

22 June 2015

Delivered by email and post

Mrs C Matten
South Tyneside Council
Town Hall & Civic Offices
Westoe Road
SOUTH SHIELDS
NE33 2RL

Dear Chris

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) REGULATIONS 2011 (AS AMENDED)

- REGULATION 5: REQUEST FOR A SCREENING OPINION

- REGULATION 13: REQUEST FOR A SCOPING OPINION

ERECTION OF NEW TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE (APPLICATION FOR FULL PLANNING PERMISSION) AND TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN PROPOSALS (APPLICATION FOR OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSON)

I write on behalf of our joint client, Muse Developments Ltd and South Tyneside Council, to formally request a Screening Opinion pursuant to Regulation 5(1) and a Scoping Opinion pursuant to Regulation 13(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 in relation to the proposed development of a new transport interchange and town centre masterplan proposals in South Shields Town Centre.

Two planning applications will be submitted to the Local Planning Authority to seek planning permission for the following two separate but related elements of the scheme:

- Full planning application: Demolition of existing Metro station on King Street, Keppel Street Post Office, 3, 5 and 7 Keppel Street and properties on William Street, Burrow Street and Albermarle Street. Erection of a new Transport Interchange, comprising new interchange building, Metro station, bus station, retail unit and passenger drop-off area and separate retail unit with office accommodation at first and second floors.
- Outline planning application for the redevelopment of South Shields Town Centre: Demolition of properties on King Street, Barrington Street, Coronation Street, Fowler Street, Thomas Street, Franklin Street, Charlotte Street, Mount Terrace, St Hilda Street and Crossgate and existing bus stands on Chapter Row. Erection of A1 retail uses (7,390sq m), A3 restaurants and cafés (2,060sq m), D2 cinema (2,745sq m) and an A1 foodstore (6,039sq m) with multi-storey and surface car parking.

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The proposals are for a wider regeneration of the town centre, which will involve a linked application for a Compulsory Purchase Order to be made by South Tyneside Council, seeking to acquire land interest to enable the demolition of some existing buildings.

Given the nature of the proposed development, the applicants accept that the outline planning application for the Town Centre masterplan constitutes EIA development on the basis of Heritage and Socio-Economic impact and will therefore voluntarily submit an Environmental Statement (ES) along with that planning application.

However, in respect of the full planning application for the new interchange proposals, we consider that the potential effects on the environment will not be significant enough to constitute EIA development and therefore this application does not warrant the submission of an ES.

In accordance with Regulations 5(2) and 13(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended), and to ensure South Tyneside Council have the relevant detail to enable a Screening and Scoping Opinion to be issued within the prescribed timescale, we enclose the following other illustrative drawings to provide a context to this joint Screening and Scoping Request.

- Site location plan showing outline planning application red-line boundary (ref 12569M_1005 rev B)
- Site location plan showing full planning application red-line boundary (ref 12569B_1000 rev G)
- Planning application boundaries and proposed s278 works (based on the existing built form) (ref 12569M_1000 rev R)
- Planning application boundaries and proposed s278 works showing proposed development (ref 12569M_1004 rev C)
- Illustrative scheme showing scale parameters of the masterplan application (ref 12569C_023 rev A)

Please note that these drawings may be subject to minor detailed changes at the planning application stage and it is thus requested that the Local Planning Authority issue their Screening and Scoping Opinion on this basis.

This extended letter sets out a brief description of the site, nature and purpose of the proposed development and its possible effect on the environment.

The following team of consultants has been assembled to offer specialist advice and assessment work in relation to the ES for the outline planning application and for the associated planning applications:

- Air Quality: JMP
- Archaeology: Prospect Archaeology
- Ecology: RDF
- Economics: Turley Economics
- Noise: Apex Acoustics
- Flood Risk and Drainage: 3e (outline masterplan application) and Arup (interchange application)
- Heritage: Turley Heritage
- Lighting: Cundall
- Ground Conditions : 3e (outline masterplan application) and Arup (interchange application)
- Planning and Retail Impact: Turley
- Sustainability: Turley Sustainability
- Transportation and Highways: JMP
- Trees: AWA

The ES will be co-ordinated by Turley, who will also take responsibility for general chapters, assessment of alternatives and consideration of cumulative impacts and impact interactions.

Site description

As shown on the accompanying drawings, the application sites (outlined in red) include a total of 6.0 ha of land within South Shields town centre. The two separate application sites are shown on the accompanying site location plans.

The application site for the interchange (full application) comprises 1.1 hectares in two parcels of land: an area of land incorporating the current Metro station and walkway between King Street and Fowler Street, and an area of land incorporating the existing Metro track and land and buildings (to be demolished) to the west of Fowler Street, including sections of Albermarle Street, William Street and Burrow Street.

The application site for the town centre masterplan (outline application) comprises 4.9 hectares in four parcels of land: land around Barrington Street and Chapter Row, the existing surface car park to the west of Garden Lane and south of Coronation Street, land to the north of the existing Waterloo Square car park, and land to the west of Fowler Street, including sections of Thomas Street, Charlotte Street, Franklin Street, Mount Terrace and St Hilda Street. These parcels of land include areas of hardstanding (including roads and pavements), existing bus stands and car parking areas, areas of vacant land and existing buildings to be demolished.

The parcels specifically exclude the listed buildings on Barrington Street.



Aerial view of the application sites

Proposed development

The proposals represent a second phase of the wider South Shields 365 Regeneration Strategy, with a new library and remodelling of the existing Market Place having been granted planning permission in October 2014.



Indicative 3-D visualisation of the wider 365 Regeneration Strategy, showing the elements of the application schemes as well as the recently-approved library and Market Place

This second phase proposes a new transport interchange and town centre masterplan proposals, as shown on the accompanying drawings. The proposed scheme will be submitted as two separate (but linked) planning applications as follows:

Full planning application: Erection of new transport interchange

As shown on the drawings, the proposals entail the demolition of the existing Metro station and improvements to the public realm in this location.

The proposals are for the erection of a new transport interchange, which will be within the parcel of land to the west of Fowler Street and will comprise a new interchange building, new Metro station at second-floor level and a new retail/office unit. The scheme will also include further landscaping improvements within the application site. The building itself will be over 3 floors.



Indicative 3-D visualisation of the proposed new transport interchange, showing the indicative height and scale of the new building

Outline planning application: Town Centre masterplan proposals

As shown on the drawings, the proposals are for a wider regeneration of the town centre, which will involve the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of new retail, café, restaurant and cinema uses, a new car park and a new foodstore with 300 parking spaces.

The buildings will generally be single and two-storey in height, with the proposed car park being over four levels and the cinema being approximately three storeys in height.

This planning application is made in outline.

EIA Regulations

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended) set out the thresholds for developments for which Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is mandatory (Schedule 1) and for which EIA may be required (Schedule 2). An Environmental Statement (ES) must accompany every planning application for which EIA is required.

EU Directive 2014/52/EU replaces 2011/92/EU but is not required to be transposed to national statute until 16 May 2017. The transition arrangements mean that 2011/92/EU is the correct legislative provision for the determination of this application.

Schedule 1

Schedule 1 identifies 23 different types of development for which EIA is mandatory. These projects include major infrastructure projects for chemical and petrochemical industries, energy industries, extractive industries, processing industries, transport networks, waste management, water resources and agricultural industries.

The proposed development for a new transport interchange and town centre masterplan proposals are not considered to fall within Schedule 1 of the Regulations and, as such, EIA is not a mandatory requirement in this instance.

Schedule 2

Schedule 2 identifies further types of development for which EIA may be required. Category 10(b) of Schedule 2 relates to *urban development projects, including the construction of shopping centres and car parks, sports stadiums, leisure centres and multiplex cinemas*. The threshold is if *the development includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development*.

Although the proposals for the new transport interchange are not explicitly referenced within the Regulations, the overall redevelopment of the town centre is reasonably considered to fall into this category and the total area of the application sites exceeds 1 hectare. Therefore, it is necessary to consider whether the proposals will have a significant impact upon the environment to determine whether EIA is required for the proposals.

The first stage of this assessment is whether the site is considered to be in an area which is considered to be sensitive, and then whether the development itself would be likely to give rise to any significant effects in its own right.

Sensitive area

The Regulations define 'sensitive areas' as being:

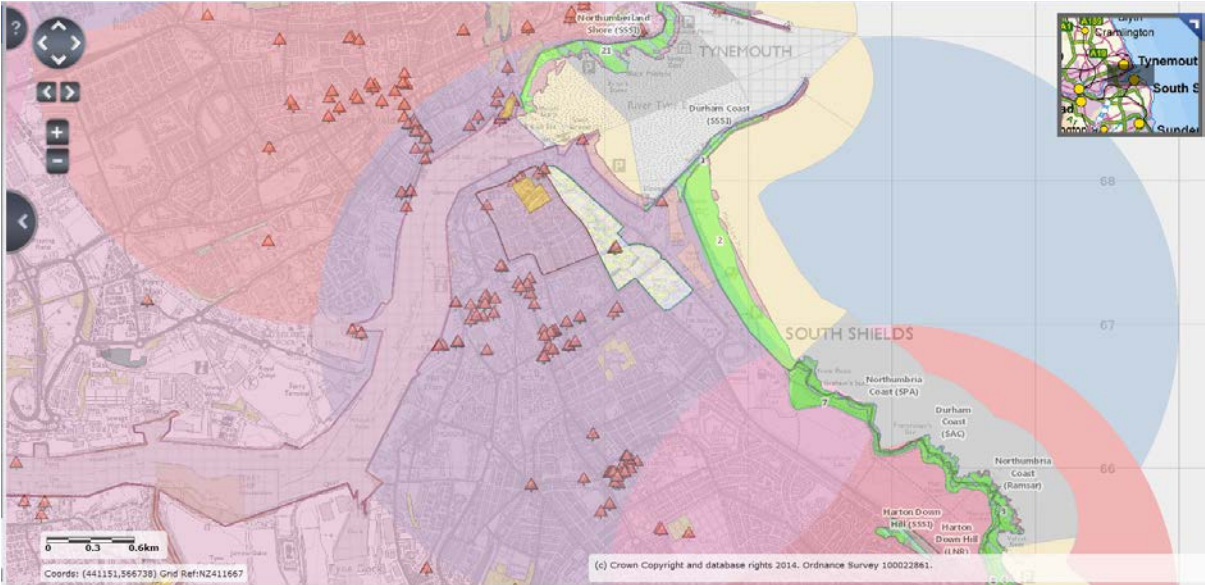
- a. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs);
- b. National Parks;
- c. The Broads;
- d. World Heritage Sites;
- e. Scheduled Monuments;
- f. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs);
- g. European Nature Conservation sites.

A review of the 'Magic' website maintained by DEFRA identifies that there are no SSSIs, National Parks, World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, AONBs or European Nature Conservation sites within the site or within the immediate vicinity of the site. The site, therefore, is not considered to be within a 'sensitive area,' as defined by the 2011 Regulations. However, the following areas have been identified as being within 3km of the site:

- Northumbria Coast RAMSAR site
- Northumbria Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Northumberland Shore SSSI
- Durham Coast SSSI
- Durham Coast Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Clifford's Fort and Roman Fort Scheduled Monuments
- Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Hadrian's Wall) World Heritage Site Buffer Zone
- North and South Marine Parks and Bents Park Registered Parks and Gardens
- Mudflats, Maritime Cliff and Slope and Coastal Sand Dunes BAP Priority Habitats

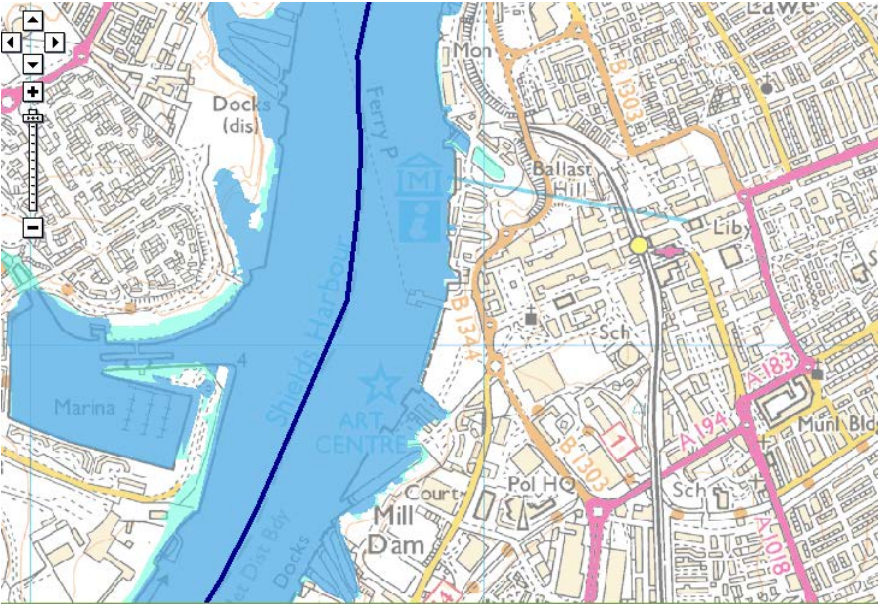
Although it is acknowledged that the areas identified above are within 3km of the application boundary, they are separated from the site by the extensive South Shields urban area. The species which rely on the ecological designations do not currently use the site and there are no direct effects on the World Heritage

Site or Registered Parks and Gardens. The proposed development, therefore, is not considered to impact upon these designated areas.



Extract of DEFRA's 'Magic' Map (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>)

In addition to a review of the DEFRA Magic website, the Environment Agency's flood mapping website has been consulted and identifies that the site lies within flood zone 1 (low risk of flooding from rivers or the sea).



Customers in Wales - From 1 April 2013 Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has taken over the responsibilities of the Environment Agency in Wales.
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Environment Agency flood risk map (<http://maps.environment-agency.gov.uk>)

Notwithstanding this, consideration has been given to the statutory and non-statutory designations that lie within or adjacent to the site.

Of particular note are the designated and non-designated heritage assets that exist adjacent to the sites. As part of the planning application for the new transport interchange, it is considered that the proposals will not have a significant impact upon the setting of these heritage assets.

However, given the quantity of heritage assets that exist within relatively close proximity to the outline planning application site for the town centre masterplan proposals, it is considered that the proposed scheme has the potential to affect their setting.

The more detailed heritage issues will be addressed fully as part of the planning application submissions as a standalone Heritage Statement (for the full planning application for the new transport interchange) and an Environmental Statement chapter (for the town centre masterplan application) and are summarised later in this letter.

Schedule 2 thresholds and criteria

Relevant thresholds and criteria for categories of development listed in Schedule 2 are contained in the second column of the Schedule. The Urban Development Projects category has a threshold of 1 hectare which, in the case of the proposed applications and this Screening/Scoping Opinion request, is exceeded. In this circumstance, it is necessary to consider whether or not a significant effect on the environment is likely as a result of the proposed development.

Whilst the site is not within a sensitive area as defined by the Regulations, a simple consideration of high level sensitivity is not a robust assessment of the potential effects which could arise from any development. A level of judgement needs to be applied to determining whether significant effects from a development are likely. The main factors we consider to be relevant are:

- The location of a development – the more environmentally sensitive the location, the lower the threshold at which significant effects will be likely,
- The physical scale of development – EIA is unlikely to be required for the redevelopment of land unless the new development is on a significantly greater scale than the previous use, the site has not previously been intensively developed, or the types of impact associated with the development are of a markedly different nature to current site uses; or
- There is a high level of contamination or pollution existing on site or likely to arise.

More clarity on the thresholds for EIA development is contained within the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (published in March 2014). The table contained within the Annex of the Guidance provides 'indicative screening thresholds' and, in respect of urban development projects, it is stated that "*Environmental Impact Assessment is unlikely to be required for the redevelopment of land unless the new development is on a significantly greater scale than the previous use, or the types of impact are of a markedly different nature or there is a high level of contamination.*"

The 'key issues to consider' stated in this table are the "*physical scale of such developments, potential increase in traffic, emissions and noise.*"

It is relevant that the application sites relate to the existing Metro station infrastructure and existing buildings and areas of brownfield land within South Shields town centre. It is therefore considered that the sites are less sensitive to change, given that they are all previously-developed land within the South Shields urban area and the surrounding area has been developed over time with various commercial town centre buildings of a similar scale, which include a variety of retail, office, workshop and other buildings.

To consider the potential 'significant' environmental effects in more detail, the applicant has utilised the selection criteria provided in Schedule 3 of the Regulations as set out below.

Significant Environmental Effects

What may constitute a 'significant' effect must be assessed on the basis of the individual quantifiable facts and evidence base available relative to a particular development proposal. It is often not possible to make a Screening opinion based on full information, and thus it is the *likelihood* of significant effects arising which is important.

Schedule 3 Selection Criteria

In considering whether the development is likely to have any significant effects on the environment, Schedule 3 provides the following broad areas for consideration:

- The characteristics of the development;
- The location of the development;
- The characteristics of any potential impact.

These are considered in more detail as follows.

Characteristics of the Development

The proposed development is for a new transport interchange, including a new interchange building, new Metro station and retail/office unit, following demolition of the existing Metro station and public realm enhancements; as well as the wider redevelopment of South Shields Town Centre, comprising retail, café, restaurant and cinema uses, a new car park and a new foodstore with 300 parking spaces. The proposed uses are similar in nature to those that have recently existed on the site and no conflicts or significant cumulative effects are anticipated due to the similarities of these uses.

The application proposals will not involve any industrial processes or result in a significant production of waste or any material pollution or nuisance. There will be no quantities of hazardous substances stored in the proposed new buildings. As such, the nature of the development is not considered to present any particularly significant effects upon the environment as a result of their character.

Location of Development

The application sites constitute previously-developed land within the South Shields urban area. The areas surrounding the sites have been developed over time with various commercial town centre buildings, which are from a range of eras and architectural styles. Within the application sites are areas of hardstanding, vacant land, car parking areas and a number of buildings to be demolished, all within an intensively-developed urban environment.

Given that the existing characteristics of the application sites, which are all built upon, have been subject to modern disturbance, are urban in nature, contain large elements of existing hardstanding and contain uses generating transport movements and associated emissions, it is considered that the sites are less sensitive to change.

There are no sensitive designations on the sites which are of international, national or local importance, but there are a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets close and immediately adjacent to the application sites, which are a relevant consideration and are considered in detail below.

Characteristics of any Potential Impact

The characteristics of the impacts envisaged are not considered to create any distinct or unusual potential effects. The following matters are believed to be relevant to the environmental consideration of the proposal and the characteristics of any potential impact on these matters are set out below:

- Heritage issues
- Socio-Economic Effects
- Townscape/Visual
- Drainage and Flood Risk
- Ecology and Trees
- Archaeology
- Lighting
- Contaminated Land
- Highways and Air Quality
- Noise
- Sustainability/Energy

Heritage issues

The application site for the transport interchange comprises 1.1 hectares and will consist of the demolition and redevelopment of the Metro station for a new transport interchange and the construction of a retail unit. The site is located approximately 43m from the grade II listed Stags Head Public House and is located approximately 34m from 21 Fowler Street, 34m from 4-8 Fowler Street, 10m from Edinburgh Buildings and 15m from 29-33 King Street (all of which are non-designated heritage assets). The northern boundary of the application site also physically abuts Riddick's, which is also a non-designated heritage asset.

Due to the location, scale, mass and design of the proposed development, taken into consideration with the proximity of the above heritage assets and their significance, it is concluded that this development will not have a significant environmental effect in relation to built heritage assets. The impact of the proposed development on these assets will, however, be assessed within a supporting Heritage Statement.

The outline application sites extends to 4.9 hectares. As set out earlier in this letter, planning permission is sought for the redevelopment of South Shields Town Centre, comprising A1 retail uses (approx. 7,390sq m), A3 cafés (approx. 460sq m) and a restaurant (approx. 1,600sq m), D2 cinema (approx. 2,180sq m) and an A1 foodstore (approx. 6,039sq m) with multi-storey and surface car parking. It is considered that, due to the extent of the application site and the proposed development, there is potential for a significant environmental effect in relation to built heritage assets.

An assessment of the likely significant environmental effects to the above-ground historic built environment of the application sites and the surrounding area for the construction and operation stages of the proposed development will be prepared by Turley Heritage. A Heritage Scoping Report accompanies this letter and provides a description of the 500m Study Area, the extent of assets to be assessed, and the proposed method of assessment. This assessment will be presented as a chapter in the ES.

Socio-Economic Effects

An assessment of the likely significant socio-economic effects of the two application sites will be prepared by Turley Economics.

In respect of the transport interchange application, this proposes the demolition of the current Metro station and the erection of a new bus and Metro interchange, along with retail and office accommodation.

Although it is acknowledged that the provision of such a facility is likely to result in a localised positive economic impact for the town, mainly through indirect economic benefits (eg increased footfall and customer spending within the town), it is not considered that the change is significant enough to warrant an EIA, given that the scheme is effectively consolidating uses that all already exist within South Shields town centre.

However, in respect of the larger outline masterplan application, it is considered that the socio-economic impact has the potential to be greater, given the scale of the proposed development, the cumulative impact of the proposed uses throughout the site and the introduction of uses that do not currently exist in South Shields town centre (eg the proposed cinema).

It is expected that the socio-economic impacts of the proposed development for the outline masterplan application will be positive, and, given the scale and cumulative impact, it is considered that this positive impact has the potential to be significant enough to warrant an EIA. As such, an ES Chapter will be prepared in support of this application.

A Socio-Economic Scoping Report for the outline masterplan application accompanies this letter and details the relevant standards and guidance relating to the assessment of socio-economic matters. It provides socio-economic baseline conditions pertaining to the proposed development. It also provides an initial assessment of the likely significant effects that are likely to arise during both the construction and operational (post completion) phases of the proposed development that will require full investigation through the preparation of the ES socio-economic chapter.

It is important to be aware that the ES will take into account the socio-economic factors of the proposed interchange, but the separate proposals for the interchange in their own right do not constitute EIA development for the reasons set out above.

Townscape/Visual

The proposed design of the new interchange building and associated public realm enhancements seeks to provide an iconic building while reflecting and enhancing the surrounding streetscape. It is designed to integrate with its surroundings and create a new modern feel and environment in this part of the town centre within an existing urban area.

The wider outline masterplan application will enable an overall enhancement to the appearance of the town centre by replacing older buildings with a higher-quality form of development, also designed to integrate with its urban surroundings.

The two application sites contain a variety of uses and buildings that will be demolished, which are mainly of two and three-storey height, as well as areas of hardstanding and vacant land. Although it is acknowledged that the planning applications will replace this existing street pattern with a new modern form of development, this will largely be similar in scale and height to the existing predominant two and three-storey form and urban layout of the town centre.

It is considered that, due to the urban location of the proposed development within the context of the range of modern and older town centre buildings, the visual impact and level of change in townscape will not be significant. Longer-range views will not be significantly affected.

It is also considered that there will be a beneficial impact upon the overall townscape, but this is not considered to be significant in the context of the existing development and urban form that currently surrounds the site to warrant an EIA.

Standard planning conditions can be imposed to ensure that the detailed design quality of the scheme is secured.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The sites lie within Flood Risk Zone 1 (area at lowest risk of flooding from rivers and the sea) and the impact of flood risk and drainage on the environment is therefore not considered to be significant.

The site exceeds 1ha and, on this basis, Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs) have been prepared to accompany the two planning applications.

The FRA for the new transport interchange concludes that the development is not at risk of flooding from the River Tyne, the North Sea, groundwater, surface water and existing and proposed drainage systems.

It identifies that there are large-diameter public sewers within the site, and it is likely that these sewers will need to be diverted. The proposals are acknowledged to increase impermeable area on the site, and, as such, some management of surface water will be required, with up to 200m³ of surface water storage that may be required. A number of options exist to deliver this storage, which will be determined at the detailed design stage. These may include the use of oversized pipes or sub-surface storage structures, which are known to be effective solutions for delivering surface water mitigation.

The FRA for the masterplan application concludes that there is a medium risk of surface water flooding adjacent/within parts of the overall site, but this risk of flooding could be reduced/removed during the design of the new drainage systems. All potential risks of flooding have been considered and the overall site is deemed as low risk. It is also concluded that the site is unlikely to be suitable for the use of infiltration techniques for the disposal of surface water to ground and it is considered that surface water flows will be directed to the public sewer network within/adjacent to the sites with flows to be agreed with NWL. Foul water flows will be directed to the public combined sewers with/adjacent to the sites.

It is therefore proposed to connect surface water drainage into the existing public combined sewer either by utilising existing connections or connecting into Northumbrian Water manholes within/adjacent to the site. Flows from the site will be restricted to a discharge rate to be agreed with Northumbrian Water, with attenuation provided within the site.

Again, tried-and-tested attenuation measures may include oversized pipes and sub-surface attenuation structures.

On the basis of the above, it is considered that flood risk and surface water drainage can be attenuated satisfactorily and will not result in a significant impact to warrant an EIA.

Ecology and Trees

An Ecological Assessment and Arboricultural Reports have been prepared and will accompany the planning submissions. The Ecological Assessment identifies that the sites comprise largely built environment and hard landscape with only a small area of semi-natural habitat established on the embankment of the railway lines adjacent to the proposed Transport Interchange, which will be partially lost through the interchange application.

The results of this preliminary assessment concluded that:

- The developments as proposed would not have any adverse impacts upon habitats of greater value than within the zone of influence of the development and these were limited to semi-natural vegetation established on the railway embankment adjacent to the proposed transport

interchange which supports a limited range of common and widespread species. New landscaping would be designed to maximise its ecological value using locally native species or non-native species with an acknowledged wildlife value in urban environments;

- The buildings marked for future demolition were of negligible or very low value to roosting bats given the nature of the buildings and their urban locations along with a lack of previously recorded bat activity within the South Shields Town Centre. Nevertheless, and as a precautionary measure, further bat activity surveys are currently being completed in order to provide further data to allow assessments upon this European protected species to be assessed fully. The first of these surveys recorded a single common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) bat in the vicinity of St Hilda's Church outside of the current study areas and suggests that impacts upon bats are likely to be negligible and that no roost locations would be impacted.
- Potential impacts upon roof nesting gulls can be mitigated by completing building demolition works of "at risk" buildings outside of the bird nesting season. Where this cannot be accommodated, a survey by a suitably qualified ecologist would be undertaken to ensure that no nesting gulls would be impacted by the demolitions and suitable mitigation measures would be implemented using well tried and tested methods, such as avoiding specific buildings and leaving certain areas untouched until they are no longer used by nesting birds.

Consequently, it is assessed that the likely ecological impacts of the development would be negligible. No sites covered by statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations or legally protected species would be affected and the new landscapes proposals offer an opportunity for creating areas of value to urban wildlife.

Therefore, an EIA is not considered to be required on ecological grounds.

Archaeology

Archaeological Assessments have been prepared and will accompany the planning submissions. The reports consider the known or suspected archaeological remains lying within and adjacent to the application sites.

For the new transport interchange application, the Archaeological Assessment concludes that the site has relatively low potential for archaeological activity, primarily due to modern uses, and in part due to low impacts from the proposed development. There is a low potential for pre-modern activity to have taken place, but it is recommended that a programme of evaluation excavation be undertaken in those areas not currently occupied by buildings, which could be secured by way of a condition attached to any planning permission.

For the masterplan application, the Archaeological Assessment concludes that, although there is likely to have been considerable disturbance as a result of modern development and World War II bombing raids, the large area involved raises the potential for archaeological remains to survive in isolated pockets across the site. The potential exists for remains of all periods, but most notably activity associated with the Roman road, the medieval cemetery and post-medieval expansion of the town centre.

As such, the report recommends a programme of evaluation excavation in order to determine the presence or absence of archaeological remains and to allow a mitigation strategy to be developed in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF. It is considered that this could be secured by way of a condition attached to any planning permission. Therefore, an EIA is not considered to be required on archaeological grounds.

Lighting

A Lighting Strategy and plan have been prepared and will accompany the planning application for the new interchange. The proposals will include new pole-mounted lighting to illuminate the interchange building and surrounding area.

The areas surrounding the wider interchange site already include lighting to buildings and highways. These areas are not considered to be sensitive, being within the urban area of South Shields town centre and already benefiting from established street lighting. There are no receptors considered to be sensitive (eg residential properties or ecological habitats) within the vicinity of the application site that may be adversely affected by the proposed lighting scheme, which has been designed to utilise modern lighting and minimise light spill.

In respect of the wider masterplan application, the application is to be made in outline and, as such, the detailed lighting scheme will be finalised in the subsequent reserved matters application at the appropriate time. However, the lighting scheme is expected to be similar to the existing situation, replacing the current established town centre street lighting with modern lighting. Similar to the interchange application, it is not considered that there are any sensitive receptors (eg residential properties or ecological habitats) within the vicinity of the application site that may be adversely affected by any proposed lighting scheme.

As such, the effect of proposed lighting on the environment is not considered to be significant, as the current baseline situation relates to a town centre with no nearby sensitive receptors and existing established street lighting. It is therefore considered that EIA is not required on this issue.

Contaminated land

Phase 1 Ground Investigation Studies have been undertaken for the two application sites and will accompany the planning submissions.

The desk study for the interchange application identifies that widespread contamination is unlikely to be present on the site, although localised areas of contamination may be present in areas associated with areas of made ground and historic land uses. It is considered that the identified risks could be mitigated through appropriate design of the development including construction materials, and landscaped areas, together with the adoption of appropriate health and safety and environmental controls during construction and implementation of localised remedial measures, if necessary, although it is considered that significant remedial works are unlikely to be required.

The desk study for the masterplan application identifies that there is a potential for contamination at the site, although the risk is low to moderate.

Based upon the results of the Phase 1 Studies, it is considered that any contamination can be remediated by removal or by capping/sealing using tried-and-tested methods so as not to impact upon the proposed development. The proposed end uses are not sensitive and no residential development is proposed within either of the two applications. As such, it is considered that remediation techniques based on severing the pathway between potential contamination and receptors can be adequately achieved. It is therefore not considered that the issue of contaminated land is not significant enough to warrant the preparation of an EIA.

Highways and Air Quality

A Transport Assessment (TA) and Travel Plan (TP) have been prepared for both planning applications and will accompany the planning submissions.

The TA includes details of existing transport conditions, collision analysis, a review of existing and future transport conditions, trip generation and distribution calculations and an impact assessment. The TP has been prepared to reduce the number of single occupancy car trips to and from the site, increase the number of staff and visitors using sustainable forms of transport to and from the site, and increase staff and visitor awareness of the TP and the use of sustainable modes.

The TP measures, supplemented by extensive sustainable transport improvements and local junction mitigation schemes, are considered to be effective in mitigating highway capacity issues resulting in an impact that is not significant.

In terms of any potential environmental effects of the associated traffic arising from the proposed development, the main effect would be air emissions from additional vehicles visiting the site.

Therefore, Air Quality Assessments (AQAs) have been prepared for both planning applications and will accompany the planning submissions.

The purpose of AQAs is to consider the impact of the development on local traffic related pollutant emissions, whilst also considering the sensitivity and safeguarding of future occupiers of the site in relation to air quality.

The AQAs focus on key transport related pollutants such as NO₂ and PM₁₀ and determine the air quality associated with the 2013 Base Year, 2018 Opening Year (Transport Interchange) and 2025 Opening Year (Master Plan) situations at receptors located in close proximity to the proposed development site.

It is concluded that, because the site does not lie within Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and the pollutant concentrations at receptors locations are below the National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) Objectives, the impact of development on local air quality is considered to be insignificant and the site is deemed acceptable for the amenity of future occupants and visitors in respect of local air quality.

In light of the above, it is concluded that the proposed development will not initiate any significant increase in traffic-related emissions, and, as such, it is anticipated that no specific mitigation will be required. In respect of the construction phase, tried-and-tested mitigation measures may be required to alleviate any potential generation of dust.

Noise

Noise Assessments have been prepared for both planning applications and will accompany the planning submissions. The Noise Assessments measured background noise levels in accordance with BS 7445:1991 and BS 4142:2014 and provide benchmarks against which potential noise impact may be assessed. There are several residential properties in close proximity to the sites. However, these are all very urban, and already affected by relatively high baseline noise levels.

In respect of the both applications, it has been concluded that the calculated plant sound rating level will not exceed the measured or representative background level at any sound sensitive receptor by more than 5 dB. This may be attenuated by tried-and-tested remedial measures, which may include attenuator specifications, acoustic enclosures or barriers, and attenuated louvre specifications, and through detailed locational choice of plant locations within the development.

Noise from the construction of the proposed development will be temporary and best practice procedures will be employed, including limiting the hours of working, maintaining plant and construction materials and the inclusion of noise attenuation measures if required.

In light of the suggestions and recommendations contained within the assessments, the effect of noise in respect of the proposed development is not considered to be significant to warrant EIA.

Sustainability/Energy

Sustainability is a wide ranging topic that is supported by national and local policy which encourages new development to be more resource efficient, and prioritise sustainable materials and construction techniques. Sustainability Statements have been prepared for both planning applications and will accompany the planning submissions.

For both application proposals, it is identified that the existing sites comprise a number of buildings which give rise to direct Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from energy and associated travel movements.

The construction of the new transport interchange and retail/office unit is anticipated to give rise to GHG emissions during construction and operation. The impacts from construction will be short term and temporary and mitigated through adopting best practice in construction, the use of sustainable materials and construction practices. The operational development will result in a number of positive sustainability impacts including supporting the increased accessibility and use of public transport and more resource efficient new buildings. The direct operational GHG emissions of the existing site building will cease and be replaced with those arising from the operation of the new Transport Interchange and retail/office unit. The emissions of the new buildings will be minimised through energy efficient design and construction in accordance with the latest national guidance and Building Regulations.

The proposed Interchange and retail/office development is not considered to have significant adverse Sustainability or Climate Change impacts requiring EIA assessment based on the information available. The key sustainability and climate change measures incorporated into the development will be set out in a Sustainability Statement accompanying the planning application.

The masterplan application will include retail units, food and drink uses, a cinema and food store and is anticipated to give rise to GHG emissions during construction and operation. The GHG emissions impact from construction of the development will be short term and temporary and direct impacts will be mitigated through adopting best practice in construction. Investment in the creation of a new, more functional, attractive town centre will benefit the local economy, creating a more sustainable community. The existing baseline GHG emissions of the sites will be removed and the operational impact of new buildings will be minimised through a fabric first approach to design and construction in response to changes to the Building Regulations and the national zero carbon buildings policy.

The proposed development is not considered to have significant adverse Sustainability or Climate Change impacts requiring EIA assessment based on the information available. The key sustainability and climate change mitigation measures incorporated into the development will be set out in a Sustainability Statement accompanying the planning application.

Summary and conclusions

It is concluded that the proposed developments do not fall within Schedule 1 of the Regulations and, as such, the submission of EIA to accompany the planning applications is not mandatory. However, the proposals do fall within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations and exceed the site area threshold where EIA may be required. This letter takes into account the operational and construction phases of the proposed development.

Given the circumstances outlined in this Screening and Scoping Request, it is considered that the submission of an ES is not required to accompany the full planning application for the new transport

interchange and retail/office units, as the overall potential impacts arising from the development are not considered to be significant.

However, given the nature of the proposed development and likely significant impacts relating to Heritage and Socio-Economic impact, the applicants consider that the outline planning application for the Town Centre masterplan constitutes EIA development and will therefore voluntarily submit an Environmental Statement (ES) along with that planning application. The applicant also proposes to limit the scope of the ES to those issues where likely significant effects have been identified, namely Heritage and Socio-Economic effects. The Scoping Reports attached to this letter set out the proposed methodology and extent of the assessment proposed.

We therefore request that the Local Planning Authority adopts a Screening Opinion to confirm that no ES is required to support the full application, an opinion as to whether an ES is required for the outline planning application and a Scoping Opinion to confirm the relevant matters and methodology to be included within the ES for the outline application. In accordance with Regulation 5(4), we look forward to hearing from you within the statutory 21 day period.

Should you have any queries relating to the foregoing, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Michael Powell
Senior Planner

enc: Site location plan showing outline planning application red-line boundary (ref 12569M_1005 rev B)
Site location plan showing full planning application red-line boundary (ref 12569B_1000 rev G)
Planning application boundaries and proposed s278 works (based on the existing built form) (ref 12569M_1000 rev R)
Planning application boundaries and proposed s278 works showing proposed development (ref 12569M_1004 rev C)
Illustrative scheme showing scale parameters of the masterplan application (ref 12569C_023 rev A)

Heritage Scoping Report, prepared by Turley Heritage
Socio-Economic Scoping Report, prepared by Turley Economics

cc: Terry Shaw/David Wells (Muse Developments Ltd)
John Sparkes (South Tyneside Council)