

4.0 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

4.1 OBJECTIVES

The principal objective of an EIA is to provide the Local Planning Authority (Halton Borough Council) and statutory consultees with a clear and concise technical document that provides sufficient information on the proposed development and its likely environmental effects to be able to make a decision on whether planning permission should be granted.

There are three basic steps used in the EIA process in order to meet this objective, as follows:

1. Establish existing baseline environmental conditions including any current environmental problems. This task is divided into two phases:
 - (i) collection and review of existing data relating to the site, including consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies; and
 - (ii) the enhancement of existing data, where necessary, with information collected through further site investigation or survey;
2. Identify, predict and assess the significance of the likely environmental impacts (both positive and negative), which could be expected as a result of the development proposals, covering those environmental issues that were considered to be potentially significant during the Scoping Study; and
3. Design mitigation and management measures, which would be adopted to prevent, reduce or remedy any significant adverse effects. Consideration is also given to enhancement measures that would be implemented to promote positive environmental benefits as a part of these proposals.

4.2 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The EIA has been carried out in accordance with the *Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999* (hereafter referred to as the EIA Regulations) and associated guidance set out in the former DETR Circular 02/99. The EIA has also taken into account guidance provided within the former DETR's document '*Environmental Impact Assessment – A Guide to Procedures: November 2000*'.

The EIA Regulations require that before consent is granted for certain types of development, an EIA must be undertaken. The EIA Regulations set out the types of development which must always be subject to an EIA (Schedule 1) and developments which may require assessment, if they are likely to give rise to significant environmental effects (Schedule 2).

The proposed development by Westlink Group falls within the criteria set out in Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations, being "*Construction of inter-modal transshipment facilities and of inter-modal terminals*" as defined under Schedule 2 Part 10c

The EIA was undertaken at the request of HBC. This decision was subsequently endorsed by WGL who agreed that the development proposals would benefit from consideration of the key environmental issues, as set out in this ES. It should be noted that this site has been previously assessed for a similar scheme by Drawbridge Securities, who proposed the INNOVIS rail freight park on this site. That scheme was approved in 2006 but will not be implemented. The data arising from it. However, and the assessment of impacts therein, is highly relevant to this application and has been revisited and re-assessed where appropriate (see discussion below).

Specific technical guidance has also been used, where appropriate, in the assessment of the impacts of the proposed development on several aspects of the environment. These include the use of British Standard methodologies and adherence to the policies set out in Government Planning Policy Guidelines (PPGs) and the Planning Policy Statements (PPS) series that supersede them. A summary of the relevant national planning policies is provided in *Section 5* and detailed descriptions of assessment methodologies and standards and guidelines utilised are given in the relevant assessment sections of the ES (*Sections 6-18*).

4.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

A number of criteria have been used to determine whether or not the potential effects of the proposed development are considered to be significant, as follows:

- international, national and local standards;
- relationship with planning policy;
- sensitivity of the receiving environment;
- reversibility and duration of effect;
- inter-relationship between effects; and
- the results of consultation.

The effects that were considered to be significant prior to mitigation are identified within the ES. The significance of these effects reflects judgement on the importance or sensitivity of the affected receptor(s) and the nature and magnitude of the predicted changes. For example, a large adverse impact on a feature or site of low importance will be of lesser significance than the same impact on a feature or site of high importance.

Environmental impacts may be both negative and positive. Quantification of these impacts, particularly in relation to comparative assessment between environmental disciplines, requires consistent assessment criteria to be used throughout. The criteria used in this assessment are as follows:

- **Major Positive or Major Negative effect** – where the development would cause a significant improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment;
- **Moderate Positive or Moderate Negative effect** – where the development would cause a noticeable improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment;
- **Minor Positive or Minor Negative effect** – where the development would cause a barely perceptible improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment; and

- **Insignificant** – no discernible improvement or deterioration to the existing environment.
- The determination of each of these criteria for the various environmental aspects of this development is presented in *Section 19 – Overall Conclusions*.

4.4 SCOPE OF THE EIA

The scope of the EIA was established during the Scoping Study and the subsequent issue of a Scoping Report to Halton Borough Council. A summary of the results of this study and key issues raised in the Scoping Report are presented in *Table 4.1*. Copies of the Scoping Report and relevant consultation responses are presented in *Appendix 1*.

Table 4.1 – Summary of the Results of the Scoping Study

Discipline	Environmental Sensitivity	Significance (pre mitigation) - Potential Impacts	Proposed Methodology
Air Quality and Climate	Emissions of pollutants to air from vehicles and the trains using the railway.	Moderate adverse effect – Vehicle emissions and dust generation during construction Moderate adverse effect – Local air extraction systems and increased vehicle movements, during operation	DMRB air quality assessment (desk-based). Proposals for control of emissions during construction. <i>Decision made subsequently by ENVIRON to use ADMS Roads to more accurately model air emissions impact.</i> <i>Emission levels to be compared to Air Quality Objectives (designed to be protective of health)</i>
Archaeology and Cultural Heritage	There are no Scheduled Monuments located within the immediate vicinity of site. Areas of known archaeological importance are located both on site and in the surrounds..	Moderate adverse impact - Disturbance during construction. There may be a Moderate beneficial impact post-development as a result of the improved setting.	Site desk-based assessment involving consultation with English Heritage & local archives.
Ecology and Nature Conservation	The site is an area of low ecological interest in itself but is close to important designated sites (Mersey SPA, SAC, Ramsar Site)	Moderate adverse impact – during construction. Minor beneficial impact through landscaping during the operational phase.	Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Protected Species Surveys of development footprint. Assessment of impacts on designated sites. Environmental enhancement measures to be adopted in landscape plan.

Discipline	Environmental Sensitivity	Significance (pre mitigation) - Potential Impacts	Proposed Methodology
Landscape and Visual Character	Site not located in Green Belt or any other landscape designation. However, the site is sensitive to visual impacts due to prominence from transport routes.	Moderate adverse effect on visual appearance of site and local views during construction. Moderate beneficial impact through redevelopment of the site.	Undertake landscape and visual impact assessment to identify key views, impacts and mitigation. Assess Night Light Impacts.
Noise and Vibration	Residential properties are not within close proximity to the site but are present in the wider area.	Potential minor adverse effect on sensitive receptors through increase in ambient noise and vibration during construction. Potential minor adverse effect due to increased vehicle movements during the operational phase of the development.	Baseline noise and vibration monitoring and assessment of construction and operational noise impacts. As above
Socio-Economics	Employment and economics	Moderate to Major beneficial impact through job creation during construction and operation.	Assessment of impacts on surrounding community's employment and amenity.
	Recreation and amenity	Insignificant as the proposed development will not significantly change the use of the area.	None required.
Soils, Geology and Contamination	Risk of localised soil contamination	Potential major adverse impact during construction as contaminated soils are exposed and managed but net positive impact due to stabilisation of large volumes of gullies deposited on the site	Phase II ground investigation and remediation strategy developed.
	Handling of hazardous materials (e.g. asbestos)	Potential moderate adverse impact during construction.	Assessment of the means of storing, handling and disposing of hazardous materials as part of a materials management strategy (including contaminated soils).
Water Quality and Hydrology	The site lies close to the River Mersey and partially occupies a potential flood plain.	Moderate adverse impacts on site drainage possible.	Flood risk assessment to be carried out in consultation with the EA. Pollution control and water protection issues to be addressed.
	Risk of contamination from accidental spillages.	Potential minor adverse impact on local surface watercourses and/or groundwater during the construction phase.	Construction management measures to be adopted.
	Increased surface runoff.	Moderate positive impact during operation as increased clean water flows to polluted watercourses and less infiltration due to increased surface area.	Establish additional surfacing extent and assess runoff management.
Traffic and Transport	Capacity of local highway network and impact on Rail Network	Moderate adverse impacts from additional traffic during construction but counterbalanced by improved road/rail freight movements during operation.	Transportation Impact Assessment to be undertaken and optimisation of road/rail transfer assessed.
Sustainability	Consumption of natural	Minor adverse impacts on	Basic quantitative assessment

Discipline	Environmental Sensitivity	Significance (pre mitigation) - Potential Impacts	Proposed Methodology
	resources	resource efficiency during construction although materials will be re-used on site where possible.	to be included in EIA.
	Sustainable construction techniques.	Moderate beneficial impacts – reuse and recycle of materials and use of energy / water efficient techniques in construction etc.	Measures to increase energy and water efficiency and reduce landfilling of waste investigated and assessment of HBC building design requirements.

The Scoping exercise also identified potential COMAH consultation issues which have no environmental impact associated with the development as such but which have been considered in the EIA.

Comparison To Previously Approved Scheme

Ordinarily on a re-development project, the baseline conditions are those that prevail at the time the developer comes along with a set of proposals for the site, thus information has to be gathered from first principles. This case is slightly unusual, however, as the site has already been assessed in detail and subjected to a thorough EIA for a similar scheme that was granted planning consent in March 2006 (INNOVIS Strategic Rail Freight Park – Drawbridge Securities Ltd). The previous scheme comprised 7 new rail fed freight warehouses across the site (planning reference 05/00212/FULEIA). The developer who was granted that consent (INNOVIS) planned to secure a range of tenants for each of the buildings but subsequently decided to divest the site to Westlink Group Limited, prior to any development taking place.

Given that the site conditions and surrounding areas have changed very little since the INNOVIS EIA and that the proposals are effectively for the same type of development (i.e. rail related freight logistics and storage), Halton Borough Council (the Planning Authority) has agreed that most of the data used for the INNOVIS EIA is still valid and relevant and the technical assessments associated with this are still appropriate. As such, it was agreed with HBC that the design team could re-visit the INNOVIS EIA and associated ES and re-assess and edit them respectively in the light of the new proposals, taking due cognisance of changes in policy, practice and environmental conditions since the original assessments were undertaken (2004/2005). This document represents the output of that process, which was undertaken in October 2007.

Although the new proposals conceptually do not represent a different use of the site from those previously approved for INNOVIS, there are a number of notable differences between the two schemes that need to be taken into account in the EIA and which needed to be re-assessed in the light of the new proposals. These are:

- The proposed development effectively comprises two large warehouse buildings with no direct rail feed and a single pre-dominant tenant (as opposed to the previous scheme of 7 separately tenanted buildings);
- The WGL proposals necessitate the footprint of the main High Bay and Low Bay building straddling the current course of Steward' Brook so this will need to be diverted away for the building to join Marsh Brook and discharge to the River Mersey further east of its current discharge point;
- The finished floor levels on this site will be higher than those proposed for the INNOVIS development;
- The Reclamation Mound (large mound of untreated galigu waste) will be removed and the galigu treated and stabilised to form a non-reactive non-polluting cement based material. The previously approved scheme did not involve any works with the Reclamation Mound; and
- The WGL proposals will involve car access from the west and HGV access from the east but no rail access to the site (the facility will be linked to the adjacent O'Connor's facility which already has a rail freight terminus). The previous scheme involved bringing rail facilities into the heart of the site and routing all vehicle movements in and out from the East.

Bearing the above in mind, there is a certain argument in terms of EIA methodology to suggest that the approved scheme (which is theoretically fully implementable) should be regarded as the baseline for the site now. From the current site owner's perspective, the proposed scheme creates the most beneficial use of the site and best employment opportunities and the previously approved scheme would not be implemented if this scheme was not approved. As such, for the purposes of this EIA and EA, the technical assessors have assumed that the baseline conditions are those that would prevail as the site currently exists and the previous EIA data have been used

in this regard. Potential impacts, however, have been considered in the light of the new proposals and especially where there are notable differences between the schemes.

Given the timescale available to complete this updated EIA for the new proposals, there are certain levels of detail about the proposed scheme that were not available at the time of production of this report (e.g. precise morphology of the diverted Steward's Brook). In these cases the assessor's have made a number of conservative assumptions. The assessor's have also tried where possible to make use of the detailed technical assessments of impacts of the previous scheme, where the proposed scheme and approved schemes have similarities (or the proposed scheme is less likely to impact upon the environment than the approved proposals hence the assessment of the previously approved scheme provides a worst case scenario). Where these approaches have been used this is discussed in the relevant section of the ES.