for the data centre buildings and landscaping.

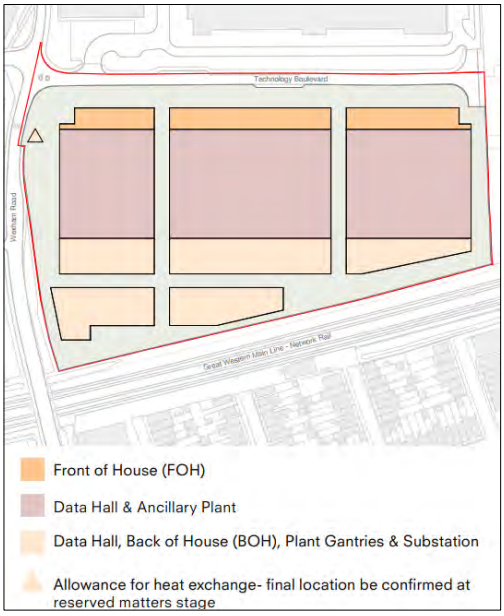
9.20 The Design Code provides detailed guidance in relation to all the principles defined by the Parameter Plans and again must be followed in preparing the specific proposals. The Code covers all detailed aspects of the design of the development including landscaping.

Illustrative Scheme – proposed layout

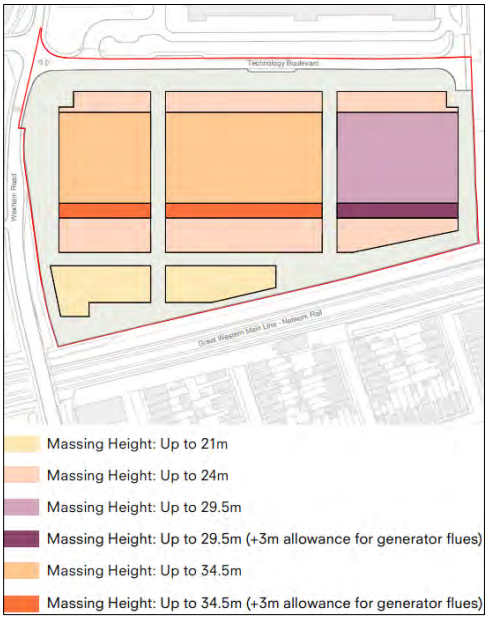
9.21 An Illustrative Scheme for the proposed data centre has been prepared in line with the Parameter Plans, with the application of the Design Code to articulate the built form and landscaping treatment. It has been presented as part of the application to demonstrate how the Parameter Plan and Design Code can be appropriately interpreted to deliver a data centre, in response to its operational requirements and surroundings. It is important to note however, that this is just one way the scheme could be brought forward and does not represent the final proposals which will be submitted at Reserved Matters stage.

Layout:

9.22 The proposed layout of the development as defined by the relevant Parameter Plans, Illustrative Scheme and Design Code, has been based on making effective use of the site, and facilitating construction and operational efficiencies having regard to its orientation, shape, boundary conditions and nature of surrounding development. The layout considers how the different elements of a data centre, namely the data halls, offices, supporting infrastructure, plant/apparatus, access, parking and landscaping can be appropriately arranged to address key frontages, sensitive neighbouring uses, biodiversity and highway safety concerns.



Building Arrangements Parameter Plan



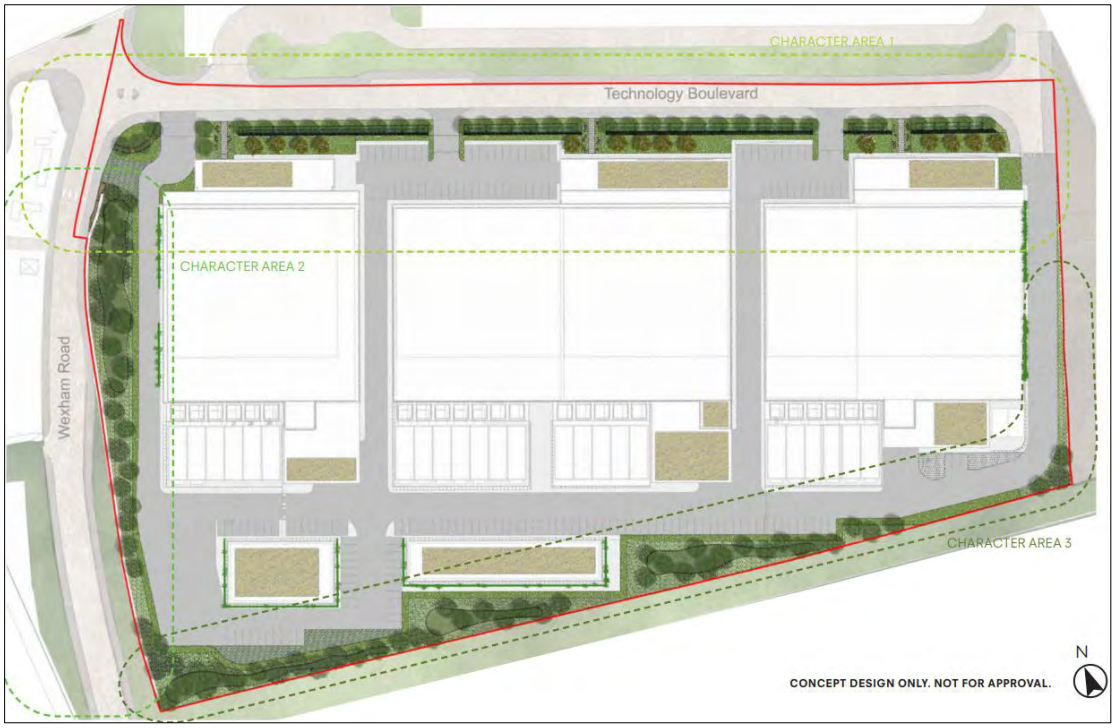
Building Heights Parameter Plan

9.23 The proposed data centre is planned to align across the full length of the site adjoining Technology Boulevard, mirroring the large data halls now completed opposite at the Yondr data centre campus. Its footprint requires minimum setbacks of 10m and 15m from Technology Boulevard and Wexham Road respectively, and two breaks along its length of at least 10m each. As per the Illustrative Scheme, this effectively allows three data halls to be constructed of differing sized footprints, reducing the extent of the built form and providing for substantial landscaped buffer zones along the two key highway boundaries. Each data hall would have their main entrance, office and Front of House (FoH) accommodation facing Technology Boulevard, providing for an active and more articulated frontage and their Back of House (BoH) and associated plant/gantries to the rear.

9.24 Two main access points proposed on Technology Boulevard at the western and eastern ends of the site will connect a service route through the development and to parking areas behind the data halls. Subject to detailed siting, the proposed substation to serve the data centre will be located adjacent the service road and

parking areas at the back of the site, towards its south-western corner. The Parameter Plans require the substation, if of a certain scale to comprise of at least two structures and be setback a minimum distance from Wexham Road and the rear boundary against the railway.

9.25 The overarching strategy for the landscape is to create a substantial green and layered landscape around the perimeter of the site, which softens and creates interesting and varied views when moving around publicly accessible areas along Technology Boulevard, Wexham Road, and from the residential areas to the south.



Illustrative Scheme – proposed landscaping

9.26 Having regard to the nature of the site, its boundary conditions and neighbouring uses, the layout of the proposed development in outline is considered appropriate in optimising the space available and respecting the nature and character of the surrounding area.

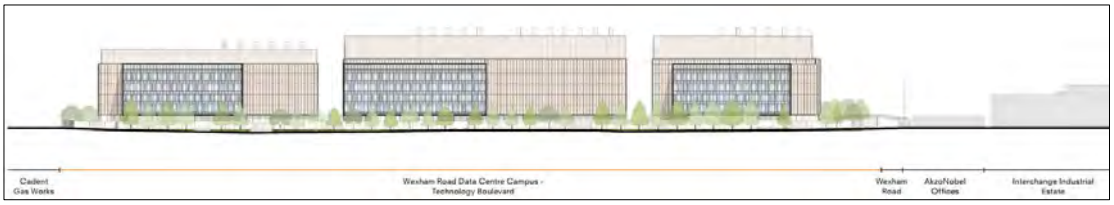
Scale and appearance:

9.27 The proposed development will introduce a significant new built form on-site that will be highly visible in the local area. Its scale, height, massing and appearance, however, have been carefully informed by the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA), Heritage Statement, Design and Access Statement and Design Code. These have considered the pattern, scale, and character of the surrounding townscape, local and strategic views and key heritage assets including Windsor Castle and Windsor Great Park. This considered approach adopts established urban design principles to ensure that the proposed development fits comfortably on-site, addresses the streetscene and minimises its impact on the wider townscape.

9.28 The scale of the proposed data centre also responds to its accommodation and technical design requirements. The centre and ancillary plant are located centrally due to their size and therefore as per the relevant Parameter Plans, height steps towards the centre of the site to respect the scale of development to the north, and steps down to the eastern and southern boundaries, opposite the residential areas. The maximum heights permitted by the Parameter Plans step down from 37.5m and 32.5m to 34.5m and 29.5m (including a 3m+ allowance for plenums) west to east respectively across the site, to 24m at the front and back. The maximum permitted height of the substation is set at 21m. The Parameter plans as noted above, also require breaks in the data centre, adding further variation in its form and massing.

Illustrative Scheme – cross-section of development from Wexham Road

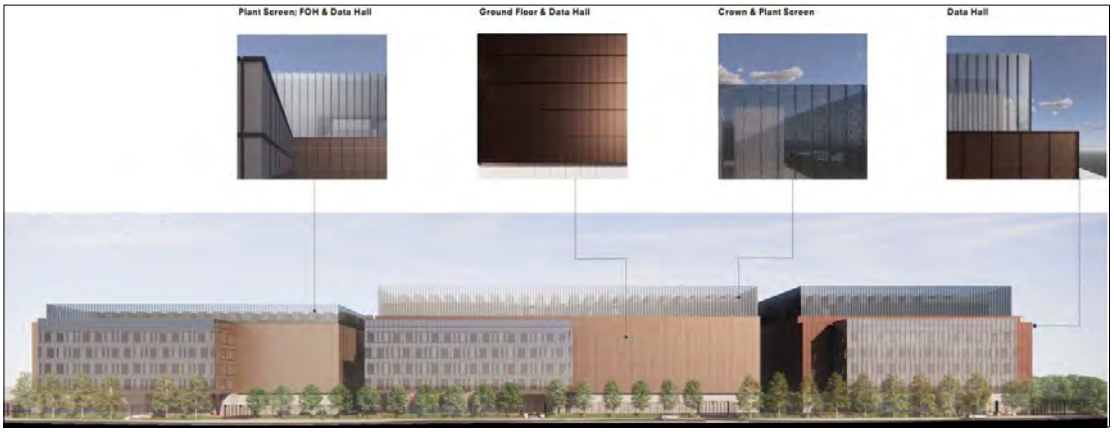
9.29 The proposed heights take some precedence from the previous Outline Planning Application, which allowed for heights of up to 32.5m on the site for residential use, and 24m for the commercial use opposite, now the Yondr data centre. Reference is also taken from schemes in the surrounding area such as the redevelopment of the Queensmere Shopping Centre, the Horlicks Factory, and the Future Works, all of which propose maximum heights ranging from 45-60m. Furthermore, the height of the development has importantly considered strategic views to ensure its massing is sat below the Chiltern Hill line when viewed from key heritage assets such as Windsor Castle.



Illustrative Scheme – cross-section of development from Technology Boulevard

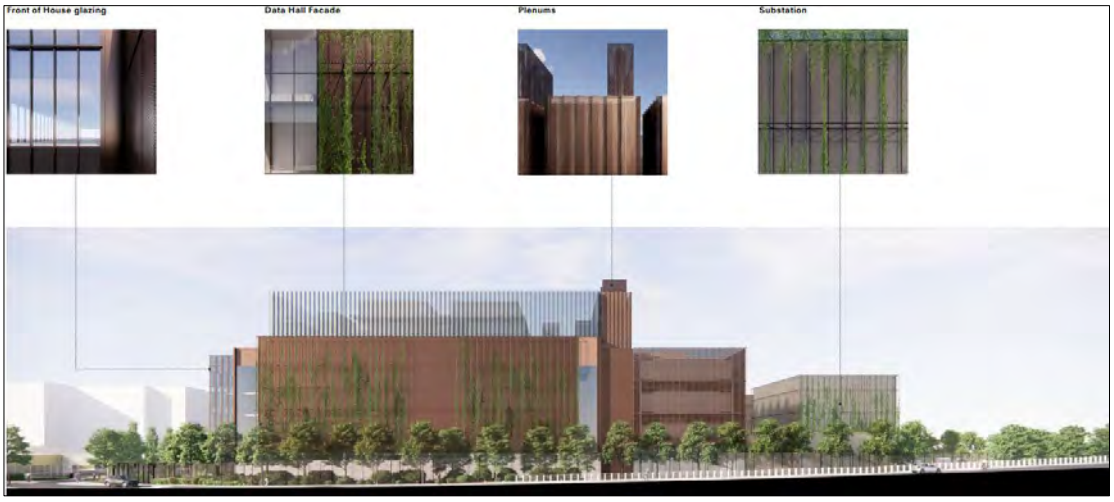
9.30 The indicative material palette outlined within the Design Code features a range of elevational treatments to promote a textured, interesting, and high-quality external appearance. The materials presented, including their colours, respond to the different elements of the data centre, their orientation and local and strategic views. The front and side elevations as highlighted by Illustrative Scheme, and detailed in the Design Code, comprise of curtain walling, with glazing on the offices facing Technology Boulevard, and bronzed textured cladding panels on the data halls and plant. Elements of curtain walling featured will, if possible be interwoven where interior areas can be exposed, such as circulation cores. Additional interest will be provided with the use of climbing plants and green walls which also complement the general landscaping proposed across the site.

9.31 The roofs of the data halls will accommodate significant mechanical apparatus to provide their cooling and electrical equipment. The plant, which will be set-in and step-up in height away from the edge of the data halls will be enclosed by metal screening to form a lightweight crown intended to provide some light and views through. The gantries will comprise extended mesh and the data halls and base of the plenums will feature textured bronzed cladding panels or similar. The top of the plenums will change to perforated mesh to provide some transparency at the top of the building.



Illustratrive Scheme – proposed north elevation to Technology Boulevard

9.32 The Back of House accommodation which will form smaller elements next to the gantries will consist of composite panels with insets where the loading bays are required. The external appearance of the substation will adopt a similar approach to the treatment of the data halls and associated apparatus through the application of a light precast concrete base and a combination of mesh screens, cladding panels and green walls to provide greater texture and depth at the upper levels.



Illustratrive Scheme – proposed western elevation to Wexham Road

9.33 Given the scale of the proposed development, the design of the buildings seeks to break down and articulate their mass with gaps, setbacks and stepped facades, and

by using a range of complementary materials and external treatments. Textured surfacing and earthy tones are used throughout, to assist in blending into the more traditional surrounding townscape, and the sky and Chiltern Hills in long range views from Windsor Castle. The buildings will also incorporate sensitively designed lighting to complement their appearance during darker periods of the day.

Visual impact and key views:

9.34 As previously indicated, the scale, height, massing and design of the proposed development have been carefully informed by a number of detailed studies which considered and assessed how it would sit in the surrounding townscape and wider landscape. This is particularly important given that the proposed buildings would be significantly larger than those nearby, and their appearance is constrained by a number of technical requirements e.g. plant, screening.

9.35 A Townscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (TVIA) is submitted with the application and has been prepared alongside a Heritage Statement, which also accompanies the application to ensure that all appropriate impacts have been considered.

9.36 A TVIA is essentially a visual appraisal to determine the relationship of an area with its surroundings, the visibility of a site within the wider landscape/townscape and provide a basis for consideration of the effects that a proposed development would have on views and the landscape/townscape and visual characteristics of the area.

9.37 The TVIA submitted describes the site as lying in an area of large scale-built form with industrial/commercial characteristics stretching between the Uxbridge Road and the Wexham Road. It recognises the area is currently in transition with the previous built form on-site having been demolished and other parts of the land currently under construction with further large built-form. It notes the surrounding area includes a broad mix of urban form, with large scale-built form in amongst low level residential areas, including tall buildings in places.

9.38 In relation to the baseline assessment, the TVIA considers a study area within approximately 500m of the site, as no changes to townscape character were considered to be likely beyond this distance, given the context of the site, and the nature of the proposed development. This looks at baseline characteristics such as building height and style, green space, linkages and use, and perceptual characteristics to inform both design development and the assessment of likely changes that would result from the introduction of the proposed development.

9.39 In terms of the views experienced by people living and working in, and passing through the area, a computer-generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) indicated that there was potential for views of the site from locations approximately 3-4km away, with an extension to the south across higher ground at Windsor Great Park, up to approximately 9km away. In reality, visibility is restricted by localised screening features such as individual or small groups of trees, woodland, hedges and garden vegetation, and sometimes several layers of intervening vegetation. This results in a much more limited availability of views than is suggested by the ZTV.

Verified wireframe views of the maximum parameter envelope and rendered montage views of the Illustrative Scheme developed to support the Application, have been used as a tool to inform the visual assessment.

9.40 The TVIA records local townscape character in a series of seven townscape character areas and highlights the site within the Wexham Road commercial/industrial Character Area. It notes that the site is currently in poor condition and concludes that although there would be some minor adverse effects during construction, once complete and in the long term they would be judged to be 'minor beneficial'. The Character Area encompasses a broad variety of large scale-built form much of which is limited quality such that, despite the taller nature of the proposed buildings, on balance improvements to the quality of local townscape would be anticipated. These would result from new planting and improved frontages along Wexham Road, and Technology Boulevard, and improved linkages. Effects on other character areas within the study are judged to be 'minor adverse' both initially and in the long term, as these areas would be influenced by changes to setting only, and would be unlikely to benefit from the planting and frontages due to limited intervisibility with these areas.

9.41 From the streets immediately surrounding the proposed development, the TVIA states that changes to views from visual receptors would be considerable, due to the introduction of new large scale-built form, albeit the existing site does not currently make an attractive contribution to the local area. As a result, it concludes that effects both initially and in the long term would be considered 'moderate adverse', as would be anticipated it notes for a development of this scale. It acknowledges that the landscaping proposed, however, would introduce some attractive features at street level which it would improve lower-level views for passers-by along the Wexham Road and from the residential areas to the south.

9.42 Slightly further away from the proposed development, within the townscape, the TVIA states that effects on visual receptors would start to reduce as a result of both intervening features, and the reduced proportion of the view occupied by new built form. From these areas, although some moderate adverse effects would remain during construction, once complete, the colours, materials and greening of parts of the built form, as set out in the Design Code and demonstrated by the Illustrative Scheme, would reduce impact and effects would reduce to 'minor adverse'.

Illustrative Scheme - View from Uxbridge Road junction with Victoria Road/Goodman Park looking west

9.43 In order to represent the nature of the development in context, 27 near and long-distance photographic views were taken to provide Accurate Visual Representations (AVR). These were used as a basis to create accurate photomontages providing 'wireline' views and 'rendered' views of the proposed development. A selection of the rendered views is presented in this section.

Illustrative Scheme - View from Uxbridge Road pedestrian crossing adjacent to Premier Inn

9.44 These views highlight that the development would be visible in a variety of ways depending on their distance from the site and the nature of the surrounding townscape/landscape. Whilst the proposed development would change to the townscape/landscape to differing degrees, having regard to its design, height, massing, and materiality officers consider it would not significantly nor detrimentally affect the character or appearance of the surrounding area.

Illustrative Scheme - view from Petersfield Avenue looking south-east

9.45 The TVIA includes consideration of a number of committed development sites within the urban area of Slough. These have been evaluated in combination with the proposed development for potential cumulative townscape and visual effects, however, although there would be some cumulative effects, the TVIA considers that these would result in any notable change to the assessment outcomes.

Illustrative Scheme - view from the junction of Wellington Street and Wexham Road

Illustrative Scheme - view from eastern side of Bloom Park looking west

9.46 As described previously, the construction of the proposed developed is to be sequenced over an extended period. The TVIA also considered the consequences of this approach and established that the townscape and visual effects would be unlikely to increase above the levels stated for the whole development when complete.

Colonial Road

Australia Road

Canada Road

India Road

Illustrative Scheme – views from residential streets to south across railway looking north

9.47 Further afield to the north, outside the town and from the historic parkland areas north of the urban area, the TVIA highlights that from the majority of locations no change would be perceptible due to the well vegetated nature of the area. Where glimpses are available, the TVIA concludes that the proportion of the proposed development visible would be small and set amongst the existing central urban area such that any effects would be considered 'minor adverse'.

9.48 From Windsor Castle and Great Park, the TVIA notes that views towards the proposed development would be generally glimpsed as part of the large but distant urban area of Slough, which already influences views from this area and the dense vegetation and sometimes landform, limits views from many areas of the park so the visibility of the site is notably limited. Given that the proposed built form will sit below the skyline, largely within the area of view already occupied by built form (the Yondr data centre), feature gaps and setbacks and darker materials to help it recede into views, and not draw the eye, the TVIA concludes that the effects are not considered greater than 'minor adverse'. The impact of the proposed development in relation to the heritage interest of Windsor Castle and Great Park are discussed in the section below.

9.49 Overall, the TVIA highlights that the proposed development includes large scale-built form, which is an unavoidable consequence of its function. In terms of townscape character, given its setting, its states that the changes are considered relatively small. However, it also states that changes to views experienced by people, living and working in the adjacent area, and passing through, would be notable in some cases due to the scale of the built form. Whilst it identifies that there would be some beneficial effects, in terms of improvements to the condition and appearance of the site, it recognises that the area is currently in transition with other large-scale buildings emerging as part of the commercial/industrial area. The TVIA concludes that the overall effects of this change, and all other sites cumulatively, considered as part as part of increasing size and height of built form in this urban area would not be regarded as inappropriate in townscape and visual terms.

9.50 Having regard to the location and nature of the site, and the scale and design of the proposed development, officers consider that it will represent a significant physical and visible change locally. Whilst the design approach and context have been carefully considered, in seeking to further mitigate its impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and enhance its setting and the quality of the local environment, the application secures a contribution (£2.5m) towards a range of public realm improvements longer-term. The contribution will be used by the Council, along with other appropriate funding as necessary, to deliver localised public realm improvements within the vicinity of the site, and in the town centre, to enhance the quality and attractiveness of the local environment and walking and cycling connections to encourage and promote active travel.

9.51 Taking account of the Parameter Plans, Design Code and Illustrative Scheme presented as part of the planning application to guide detailed design at Reserved Matters stage, in addition to the contribution to mitigate impacts identified and deliver local environmental improvements, the proposed development is considered

appropriate and broadly compliant with relevant local and national planning policies and guidance in respect to its scale and design in relation to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

9.52 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

10.0 **Impact on Heritage Assets**

10.1 Section 66 and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 seeks special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting and to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area.

10.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) intends to preserve and enhance the historic environment and requires local planning authorities to afford great weight to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether the potential harm is substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm. It requires an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

10.3 The NPPF also requires local planning authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

10.5 It states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

10.6 Core Policy 9 of the Core Strategy states that development will not be permitted unless it:

- Enhances and protects the historic environment;
- Respects the character and distinctiveness of existing buildings, townscapes and landscapes and their local designations;

10.7 Policy EN17 (Locally Listed Buildings) of the Local Plan states that special consideration will be given, in the exercise of the development control function, to the retention, enhancement and appropriate refurbishment of locally listed buildings together with their setting.

- Assessment:

10.8 The planning application has considered the impact of the proposed development on heritage assets to ensure these are not unduly affected and appropriate mitigation can be implemented.

10.9 In accordance with the NPPF, the application is accompanied by a Heritage Statement (HS). This has assessed the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets both within the site and in the vicinity of the site to enable potential impacts on these assets to be identified along with the need for design solutions. The Statement has been prepared following engagement with Historic England and the Local Planning Authority. The HS has been informed by the Townscape Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) referred to above and has been considered alongside a Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment also submitted with the application. This document aimed to identify cultural heritage assets that may be affected by the proposed development including buried archaeological remains and historic buildings and designations.

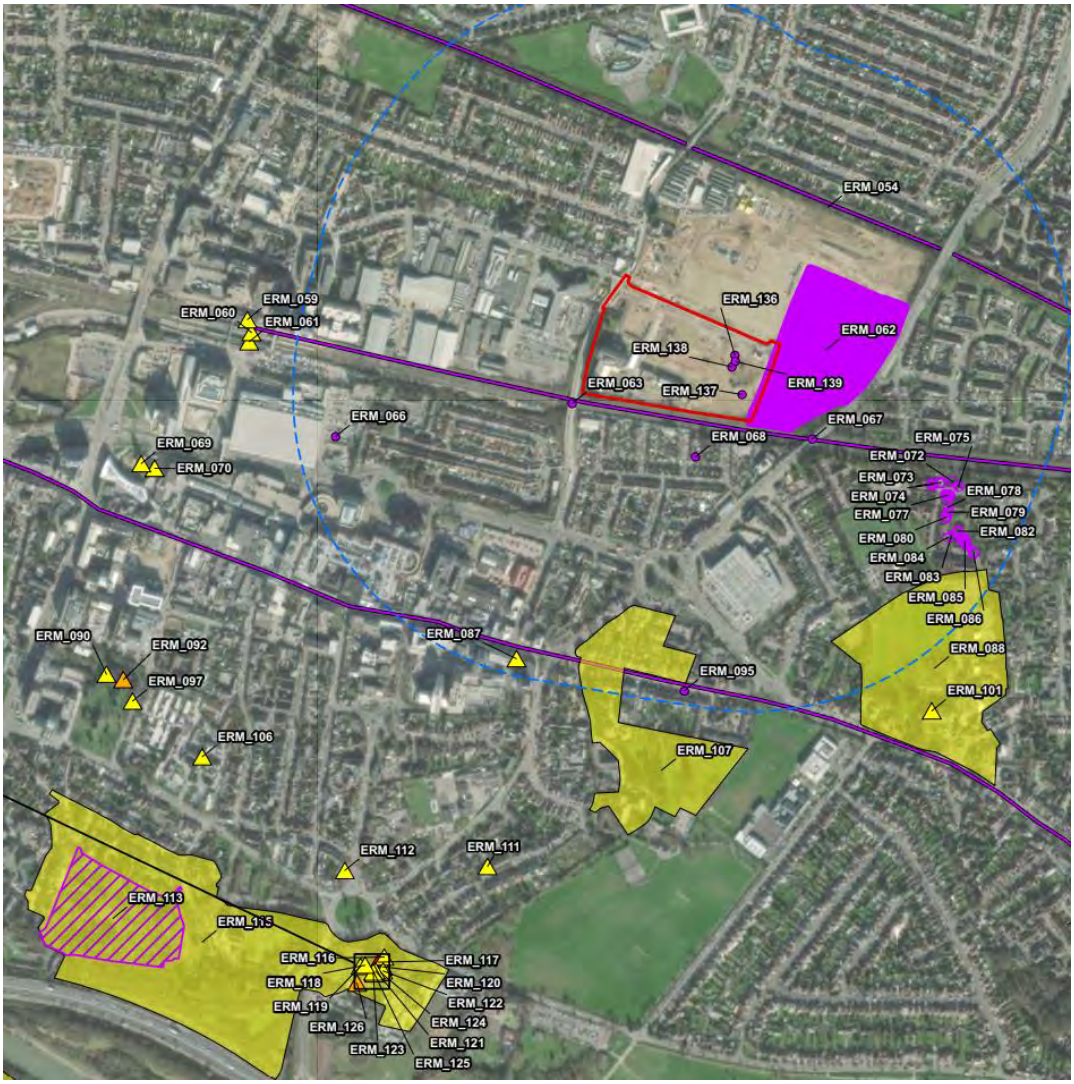
10.10 The site is not located in adjacent a Conservation Area, nor does it accommodate any heritage assets. In accordance with Historic England guidance and based on the TVIA, a significant number of designated heritage assets within the wider environs of the site were scoped out of the assessment as they would not be affected by the proposed development in terms of material changes or changes to their setting and significance. Consideration was given to the distance of the asset from the site, the asset's location, scale and orientation, and the nature, extent and scale of intervening-built form and vegetation.

10.11 Based on the scoping exercise, a 1km Study Area around the site was used to assess heritage assets, in addition to The Royal Estate, Windsor: Windsor Castle and Home Park and Windsor Great Park. Whist the Castle lies approximately 3km to the south of the site, given its significance, setting and views of the proposed development, it has formed a key part of the assessment in the HS.

10.12 It should be noted that, depending on their nature and location, not all designated heritage assets within the 1km Study Area were subject to a full or similar level of assessment, however appropriate consideration was afforded to each.

10.13 There are three Conservation Areas within or partly within the Study Area, namely:

- Sussex Place and Clifton Road Conservation Area
- St Bernard's School Conservation Area
- Upton Park and Upton Village



Map of Conservation areas (yellow) and Listed Buildings (triangles) within Study Area

10.14 The following Listed Buildings are located within the Study Area:

- Church Of St Mary - Grade II*
- Beech House, Oak House and Linden House at Upton Hospital - Grade II
- Slough Station Booking Hall, Booking Office and Travel Centre - Grade II
- Island Platform Building Booking Office and Travel Centre - Grade II
- Wall, Gate Piers and Gates (East Of The Church Of St Mary) - Grade II
- West Block and Chapel at St Bernard's Convent - Grade II
- The Rose and Crown Public House - Grade II
- 74, Upton Road - Grade II
- St. Ethelbert's Presbytery - Grade II
- Church Of Our Lady Immaculate and St. Ethelbert - Grade II
- The Red Cow Public House - Grade II
- Slough Station Area Managers Office, Traffic Assistants Office, and Red Star Parcel Office - Grade II
- Slough Town War Memorial In Churchyard Of St Mary's Church - Grade II

10.15 In relation to Non-Designated Heritage Assets, there are 35 Locally Listed Buildings within the Study Area as identified in the Local Plan.

10.16 The key heritage assets specifically considered beyond the Study Area are the Grade I Listed Windsor Castle and the Statue of George III (also known as the Copper Horse), a Grade II Listed feature. Windsor Great Park and Windsor Castle and Home Park are also designated Grade I Registered Parks and Gardens.

10.17 As highlighted previously; in assessing the potential impacts, the Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) present Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) maps and relevant views including Actual Visual Representations (AVRs) and photomontages.

10.18 In relation to the Listed Buildings identified, these fall outside the ZTV from where the proposed development would be visible and have no historic ownership or functional links with the development site. The significance of these assets, as noted in the HS is considered to be unaffected by the proposed development and therefore no further assessment is necessary.

10.19 Two of the Conservation Areas highlighted fall within the ZTV, Sussex Place and Clifton Road Conservation Area and St Bernard's School Conservation Area. Whilst the proposed development will be visible from limited parts of these areas, views will be obstructed by existing buildings and trees. The HS notes that this will not change the character of the conservation areas themselves but will slightly detract from those limited sections of the designated areas and therefore concludes that a low level less than substantial harmful effect will be caused to their significance.

10.20 Windsor Castle, Windsor Great Park and Home Park are all key and related designated assets and have interrelated, overlapping settings. The HS has considered the significance of each of these assets both separately and together in respect to their setting and contribution to the significance of the assets.

10.21 As described in the HS, Windsor Castle is located c.3.3km to the south-west of the site and is the oldest and largest castle continuously inhabited by the Monarchy in the UK. It is both unique and of very high heritage significance due to its architectural, historical, archaeological and artistic interest.

10.22 Windsor Great Park is of medieval origin created out of Windsor Forest as a royal hunting park and containing many ancient trees. The park was later landscaped, and contains gardens attached to four principal residences within its boundary. It accommodates other key features including the Long Walk and Queen Anne's Ride, and the Statue of George III on Snow Hill and is a key element of the setting of the Castle.

10.23 The significance of Windsor Castle and Home Park Registered Park is similar to the Great Park, residing in its high historical, artistic and archaeological interest. The key difference is that this designation includes the open space of Windsor Castle and its immediate surrounds as well as the Home Park to the north-east and south-east.

10.24 Whilst the majority of Windsor Castle and Home Park are outside of the ZTV, the proposed development will be mainly visible, in part from its north facing elements including the North Terrace, in views looking across towards Slough and the Chiltern Hills. The northern half of Windsor Great Park is also within the ZTV from where the proposed development will be partly visible behind and to the east of the Castle, including a section along the Long Walk and Queen Anne's Ride, and the Statue of George III on Snow Hill.

Illustrative Scheme – cumulative view from Northern Terrace, Windsor Castle

10.25 The HS highlights that the proposed development will be located at the eastern end of the view from the North Terrace, towards the existing large buildings within Slough including the relatively prominent white Yondr data centre, recently constructed next to the site. It notes that the Illustrative Scheme shows how the maximum parameter envelope will ensure that the proposed development sits below the Chiltern Hills skyline, will screen the Yondr buildings and be broken up by the application of the principles set out in the Design Code. Furthermore, the colour and material palettes presented in the Code have been prepared to specifically reduce and minimise the visibility of the scheme at this distance against the hills and urban area.

10.26 Notwithstanding this design approach, the HS acknowledges that the development will appear as a continuous line of building and be a noticeable change in the setting of the Castle. Consequently, it notes that this will have a minor adverse effect on the Castle's significance which it equates to a low level of 'less than substantial' harm as defined in the NPPF. The HS also recognises that construction of the proposed development will be temporary change within the setting of the Castle which it affords a similar degree of harm to its significance.

10.27 In relation to Windsor Great Park, the HS also acknowledges that the proposed development will be a change effecting within its wider setting, particularly from views along the Long Walk and the Statue of George III. Due to the elevated position on Snow Hill, there are panoramic views to the north with Windsor Castle in the middle of the view and the Chilterns as the backdrop and the proposed development

will be visible in views looking across to the east of the Castle and existing larger buildings in Slough town centre. The proposed development will however again appear below the Chiltern Hills skyline and the potential selection of colours and materials set out in the application will assist in seeking to blend its mass into the backdrop of the wider landscape. It should be noted again that the development will obscure the prominent white Yondr data centres adjacent the site to the north from views in the Great Park which is considered to represent a betterment.

Illustrative Scheme – cumulative view from Snow Hill, Windsor Great Park.

10.28 Whilst the ZTV shows that the proposed development is theoretically visible in part from the Long Walk and Queen Anne's Ride, in reality it will not be experienced along the majority of these routes due to a combination of topography, trees and the vegetation and the HS notes that it will therefore have no adverse impact on the significance of the Great Park and Windsor Castle.

10.29 Given the potential changes taking place across Slough, and its town centre in particular, as a result of other development opportunities, the application has also considered the proposed development and its cumulative impact from these key views. The HS has identified up to ten consented schemes within Slough have been that give rise to potential cumulative impacts with the proposed development in respect to views from Windsor Castle and Windsor Great Park. These include:

- 70-83 Uxbridge Road (13)
- Thames Central (14)
- Former BHS – 204-206 High Street (06)
- 190-192 High Street (16)
- Queensmere Shopping Centre (03)
- 15-23 Church Street (10)
- Buckingham Gateway Site (07)
- Former Octagon Buildings – Bunel Way (01)
- The Future Works (04)
- The Horlicks Factory (02 & 02B)
- Slough Central Canal Basin (09)

10.30 As shown in the TVIA cumulative scheme verified view, the HS notes that the combination of all the cumulative schemes will have an adverse effect on the significance of Windsor Castle. Collectively, they break up the Chiltern Hills skyline and obscure a relatively long section of it. They increase the height of Slough centre and therefore also its visibility from Windsor Castle and the Great Park. The proposed development will add to this adverse effect but in a limited way given, as described above, it will not exceed the Chiltern Hills skyline, and its form and materiality seeks to ensure it appears as a visually recessive feature within the wider setting of the Castle and its environs. The HS concludes therefore that the combined impact would have a less than substantial harmful effect.

10.31 Having reviewed the application carefully, Historic England as noted in the consultation section above, welcome the amendments to the proposals which are considered to help to reduce the harm that would result from the proposed development of the site by breaking up the appearance of the mass of the building. However, some harm is still identified, largely through the Chiltern Hills being obscured across the large east-west extent of the site area from key vantage points around Windsor Castle. For the purposes of the NPPF, Historic England judge the level of harm from these proposals to be less than substantial, at the low end of the scale and state that it is for Council to weigh up the relevant harm to heritage identified in the proposals against public benefits from the scheme.

10.32 In respect to Non-Designated heritage assets, whilst there are numerous Locally Listed Buildings located within the Study Area, only one (16-18 Mill Street (to the west of the site) is just within the ZTV of the proposed development, which would only be visible in part when standing in the street in front of the property. Given its condition, modern surroundings and multiple taller buildings in the immediate vicinity, its significance as noted in the HS will be unaffected.

10.33 The application has also been reviewed by the Councils Heritage Advisors who agree with the findings of the Heritage Statement in relation to the impact upon setting of the Sussex Place and St Bernard's School Conservation Areas. The amended scheme provides further detail on how the massing of the building will be broken up and the modest reduction in height will provide a limited visual benefit. However, they advise that the proposal will remain a large-scale structure, visible from the North Terrace of Windsor Castle and disrupting long views towards the Chiltern Hills beyond the site and agree with Historic England that it will result in a low level of 'less than substantial' harm to the significance of Windsor Castle.

10.34 The application and the HS present a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the proposed development relation to heritage assets, and officers consider that the conclusions reached respect to Designated heritage assets within the 1km Study Area and are considered reasonable and acceptable. Give the limited impacts identified and having regard to the principle and benefits of the proposed development discussed below, officers are of the view that it would not, on balance significantly affect the setting of key local heritage buildings and designations.

10.35 In accordance the NPPF, the Council as decision maker must balance the less than substantial harm identified against any public benefits the proposals may provide. Having regard to the nature of the site and its location and the principle of the development, officers consider that proposals present an appropriate re-use that would secure a significant long-term commercial investment in the Borough.

10.36 The proposed development involves bringing a vacant, underutilised, brownfield employment site in a sustainable location back into long-term productive use, which the NPPF states should be given 'substantial weight' in planning terms. The key local and wider economic benefits of the proposed development concern employment creation and supporting the rapidly expanding digital economy, upon which most of modern society is reliant. It is anticipated that at least 200 direct jobs would be created during the construction phase of the development, approximately 180 direct jobs once operating, and significantly more indirect employment opportunities would arise local and regionally within this sector and across a wide variety of commercial/industrial sectors. Key contributions would also be secured for local employment/skills training and initiatives, public realm and public transport improvements, and for exploring the delivery of a district heating network with heat being supplied locally from the data centre, if feasible.

10.37 The proposals would deliver a contemporary and high-quality development that would respect the amenity and character and appearance of the local area, reduce traffic movement and improve highway safety, significantly enhance greening and biodiversity and reduce flood risk with better and more sustainable drainage measures.

10.38 Officers conclude therefore that the lower end of less than substantial harm to identified heritage assets that would otherwise result is demonstrably outweighed by the public benefits summarised above and expanded upon elsewhere in this report.

10.39 Based on the above assessment, and having regard to the heritage advice received, the proposal is considered on balance to be acceptable in accordance National Planning Policy Framework and would also comply with Core Policy 9 of the Core Strategy.

10.40 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

11.0 **Impact on amenity of neighbouring occupiers / uses**

11.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. It goes onto state that planning decisions should ensure developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.

11.2 This general approach is reflected in Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy and Local Plan Policies EN1 and EMP2, as described earlier.

- Assessment:

11.3 The site has a long-established industrial history and is bounded by commercial/industrial uses and road and rail infrastructure. The surrounding area beyond is predominantly residential in nature and accommodates some educational/community related uses and open spaces. The proposed development has the potential to impact these surrounding land-uses in several ways during both its construction and longer-term operational phase. Impacts may relate to matters including noise, air-quality, privacy, visual amenity, sunlight/daylight, outlook, lighting, highway safety, parking, drainage and ecology.

11.4 The proposals have been designed to respect neighbouring amenity and mitigate against potential adverse impacts. As noted earlier, the application is supported by a comprehensive range of detailed technical assessments demonstrating how the proposed development can be satisfactorily accommodated in this location without compromising local amenity and existing environmental conditions.

11.5 Whilst closer to the site, given the nature scale of the of neighbouring commercial/industrial uses, it is also not considered that these would be unduly affected and are therefore not considered in detail in this section.

11.6 The nearest residential area is located across the railway to the south, approximately 40m away at its closest points, and comprises traditional terraced streets perpendicular to the railway. Other properties close-by include two properties on Wexham Road to the north, adjacent the recent constructed Yondr Data Centre, over 100m to the north and properties on Petersfield Avenue slightly further away to the north-east of the site.

11.7 As noted earlier in this report, the proposed development will deliver substantial new buildings and associated structures on the site which will be highly visible in the immediate area. Whilst they will have an on impact local visual amenity, their layout and design have considered existing boundary conditions and surrounding property. As required by the Parameter Plans and set out in the Design Code, and demonstrated by the Illustrative Scheme, the proposed development will feature significant gaps, setbacks and variations in height to break-up and reduce its scale. In addition, the buildings and plant will be treated in appropriate materials to soften their appearance, and the site will incorporate significant landscaping along its key boundaries.

At its nearest point the proposed development would sit at least 40-50m away approximately from the residential properties to the south across the railway at a maximum height of 21m (sub-station) and 24m (data hall Back of House/plant). Whist the development will be highly visible from the residential roads looking north towards the site, it would not appear overbearing due to the distances involved and its variation in form, materiality and the existing and proposed boundary planting along the railway. Neither would the development affect the outlook from the properties concerned as they are side facing in relation to the site. The proposed

development is not considered to directly affect any other residential property in the surrounding area in this regard.

The planning application is accompanied by a Daylight and Sunlight Assessment which considered the effects upon the daylight and sunlight amenity of surrounding residential properties as a result of the proposed development. The following properties, being closet to the site were assessed:

- 9 ,11 India Road
- 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 Canada Road
- 14, 15, 16, 17 Australia Road
- 16, 17, 18, 19 Colonial Road

The results of the Assessment outlined that the properties identified would experience no reductions, or reductions of daylight and sunlight which would be unnoticeable to the occupants. The Assessment therefore concluded that the proposed development would have a minimal impact on surrounding residential properties and considered it to be acceptable in terms of daylight and sunlight amenity.

11.7 Whilst the proposed development is substantial, impacts associated with its construction can be appropriately mitigated and managed via the implementation of phased Construction Management Plans to be agreed before any works commence and monitored throughout the build period. This will be secured by planning condition should the application be approved and safeguard local amenity during the extended build period. As indicated by the Outline Construction Management Plan (OCMP) submitted with the application, these will provide details in relation to the management and monitoring of the site and works, community liaison, working hours, dust and noise mitigation measures, lighting, vehicle/machine emission standards and vehicle routing and access. A construction related management plan will also be conditioned to manage impact in relation to local ecology.

11.8 The Air Quality Assessment submitted with the application demonstrates that subject to appropriate mitigation, local air quality would not be adversely affected by the proposed development during its construction and operational phases and having regard to cumulative impacts associated with the neighbouring Yondr data centre. Whilst it identifies that there may be potentially significant NOx levels present in the unlikely event of a power outage, the probability of this scenario coming forward is extremely low given the reliability of the existing power connection to the site. The submitted Noise Impact Assessment similarly highlights the potential for adverse noise occurrences having regard to cumulative impacts but concludes that these would not be significant subject to appropriate mitigation. These matters are discussed in detail later in this report.

11.9 The accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, also discussed in detail in a later section of this report demonstrates how the proposed drainage arrangements would ensure that the site and development is safe from surface water flooding, significantly improve run-off rates and not increase flooding risk elsewhere.

A large sub-station is proposed to the rear of the site to serve the data centre. Whilst, as per the Parameter Plans the sub-station could sit a minimum of 50m away from the nearest residential property across the railway to the south, it will be necessary to ensure that there are no health implications for neighbouring residents. A condition is therefore recommended requiring the submission of an Electromagnetic Fields Assessment to confirm that the sub-station would fall within the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines and therefore have no adverse impact.

Policy EN6 of the Local Plan prohibits the development of large buildings or structures where they would have the potential to interfere with telecommunications signals. To address this policy, the application is supported by a Telecommunications Assessment Report determine potential effects of the proposal on local broadcast services reception. The Report concludes that the proposed development is not expected to cause any interference with any broadcast services in the local area. It found that no adverse impact would be caused and therefore no mitigation measures are required.

11.9 The submitted Transport Assessment and Travel Plan details how the proposed development would result in significantly less traffic movement, would provide sufficient parking, and encourage sustainable transport modes to ensure existing road and parking conditions and highway safety are not affected. These matters are discussed in detail later in this report.

11.10 Having regard to the identified and potential impacts associated with the proposals, during its construction and operational phases, it is not considered subject to appropriate mitigation that the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and users would be adversely affected. It should noted that no public representations have been received in response to the application.

11.11 Based on the above assessment, and subject to appropriate planning conditions, the proposal is considered to comply with the relevant requirements of Core Policy 8 of The Core Strategy, Policies EN1 and EMP2 of The Local Plan for Slough, and the requirements of the NPPF.

11.12 Neutral weight is applied in the planning balance.

12.0 **Transport, highways and parking**

12.1 The National Planning Policy Framework advises that in assessing specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

a) sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location;
b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;
c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the

National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and

d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.

12.2 Core Policy 7 requires development proposals to improve road safety and reinforce the principles of the transport strategy as set out in the council's Local Transport Plan

12.3 Policy T2 of The Adopted Local Plan for Slough 2004 seeks to restrain levels of parking in order to reduce the reliance on the private car through the imposition of parking standards. The Parking Standards have been updated within Part 3 of the Slough Developer's Guide.

- Assessment:

12.4 A Transport Assessment (TA), TA Addendum and Travel Plan have been submitted with the application and consider all aspects of movement by employees and visitors, parking, servicing, and delivery arrangements during the operational stages of the proposed development.

12.5 The TA and Addendum also include operation phase trip generation, construction traffic data along with operation traffic data and mitigation measures, a junction assessment in respect to Wexham Road/Technology Boulevard/Petersfield Avenue and Wellington Street and Wexham Road and HGV tracking. A Stage 1 RSA was completed and is presented in the TA with comprehensive responses to matters raised.

12.6 An Outline Construction Management Plan also forms part of the application which details, indicatively how the construction phase will be managed including construction vehicle movements. The Applicant has stated that no contractors have yet been appointed to deliver any of proposed development. It is proposed therefore that full details of the impact of future construction activities and proposed mitigation will come forward with each Reserved Matters submission via the Construction Management Plans (CMP).

12.7 The documents have been prepared having regard to both local and national planning policy and guidance and demonstrate that the development will not cause any unacceptable transport impacts and is considered acceptable in highway safety terms and against the requirements of Core Policy 7 and the NPPF.

<u>Access:</u>

12.8 Access into the site is to be taken from the existing estate road, Technology Boulevard. Approval is sought for two main access points on Technology Boulevard, and an emergency means of access on Wexham Road near its junction with Technology Boulevard. The two main access points are located at end of the site

and would be connected via a route through the development when the layout is agreed at Reserved Matters stage, including additional car, pedestrian and cycle access points along Technology Boulevard as defined in the associated Parameter Plan.

Car parking:

12.9 Having regard to the accessibility of the site, the scale of the proposed data centre, and the need to promote sustainable travel, the application accommodates the optimal number of spaces possible within the confines of the site totalling up to 171 car parking spaces. The number of spaces has been established using survey data and forecast staff numbers and visitors (estimated at approximately 90 and 180 respectively in this instance), and this approach is considered acceptable.

12.10 Electric Vehicle Charging facilities will also be provided in accordance with the Slough Low Emissions Strategy and 6% of car parking spaces will be for Blue Badge permit holders and will be provided near to the building entrance. Access to these spaces will be controlled by the building management. The car park access will be controlled by a swipe card-controlled gate.

12.11 It should be noted that whilst there is no CPZ in operation around the site, employees and visitors cannot park on nearby streets due to the presence of single and double yellow lines. Also, whilst there are no public car parks in the immediate vicinity of the site, there are several pay-and-display car park located at Slough train Station, with over 500 combined parking spaces.

Cycle parking:

12.12 Secure and covered cycle parking provision is also indicatively shown for up to 90 bicycles on the front of the site based on a similar rationale.

Servicing and deliveries:

12.13 All delivery and servicing vehicles entering the site will use the entrance at the eastern end of Technology Boulevard and all delivery and servicing activity, including waste collection, will then take place within the development. Based on the size of the proposed data centre only 6-9 HGV deliveries per day are envisaged 24 to 36 LGV (Light Goods Vehicles). To manage the movement of servicing and delivery traffic entering and leaving the site and reduce the impact of vehicle movements on the local environment, a booking management system will be introduced at the development.

12.14 A delivery and servicing strategy is included within the TA which sets out in detail how the vehicle movements will be proactively and safely managed. A separate Outline Construction Management Plan has been prepared which provides information on the construction stage servicing and the impacts associated with the construction, along with appropriate mitigation measures including an indicative routeing strategy. The latter item is particularly critical given the need to ensure

larger vehicles do not use local residential roads. Each Reserved Matters phase of the development will require the submission and approval of a detailed Construction Management Plan by the Local Authority.

Trip generation – Operational Phase:

12.12 The previously consented residential scheme included extensive junction capacity assessments of the local highway network which were found to operate within capacity in future scenarios. This assessment was undertaken in 2019 and included background traffic flows at the time.

12.13 The proposed data centre generates a net reduction in trips generated compared to the assessed residential scheme. It is noted that whilst there is a net reduction in trips, the arrival and departure profile may differ, for example the data centre may include more arrivals in the AM peak as people arrive to work, rather than departing to go to work in the residential scheme.

12.14 In order to identify such differences, the turning profiles for the residential scheme and the data centre have been considered and compared. The comparisons were completed for the junctions at:

- Wexham Road, Technological Boulevard, and Petersfield Road (main access point to the network)
- Wellington Street (A4) and Wexham Road

12.15 The junction turning profile assessment shows a net decrease across both junctions during the AM and PM peak hours, between the 2019 residential scheme and the proposed data centre scheme. Based on the comparison between the 2019 residential scheme and the proposed data centre scheme, there would be a net reduction of:

- 9 turning movements during the AM development peak hour (07:00-08:00); and
- 46 turning movements during the AM network peak hour (08:00-09:00)

12.16 During the PM peak hour (17:00-18:00), there would be a decrease in turning movements on all arms of both junctions. The decrease at the northern junction would be 84 turning movements and 38 turning movements at the southern junction.

12.17 This analysis shows that the technical assessment in 2019 demonstrated junctions would operate within capacity with the residential scheme – and by comparison can also accommodate the lower levels of proposed data centre traffic. It also shows that the background traffic has not increased since 2019, and therefore that the 2019 assessment of the junctions are valid.

12.18 Where there are forecast increases in particular turning movements, the existing junction movements indicate that there is sufficient junction capacity to absorb these additional vehicles without significant impacts on junction operation and safety.

Trip generation – Construction Phase:

12.19 As noted above, no contractors have been appointed to deliver any of proposed development. It is proposed therefore that full details of the impact of future construction activities and proposed mitigation are not yet known. However, these will come forward with each Reserved Matters submission via the Construction Management Plans (CMP). Notwithstanding this, the potential the number of daily vehicles in different scenarios has been assessed based on a refined delivery sequencing as follows:

- Building 1 under construction
- Building 1 in operation and Building 2 under construction
- Building 1 and 2 in operation and Building 3 under construction
- Building 1, 2 and 3 in operation

12.20 The table below shows the number of forecasted daily construction vehicles attending the site during the building phases. This has been calculated using another data centre currently being constructed by Equinix on the Slough Trading Estate (LD14) as a precedent for construction with one of the other Trading Estate data centres which is of comparable size and use.

Scenario	Daily Construction Vehicles HGVs		Workforce (drivers)		Daily Operational Vehicles	Total Daily Vehicles	
	Average	Peak	Average	Peak		Average	Peak
Building 1 under construction (development sequencing Stage 1a,1b,2)	8	12.5	96	192	-	104	204.5
Building 1 in operation and Building 2 under construction (development sequencing Stage 3)	8	12.5	96	192	73	177	277.5
Building 1 and 2 in operation and Building 3 under construction (development sequencing Stage 4)	8	12.5	96	192	147	251	351.5
Building 1,2, and 3 in operation	-	-	-	-	220	220	220

12.20 Detailed evaluation of the project management for the delivery of that data centre building indicates that there will be an 18 – 24-month period for the shell and core to be erected and external works to be concluded. There will then be a period of 18 – 24

months of fitting out of the plant and equipment. The data halls proposed at the Wexham Road Campus site are smaller so the time take to construct and operate them should be similar or less.

12.21 The Outline Construction Management Plan (OCMP) sets out in detail the principles that can be secured at the Outline Application stage. As highlighted previously, the OCMP will be supported by detailed CMPs, setting out detail of parking, park and ride, vehicles delivery hours, and HGV routes secured by a condition for them to be provided for each phase and approved prior to the construction of each phase.

Travel Plan:

12.22 A Travel Plan (TP) has been prepared for the Site in accordance with the Slough Borough Council document "Travel Plan Guidance and Checklist". This outlines indicative targets which aim to reduce the modal share or car trips throughout the site and increase the modal share of active travel and public transport modes. This would be achieved through the site by implementing measures to increase access and awareness of sustainable transport modes.

12.23 The Travel Plan aims to encourage the local recruitment of staff where possible and undertake staff travel surveys in order to establish baseline modal shares for the Travel Plan. It also seeks to increase walking and cycling. The measures it sets out to achieve this goal are to investigate local campaigns such as 'walk to work' week and 'bike to work' day. Providing secure cycle facilities and changing and shower facilities as well as promoting the benefits of sustainable transport would help to achieve this aim. Providing more information on the local cycle routes and encouraging occupiers to increase their use of sustainable transport modes would also increase walking and cycling. The Travel Plan also sets out the need to encourage car sharing.

12.24 Finally, the Travel Plan emphasises the need for public transport and aims to improve this by providing information on bus routes, times and drop off points as well as relaying information regarding discounted tickets/passes. By doing this it will help to enhance and increase the use of public transport.

12.25 The aims and methods as outlined in the Travel Plan would increase travel sustainability on site and within the wider region of Slough and is as policy compliant with national and local guidance.

Planning Obligations:

12.26 In order to ensure the robust delivery of the approach set out, and further mitigate the impacts identified in relation to the proposed development, a number of specific transport related obligations have been secured via the s106 Agreement, including:

- Financial contribution of £568,013, towards public transport improvements.
- Travel Plan
- Financial contribution of £9,450 towards Travel Plan Monitoring

- Euro VI construction vehicle emission standards.

12.27 The Council's Transport/Highway Officers have reviewed the planning application and consider it to acceptable providing the necessary mitigation measures are secured.

12.28 Subject to appropriate planning conditions and planning obligations, the proposals are considered acceptable in relation to transport, highway and parking related matters and would accord with national and local planning policy and guidance.

12.29 Neutral weight is applied in the planning balance.

13.0 **Air Quality**

13.1 Air quality is regulated in England through multiple mechanisms. The protection of human health and of designated conservation areas from adverse air quality is regulated through the use of Air Quality Standards (AQS) transposed in UK law from EU standards. In addition, through an Environmental Permit issued by the Environment Agency (EA), an industrial facility has set to emission limits for those emission points deemed to be of potential significance in terms of their impacts onto air quality. Such development must comply with both the Environmental Permit process and planning policy and guidance.

13.2 The National Planning Policy Framework states that Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. It goes on to state that planning decisions should contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas.

13.3 Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy states that development shall not give rise to unacceptable levels of pollution including air pollution, dust and odour. It also highlights that proposals should not be located on polluted areas affected by air pollution unless the development incorporates appropriate mitigation measures to limit the adverse effects on occupiers and other appropriate receptors.

13.4 The Council has adopted the Slough Low Emission Strategy on a corporate basis, which forms part of the local Air Quality Action Plan (2024-2028) incorporating initiatives to be delivered by the Council and will set the context for revising the Local Development Plan Polices. Measures in the Low Emission Strategy include reducing traffic and requiring electric charging points within new developments. The Low Emission Strategy is a material planning consideration, but it does not form part of the current local development plan.

13.5 As part of its responsibilities for investigating air quality within its area under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime, the Council has declared five AQMAs

because of exceedances of the annual and 1-hour mean NO2 National Air Quality Objectives (NAQO). Local road traffic contributes to around 50% of local NO2 concentrations. The air quality monitoring undertaken in Slough is therefore focused on road emissions, with many kerbside and roadside monitoring sites. The Site is not located within an AQMA, the closest AQMA to the site being AQMA No. 4 declared in 2011, located approximately 200m south of the site and incorporates the A4 Bath Road from the junction with Ledgers Road/Stoke Poges Lane, in an easterly direction, along Wellington Street, up to the Sussex Place junction.

- Assessment:

13.6 An Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) has been prepared in support of the application having regard to relevant legislative requirements and local and national planning policy and guidance.

13.7 This AQIA adopts a strategic approach that considers a likely worst-case scenario for impacts to air. As such, the assessment has been carried out for the full development to assess potential impacts on human and ecological receptors, using maximum parameter heights and the illustrative scheme for locations and quantity of generators, and does not consider the sequenced delivery programme set out earlier in this report. The sequenced nature of the development previously described will provide betterment to the results of the dispersion modelling presented in AQIA.

13.8 The following specific assessments have been considered in the scope of the AQIA:

- Assessment of potential air quality impacts during the construction phase (construction dust)
- Assessment of potential air quality impacts from construction and operational traffic in line with the development delivery programme
- Assessment of potential air quality impacts during the operational phase (planned testing and emergency of the diesel generators)
- Identification of mitigation measures (as required).

13.9 The assessment primarily focuses on Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) emissions associated with operational traffic and diesel engine operations at the site. Potential particulate matter (PM) emissions from construction dust and diesel engine operations have also been addressed, with screening assessments undertaken. Sulphur Dioxide (SO2) emissions are not considered to be a material issue since all fuel oil at the site is specified as ultra-low sulphur. The assessment of potential air quality impacts includes emissions both independently and cumulatively with the adjacent Yondr data centre development and seven operated by Equinix within the Slough Trading Estate approximately 2.5 miles north-west of the site, using a total of 122 generators.

13.10 Whilst the AQIA considers both human and ecological related impacts, this section specifically focuses on the former and the section below covering Landscaping, Ecology and Biodiversity details the air quality implications for ecological sensitive receptors.

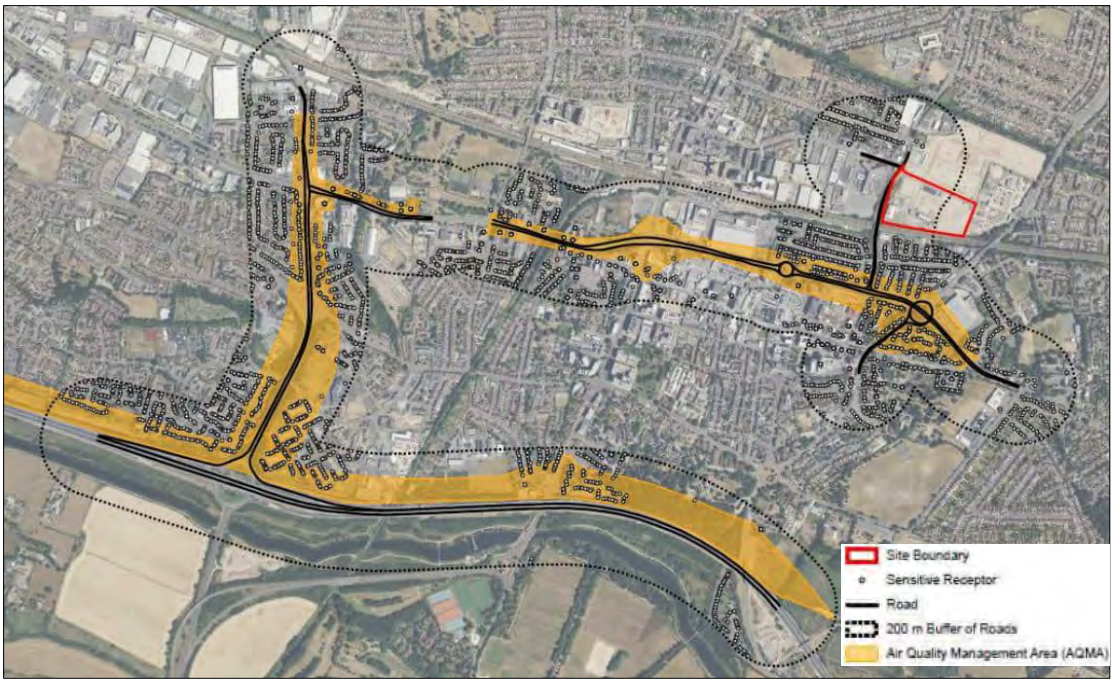
Construction phase

13.11 For the construction phase of the proposed development, the AQIA highlights that pollutants of interest are dust and PM10 (Particulate Matter - fumes, fuels, smoke) due to construction activities and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) from construction traffic.

13.12 A construction dust impact assessment has also been prepared to support the application. The assessment is based on a methodology set out in the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) dust assessment from demolition and construction guidance. A detailed modelling assessment is required where there is a human receptor within:

- 250m of the site boundary; and/or
- 50m of the route(s) used by construction vehicles on the public highway, up to 250m from the site entrance(s)

13.13 There are a number of sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the site including residential properties, commercial premises, and other locations where people are expected to be present.



Human receptors for air quality assessment and AQMAs

13.14 The potential impacts of construction dust from earthworks and build-out during the development of the site have been assessed as per the IAQM guidance. The risk levels of the potential dust impacts on human health of these activities are considered medium to high respectively. Following, however, the application of site-specific mitigation measures, the residual effect is not expected to be significant. The application is supported by an Outline Construction Management Plan (OCMP), which outlines a framework and principles relating to the management of proposed construction works at the site which will come forward in line with the proposed sequencing of the development.

13.15 The OCMP provides detail on site management and monitoring, community liaison, working hours, dust and noise mitigations, vehicular access arrangements and vehicle/machine emission standards. More specifically, and as conditioned, a Construction Management Plan (CMP) will come forward with each Reserved Matters submission setting out all the necessary mitigation measures to ensure the development is managed appropriately, safeguards air quality and minimises disturbance/nuisance generally.

13.16 The assessment of expected construction is based upon the analysis reported in the Transport Assessment (TA) submitted as part of the planning application. The traffic assessment within the TA assumes all traffic generated by the site is travelling to and from it including construction and operational traffic. The assessment assumes a phased approach in which each of the main buildings (data halls - LD15, LD16 and LD17) are constructed separately and when completed are operated in conjunction with the next phase of construction for each subsequent building according to the delivery programme. The final phase is when the entire site is in operation.

13.17 Applying the IAQM screening criteria, detailed modelling was carried out to assess potential air emission impacts from expected operational and construction traffic through the road network. The modelling has been based on four scenarios taking into account the phased delivery of the 3 data halls and measured against a 'Base' case scenario representing traffic levels on the existing road network in 2024. This 'Base' case has been informed by the highway modelling undertaken as part of planning permission P/00072/096 for the comprehensive redevelopment of the wider site including commercial and residential uses.

13.18 An Equinix data centre in the Trading Estate (LD14), currently under construction has been used to provide indicative vehicular movement data and both HDVs and LDVs (Heavy and Light Duty Vehicles) have been considered. The scenarios as are follows:

- Scenario 1 – Building 1 (LD15) under construction
- Scenario 2 – Building 1 (LD15) in operation and Building 2 (LD16) under construction
- Scenario 3 – Building 1 (LD15) and 2 (LD16) in operation, Building 3 (LD17) under construction
- Scenario 4 – Building 1, 2 and 3 in operation (LD15, LD16 and LD17).

13.19 The AQIA outlines the difference in vehicle movements in Annual average daily traffic (AADT) between the baseline and each scenario, split by LDV and HDV. A number of roads within or adjacent to the AQMA were screened in due to exceeding IAQM thresholds and were considered in the detailed assessment. The assessment results however indicate that the air quality impacts from vehicular traffic are low for all scenarios (maximum NO2 increase of 0.01ug/m^3 in Scenario 3) and is therefore considered negligible. The Assessment also confirms that additional cumulative impacts taking into account the results from the adjacent Yondr development are also expected to be negligible.

13.20 The Applicant has stated that no contractors have been appointed to deliver any of proposed development Consequently, it is proposed that full details of the impact of future construction traffic (including dust) and proposed mitigation will come forward with each Reserved Matter submission via the Construction Management Plans (CMP). As indicated by the Outline Construction Management Plan (OCMP), these will provide details in relation to the management and monitoring of the site and works, community liaison, working hours, dust and noise mitigations measures, vehicle/machine emission standards and vehicle routing and access.

13.21 The AQIA demonstrates that, with appropriate mitigation, the construction impact of the proposed development would not be significant in relation to sensitive receptors, namely nearby residents and non-residential occupiers, nor would adversely affect air quality more widely.

Operational phase

13.22 A detailed air dispersion modelling study has been carried out to assess the potential impacts on air quality from the proposed generator testing and emergency outage scenarios. Generator testing/use is associated with exhaust emissions (primarily NOx, NO, NO2 and PM10) from the diesel engines driving the generators.

13.23 Eighty-one diesel backup generators are proposed to be installed as part of the development to provide emergency power to the data centre in the event of a grid supply failure. Twenty-three generators will be installed at the west building (LD15), thirty generators will be installed at the central building (LD16) and twenty generators will be installed at the east building (LD17).

13.24 The engines will not be used to routinely provide power but will be regularly tested to ensure that they are capable of reliably fulfilling the back-up supply requirements. The following testing regime is envisaged and is the basis of the impact assessment:

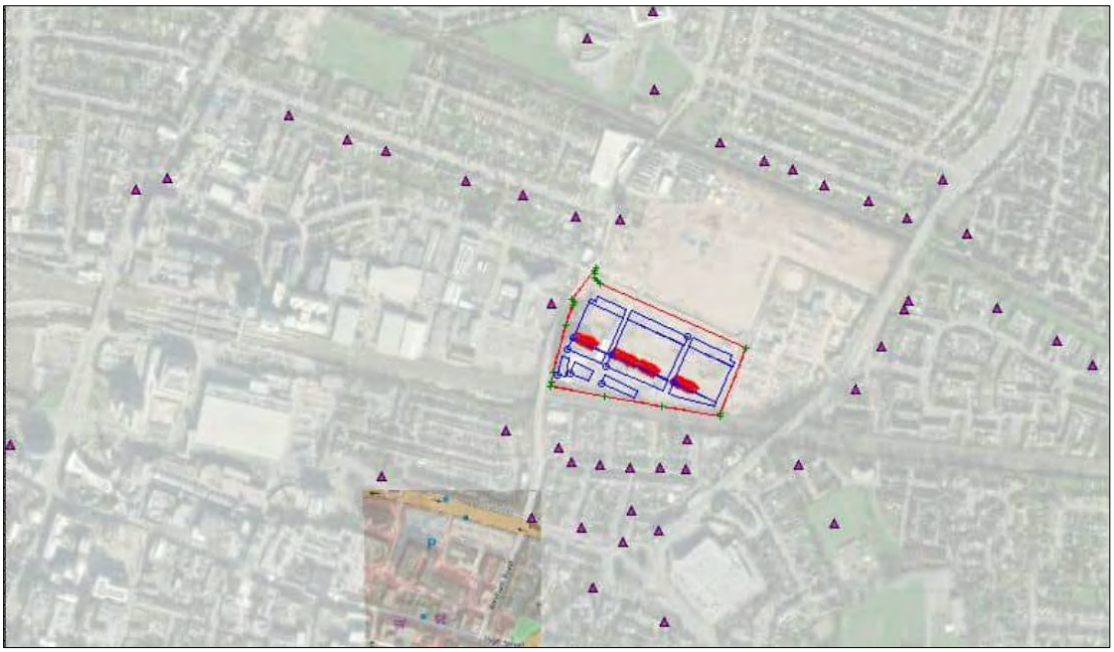
- Operational testing regime (all tests);
- Emergency outage scenario (1 hour); and
- Emergency outage scenario (72 hours)

Regime	Frequency	Duration	Number of Engines	Load
Testing Regime – All tests				
Off Load test	Monthly	5 minutes per generator	One engine after the other	No electrical load. Modelled as 30% load.
Load Bank Test	Monthly	30 minutes per generator	One engine after the other	100%
	Quarterly (Q1, Q2, Q3) [a]	1 hour per generator	One engine after the other	100%
	Annually (Q4)	2 hours per generator	One engine after the other	100%
Building Load Test	Annually	1 hour all generators together	All engines within the same building at once	78%
Emergency Outage Scenario				
Emergency outage scenario	Unpredictable, infrequent	1 hour	All engines together	60% [c]
		72 hour		

Proposed generator operating regime

13.25 The Applicant proposes to install Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) systems on all 81 generators. SCR is an advanced emissions control technology used to reduce nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions in various applications, including diesel engines and power plants.

13.26 The screening assessment for the potential PM10 emissions from the generator operation measured the 24-hour PM10 AQS of 50 µg/m3 (microgram / cubic meter), and the 2028 interim target33 for PM2.5 of 12 µg/m3 as an annual Mean, based on the Slough Borough Council Air Quality Action Plan (2024 – 2028) and The Environmental Targets (Fine Particulate Matter) (England) Regulations 2023. For PM2.5 the screening test considers the combined annual mean impact from the proposed testing regime highlighted above. PM2.5 emissions are assumed identical to PM10, the results can therefore be considered as a reasonable worst case (for most combustion processes PM10 consists for a large part of PM2.5).



Air emission source and modelled human receptors map

13.27 The assessment concluded that is not expected to be breached under any testing regime or a one-hour emergency outage scenario. During a 72-hour emergency outage, however, the 24-hour PM10 AQS of 50 µg/m3 is modelled to be exceeded. As the standard allows for 35 days of exceedance in a year, the daily PM10 standard would not actually be breached unless the modelled emissions were sustained for an outage of at least 35 days a year, which is considered unlikely in practice by the Applicant as major, sustained power outages are uncommon in UK urban areas.

13.28 For the potential PM2.5 emissions from the generator operation, the assessment concluded that the annual PM2.5 AQS of 12 µg/m3 (as per the Council's Air Quality Action Plan) is not expected to be exceeded under the planned regime or a 72-hour emergency outage scenario. During a 72-hour emergency outage, the annual PM2.5 impact may be minor following the IAQM criteria for planning.

13.29 The results of the modelling of the potential NOx emissions from the planned generator testing were as follows:

- The maximum 1-hour NO2 PEC was modelled to exceed the 1-hour NO2 AQS of 200 µg/m3 at some modelled receptors, but only for the Annual Building Load test at LD16 or LD17. The modelled impacts were therefore considered to be potentially significant according to the EA permitting guidance for this test. The same results for the Annual Building Load test were considered a 'substantial' impact for NO2 at local sensitive receptors according to the IAQM Planning Criteria. These test results however, should be considered in context of other key factors and results, including mitigating circumstances namely:
  - the load test is only planned to occur once per year for one hour, therefore a breach of the 1-hour AQS (i.e. more than 18 hourly exceedances per year) cannot occur as the maximum number of exceedances is at most two (one for LD16 and one for LD17), and the

results for the 19th highest hourly value indicate that even if the emissions associated with the Annual Building Load test to occur continuously all year (i.e. 24/7), a breach of the 1-hour NO2 AQS is still not predicted;
    - at LD15, the PEC (Predicted Environmental Concentration of a substance) for the Annual Building Load test was not modelled to exceed the 1-hour NO2 AQS. The modelled impacts are not considered to be significant according to the EA permitting guidance for this test at LD15.
    - the maximum 1-hour NO2 PEC was not modelled to exceed the 1-hour NO2 AQS of 200 µg/m3 at any of the modelled receptors for any of the other planned tests. The potential modelled impacts for these tests were therefore not considered to be significant according to the EA permitting guidance. The same results for these tests were considered a 'negligible' impact for at local sensitive receptors according to the IAQM Planning Criteria;
    - modelling did not suggest any exceedance of the Acute Exposure Guideline Levels (AEGL) guidelines. The Annual Building Load test resulted in the highest modelled impact within the proposed testing regime, with a maximum PC of 64% relative to the 10-minute AEGL-1 threshold at the sensitive discrete receptors;
    - in accordance with EA guidance, the air dispersion modelling conservatively used the least favourable meteorological data from a five-year reference period. Actual concentrations at receptors were typically expected to be less than modelled as dispersion conditions are normally expected to be more favourable than those for which modelled results were presented in the AQIA;
    - the modelling results reflected the proposed fitment of SCR to all generators, which would substantially reduce NO2 emissions by comparison with unmitigated engines similarly operated.
- Two emergency outage scenarios were modelled, a 1-hour scenario which was considered unlikely to occur in practice and a 72-hour scenario which is considered highly unlikely. In both scenarios, an exceedance of the 1-hour NO2 AQS was modelled to occur. Whether the standard would actually be breached would depend on the duration of emergency operations, noting that 18 hourly exceedances were allowed in any one year, and also on the prevailing meteorological conditions, again noting these were conservatively modelled. For the 1-hour scenario, this would require 19 outage events, which is considered very unlikely in a year. Total outage time up to 72 hours a year is even less likely and therefore the risk of breaching the 1-hour AQS during emergency operation is considered very low;
- Modelled annual impacts of the testing regime and emergency outage scenarios at the site are not considered significant;
- The likely cumulative impacts of the site with the adjacent Yondr development and the Equinix existing data centres on human health are considered low.

13.30 The proposed data centre will require an EP under the permitting regulations as indicated earlier. The EP will separately regulate the operation of the Site and environmental emissions, including those relating to air quality. The EP application will include evidence of operational techniques to control emissions to air so as to be

protective of human health and the environment. The Applicant will also seek to align operations with Best Available Techniques (BAT), as per the Environment Agency's (EA) data centre technical operating guidance (Data Centre FAQ Headline Approach Document Nov 2022) and has initiated pre-application consultation for the Environmental Permit requirements and application.

13.31 It should be noted, as highlighted elsewhere in this report that developments of this nature are required to mitigate their impact on traffic and seek to promote sustainable transport where possible. The Travel Plan and Sustainability Statement accompanying the application, state that the proposed development will provide electric vehicle charging points, cycle parking and variety of other measures to encourage sustainable travel, reduce car trips and safeguard air quality.

13.32 Additionally, green infrastructure such as trees, and landscaping will be included in the design of the scheme, which can have a beneficial impact on air quality as it can form a physical barrier between pollution source and receptor.

13.33 The Council's Environmental Services officers have carefully reviewed the updated AQIA and consider its approach and conclusions acceptable. Subject to appropriate mitigation the proposed development would not have a significant nor adverse impact on air quality on-site or in in the surrounding area.

13.34 Based on the assessment above, and subject to conditions and informatives, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the requirements of national and local planning policy and guidance regarding air quality.

13.35 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

14.0 **Noise**

14.1 The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In particular, they should reduce to a minimum potential adverse impact resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life. health and the quality of life. This is reflected in Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy and Local Plan Policies EN1 and EMP2.

14.2 Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy states that development shall not give rise to unacceptable levels of pollution including noise. It also highlights that proposals should not be located in noisy environments unless the development incorporates appropriate mitigation measures to limit the adverse effects on occupiers and other appropriate receptors.

- Assessment:

14.3 A Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment (NVIA) has been submitted with the application which assesses the potential impact of noise and vibration from the proposed development on the surrounding area and identifies necessary mitigation. As with the AQIA, described above, the NVIA considers the Illustrative Scheme presented in the planning application which may be subject to change at Reserved Matters stage, including mitigation measures to be employed during detailed design

14.4 The assessment was carried out in general accordance with relevant national and local legislation, planning policy and guidance and considers potential noise emissions from the site, both independently and cumulatively with the adjacent Yondr data centre development. The following assessments formed part of scope of the NVIA:

- Construction noise and vibration;
- Operational noise; and
- Off-site road traffic noise during the construction and operational phase, including cumulative noise with the Yondr development and a combination of construction and operational off-site traffic.

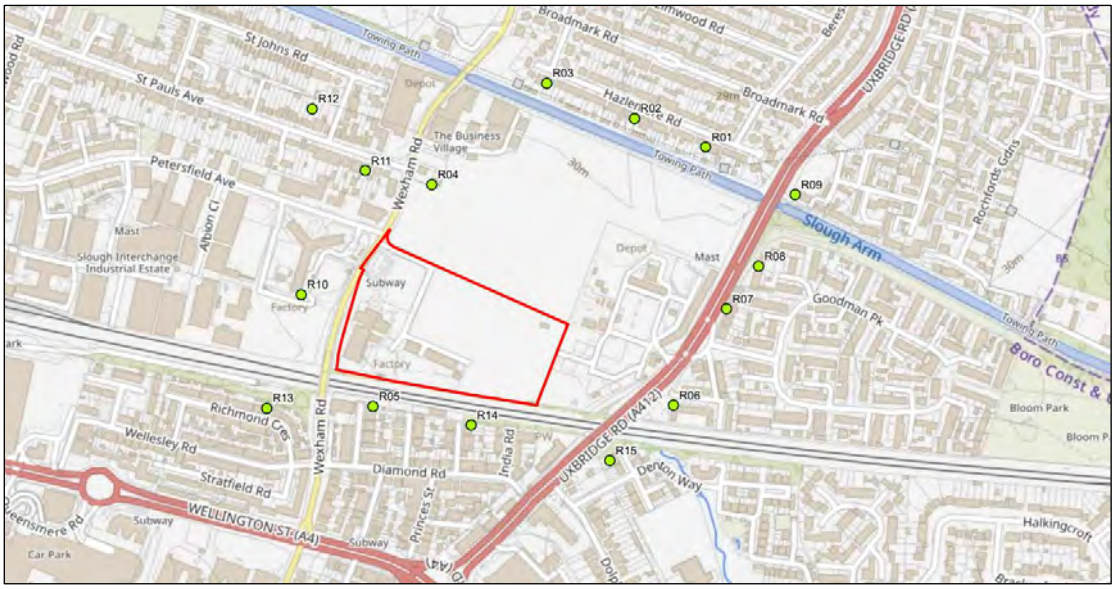
14.5 As with the AQIA, the NVIA adopts a strategic approach that considers a likely worst-case scenario for impacts to surrounding noise and vibration sensitive receptors. As such, the assessment has been carried out to assess potential impacts on human receptors from both construction and operation in Stage 2 and for the full development in Stage 4 of the delivery programme as described earlier in this report. The assessment uses the maximum Parameter Plan heights and relevant elements of the illustrative scheme such as type and location of key plant equipment.

14.6 The acceptability of potential noise pollution levels has been determined having regard to several factors, including potential impact to human health and amenity, the proximity of sensitive uses, existing pollution levels and relevant receptors.

14.7 The NVIA highlights that the surrounding area is of mixed use, bounded by A-roads to the east and west and the mainline railway between Slough and Langley to the south. Directly to the north lies the site of two data centres which are currently nearing completion.

14.8 The key receptors for the assessment include the surrounding residential properties and offices within the industrial estate to the west of the site.

14.9 Background noise levels measured at nine locations in 2019 to support the previous outline planning permission (P/00072/096) have been used the basis for the AQIA, in addition to six additional locations in the surrounding area, as shown in the map below.



Baseline noise level locations

Construction phase

14.10 The main noise generating activities associated with the construction phase are identified as earthworks and foundations, the erection of the building frames, the provision of the roads/parking areas and construction traffic both on and off-site. The items of equipment required during construction that are expected to result in the highest levels of vibration relate to bored piling and the use of vibratory rollers during road/carpark construction. The Assessment assumes Stages 2 - 4 are built at the same time as this would result in the highest quantity of construction plant being used simultaneously.

14.11 Changes in noise levels resulting from the expected road traffic due to construction and operation have been calculated using established methodology from the Department of Transport - Calculation of Road Traffic Noise (CRTN). The calculations use Annual Average Weekday Traffic (AAWT) flows provided by the analysis in the Transport Assessment submitted. The approach, as with air quality, has also been informed Equinix's LD14 data centre site which is currently under construction on the Slough Trading Estate.

14.12 Construction is not expected to take place at the same time as construction of the Yondr development, so no cumulative impacts from construction activities are expected during these stages of development.

14.13 Construction noise and vibration levels have been assessed using the relevant British Standards (BS) which refer to the need for protection against noise and vibration of persons living and working in the vicinity of and those working on construction and open sites. They recommend procedures for noise and vibration control in respect of construction activities. The Standards categorise the magnitude of predicted impacts in terms on being Negligible, Small, Medium and Large and their likely significance of effect as either Not significant or Significant.

14.14 The results of the AQIA show that modelled construction noise levels would not exceed the applicable criteria at any noise sensitive receptor, resulting in Negligible to Small magnitude impacts which are considered to be Not Significant in accordance with relevant guidance. Modelling of vibration during construction demonstrates that there would be Negligible magnitude impact which is also considered to be Not Significant.

14.15 In relation to the combined potential construction and operational impacts on-site, noise from the operation of Stage 2 has been modelled to be more than 10 dB lower than the modelled construction noise level for Stage 4. Therefore, operational noise is not expected to significantly increase the modelled construction noise level and so cumulative effects are expected to be Negligible which is again considered to be Not Significant.

14.16 The increase in road traffic noise during the construction (and operational) phases, including cumulative traffic with the Yondr development has been modelled at less than 1 dB on all road links which is a Negligible magnitude impact, and is therefore considered to be Not Significant.

14.17 As noted above in the Air Quality section, the Applicant has stated that no contractors have been appointed to deliver any of proposed development. It is proposed therefore that full details of the impact of future construction activities and proposed mitigation will come forward with each Reserved Matter submission via the Construction Management Plans (CMP). As indicated by the Outline Construction Management Plan (OCMP) and in respect to noise specifically, these will provide details in relation to the management and monitoring of the site and works, community liaison, working hours, types of machinery, noise mitigation measures, vehicle routing and access.

14.18 Best Practicable Means (BPM) as defined by The Control of Pollution Act 1974 (CoPA) and the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA), will also be applied to construction activities to minimise noise and vibration at neighbouring residential properties and other sensitive receptors. BPM measures will be detailed in the CEMPs.

Operational Phase

14.19 In relation to the operational phase, the NVIA has considered the expected dominant noise sources and noise reduction techniques, including application of noise attenuation measures where modelling suggested these may be required.

14.20 The NVIA considers the illustrative Scheme as presented in the planning application. It has modelled noise impact in relation to traffic and equipment associated with the data centre once operational against the relevant British Standards (BS), in addition to cumulative noise levels with the adjoining Yondr data centre. The generator testing regime and emergency operation modelling reflects that highlighted above in relation to the air-quality assessment.

14.21 The key items of noise emitting equipment include the back-up generators, sub-station and rooftop plant, namely air-cooled chillers, variable refrigerant flow units and air handling units. During normal operation, all equipment other than the generators will operate continuously. A temporary substation will be used to provide power to the proposed development during Stage 2. The temporary substation is anticipated to be smaller and quieter than the permanent substation which will only operate during Stage 3 and 4.

Proposed noise emitting equipment

14.22 It should be noted that the previously approved mixed-use redevelopment (P/00072/096), required noise rating levels at the site to be no higher than 2 dB above background noise, and 55 dB LAeq (continuous sound), 1 hr during day and 45 dB LAeq, 1hr at night. At the request of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), these requirements have been considered in the current proposals.

14.23 Allowance for various mitigation measures has been included in the indicative design to reduce noise, to seek to ensure that the modelled noise emissions from the proposed data centre can be sufficiently reduced to avoid exceedances. Mitigation measures include use of low noise equipment models, acoustic louvres to reduce internal noise breakout from the temporary and main electrical substations and enhanced acoustic enclosures for the air-cooled chillers and generators.

14.24 At Stage 4, and following completion of the development, during normal operation and during load bank testing (a procedure which works by placing an artificial or dummy load on the generator), the modelled rating level did not exceed the background sound level by more than 2 dB (the level required for the previously approved scheme) at any noise sensitive receptors during the day or night. Load Bank testing has been assessed as it represents the most intense testing that will be carried out frequently (monthly). The modelled rating levels resulted in Negligible to Small impact magnitudes, which are not significant. Modelled noise levels during operation of Stage 2 are no higher than during Stage 4, therefore effects during Stage 2 are considered Not Significant.

14.25 Exceedances of the background sound level have been modelled during emergency use of the generators, particularly if it occurs at night. However, as this situation is unlikely to occur in practice, the NVIA highlights that this is considered to be Not Significant. Following a review of information from five Equinix sites in Slough for the last 5 years (2020-2024), Equinix has advised that generator annual operations in an emergency scenario i.e. unplanned power outage were a total of eight hours over the five-year period. The eight hours were split across two separate power outages. This is based on the information Equinix collates and submits to the EA on an annual basis.

14.26 The indicative design of the proposed development implements Best Practicable Means (BPM) by including robust mitigation measures to minimise residual effects so that they are considered to be Not Significant.

14.27 In relation to the potential cumulative effect with the Yondr data centre facility during the operational phase, the NVIA shows that in three residential locations around the site noise levels were higher than the required +2 dB level at night, as conditioned in the previous consent for the site. At locations R02 and R04 to the north of the site, as shown in the Baseline noise level locations map above, noise levels exceeded this limit due to the modelled results for the Yondr development exceeding the 2 dB criterion in isolation. It should be noted that the Yondr facility is closer to these receptors. The levels however remained below 5 dB above background which the British Standard (BS) considers not to cause an adverse effect. The NVIA considers therefore the impact is Small in magnitude and Not Significant.

14.28 At the third location, R07 there was a 5 dB modelled cumulative noise exceedance, which again was attributable to the Yondr development exceeding the background noise levels in isolation. The modelling noise levels from the proposed development were 10 dB below the modelled noise levels from the Yondr development. This means that the modelled cumulative noise exceedance remained at 5dB above background BS, which considers a noise level of 5 dB or below not to cause an adverse effect and therefore, the impact is considered Small in magnitude and Not Significant.

14.29 The increase in road traffic noise during the construction and operational phases, including cumulative traffic with Yondr is modelled to be less than 1 dB on all road links which is a Negligible magnitude impact, and is therefore considered to be Not Significant.

14.30 Overall, the NVIA concludes that expected noise from the construction of the proposed development and its operation has been considered alongside the existing background noise from the Yondr data centre facility, the railway and local urban noise. At each juncture while audible noise will be created it has been assessed to be below both national and locally recognised levels for an urban area. In these circumstances the AQIA states that noise from the construction of the development and its operation are not considered likely to cause unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance, in accordance with national and local planning policy and guidance.

14.31 The Council's Environmental Services officers have carefully reviewed the updated NVIA and consider its approach and conclusions acceptable. Subject to appropriate mitigation the proposed development would not have a significant nor adverse impact in relation to noise levels on-site or in in the surrounding area.

14.32 Based on the above assessment, and subject to conditions and informatives, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and compliant with national and local planning policy and guidance in respect to noise impact.

14.33 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

15.0 **Landscaping, ecology and biodiversity**

Landscaping:

15.1 The NPPF Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.

15.2 This approach is reflected in Core Policy 8 of Slough's Core Strategy and Adopted Local Plan Policies EN1 and EMP2 which emphasise the need for high standard of design and for development proposals to be compatible with and / or improve their surroundings.

- Assessment:

15.3 The application proposes a comprehensive landscaping strategy having regard to the nature of the site and data centre development, visual amenity and ecological interest. The landscaping proposals are presented in outline via the Parameter Plans, Illustrative scheme, DAS and Design Code to establish a number of key principles in relation to it location, form and structure. The detailed landscaping treatment will come forward for consideration as part of the Reserved Matters application alongside the detailed design of the data centre.

15.4 The indicative landscaping strategy seeks to ensure the external treatment of site is appropriate and enhances the setting of the data centre and its relationship with the surrounding area. Specifically, as highlighted in the Parameter Plans, it proposes significant areas of planting around the perimeter of the site, in addition to making provision for the greening of the buildings to soften and create interesting and varied views along Technology Boulevard, Wexham Road, and from the residential areas to the south across the railway.

15.5 As set out in the DAS and Design Code, the strategy provides a planting palette including native trees, mixed species scrub, ornamental and neutral grassland that will develop into robust and varied habitats that also achieves Biodiversity Net Gain targets and contributes to sustainable urban drainage. The strategy prioritises native species with the management of these vegetation types outlined within a Landscape

and Ecology Maintenance Management Plan (LEMMP) which also supports the application.

15.6 The external treatment of the site also considers hard surfaced areas including amenity/break-out space and seating for employees and visitors, vehicular and pedestrian access routes, car and cycle parking and security measures such as fencing, CCTV, and lighting.

15.7 In addition, it should be noted as highlighted previously, that the application will secure a financial contribution towards public realm and landscaping improvements in the surrounding area. This contribution will be used by the Council in seeking to mitigate soften the visual impact of the development and enhance its setting, create and improve 'Green and Blue Routes and Infrastructure' in the vicinity of the site, support town centre gateway projects and secure a more attractive, green and useable local environment longer-term.

Ecology:

15.8 In accordance with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to show regard for conserving biodiversity in the exercise of all public functions.

15.9 The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and require development to minimise impacts on and providing net gains in biodiversity.

15.10 Core Policy 9 relates to the natural environment and similarly requires new development to preserve and enhance natural habitats and the biodiversity of the Borough.

15.11 Under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitats Regulations) it is necessary to consider whether the proposed project may have significant effects upon areas of nature conservation importance designated/classified under the Directives (Habitats Sites). In this case the proposed development is within a 5.6 Km buffer zone of Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation (SAC) located to the northwest of Slough outside the borough boundary.

15.12 The Habitats Regulations place a duty upon 'Competent Authorities' i.e. Slough Borough Council to consider the potential for effects upon 'Habitats Sites' (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Ramsar) prior to granting consent for projects or plans.

15.13 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) recently became mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met

("the biodiversity gain condition"). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat.

- Assessment:

15.14 The proposed development seeks to significantly improve ecology and biodiversity on-site, as part of a comprehensive landscaping strategy to provide appropriate greening, screening and sustainable urban drainage measures. It also seeks to minimise impacts on ecological interest in the wider area.

15.15 An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy and Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) have been submitted with the application. These assessments consider the impacts of the development on ecology and nature conservation both on and off-site and set out appropriate mitigation and/or enhancement/betterment measures. Other technical documents submitted and relevant to ecology include an Arboricultural Method Statement, Noise Assessment, Transport Assessment and Outline Construction Management Plan.

15.16 The EcIA has been informed by the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy and AQIA and a number of baseline surveys including a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, an updated habitat survey and bat and badger surveys. Its scope encompasses statutory and non-statutory designated sites within 5 km of the site boundary and records for protected and noteworthy species within a 2 km. This approach follows established guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), taking into consideration various factors including the important ecological features within the site and the surrounding area, activities occurring during the construction and operation phases of the proposed development and the surrounding designated sites and their ecological interest.

15.17 The application site does is not covered by any designations and not overlap with any designated areas. The majority of designated sites are close to 5km away; however, three local nature reserves, two Biological Notification Sites and one B-line site (insect pathways) are within 2km of the site.

15.18 There are 15 designated sites within 5km of the site including:

- Southwest London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site, 4.9km southeast
- Black Park Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 4km northeast
- Stoke Common SSSI 4.6km northeast
- Littleworth Common SSSI 3 km northwest
- Burnham Beeches National Nature Reserve (NNR), 5km northwest
- Bray to Elton Meadows and Pits Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) 1km southwest
- South Bucks Heaths and Parklands BOA, 1.4km north
- Cocksherd Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR), 2.5km west
- Herschel Park LNR, 1.1 km south

- Haymill Valley LNR, 4.2 km west
- Black Park LNR, 2.8 km north
- St Mary's Churchyard Wrexham Biological Notification Site, 1.4 km northeast
- Railway Triangle (Of Court Park Stranraer Gardens)
- Local Wildlife Site (LWS), 1.1km east
- Upland Court Park LWS, 1.4km south
- Langley Park Biological Notification Site, 1.9km northeast

15.19 At the time of the survey work, the application site comprised predominantly hardstanding and bare ground, with areas of poor semi-improved grassland, scrub and short ephemeral vegetation. It also featured a number of scattered trees and a row of conifers on its western boundary. Several disused commercial and industrial buildings then present on-site have been demolished and the land has now been comprehensively cleared under a separate planning permission (ref: P/00072/128), approved last year for de-contamination and enabling works. Whilst there are currently no trees on-site, broadleaved trees exist outside of southern border within Network Rail owned land.

15.20 The site was assessed for its suitability for protected and notable species and habitats for its potential suitability for the protected animals that are likely to occur in the area including badgers, bats and breeding birds.

15.21 The EcIA highlights that the habitats on-site are common and widespread, as are the flora species. The dominant habitat types were 'Urban' habitats including developed land; sealed surface, built linear features and artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface. Other habitats included modified grassland, mixed scrub, sparsely vegetated land and the individual and line of trees, mentioned above.

15.22 The Assessment confirms that there was no evidence of roosting or hibernating bats recorded on-site, and it is characterised as 'low' suitability for commuting and foraging bats. It also confirms that there was also no evidence of badgers recorded on-site or in and around the rail embankment. In relation to birds, the EcIA an incidental sighting of a pair of little ringed plover was recorded in the eastern part of the site although no evidence of a nest was seen, it is likely that this was a breeding pair as this species are breeding migrants to the UK. The applicant has confirmed that during the decontamination and enabling works, regular Ecological Clerk of Work (ECoW) visits took place to help prevent adverse impacts on sensitive receptors including little ringed plover.

15.23 The EcIA states that all habitats on-site will be lost as a result of the development but that no irreplaceable habitats or habitats of international or national value have been recorded on-site. It adds that the scrub and trees that were on-site were habitats of local value and that the remaining habitats are of low and very low distinctiveness.

15.24 Habitat creation measures as explained in the EcIA are outlined within a Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy. This Strategy and Illustrative Landscape Scheme present the proposed habitat creation on-site, with the aim of achieving at least a 10% biodiversity gain. Habitats of medium distinctiveness proposed include mixed scrub,

trees and other neutral grassland. Other measures which will support the achievement of biodiversity net gain on-site include the creation of green walls and green roofs, rain gardens, an area of modified grassland and reinforced grass surfacing for access routes/car parking areas. Linear habitats are also proposed within the landscape plan increasing the length from that of the baseline and of higher distinctiveness and condition than the one line of coniferous trees previously present.

15.25 The Landscape and Ecology Maintenance Management Plan (LEMMP) will provide a long-term framework for the management and maintenance of the soft landscaped areas and habitats, assuming a minimum 30-year management period to reflect the requirements for BNG under the Environment Act. The Plan sets out management responsibilities, management and maintenance objectives, target habitat conditions and specific management prescriptions for landscape components during the establishment period. Beyond the establishment period, this Plan will serve as a guide that can be updated for the future maintenance, monitoring and management of the site in the long-term. In summary therefore, the proposed landscaping treatment will provide a wider diversity of habitats, a larger area of medium distinctiveness habitats and a longer length of linear habitats and as such, the proposed development is considered to have a significant beneficial effect on habitats in the long-term.

15.26 In respect to Protected species specifically, as highlighted above, whilst the site is considered suitable for badgers, no badgers or badger signs were found during the surveys. Similarly, no hibernating nor roosting bats were found, and only low levels of bat activity were recorded, therefore no significant adverse effects on bats are predicted.

15.27 Detailed Construction Environment Management Plans (CEMP) are conditioned and will be prepared during the Reserved Matter stages. These will include appropriate working methods and monitoring to prevent harm to badgers and protect nesting birds and foraging/commuting bats with ecological measures developed by a qualified ecologist and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

15.28 The Illustrative Landscape Scheme included in the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy incorporates areas and lines trees, hedgerows and scrub which will provide foraging/commuting habitat for bats and nesting opportunities for birds. These features, in addition to the proposed green roofs, green walls, rain gardens and neutral grassland will also attract a variety of invertebrates and small mammals such as hedgehogs, which will in turn further benefit bird and bat habitats. Lighting will be conditioned and implemented to prevent disturbance and minimise light spillage on suitable foraging and commuting areas that are existing or proposed.

15.29 In relation to off-site impacts, measures will be implemented to protect the scattered trees and any associated habitat within Network Rail land to the south of the site during construction works and beyond. Due to the distance of the designated sites, highlighted earlier, and the nature and extent of the development, these sites are not

expected as confirmed in the EcIA, to be affected as there is no identified pathway for significant effect (e.g. air emissions, surface or ground water connectivity).

15.30 Given the former use of the site and the nature of the proposals (i.e. commercial/industrial) and the surrounding habitats (i.e. commercial/residential), consideration of air quality impacts has not been triggered through the EcIA. As well as their potential to impact on human health, some air pollutants have long been acknowledged to have effects on vegetation and freshwater systems. Whilst direct impacts of air pollutants on fauna are less common, any such effect on the health of vegetation or freshwater systems can then affect animal species that are dependent on the vegetation.

15.31 The Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) submitted considers specifically the construction and operational air quality impacts of the proposed development on identified ecological sites in the surrounding area. As per Environment Agency guidance, protected conservation areas within 10 km of the Site for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Ramsar sites and within 2 km for Local Nature Reserves (LNR), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) were included in the impact assessment.

15.32 The following ecological designated sites have been included based on Natural England mapping guidance:

- Haymill Valley (LNR)
- Cocksherd Wood (LNR)
- Windsor Forest & Great Park (SAC)
- South West London Waterbodies (SPA & Ramsar)
- Wraysbury Gravel Pit No 1 (SSSI)
- BlackPark (SSSI)
- Wraysbury Reservoir (SSSI)
- Staines Moor (SSSI)
- Stoke Common (SSSI)
- Burnham Beeches (SAC)
- Haymill Valley (LNR)

15.33 The assessment of potential air quality impacts includes emissions to air from the site both independently and cumulatively with the adjacent Yondr development and the existing data centres operated by Equinix within the Slough Trading Estate. The Yondr development, situated immediately north of the site will comprise three data centres once fully developed with an associated substation. The Slough Trading Estate is located approximately 2.5 miles north-west of the site and accommodates seven Equinix data centres with a total of 122 generators.

15.34 As highlighted in the Air Quality section above, for the construction phase of the proposed development, the pollutants of interest are dust and as PM10 (Particulate Matter such as dust, pollen and smoke) due to construction activities and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) from construction traffic. For the operational phase potential emissions of NO2, NOx and PM10 from the operation of the generators as well as potential emissions of NO2 from operational traffic have been considered. Potential human

health impacts are associated with NO2 whilst ecological impacts are associated with NOx and NH3 (and by association nutrient nitrogen and acid deposition).

15.35 Eighty-one diesel bac-kup generators are proposed to be installed at the site to provide emergency power for the data centres in the event of a grid supply failure. The engines will not be used to routinely provide power but will be regularly tested to ensure that they are capable of reliably fulfilling the backup supply requirements. The following testing regime is envisaged and is the basis of the AQIA:

- Operational testing regime (all tests);
- Emergency outage scenario (1 hour); and
- Emergency outage scenario (72 hours).

15.36 A detailed air dispersion modelling study was carried out to assess the potential impacts on air quality from the proposed generator testing and emergency outage scenarios.

15.37 With reference to the identified ecological designated sites located within 10 km of the site, the modelled potential impacts of ambient 24-hour NOx (Nitric Oxide), ambient annual NOx, nitrogen and acid deposition from the testing regime and emergency outage scenarios of the site are considered insignificant. The likely cumulative impacts of the proposed development with the adjacent Yondr data centres and the existing Equinix data centres on ecology are considered low in the Assessment.

15.38 In relation to construction impacts and operational traffic, the AQIA is based on a methodology set out in the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) which highlights a detailed modelling assessment is required where there is an ecological receptor within:

- 50m of the site boundary; and/or
- 50m of the route(s) used by construction vehicles on the public highway, up to 250m from the site entrance(s).

As the ecological designated sites are over 250m from the receptor search radius, construction and traffic emission impacts were not considered to result in likely significant effects and have not been detailed in the Assessment.

<u>Habitats Regulations Assessment:</u>

15.39 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required to determine if a plan or project may affect the protected features of a European designated ecological site. European sites protected by the Habitats Regulations include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA), and Proposed SACs, Potential SPAs, and Ramsar sites (wetland).

- Assessment:

15.40 The amended application has been supported by a HRA Stage 1 Screening report which sets out the European sites included in the assessment, the habitats and

species that have been screened out, potential effects and the screening for any likely significant effects on the sites.

15.41 As per Environment Agency guidance, protected conservation areas within 10 km of the development were identified in the impact assessment and include:

- Burnham Beeches (SAC);
- Windsor Forest & Great Park (SAC); and
- South West London Waterbodies (SPA & Ramsar)

15.42 The HRA addresses specifically air quality impacts from the proposed development on European sites and Ramsar sites. No other impact pathways were identified with potential to affect the sites. The Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) submitted with the application assessed anticipated construction and operation air quality related impacts of the proposed development on ecological receptors. These included the following:

- dust from construction activities and construction traffic;
- vehicle emissions from construction and operation traffic; and
- emissions from the planned testing and emergency use of diesel generators.

15.43 Construction related activities and traffic impact in the AQIA is, as indicated earlier based on a methodology set out in the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) dust assessment from demolition and construction guidance. Given that there are no European sites or Ramsar sites within 250m of the proposed development, with the closest site nearly 5km away, construction dust and traffic emission impacts are not considered likely to result in significant effects on European designated sites and Ramsar sites and have been scoped out of the HRA.

15.44 Based on the nature of the designated site, including qualifying interests, conservation objectives and Site Improvements Plans, the South West London Waterbodies SPA and Ramsar site has been screened out of the HRA. The Conservation Objectives for the features or the Site Improvement Plan or Ramsar information details highlight that there are no issues or threats relating to air pollution. The HRA therefore focusses on air quality impacts in respect to Burnham Beeches SAC and Windsor Forest and Great Park SAC.

15.45 The potential impact of NOx emissions, nitrogen and acid deposition resulting from the diesel testing regime and emergency outage scenarios on the identified ecological designated sites has been assessed in the Air Quality Modelling Assessment within the AQIA. The Assessment has also tested the cumulative impact of the adjacent Yondr data centre being completed and other data centres operated by Equinix in the Slough Trading Estate.

15.46 The AQIA has not identified potential effects on the habitats and species associated with the identified European designated sites and demonstrates that the contributions of nutrient nitrogen, acid deposition and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) are all expected to be insignificant. Accordingly, it concludes that there no likely significant effects on Burnham Beeches or Windsor Forest and Great Park SACs from the proposed development.

15.47 Natural England and Burnham Beeches have been consulted on the application and having considered the HRA and have confirmed that they agree with its findings and therefore raise no objections. Planning Officers are satisfied with the approach adopted by the HRA and the conclusions reached.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

15.48 Under the Environmental Act 2021, it is a requirement for developments of this nature and scale and to provide a 10% net gain in biodiversity.

- Assessment:

15.49 A Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy has been submitted in support of the amended Outline planning application which aims to demonstrate and give assurance that a 10% net gain can be met across the whole site through on-site habitat creation.

15.50 Strategy and based on the Illustrative Landscape Scheme described above, an Overall Biodiversity Gain Plan has been prepared and a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment conducted. This has calculated the expected change in biodiversity units from pre- to post-development to provide an indication of the biodiversity losses / gains that may occur relative to the baseline survey condition, previously highlighted, should the proposed development be implemented.

15.51 For the purposes of the Assessment, BNG provision has assumed a worst-case scenario for habitat creation within the proposed indicative delivery programme i.e. the last year that BNG could be implemented for each stage to consider a worst-case delay in habitat creation.

15.52 Based on the baseline and current landscape proposals and outlined assumptions, the Illustrative Landscape Scheme assessed is expected to result in an overall net gain of approximately 10.61% for habitats and 45.60% for linear habitat. On this basis the BNG legislative requirements will be satisfied. The table below summarises the overall result of the BNG assessment:

Project Stage	Habitat Type	Biodiversity Units
On-site baseline	Habitat units	7.62
	Hedgerow units	0.36
On site post-intervention	Habitat units	8.43
	Hedgerow units	0.52
On site net change	Habitat units	0.81
	Hedgerow units	0.16
On site net % change	Habitat units	10.61%
	Hedgerow units	45.60%

Overall BNG assessment results

15.53 The results of the assessment also demonstrate the potential for the proposed development to deliver the majority of the net gains in the first stage of work (6.48 BU and 0.47 LU). Such 'front loading' of BNG delivery into earlier stages of the project align with DEFRA indicated in their Consultation on Biodiversity Net Gain Regulation and Implementation guidance (January 2023) which states:

"Biodiversity net gain delivery will be tracked on a phase-to-phase basis, including the target percentage gains to be delivered at each stage. For most phased developments, we intend to state in guidance that biodiversity gains should be 'frontloaded' into earlier stages. This will help to avoid the risk of net losses being caused by later stages being delayed or cancelled".

15.53 Each stage of the development will be subject to Reserved Matters applications and be supported by Phased Biodiversity Gain Plans which will set out the stage's contribution to BNG to fit within the overall biodiversity gain objective for the development.

15.54 As indicated earlier, the Landscape and Ecology Maintenance and Management Plan (LEMMP) for the proposed development, will provide a long-term framework (30 years) for the management and maintenance of the soft landscaped areas and associated habitats.

15.55 The application proposes a comprehensive landscaping approach which seeks to provide an appropriate setting for the data centre facility, soften its presence and enhance its relationship with the adjoining area. This is complemented by a financial contribution secured to assist in delivering public realm improvements in key locations around the site. The approach also seeks to provide substantial greening on-site and deliver significant benefits in relation to biodiversity. The application has demonstrated that the proposed development would not adversely impact features and areas of ecological interest on-site and in the surrounding area.

15.56 Based on the above assessment, the proposal is considered to comply with relevant legislative requirements, the National Planning Policy Framework and local planning policy and guidance.

15.57 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

16.0 **Community safety and crime prevention**

16.1 The National Planning Policy Framework highlights that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.

16.2 Core Policy 12 and Policy EN5 of the adopted Local Plan requite all new development to create safe and attractive environments to reduce the potential for criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.in accordance with the recognised best practice for designing out crime.

- Assessment:

16.3 Whilst data centres need high levels of security and have very specific technical design requirements, the layout and design of the proposed development have sought to respond positively to the site and its location, as described earlier, and take a preventative place-making approach to potential criminal and anti-social activities.

16.4 The proposals recognise the importance of place-making and have adopted a number of important principles to ensure the buildings and associated spaces proactively address the sites main street frontages, namely Wexham Road and Technology Boulevard. In particular, the proposed development would present a clear and consistent building line to Technology Boulevard with defined access points, introduce active frontages, feature high-quality materials and lighting and incorporate extensive landscaping treatment to enhance the amenity of this key route and its legibility and useability. In relation to Wexham Road, the proposed data centre is substantially set back, its ground floor level largely below the height of the adjoining highway, and again would feature high-quality external treatment, landscaping and lighting.

16.5 The application, and specifically the DAS and Design Code have been updated to incorporate the comments received from the Thames Valley Designing Out Crime Officer ('DOCO') on the original submission. The revised DAS and Design Code explain that the proposal will incorporate the need for a high level of security in line with the DOCO advice. Specifically, this concerns how the buildings are articulated to improve natural surveillance on Technology Boulevard and where possible on Wexham Road, in addition to landscaping layout and boundary treatment and scale.

16.6 The need for security is intrinsic to the development of data centres and as such, the site will have limited access points which, appropriately gated and monitored and will be secured by perimeter fencing. The fencing will as highlighted previously allow views through, be set back from the boundary and complement the proposed landscaping. The use of appropriate boundary treatment, landscaping, signage and lighting will in reinforcing site ownership and security whilst also presenting a welcoming interface with the adjoining public realm. These physical design elements would allow for a balance between enabling legitimate users and visitors into the area while keeping potential trespassers/intruders out and away from the site.

16.7 Full details of the security measures, associated boundary treatments and landscaping will be submitted as part of the Reserved Matters applications for each building phase in accordance with the Parameter Plans and Design Code.

16.8 Despite the design constraints associated with data centres, and the predominantly commercial/industrial nature of site and its surroundings, the proposed development

seeks to create, in line with policy a higher-quality, greener, more inclusive, and safer environment which enhances the character appearance of the immediate area. In so doing, a greater sense of place should be created, pedestrian and cycling encouraged, natural surveillance improved and opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour and the fear of these, it is hoped reduced.

16.9 Based on the above assessment, it is considered the proposals would accord with Core Policy 12 of the Core Strategy, Local Plan Policy EN5, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to matters concerning community safety and crime prevention.

16.10 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

17.0 **Ground conditions and contaminated land**

17.1 The National Planning Policy Framework requires that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. It goes on to state that a site suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from land instability and contamination and appropriate remediation undertaken where necessary.

17.2 This approach is also reflected in Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy which highlights that development should not cause contamination or a deterioration in land, soil or water quality, or be located on polluted land unless the development incorporates appropriate mitigation measures to limit the adverse effects on occupiers and other appropriate receptors.

- Assessment:

17.3 Part of the site has been treated for decontamination by the previous owners and following approval of an enabling works application last year, the Applicant is completing further decontamination and remediation works on the rest of the site including the demolition of the remaining buildings, the provision of retaining walls and other engineering works to stabilise the ground conditions.

17.4 A detailed technical note has been submitted with the application summarising the history of the site and associated areas, and works undertaken thus far including all geo-environmental reporting and the current condition of the land, in addition to f The note highlights that potential long-term risks to human health of future site users of the data centre associated with residual contamination in the shallow soils / groundwater via direct contact, ingestion and inhalation (of soil particles, ground gases), and potential risks to water supply pipes (via permeation through pipe material) may require risk management. It goes onto state that mitigation measures are expected to be limited to the provision of barrier layers (e.g. clean cover system in areas of soft landscaping, ground gas / vapour protection measures in buildings, appropriate water supply pipe material) to break the potential contaminant pathways

but that no specific soil or groundwater treatment is required. It concludes by noting that upon the successful completion of the risk management works, the site will be suitable for use as a data centre.

17.5 An Outline Construction Management Plan (CMP) has also been provided with the application which similarly details how the site is being prepared, including previously agreed remediation works and outlines a framework and principles relating to management of proposed construction works. The sections briefly concerning excavation, ground stabilisation and foundation works, and levelling refer to the movement of soil on and off the site, which will require further sample analysis and testing before relocation import or removal from site, to ensure its suitability. Given the site history, the soil analysis and categorisation are a necessary step that will inform future stages of development and detailed records of these activities must be kept and collated for future validation.

17.6 The Councils' Contaminated Land officer and the Environment Agency have considered the proposals carefully and raise no objections subject to safeguarding conditions to ensure that the proposed development addresses all land contaminated risks appropriately during its construction and operational phases.

17.7 Based on the above assessment and subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to land contamination and mitigation.

17.8 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

18.0 **Health and safety**

18.1 As indicated throughout this report, national and local planning policy and guidance emphasise the need for all developments to be well-designed, respect and improve the local environment, not cause harm to health, neighbouring amenity and mitigate impact appropriately.

- Assessment:

18.2 The development as described in earlier sections, seeks to optimise the use of the site having regard to the constraints and opportunities its presents, and the nature and character of the surrounding area. Whilst the application is submitted in Outline, it has considered the impact of the proposals and set out how they could be appropriately addressed at detailed design stage. In particular, the approach demonstrates that the proposed development, subject to detailed design considerations and mitigation, will not adversely impact local amenity in respect to noise, air quality, construction activity, contamination nor compromise highway safety.

18.1 In addition, it should be noted that whilst the application site is located close to gas infrastructure, Cadent Gas Ltd which has an operational base next to the site, has been consulted and raise no objections to the proposals.

18.2 The proposed development will accommodate diesel generators and associated fuel tanks requiring refilling as necessary. No objections have been raised from Cadent Gas Ltd or the Environment Agency in this regard. In respect to these and other applications for diesel storage, it should be noted that the applicant will be subject to the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA) and associated legislation. Under sections 2 and 3 of the HSWA, an operator must conduct the undertaking in such a way as to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, employees and other persons, including people living nearby, are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety. This is included as an informative and will be considered further at Reserved Matters application stage when the detailed design of the development is finalised.

18.3 As noted previously, a large sub-station is proposed to the rear of the site to serve the data centre. Whilst, as per the Parameter Plans the sub-station could sit a minimum of 50m away from the nearest residential property across the railway to the south, it will be necessary to ensure that there are no health implications for neighbouring residents. A condition is therefore recommended requiring the submission of an Electromagnetic Fields Assessment to confirm that the sub-station would fall within the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines and therefore have no adverse impact.

18.4 In relation to aircraft safeguarding, the Airport Safeguarding lead at Heathrow Airport has considered the proposals carefully and has raised no objections, subject to safeguarding conditions.

18.5 Based on the above assessment, and subject to the Reserved Matters and other conditions there is no evidence to suggest that the proposals would have unacceptable impacts in relation to health and safety.

18.6 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

19.0 **Flood Risk and drainage**

19.1 The NPPF states that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific Flood-Risk Assessment (FRA). It goes onto to state that applications which could affect drainage on or around the site should incorporate sustainable drainage systems to control flow rates and reduce volumes of runoff, and which are proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. These should provide multifunctional benefits wherever possible, through facilitating improvements in water quality and biodiversity, as well as benefits for amenity.

19.2 Core Policy 8 of The Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy, Development Plan Document states that development must manage surface water arising from the site in a sustainable manner which will also reduce the risk of flooding and improve water quality. Core Policy 10 states that development will only be allowed where there is sufficient existing, planned or committed infrastructure including water, sewerage and drainage and that all new infrastructure must be sustainable. This is also reiterated by Local Plan Policy EN34 (Utility Infrastructure).

- Assessment:

19.3 The application site area exceeds the one-hectare threshold referred to in the NPPF and consequently a Flood Risk Assessment (and Drainage Strategy) has been submitted with the planning application.

19.4 The FRA and Drainage Strategy document sets out the relevant existing hydrology and flooding conditions, provides an assessment of the effects of the development on off-site flooding and of the flood risk on the development and details of the proposals for suitably managing site surface water.

19.5 The document describes the site as covering a generally flat and open permeable area and highlights that there is a culverted watercourse, the Datchet Common Brook, approximately 200m to the east of the site, the Grand Union Canel 350m to the north and approximately 1000m south is The Myrke, a main river.

19.6 The FRA confirms that the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is at no risk from fluvial flooding but is identified as being within an area of very low flood risk and assumes that some water potentially drains off-site and that most flow discharges into the ground at uncontrolled brownfield rates. Following approval of the enabling works as described earlier, temporary drainage basins were installed to manage flows in this temporary condition.

19.7 The Drainage Strategy proposed to utilise the existing surface water sewer serving the Yondr data centre development to the north, to drain the proposed development upon full completion. This sewer is currently undergoing adoption by Thames Water and is owned by the Council.

19.8 Surface water attenuation in the form of below ground cellular storage tanks is proposed, to be introduced in line with the sequenced delivery, for storm events up to 1:100-year return period, inclusive of a climate change allowance of 20%. Only the landscaped areas will infiltrate into the ground, and any surface water runoff will be collected and discharged to the public sewer. During its sequenced delivery, areas yet to be constructed will be drained via infiltration into the ground, due to the low risk of contamination on site.

19.9 Surface water management will be improved with the implementation of a sustainable urban drainage network that collects all surface water run-off from developed areas of the site and connects into the public sewer. This will be provided in accordance with the sequenced delivery of the site. Surface water is to be

discharged at Greenfield run-off rates, in line with the Council's drainage guidance which represents a significant betterment in relation to the former and current condition of the site.

19.10 Any minor groundwater flooding that occurs within the site would not flow off site due to the proposed levels across the site, which have been designed to direct exceedance flows into the soft and hard landscaping areas and away from buildings.

19.11 It should be noted that the amended scheme includes a major change to the cooling strategy which now makes provision for an air-cooled system in place of a water-cooled system. This revised approach reduces water use substantially and effectively eliminates wastewater flows as there will be no wastewater discharge associated with the cooling of the data halls or its ancillary plant.

19.12 The FRA and Drainage Strategy has comprehensively reviewed the potential sources of flooding and concludes that the proposed development, including its sequenced delivery, is considered suitable in terms of impacts on and from the flooding conditions of the area.

19.13 The Council's Flood Risk officer, the Environment Agency and Thames Water have been consulted on the amended planning application and after careful consideration have confirmed that they have no objection to the scheme subject to appropriate conditions and informatives.

19.14 Based on the above assessment, it is considered that there are no flooding and drainage related constraints to the development of the site, and the proposals can be appropriately developed in this location. The proposed drainage arrangements would ensure that the site and development is safe from surface water flooding, significantly improve run-off rates and not increase flooding risk elsewhere. The application is therefore compliant with national and local planning policy and guidance in this regard.

19.15 Neutral weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

20.0 **Economic impact**

20.1 The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

20.2 It goes onto state that planning policies and decisions should also recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes

making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high-technology industries which support the expansion or modernisation of other industries of local, regional or national importance to promote economic growth and resilience.

20.3 The importance of data centres at noted previously, is recognised by their recent designation as Critical National Infrastructure ('CNI'), by the Government. Data Centre infrastructure underpins essential services that are critical to the UK economy and our way of life and will only become more vital as technologies like AI require greater data centre and cloud capacity.

20.4 One of the main aims of the local planning policy outlined in the Core Strategy is to ensure that Slough continues to fulfil its regional role in maintaining a competitive, sustainable and buoyant economy, whilst at the same time providing a diverse range of jobs for local people. Core Policy 5 (Employment) protects Existing Business Areas, such as the former AkzoNobel site against non-employment generating uses and Policy EMP12 (Remaining Existing Business Areas) allows for a range of business developments within the Existing Business Areas

- Assessment:

20.5 Data centres are essential data infrastructure that play a vital role in supporting the rapidly expanding digital economy and emerging technological change. Digitisation in the way people live, work and play has grown exponentially in recent years, with a growing demand for the storage and use of personal and commercial data.

20.6 The development proposed will bring a vacant, accessible and long-standing industrial site back into use ensuring it is better utilised and provide critical data centre facilities to support Slough's changing economy.

20.7 The application is accompanied by a Socio-Economic Benefit Statement which sets out the key socio-economic benefits that would and could be delivered by the proposed development. The assessment is based on commercial information and published research and identifies the value of the data economy at the national and regional level, and its capacity for growth, and the value of data centres in relation to local employment and enterprise.

20.8 The Statement states that the UK is already a major international technology hub and is Equinix's (the Applicant) second largest global market with 14 data centres across Slough, London, and Manchester. It highlights that Equinix have invested over £1 billion into the UK and employ approximately 1,200 people in the UK with many of coming from the local areas including a large proportion from Slough itself. It also provides support to over 1,800 businesses in the Uk, c.790 of which have headquarters based in here.

20.9 It goes onto to state that Slough is the largest data hub in Europe and Equinix has had an interest in the Borough for 20 years, currently operating six data centres around the Slough Trading Estate, with a seventh site (LD14) about to begin

construction. It emphasises that Equinix's investment in the local community is significant, and it maintains close collaboration with local organisations like Slough Hub, in addition to providing long-term apprenticeships and training opportunities through partnerships with local schools and colleges.

20.10 The Statement explains the significant growth and potential of the data storage sector and its importance economically and in supporting and enabling future socio-economic change and growth. It highlights for instance that the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology estimates that 28% of all UK businesses, and 62% of large businesses (i.e. over 250 employees), rely on services housed in data centres. Additional digital infrastructure creates productivity gains in these industries as well as avoiding costs when infrastructure fails.

20.11 Having regard to this context, it sets out the key local and wider socio-economic related benefits the proposed development deliver. These are summarised below:

- Bringing back into use a large, vacant, established industrial site, formerly heavily contaminated, representing a £1.2 billion capital investment.

- An estimated £960m of GVA to be generated during the construction of the proposed development between 2026 and 2045 boosting jobs and productivity locally in the construction sector and its supply chain.

- Creation of approximately 10,000 construction related jobs locally (direct, indirect and induced).

- An expected £54.20m of economic activity to be generated locally per year.

- Creation of approximately 1450 jobs operation in Slough of which 756 will be FTEs with 100 based on-site. These include direct, indirect and induced employment within the local data economy and unrelated service sectors e.g. retail/hospitality.

- Creation up to 163 additional related jobs nationally.

- Developing a skilled workforce and targeting young people in education and apprenticeships in Slough.

- Establishing a more sustainable approach to managing data needs nationally Equinix, corporately has set a goal to reach 100% clean and renewable energy within the next 5 years.

- Providing a capability for exporting heat from the development into potential district heating network to support future major development opportunities locally.

- Securing relevant s106 contributions in respect to local skills and training (£1,017m), local economic development (£2.35m), public realm

improvements in the surrounding area (£2.5m), facilitating the provision of a district heating network (£0.2m up to £0.5m), local public transport improvements (£0.57m)

- Securing additional revenue to the Council through business rates, in the region of £8.2m per annum.

20.12 Data centres are essential infrastructure that play a vital role in supporting the rapidly expanding digital economy and emerging technological change. Digitisation in the way people live, work and play has grown exponentially in recent years, with a growing demand for the storage and use of personal and commercial data. In particular, data centres provide critical technical infrastructure for financial services, government/public services, aerospace, transport, healthcare, retail and utilities. They underpin a digital economy that contributes significantly to the local economy, domestic output, employment and UK exports.

20.13 Having regard to the location and nature of the site, the proposed data centre is considered to represent an appropriate redevelopment which would secure its longer-term viable economic use and provide wider economic benefit. The scheme aligns with the policies in the Local Plan which promote new investment and employment opportunities within existing business areas, as well as the guidance in the NPPF which seeks to support the delivery of Critical National Infrastructure and the provision clusters or networks of knowledge or data driven industries to promote economic growth.

20.14 Positive weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

21.0 **Sustainable design and construction**

21.1 The National Planning Policy Framework highlights that the planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts. It states that it should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

21.2 Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy states that all development in the Borough shall be sustainable, of a high-quality design, improve the quality of the environment and address the impact of climate changes. The Policy also seeks to minimise the consumption and unnecessary use of energy; generate energy from renewable resources; and incorporate sustainable design and construction techniques.

21.3 The Slough Developers Guide Part 2 expects commercial development of 10,000 sqm or more to achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent', and low or zero carbon energy generation equivalent to approximately 10% of the developments carbon emissions.

- Assessment:

21.4 Having regard to the nature and particular design requirements of data centres, the planning application has sought to present a sustainable, high-quality scheme, which improves the condition of the site, the quality of the local environment and addresses climate change impact.

21.5 In particular, the proposed development will bring back into use an accessible and currently vacant established industrial site in a mixed-use urban area. It will remediate a heavily contaminated site and seeks to minimise the consumption of energy and water and incorporate renewable resources and sustainable design and construction techniques during its construction and operational phases. In addition, as noted earlier, the proposals consider noise and air pollution and drainage to ensure that impacts are appropriately mitigated and deliver, where possible betterment.

21.6 It should be noted that the extreme cooling requirements for servers within data centres result in a disproportionately high consumption of energy and waste heat compared with conventional office or hi-tech, light-industrial buildings and warehouses. They also require substantial space for plant, particularly at roof-level which limits the area available for solar panels and green roofs. For this reason, it is considered appropriate to apply energy related policy and guidance more pragmatically.

21.7 An Energy and Sustainability Statement has been submitted with the application which sets out how sustainable design principles have been considered as part of the outline proposals. Together with the Design Code and other relevant documentation, it will guide the detailed design of the development at Reserved Matters stage. The Statement focuses on several strategies, grouped around key themes, that will shape a holistic approach to sustainability, in line with Equinix's sustainability framework and national and local planning policy and guidance. These themes include land use and ecology, transportation, waste, health and wellbeing, water, materials and energy efficiency.

21.8 The Applicant has also submitted information in relation to its corporate approach to sustainability including key strategic objectives and ongoing initiatives to reduce its carbon footprint. It highlights that Equinix is committed to achieving Net Zero by 2040 and currently sources the bulk of the energy for its data centres from the grid, purchasing 100% renewable energy from energy providers, resulting in zero GHG (Greenhouse Gas) emissions. For its remaining GHG emissions generated on its sites from emergency back-up power generators and other sources, Equinix is targeting a 50% reduction by 2030, ahead of its 2040 Net Zero target. Many of the corporate carbon reduction plans are being applied to the proposed development currently under consideration and an obligation will be secured via the s106 Agreement requiring all the energy to serve the development to be procured from 100% zero carbon energy.

21.9 In order to reduce the energy consumption and associated carbon emissions the proposed design of the development will prioritise passive design strategies such as

thermal insulation and optimised air tightness. The adoption of active measures, such as the use of efficient lighting and ventilation systems will help in reducing the energy consumption and further reduce operational carbon usage. The outline plans are based on using the latest technologies available for MEP plant equipment (Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing), maximising efficiencies and minimising waste. This includes the intended use of high energy efficient Air-Cooled Chillers (ACC).

21.10 As indicated earlier, data centres emit large amounts of heat which can be recovered and used as free low-grade heating, and the proposals allow for the waste heat of the data centre to be reused by a district heat network. Equinix Allowance for additional heat exchangers, pumps and infrastructure has been made for the required plant and pipework distribution up to the site boundary for a connection to a district network.

21.11 The Council is exploring the possibility of establishing a heat network with Equinix and other potential developers and a feasibility study will be prepared to evaluate the technical and financial viability of exporting heat to the surrounding area from the site. Equinix will contribute a minimum of £200,000 for initial feasibility work and an additional payment of up to £300,000 if the feasibility study demonstrates that a site is available and is permitted for a district heating system energy centre. A heat network offers significant environmental and community related benefits longer-term as most new residential buildings will shift from gas boilers to heat pumps enabling them to potentially connect and make use of the waste heat generated by the data centre. Equinix estimate that the proposed data centre could provide waste heat for up to 4500 new homes locally in the future.

21.12 Due to the levels of heat generated, cooling and IT energy are the biggest expected energy drivers associated with data centres. The proposed data centre will accommodate highly efficient ACC in the data hall spaces, and where feasible, make use of heat pumps and solar photovoltaic (PVs) in Front of House areas. The use of heat pumps and PVs will facilitate delivering 10% renewable energy via renewable technologies as advised by local policy guidance. Whilst the Applicant states that this should be achieved and improved upon, it is subject to detailed design and assessment at Reserved Matters stage.

21.13 Water use in data centres is particularly high, when they are equipped with cooling towers and Water-Cooled Chillers (WCC). The proposed revisions to the development include a major change in the cooling strategy from a water-cooled system to an air-cooled system. This key change enables a significant reduction of water use and will also facilitate immersion cooling (submerging storage racks in conductive liquid) and further reductions in energy use. Immersion cooling will be developed in conjunction with the data centre for possible implementation as detailed designs are prepared at Reserved Matters stage.

21.14 Indoor water use will be reduced with the incorporation of low water flow fittings, fixtures and appliances, including dual flush WC cisterns, efficient taps and showers. Rainwater harvesting will to provide water for toilet flushing, further reducing mains

water consumption. The development will also explore the incorporation of permanent water meters and leak detection devices. Outdoor water use will be reduced with an appropriate selection of native vegetation that relies only on rainfall and SuDs/storm water attenuation tanks will limit water run-off. These features will be considered in detail at Reserved Matters stage.

21.15 The development will prioritise the use of low carbon materials from environmentally responsible sources in its construction to reduce embodied carbon, and it will seek to reduce waste sent to landfill by using recycled and/or durable materials where possible and pre-assembled packaged plant. A Whole Life Cycle Carbon Analysis will be carried out during the next design stages, to understand the opportunities to reduce embodied carbon.

21.16 In accordance with policy, the data centre will also deliver a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating in relation to its Front of House accommodation and this will be required by planning condition.

21.17 A Construction Management Plan (CMP), to be secured by planning condition will ensure a comprehensive range of measures are put in place during the construction and operation of the site to reduce pollution, minimise waste and encourage recycling. A similar plan to specifically safeguard local ecology is also secured by condition.

21.18 Based on the above assessment, it is considered that the application satisfactorily demonstrates how the proposed development will manage energy usage responsibly and minimise its carbon footprint, noting the particular technical constraints and cooling requirements associated with data centres. Subject to appropriate conditions and legal obligations, the proposal complies broadly with national and local planning policy and guidance in this regard.

21.19 Positive weight is applied to this matter in the planning balance.

22.0 **Equalities considerations**

22.1 Throughout this report, due consideration has been given to the potential impacts of development, upon individuals either residing in the development, or visiting the development, or who are providing services in support of the development. Under the Council's statutory duty of care, the local authority has given due regard for the needs of all individuals including those with protected characteristics as defined in the 2010 Equality Act (e.g. age (including children and young people), disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In particular, regard has been had with regards to the need to meet these three tests:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics; and;

- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life (et al).

22.2 The proposed development supports a number of important aspects relevant to these considerations. It would for instance provide new employment space and create new local employment opportunities, in addition to assisting technological change for potentially wider social and economic benefit. Access to its buildings would be safe and suitable for all users and lift, wheelchair accessible car parking spaces and EV charging points provided.

22.3 There may be temporary (but limited) adverse impacts upon all individuals with protected characteristics, whilst the development is under construction, by virtue of the construction works taking place. People with the following characteristics have the potential to be particularly disadvantaged as a result of the construction works associated with the development e.g. people with disabilities, maternity and pregnancy and younger children, older children and elderly residents/visitors. It is also considered that noise and dust from construction have the potential to cause nuisances to people sensitive to noise or dust. However, measures can be incorporated into the construction management plan to mitigate the impact and minimise the extent of the effects. This will be secured by condition should the scheme be acceptable.

22.4 In conclusion, it is considered that the needs of individuals with Protected Characteristics have been fully considered by the Local Planning Authority exercising its public duty of care, in accordance with the 2010 Equality Act.

23.0 **Section 106 Requirements**

23.1 It is noted within the report, that in order to make the development acceptable in planning terms, the following obligations are required:

i. Financial contribution of £1,017,286 towards local skills and employment training and business promotion.
ii. Financial contribution of £2,358,229.35 towards local economic development initiatives.
iii. Financial contribution of £2,500,000 towards public realm improvements.
iv. Financial contribution of £568,013 towards public transport improvements.
v. Financial contribution of £200,000 minimum towards the provision of a Slough district heating network up to a cap of £500,000.
vi. Financial contribution of £9,450 Travel Plan monitoring fee.
vii. Financial contribution of £13,766 s.106 monitoring fee.
viii. All energy to serve the development to be procured from 100% zero carbon energy.
ix. Future connection to a district heating network.
x. Travel Plan.
xi. Euro VI construction vehicle emission standards.

23.2 The above obligations would comply with Regulation 122 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 in that the obligations are considered to be:

a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
b) directly related to the development; and
c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

24.0 **Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development**

24.1 At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. It confirms that for decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. For the purposes of this application, the Development Plan is up to date. The report identifies that the proposal broadly complies with all the up to date and important relevant saved policies in the Development Plan, and relevant sections of the NPPF.

25.0 **Planning Balance**

25.1 The application will secure significant benefits as noted in this report which are considered to outweigh any harm identified and ensure that it broadly complies with local and national planning policy and guidance.

25.1 The proposed development will deliver new Critical National infrastructure, create significant job opportunities and secure substantial planning contributions towards local employment and skills initiatives, economic development, public realm improvements and, if feasible establishing a district heating network providing longer-term sustainable local energy usage.

25.2 All the benefits identified are considered to demonstrably outweigh the less than substantial harm identified by the proposals on the setting of and significance of heritage assets identified above and within the Heritage Assessment and in accordance with the NPPF.

26.0 **Conclusion**

26.1 The proposals presented in this report represent a major investment opportunity in the Slough that would optimise and secure the long-term use of a large vacant industrial site.

26.1 The proposed data centre would create a substantial number of employment opportunities during both its construction and operational phases including significant numbers of indirect jobs in the Borough and outside. They would generate substantial value for the local, regional and national economies and fundamentally support the rapidly expanding digital economy.

26.2 The proposal represents a modern and high-quality commercial development which has been carefully designed having regard to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and local amenity.

26.3 The proposed development would be constructed using a variety of contemporary and sustainable materials to complement the surrounding area and provide visual interest. It would incorporate substantial landscaping and sustainable urban drainage measures to enhance its setting and the immediate streetscape. This approach would also provide significant benefits in respect to biodiversity and reducing flood risk. In addition, given the nature of data centres, traffic movements during peak periods are acceptable, ensuring local highway conditions and safety are not affected.

26.4 Whilst some adverse impacts may arise in relation to air quality and noise during the potential use of the proposed emergency generators, given the extremely low likelihood of a complete power failure occurring, these impacts are not considered, on balance to be significant.

26.5 It is also recognised that the proposed development would have less than substantial harm to identified heritage assets, including Windsor Castle, Windsor Great Park and associated historical features. On balance however, officers consider that the demonstrable public benefits that would be secured by the application (including some heritage benefit) outweigh this harm.

26.6 On balance it is considered that the proposed development broadly complies with the development plan and NPPF, and as such the proposal represents sustainable development and is recommended for approval as set out in the recommendation.

PART C: RECOMMENDATION

27.0 **Recommendation**

27.1 Having considered the relevant policies set out below, and comments that have been received from consultees, and all other relevant material considerations it is recommended the application be delegated to the Planning Manager:

A) For approval subject to:

1. The satisfactory competition of a Section 106 legal agreement to secure:

xii. Financial contribution of £1,017,286 towards local skills and employment training and business promotion.
xiii. Skills development programme for the construction phase.
xiv. Financial contribution of £2,358,229.35 towards local economic development initiatives.
xv. Financial contribution of £2,500,000 towards public realm improvements.
xvi. Financial contribution of £568,013, towards public transport improvements.
xvii. Financial contribution of £200,000 minimum towards the provision of a Slough district heating network up to a cap of £500,000.

xviii. Financial contribution of £9,450 Travel Plan monitoring fee.
xix. Financial contribution of £13,766 s.106 monitoring fee.
xx. All energy to serve the development to be procured from 100% renewable sources.
xxi. Future connection to a district heating network.
xxii. Travel Plan.
xxiii. Euro VI construction vehicle emission standards.

2. Agreement of the pre-commencement conditions with the applicant/agent; finalising conditions/informatives; and any other minor changes.

3. Agreement of an updated Design and Access Statement and Design Code.

B) Refuse the application if the completion of the above has not been satisfactorily completed by 26th July 2026 unless a longer period is agreed by the Planning Manager, or Chair of the Planning Committee.

PART D: CONDITIONS

Reserved Matters Submissions

1. Application submissions for approval of the first reserved matters shall contain all matters hereby reserved pursuant to the first phase within the development and shall be made to the Local Planning Authority before the expiration of two years beginning with the date of this permission. All further applications for the approval of reserved matters shall be made no later than the expiration of eighteen years beginning from the date of this planning permission. The development hereby approved shall be implemented only in accordance with the following plans and drawings hereby approved by the Local Planning Authority:

   REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Development Time Limits and Phasing

2. Application for approval of the first reserved matters shall contain all matters hereby reserved pursuant to the first phase within the development and shall be made to the Local Planning Authority before the expiration of 2 years from the date of this planning permission. All further applications for the approval of reserved matters shall be made no later than the expiration of 18 years beginning from the date of this permission.

   The development herby permitted shall be begun either before the expiration of 5 years from the date of this outline permission or before the expiration of 3 years from the date of the approval of the last reserved matters, whichever is the later.

Each reserved matter submission shall be supported by a detailed phasing strategy and programme for the delivery of that phase of the development and shall approved by the Local Planning Authority. The phasing strategy and programme for delivery shall set out clearly the phases of development which each RMA submission relates to, and details of the delivery of data centres, ancillary infrastructure and areas of biodiversity planting in each relevant phase being submitted. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved phasing unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Approved Plans

3. The development hereby approved shall be implemented only in accordance with the following plans and documents hereby approved by the Local Planning Authority:

Plans:

- Site Location Plan 22058-BWT-ZZ-DR-A-2000 P08
- Existing Block Plan / Topographical Survey 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2010 P05

Parameter Plans:

- 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2021-P07
- 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2022-P07
- 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2023-P06
- 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2024-P06
- 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2025-P06
- 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2026-P07
- 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2027-P06

Detailed Access Drawings

- M001270-2-1-DR-007-C
- M001270-2-1-TR-013-C

Reports

- Air Quality Assessment 0685061 Rev 2.3
- Arboricultural Impact Appraisal and Method Statement
  - 23034-9 Tree Protection Plan
  - 23034-AA10-PB AIA and Method Statement
- Archaeological Investigation Report
  - 0685061 V1.03
- Daylight and Sunlight Assessment
  - P3585 Release 2 plus P3585_Data Centre MPSlough_DLSL_May 2025
- Design & Access Statement and Design Revisions August 2025
  - 22058-BWT-A1-XX-RP-A-2001 P07 [Rev P07 awaiting formal submission in November]

- Design Code
  - 22058-BWT-A1-XX-RP-A-2000 Rev P07 [Rev P07 awaiting formal submission in November]
- Ecological Impact Appraisal
  - 0685061 Rev V1.03
- Energy & Sustainability Statement
  - 22058-BWT-ZZ-ZZ-RP-Z-2000 Rev P05
- Heritage Statement Heritage Report
  - PN3999 and Figures 1-15, May 2025
- Land Contamination - Technical Note: Summary of Geo-Environmental Reporting
  - 2731-A2S-XX-XX-TN-Y-0006-06 Summary of Geo-environmental Reports May 2025 including Technical Note Contents
- Landscape & Ecology Maintenance and Management Plan
  - LP2389 Rev 08
- Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
  - 0685061 Rev 2.2 11 July 2025
- Outline Construction Management Plan (OCMP)
  - OCMP 001 Rev 1 dated 28 May 2025
- Outline Utilities Assessment
- Outline Drainage Strategy Plan (Appendix C)
  - 22058-BWT-C1-XX-RP-C-3701 P03
  - 22058-BWT-C1-00-DR-C-3101 P04
- Overall Biodiversity Gain Plan
  - 0685061 V2.2
- Planning Statement
- Draft Heads of Terms
- Phasing Statement V18
- Email correspondence applicant/SBC RE: Drainage
- Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy
- Proposed Levels Plan at Appendix H
- Socio-Economic Benefit Statement Technical Note at Appendix A
  - 0685061 V2.2
- 27 Statement of Community Involvement V9
- 28 Telecommunication Assessment Report
  - P230181-BTC-ZZ-ZZ-RP-XX-0001 v4.0 plus technical Note 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-TS-A-0002 P01
- Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment
  - TVIA LPv6 - LP2389 Wexham Road Appendix A – G
- 30 Transport Assessment and Addendum
  - 240820 TA – M001270 Issue 4.0
  - Transport Assessment Addendum 28.05.2025
- Travel Plan
  - 240820 TP – M001270 Issue 7.0
- HRA Screening Report
  - 0685061 Rev 1.2 dated 30/05/2025

REASON: To ensure that the site is developed in accordance with the submitted application and complies with the Policies in the Development Plan.

Outline Details

4. Details of layout, scale, appearance of the site and buildings and additional access points (Technology Boulevard only, area shown on Parameter Plan Site Access and Flows drawing number 22058-BWT-ZZ-XX-DR-A-2024) and landscaping of the site (herein called the reserved matters) shall be submitted to and approved in by the Local Planning Authority before development on land to which the reserved matters relate commences. Development thereafter shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

   REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 92 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Design Code Compliance

5. No development shall commence above ground level on each phase of the development until a Design Code Compliance Statement has been submitted as part of the reserved matters application for the relevant phase of development and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The compliance statement shall provide detail of the design elements of the relevant phase and explain how they meet the requirements set out within the approved Design Code. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved statement.

   REASON: To ensure a satisfactory appearance of the development so as not to prejudice the visual amenity of the locality in accordance with Core Policy 8 of The Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008, Policy EN1 of the Adopted Local Plan for Slough 2004, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Use Class

6. The development hereby approved shall be used for Data Centre use, including ancillary offices, associated substation and plant facilities and temporary ancillary uses (Sui Generis Use Class) only, and for no other purposes.

   REASON: In order protect the amenities of the area and to ensure an appropriate use within a defined business area in accordance with Core Policies 5, 7 and 8 of The Core Strategy 2008, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Biodiversity Net Gain

7. No development shall commence above ground level on each phase of the development until a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted as part of the

reserved matters application for the relevant phase of the development and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The biodiversity gain plan for each phase shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details within the Wexham Road Data Centre Campus Biodiversity Gain Strategy 28 May 2025 0685061 including statutory metric at appendix D and Wexham Road Data Centre Campus Landscape & Ecology Maintenance and Management Plan LP2389/RP001 P08 28 May 2025. Any habitat enhancement or creation shall be maintained for at least 30 years after the relevant phase of development is completed or in accordance with a revised period set out in any future regulations enacted by the Secretary of State.

REASON: In order that the biodiversity gain objective is met and to accord with Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Car Parking

8. No development above ground level shall commence on any phase of the development, until details of the car parking for that phase of the development have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The car parking provision shall be provided in accordance with the approved Transport Assessment dated 19.08.2024 and Transport Assessment Addendum dated the 28.05.2025. The development or any phase of the development, whichever is the sooner, shall not be occupied until the car parking has been constructed and completed in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be kept free of obstruction and permanently available for the parking of cars to serve the development hereby approved.

   REASON: In the interests of ensuring that the use benefits from satisfactory car parking provision in the interests of the amenities of the area in accordance with Core Policy 7 of the Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006-2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008`

Cycle Parking Details

9. No development above ground level shall commence on any phase of the development, until details of the cycle parking for that phase of the development have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle parking provision shall be provided as a minimum in accordance with the approved Transport Assessment and Transport Assessment Addendum and equivalent to one cycle parking space per three data centre staff and the design and layout shall accord with the design guidance in LTN 1/20 on Cycle Infrastructure Design. The development or any phase of the development, whichever is the sooner, shall not be occupied until the cycle parking has been constructed and completed in accordance with the approved details and shall thereafter be kept free of obstruction and permanently available for the parking of cycles only.

REASON: To comply with the design guidance LTN 1/20 on Cycle Infrastructure Design and to ensure suitable cycle parking provision for the scale of the development to support active travel for trips to and from the site.

Contamination Verification Report

10. No development within or adjacent to any area(s) subject to remediation works carried out pursuant to the Akzo Nobel DC – Remediation Strategy, Ref. no. 2731-A2S-XX-XX-RP-Y-0005-03, dated November 2023, and prepared by A-squared Studio Ltd shall be occupied until a full final Validation Report for the purposes of human health protection has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The report shall include details of the implementation of the remedial strategy, and any contingency plan works approved pursuant to the Remediation Strategy above. If gas and/or vapour protection measures are specified by the remedial strategy, the report shall include written confirmation that all such measures have been implemented by a competent installer and then verified by a qualified independent third party/Building Control Regulator.

    REASON: To ensure that remediation work is adequately validated and recorded, in the interest of safeguarding public health and in accordance with Policy 8 of the Core Strategy 2008.

    Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) – Biodiversity

11. Prior to the commencement of any phase of the development hereby permitted, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) for that phase of development shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP Biodiversity shall include details on:

    a) Measures to be taken to avoid disturbance to existing landscaping, trees and habitats within and immediately adjacent to the site of the development;
    b) Measures to be taken to avoid disturbances to landscaping, planting, tress and habitats created as part of any BNG plan requirement;
    c) Identified biodiversity protection zones for key habitats (if any) and notable protected species (namely Badgers and nesting birds, as identified within the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment 16.08.2024));
    d) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction; and
    e) The times during pre- construction, during construction and post construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
    f) Responsible persons and lines of communication;
    g) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

REASON: To ensure that the construction period of the development hereby approved, is managed to avoid disturbance and to ensure protection of existing and proposed landscape and protected species identified within the ecology surveys and to be delivered as part of the BNG secured as part of the development in accordance with local and national planning policy and guidance.

Detailed Construction Management Plan (CMP)

12. Prior to the commencement of the first phase and each subsequent phase of the development (phasing as approved as part of each reserved matters submission), a Construction Management Plan (CMP) shall be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The CMP relating to each phase shall include provision to accommodate:

    - All site operatives and visitors including parking.
    - Site management of construction traffic and access and controlled hours of delivery including:
        - Any temporary signage to be provided to identify construction route/s and promote its safe use.
        - Loading and unloading of material.
        - Identification of the routing strategy and procedures for the notification and conveyance of any abnormal or indivisible load authorised by the Highways Agency pursuant to the Road Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) (General) Order 2003.
        - Wheel washing facilities and arrangements for removal of mud from public highway.
        - Storage of plant and materials to be used.
        - Details of how all temporary external lighting will not result in unacceptable neighbour amenity or unacceptable ecological impacts.
        - Hours during the construction phase, when delivery vehicles taking materials are allowed to enter or leave the site.
    - Non-road mobile machinery (NRMM) used on site is required to meet Stage IIIB of EU directive 97/68/EC as a minimum. Machines with constant speed engines (such as generators) are required to meet Stage V of EU directive 97/68/EC.
    - The Plan shall also include details of the control of noise and dust, including monitoring against trigger levels (trigger levels to be defined within CMP).
    - Construction vehicles shall meet Euro VI emission standards.

    The Development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

    REASON: To ensure the management of the construction period to ensure the impacts of construction are limited and do not lead to unacceptable

impacts on the surrounding area in accordance with local and national planning policy and guidance.

Bird Hazard Management Plan

13. Prior to the commencement of any development on any phase (phasing as approved as part of each reserved matters submission) above development platform level, a Bird Hazard Management for each phase of the development delivering a data centre and/or substation, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted plan shall include details of the management of any flat/shallow pitch roofs on buildings within the site which may be attractive to nesting, roosting and “loafing” birds.

    The management plan shall comply with Advice Note 3 ‘Wildlife Hazards’ (available at http://www.aoa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Advice-Note-3-Wildlife-Hazards-2016.pdf

    The Bird Hazard Management Plan shall be implemented as approved and shall remain in force for the life of the building. No subsequent alterations are to take place unless first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

    REASON: To minimise its attractiveness to birds which could endanger the safe movement of aircraft and the operation of Heathrow Airport.

Surface Water Drainage

14. Prior to the commencement of each phase of the development a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site or a detailed surface water drainage scheme for each phase of development, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the occupation of each phase or before the development is completed. The scheme shall include:

    - Detailed design drainage layout drawings of the SuDS proposals including cross-section details.
    - Full drainage run-off and attenuation calculations for all events in accordance with the National standards for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) July 2025.
    - Detailed maintenance management plan in accordance with Section 32 of CIRIA C753 including maintenance schedules for each drainage element.
    - Details of how water quality will be managed during construction and post development in perpetuity.
    - Confirmation of any outfall details.
    - Consent for any connections into third party drainage systems.

REASON: To reduce the risk of flooding both on and off site in accordance with Core Policy 8 of the Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2026, and the National Planning Policy Framework by ensuring satisfactorily means of surface water attenuation and discharge from the site and to ensure the future maintenance of drainage systems associated with the development.

Plant Noise

15. Prior to the installation of any operational plant, diesel generators, and substation, full specification details of any operational plant, including any mitigation demonstrating expected compliance with the assumptions set out in [the approved Noise Assessment ref: 0685061, dated 11.07.2025] in Table 5.1, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

    The approved details shall be fully installed prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved and be retained in good working order at all times in the future. Where the installed plant sound levels are different to those assumed in [the approved Noise Assessment ref.0685061, dated 11.07.2025] or where other plant is to be installed not currently identified in the report, an assessment demonstrating that the plant noise rating levels identified in the report are not expected to be exceeded at nearby receptors shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for their subsequent approval and the plant shall be installed in accordance with the approved assessment.

    REASON: To ensure that the development hereby permitted is not detrimental to the amenity of the surrounding area by reason of undue noise emission and/or unacceptable disturbance. In accordance with Policy EN1 and EMP2 of The Adopted Local Plan for Slough 2004, Core Policy 8 of the Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2026, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Electromagnetic Fields Assessment Report

16. Prior to the installation of each of the substations hereby approved, an electromagnetic fields assessment report demonstrating that the substation would fall within the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

    The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to first use be retained in good working order at all times in the future. No other plant shall be installed.

    REASON: In the interests of safeguarding the amenities of neighbouring properties in accordance with Core Policy 8 of The Slough Local

Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008 and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

BREEAM – Pre-occupation

17. Prior to the first use of each data hall hereby approved, a design Stage Certificate shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, confirming that the development has been designed to achieve a standard of BREEAM 'Excellent' in line with 'BREEAM Data Centres 2010' (or equivalent standard).

    REASON: In the interest of sustainable development in accordance with Core Policy 8 of The Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006-2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008, Policy EMP2 of the adopted Local Plan for Slough, and the requirements of the NPPF.

BREEAM – Post-occupation

18. Within 12 months of the first use of each data hall hereby approved being brought into use, a Post Construction Review Certificate confirming the development hereby approved has been constructed as to achieve a standard of BREEAM 'Excellent' in line with 'BREEAM Data Centres 2010' (or equivalent standard) shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

    REASON: In the interest of sustainable development in accordance with Core Policy 8 of The Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006-2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008, Policy EMP2 of the adopted Local Plan for Slough, and the requirements of the NPPF.

Surface Water Network Upgrades and Phasing Plan

19. No development shall be occupied until confirmation has been provided that either: - all water network upgrades required to accommodate the additional demand to serve the development have been completed; or - a development and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed with Thames Water to allow development to be occupied. Where a development and infrastructure phasing plan is agreed no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed development and infrastructure phasing plan.

    REASON: The development may lead to no / low water pressure and network reinforcement works are anticipated to be necessary to ensure that sufficient capacity is made available to accommodate additional demand anticipated from the new development in accordance with local and national planning

Sewage Works Upgrades and Phasing Plan

20. No development shall be occupied until confirmation has been provided that either: - all sewage works upgrades required to accommodate the additional flows from the development have been completed; or - a development and infrastructure phasing plan has been agreed with the Local Authority in consultation with Thames Water to allow development to be occupied. Where a development and infrastructure phasing plan is agreed no occupation shall take place other than in accordance with the agreed development and infrastructure phasing plan.

    REASON: Sewage Treatment Upgrades are likely to be required to accommodate the proposed development. Any upgrade works identified will be necessary in order to avoid sewage flooding and/or potential pollution incidents

SuDS As Built and Maintenance Details

21. Prior to the first occupation of any phase of the development, a record of the installed SuDS and site wide drainage scheme for each phase shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority for deposit with the Lead Local Flood Authority Asset Register. The details shall include:

    a) As built plans in both .pdf and .shp file format;
    b) Photographs to document each key stage of the drainage system when installed on site;
    c) Photographs to document the completed installation of the drainage structures on site;
    d) The name and contact details of any appointed management company.

    REASON: To ensure the installed SuDS and site wide drainage schemes are satisfactory and appropriately maintained in accordance with Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2026 Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Boreholes – Environment Agency

22. Prior to the installation of any boreholes to the east of trial pit TP32 as shown on drawing 38523-A2SI-XX-XX-DR-Y-0001-01 Rev00 of the approved A2 Site Investigation Report 38523-A2SI-XX-XX-RP-X-0001-01 dated March 2024 a scheme for managing future boreholes in this part of the site, should any become required to be installed for the investigation of soils, groundwater or geotechnical purposes shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The scheme shall provide details of how redundant boreholes are to be decommissioned and how any boreholes that need to be retained, post-development, for monitoring purposes will be secured,

protected and inspected. The scheme as approved shall be implemented prior to the occupation of any part of the permitted development / of each phase of development.

REASON: To ensure that redundant boreholes are safe and secure, and do not cause groundwater pollution or loss of water supplies in line with paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Position Statement A8 of 'The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection'. The submitted planning application indicates that boreholes have been installed at the development site to investigate groundwater resources/carry out soakage tests/geotechnical purposes. If these boreholes are not decommissioned correctly they can provide preferential pathways for contaminant movement which poses a risk to groundwater quality. Groundwater is particularly sensitive in this location because the proposed development site is within Source Protection Zone 3 and located upon a superficial principal aquifer, with the Chalk aquifer at depth.

Vehicle Access

23. No phase of the development shall be occupied until the new means of access to serve each phase of the development, including the emergency means of access, has been sited and laid out in accordance with the approved plans.

    REASON: To ensure that adequate access is available to serve the development to ensure that the proposed development does not prejudice the safety and function of the highway network in accordance with Core Policy 7 of The Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008 and National Planning Policy Framework.

Electric Vehicle Charging

24. Prior to the first occupation of any phase of the development, (phasing as approved as part of each reserved matters submission) [at least 10% of the car parking for each phase] shall be provided as electric vehicle charging points (Type 2' socket and be rated to at least 7.4kW 32amp to 22kW 32 amp single or 3 phase), together with underground ducting and tether provision where applicable to ensure reliability and ease of future cable pulling to provide a passive supply for the remaining car parking spaces.

    The charging points shall be fully installed and the active charging points shall be fully operational prior to the first occupation of any phase of the development and be retained in good working order at all times in the future.

    REASON: To provide mitigation towards the impacts on air quality in accordance with Core Policy 8 of the Slough Local Development Framework,

Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008, the Slough Low Emission Strategy 2018 – 2025 Technical Report, and the requirements of the National Planning Framework.

Oil Storage – Environment Agency

25. Prior to the storage of any oils, fuels or chemicals on any phase of the development, details of any facilities for the storage of oils, fuels or chemicals associated with this development shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. The details shall include:

    - secondary containment that is impermeable to both the oil, fuel or chemical and water, with no opening used to drain the system
    - a minimum volume of secondary containment at least equivalent to the capacity of the tank plus 10% or, if there is more than one tank in the secondary containment, at least equivalent to the capacity of the largest tank plus 10% or 25% of the total tank capacity, whichever is greatest
    - all fill points, vents, gauges and sight gauge located within the secondary containment
    - associated above ground pipework protected from accidental damage
    - below ground pipework having no mechanical joints, except at inspection hatches and have either leak detection equipment installed or regular leak checks
    - all fill points and tank vent pipe outlets designed to discharge downwards into the bund.

    The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

    REASON: To ensure that the proposed development, does not harm groundwater resources in line with paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Position Statements A & D of 'The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection'.

    The submitted planning application indicates the above ground storage of oils/fuels/chemicals that are not controlled through legislation. The storage of oils/fuels/chemicals can pose a risk to groundwater if spillage occurs.

    Groundwater is particularly sensitive in this location because the proposed development site is within Source Protection Zone 3 and located upon a superficial principal aquifer, with a principal Chalk aquifer at depth.

Generator Testing Regime Compliance

26. The diesel generators hereby approved shall only be used in the event of a power supply outage, and in accordance with the testing regime specified within Table 4.2 of the air quality assessment (ref: 0685061, dated 29th May 2025). The diesel generators shall only be used in accordance with these

details approved, unless changes to the testing regime which can demonstrate no undue air or noise emissions and/or no unacceptable disturbance is otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To ensure that the development hereby permitted is not detrimental to the amenity of the surrounding area by reason of undue noise and emissions and/or unacceptable disturbance. In accordance with Policy EN1 and EMP2 of The Adopted Local Plan for Slough 2004, Core Policy 8 of the Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2026, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Contamination – Environment Agency

27. If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed with the local planning authority) shall be carried out until a remediation strategy detailing how this contamination will be dealt with has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

    REASON: To ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site. This is in line with paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The decontamination and remediation of the entire site is now complete as part of the enabling works. As evidenced by the fact that some hotspots were encountered in the validation reporting, we endorse that a watching brief for unexpected contamination is maintained across the whole site.

Drainage Systems – Environment Agency

28. No drainage systems for the infiltration of surface water to the ground are permitted other than with the approval of the local planning authority. Any proposals for such systems must be supported by an assessment of the risks to controlled waters. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

    REASON: To ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilised contaminants. This is in line with paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Piling – Environment Agency

29. Piling using penetrative methods shall not be carried out other than with the approval of the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To ensure that the proposed development, does not harm groundwater resources in line with paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Position Statement N of the 'The Environment Agency's approach to groundwater protection'.

Ecology

30. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the mitigation set out in Section 8 of the Wexham Road Data Centre Campus Ecological Impact Assessment 0685061, dated 16 August 2024.

    REASON: In the interests of the preservation of natural habitats and safeguarding protected species in accordance with Core Policy 9 of The Slough Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

SuDs Strategy

31. Prior to the commencement of each phase of development details shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority of a detailed drainage scheme which is in accordance with the runoff calculations and attenuation calculations of the hereby approved Outline Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report Reference: 22058-BWT-C1-XX-RP-C-4002 Rev P04. Each phase of the approved drainage system with its attenuation element shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the phase of development to which it relates.

    REASON: To ensure that the principles of sustainable drainage are incorporated into the proposal. in accordance with Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy Slough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2026 Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Access and Security Strategy – Thames Valley Police

32. Each reserved matters planning application shall be supported by a detailed Access and Security Strategy, which shall include:

    - Proposed access control measures (including proposed measures for visitors, deliveries and postage and boundary treatment details);
    - Windows, doors and gates security specification;
    - Compartmentation of the building
    - Proposed security lighting and CCTV strategy (locations and proposed monitoring and management).
    - Proposals for secure car parking area and cycle parking area;
    - Details of proposed active security of the site, including number of personnel, location of security desk/s and management.

The approved details shall be in place on the first use of each phase and retained at all times in the future.

REASON: To ensure the design of the proposed development provides appropriate levels of security and the scheme has considered designing out crime matters in accordance with Local Plan Policy EN5, The National Planning Policy Framework and Secured by Design Commercial Guide 2023.

Emergency Access

33. The emergency access hereby approved shall only be used for this purpose and no other mean of access.

REASON: To ensure that appropriate emergency access is available to serve the development to ensure the safety and function of the highway network in accordance with Core Policy 7 of The Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, Development Plan Document, December 2008 and National Planning Policy Framework.

INFORMATIVES

S106 Agreement

1. A Section 106 Agreement forms part of this planning permission.

Statement of Working

2. In dealing with this application, the Local Planning Authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner through providing pre application advice, requesting revisions and further information. It is the view of the Local Planning Authority that the proposed development does improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area for the reasons given in this notice and it is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Collaboration with Yondr on Generator Testing

3. The applicant will take all reasonable steps to proactively engage and work collaboratively with Yondr to coordinate generator testing at the Wexham Road Data Centre Campus and Yondr Data Centre to ensure that no two generators are tested on-load at any time and to ensure impacts of emissions are limited.

Control of Construction Timing (with Yondr)

4. During construction works to deliver the Wexham Road Data Centre Campus, the applicant will endeavour to work collaboratively and engage with Yondr

during construction works taking place on both sites. To help reduce potential cumulative and noise impacts from the construction phase of these developments.

HSE

5. HSE's website provides advice on a wide range of topics, including the fire and explosion risks associated with flammable substances – see About dangerous substances - Fire and explosion (hse.gov.uk) and Storage of flammable liquids in tanks HSG176 (hse.gov.uk).

   The employer will be subject to the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA) and associated legislation, including The Dangerous Substances And Explosives Atmospheres Regulations 2002 - see The Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002 - Fire and explosion (hse.gov.uk). Under sections 2 and 3 of the HSWA, an operator must conduct the undertaking in such a way as to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, employees and other persons, including people living nearby, are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety.

Local Highway Authority

6. The development must be so designed and constructed to ensure that surface water from the development does not drain onto the highway or into the highway drainage system.

7. The applicant is advised that if it is intended to use soakaways as the method of dealing with the disposal of surface water then the permission of the Environment Agency will be necessary.

8. The permission hereby granted shall not be construed as authority to obstruct the public highway by the erection of scaffolding, hoarding, skip or any other device or apparatus for which a licence must be sought from the Highway Authority.