

By email
01 December 2022

Chris Davies
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Your ref tbc
Our ref 602898-84
File ref 4-50

63 St Thomas Street
Bristol
BS1 6JZ
United Kingdom

t +44 117 976 5432
f +44 117 976 5433

arup.com

Dear Chris

**Neath Port Talbot Campus – Harbourside College
EIA Screening Request under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning
(Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017
Full Planning Application for the proposed development of Neath Port Talbot
Harbourside College on land south of the A4241, Port Talbot, SA13 1RS.**

Ove Arup and Partners Limited (Arup) has been instructed by the Welsh Education Partnership Company Limited (WEPCo) and Neath Port Talbot College (NPTC) to request your opinion on the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the proposed development of the Neath Port Talbot Harbourside College on land south of the A4241, Port Talbot, SA13 1RS.

The request is made under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations') and provides the relevant information for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to adopt a Screening Opinion in line with Regulation 6(2) of the EIA Regulations.

Application Site

The site

The application site is located 4km south of Port Talbot town centre. The site is approximately 4.02ha in area.

The site comprises unoccupied brownfield land, that has previously been used as part of the docks and Port Talbot Steelworks. Significant areas of the site are covered by tarmac and concrete hardstanding, with topsoil located in a narrow strip bordering the A4241 to the east of the site. A significant proportion of the site is covered by overgrown and dense vegetation.

The site is generally flat, with the central area raised approximately 2m above the surrounding area and is split into to a northern and southern area by an unnamed access road.

To the north of the site exist commercial buildings with residential properties and Port Talbot town centre. To the east exists the road network with the Harbourside Business Park and HMCTCS Port

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

Talbot Justice Centre beyond. At the south of the site, the A4241 road network with disused land and Port Talbot Docks beyond. At the west of the site exists the Port Talbot Industrial Estate, the River Afan and residential development.

Access to the site is gained off Dock Road to the south and off the A4241 to the north east of the site. Port Talbot Parkway Station is located approximately 340m to the north east of the site.

A location plan sufficient to identify the site is enclosed in Appendix A.

Proposed Development

The proposed development would provide new sixth-form college for 16-19 years (plus adult education, apprenticeships and pre-16 programme). The proposed site layout for the development is enclosed in Appendix B.

The proposed student capacity that the campus would accommodate circa 1400 students, 150 teaching staff and 50 non-teaching staff.

The college would comprise a Net Zero Carbon in operation educational facility. The proposed development seeks to create an inspiring 21st Century Standard learning environment to include a variety of teaching spaces as shown in the submitted Preliminary Building Layout Plans.

The proposed development is targeting an operational date during 2027.

Development Proposals

The planning application would seek full planning permission for the development of the new Neath Port Talbot Harbourside Campus, to comprise a main building with associated works including landscaping, SUDs, hardstanding including pedestrian walkways, provision of a car park and servicing area.

The proposed development would be circa 11,981sqm in Gross Internal Area (GIA) and would be 4 storeys in height. This is proposed to be located within the south and centre of the site, with access from the north of the site for students, staff, and the general public.

Car parking is proposed within the north and west of the site, with a separate pedestrian and cycle entrance would be provided at the northern boundary of the site.

The development would be secure, utilising the topography of the proposed site where possible, and with the car parking area providing a secure line to the main building. Soft landscaping areas would be primarily located at the eastern boundary of the site adjacent to Harbourside Road.

Environmental Baseline

The site contains no statutory or environmental designations and does not contain any listed buildings or scheduled monuments. Several assessments and surveys have been undertaken in relation to the site and are summarised thematically below.

Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken for the site in September 2022.

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

The PEA confirmed that the site lies within 10km of two internationally important designations and within 2km of six non statutory designations for wildlife conservation. However, given the nature of the proposals, there is not considered to be any pathway for effect on any designation at this stage except for the nearby Harbourside Law Courts Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), which lies in close proximity.

Habitats currently present within the site are fairly typical of the local industrial context, comprising largely open mosaic habitat over previously developed land, with potential to support flora and fauna of ecological interest. Protected species which may be present include foraging / dispersing bats, reptiles, nesting birds, as well as a notable invertebrate assemblage. Further surveys to confirm the presence or likely absence of these species, the nature of their use of the site and value in the context of the local area have been recommended. This will inform mitigation requirements within an evidence based Ecological Impact Assessment to be prepared in support of any planning application.

In addition, the PEA confirmed that:

- There are no statutory designations covering any part of the Site.
- Two international statutory designations were identified within 10km of the Site, comprising Crymlyn Bog SAC/Ramsar (c. 6.26km north-west of the Site) and Kenfig SAC (c. 6.26km south of the Site).
- Given the nature of proposals to establish a new college campus to service the Neath Port Talbot County area, and the location of the Site in the context of the two designations, there is not considered to be any pathway for effect on Crymlyn Bog SAC/Ramsar or Kenfig SAC as a result of recreational pressures, changes in hydraulic conditions, damage to associated habitats or air quality impacts.
- No national or local statutory designations were identified within 3km of the Site.
- Six non-statutory designations were identified within 2km of the Site. Neath Port Talbot Watercourses is a blanket designation area covering all watercourses within the Neath Port Talbot unitary authority area. No watercourses are present on-site that may be associated with the designation, with the closest being the River Afan, c. 115m west of the Site. Given the distance to the Site and the land use between the watercourse and the Site, dominated by existing industrial units, with a narrow corridor of hardstanding and scrub connecting to the river corridor, there is considered to be limited pathways for direct or indirect effects on the watercourse.
- The next closest non-statutory designations within 1km are Harbourside Law Courts SINC (c. 125m east of the Site) and Lower River Afan Estuary SINC (c. 670m south-west of the Site). Given the context of the surrounding area, a number of the designations are selected for coastal habitats at the estuary and sand dunes, and for post-industrial land which support varied flora and invertebrate assemblages. There is potential for the Site to share some functional linkage with nearby post-industrial sites designated for 'open mosaic habitats on previously developed land'.

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

Following the recommendations of the PEA, a reptile survey was undertaken for the site in 2022 to determine the presence or absence of reptiles within the site. The results of this survey were one common lizard recorded, indicating a small population of this species is persisting within suitable habitat. No other reptiles were recorded during the surveys which is consistent with the findings of surveys conducted in 2019 and are considered likely absent from the site.

Recommendations are made for the scheme to be developed to retain or replace suitable habitats for reptiles alongside scheme design. A reptile mitigation strategy should be prepared which outlines any required mitigation (such as sensitive working methods during construction), compensation (replacement habitats) and enhancement to be delivered alongside proposals.

Flood Risk and Drainage

A Flood Consequence Assessment (FCA) was conducted for the site in 2019. The FCA confirmed several key findings and made recommendations as set out below.

The majority of the site is considered to be in Flood Zone 2, which is land assessed as having a between 1% and 0.1% annual probability of flooding. The site is also categorised as Flood Zone C1, which is defined as an area served by significant infrastructure including flood defences. The site is therefore located within an area of conjectural fluvial flood risk.

The site is not located within a Groundwater Source Protection Zone.

The nearest surface watercourse is the River Afan located approximately 120m to the north west of the site. Port Talbot docks are located approximately 250m south of the site and the Bristol Channel is located approximately 1.4km south west of the site.

No licensed surface water abstraction points are recorded within a 250m radius of the site. No Surface Water Discharge Consents are recorded within a 250m radius of the site.

The site is not considered to be at risk of tidal flooding, and low risk of fluvial flooding with the main source of flooding being the River Afan.

The site is at low risk of surface water flooding. However, a confined corridor to the north western boundary of the site near to existing buildings is shown as being at high risk (greater than 1 in 30 probability of occurrence). Additionally, the southern corner of the site and central region is at low risk of surface water flooding (1 in 1000 to 1 in 100 probability of occurrence). Pockets of higher risk is also evident within this envelope. Overall, pluvial/surface water flooding is considered to present a risk to the proposed development and avoidance and/or mitigation should be considered during detailed design.

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) (2013) indicates that the site may be at significant risk of groundwater flooding. Further site investigation works are recommended in order to fully assess the potential for groundwater to impact upon the site and assess the potential for disposal of surface water via infiltration and/or to a watercourse (e.g. River Afan, Port Talbot Docks).

No specific evidence of public sewer flooding impacting the site was obtained during the preparation of the FCA. However, the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PRFA) (2011, 2017)

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

has recorded sewer flooding incidents in the wider area, and in overall terms the risk of sewer flooding to the site is considered to be low-medium.

Based upon the proposed development end use as an educational facility, the development would be classified as '*Highly Vulnerable*'. Planning Policy Guidance considers *Highly Vulnerable* uses within Flood Zone C1 as being appropriate provided that a Justification Test is applied with consideration to Acceptability of Consequences.

The FCA outlines that flood resilient/resistant construction may be required to mitigate residual risk. The details of the provisions required will be dependent upon the final proposals.

It is also acknowledged that a revised TAN15 is due to be implemented in June 2023. This will be supported by the new Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Flood Map for Planning, which includes climate change information to show how this will affect flood risk extents over the next century. It shows the potential extent of flooding assuming no defences are in place.

The Flood Map for Planning has no official status for planning purposes until June 2023. However local authorities must review their Strategic Flood Consequence Assessments by November 2022 in line with the new TAN15 and Flood Map for Planning.

Flood modelling has been undertaken, and further iterations will be carried out to obtain agreement from the SAB Officer (who we are already engaging with). Mitigation measures already proposed for the scheme include a new culvert providing a new route for flood water to reach the sea.

Drainage

The site utilities review indicates that a 550m Welsh Water drainage asset crosses the northern area of the site. Minimal invert levels have been indicated to some of the site manholes, of circa 300 – 350mm, therefore further investigation of sewer invert levels should be undertaken as a priority to establish the viability of the drainage connections.

Contamination and Coal Mining Risk

Phase I and II Geo-Environmental Assessments were conducted for the site in 2019 and 2020. Conclusions from these assessments are as follows:

- The ground conditions encountered on the site generally comprise concrete hardstanding and soft landscaping overlying Made Ground of black sandy gravel of clinker, ash and slag which was found to a maximum depth of 3.60m begl (below existing ground level). Superficial deposits of Tidal Flats were encountered to a maximum depth of 8.40m begl beneath the made ground.
- Due to the varied levels encountered across the site, it is envisaged that significant earthworks may be required. It is unlikely that natural near surface soil arisings generated on site will be suitable for use as engineered fill on site, subject to appropriate testing and assessment.
- Due to variable and deep made ground (>5.00m depth) and very soft and very loose Tidal Flats deposits, traditional foundation solutions (strip and pad) are not considered appropriate across the site. Therefore, an alternate foundation solution in the form of piling is recommended. This should be designed and warranted by a specialist contractor.

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

- The concentrations of potential contaminants recorded at the site were recorded at levels exceeding the Generic Acceptance Criteria and are at such concentration that they are likely to exceed Site Specific Assessment Criteria (SSAC). Therefore, a capping system is considered likely to be necessary at the site within soft landscaping areas. This is likely to be in the range of between 300mm and 450mm in thickness, to be confirmed with the Local Authority. Further Ground Investigation is to be undertaken to inform the development design.

Trees

In September 2022, a survey of the site in accordance with BS5837 was undertaken to provide guidance on how trees and other vegetation can be integrated into construction and development design schemes. The overall aim is to ensure the protection of amenity by trees which are appropriate for retention.

The survey confirmed that the site is currently derelict with most building and infrastructure demolished or partially demolished. There are spoil, rubble, waste heaps throughout the site interspersed with fly tipping. Weed scrub consisting of Buddleia and Goat Willow dominate the site. There are also Birch Alder saplings starting to establish.

The tree survey and assessment resulted in the BS5837 quality/retention categories of 'B'-Moderate and C - low' being attributed to trees/tree groups.

The survey notes that the 'B' class trees are located off site, along with other low quality 'C' class trees due to either their small scale, defects, and limited current contribution and/or limited future potential. Hence, it is considered they should not significantly constrain nor guide the scheme.

Only low-level scrub has been noted on site. The survey also notes that 3 areas of Japanese Knotweed have been identified.

The removal of the above trees or vegetation may have an impact on the green cover in the first instance, however, the survey notes and considers that the scheme presents a significant enhancement opportunity. Said removals would have no impact on the long-term amenity of the site and will allow for the selection of native species to enhance amenity and biodiversity.

EIA Regulations

The EIA Regulations set out the legislative framework for establishing the need for an EIA to be undertaken and submitted in the form of an Environmental Statement (ES) with a planning application. Regulation 6 sets out the process for identifying whether an EIA is required.

Schedule 1 Assessment

Under the EIA Regulations, the proposed development does not constitute Schedule 1 development.

Schedule 2 Assessment

To be classified as a Schedule 2 development, a proposal must be of a kind described in Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations and either be located within a 'sensitive area', or any applicable threshold or criterion must be exceeded or met.

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

The proposed site is not located within an environmentally sensitive location, i.e., it is not within an area defined as a 'sensitive area' in Regulation 2(1) of the EIA Regulations.

The proposed development does fall into Schedule 2 category 10 (b) 'urban development projects' of the EIA Regulations as it includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not residential development, as set out in Schedule 2 category 10(b)(i). As such, it must be screened against Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations, as described in further detail below.

Schedule 3 Screening

Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations stipulates the selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development, in relation to the characteristics of development, location of development and types and characteristics of potential impact.

Characteristics of development

The characteristics of development, including level of environmental sensitivity, which must be considered for the site are set out within Table 1 below, and discussed in the following sub-sections.

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

Table 1 Schedule 3 selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development

Development characteristic	Potential for likely significant effects	Type and characteristic of effects	Scale, duration and probability of effects
(a) the size and design of the development;	No	The application site area equates to approximately 4.02ha. It constitutes majority brownfield within an existing urban settlement. The scale and design of the main school building would be >1.0ha in size and be suitably screened from adjacent land uses using soft landscaping.	N/A
(b) the cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;	No	A review of NPTCBCs planning applications register revealed that there are a number of major applications (recently permitted) that may have some impacts for traffic and transport in the locality. However, the full cumulative impacts would also be assessed through the Transport Assessment submitted in support of the future planning application.	N/A
(c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;	No	The proposed development would not place disproportionate pressure on the use of natural resources, including water supply. The proposed development would maximise the use of previously developed land through redevelopment of existing brownfield land, while avoiding significant environmental effects.	N/A
(d) the production of waste;	No	Given the nature of the proposed development (i.e. an education facility), it is not considered that there would be major environmental effects related to waste production or management. Appropriate waste facilities would be provided at the site and details provided within a Waste Strategy submitted as part of the future planning application.	N/A
(e) pollution and nuisances;	No	While it is acknowledged that there is potential for some noise pollution associated with the proposed development use as a college, alongside emissions associated with increased trip generation, it is considered at this stage that this would not reach a level deemed to be classified as a significant environmental A Noise Impact Assessment will be undertaken to understand the existing baseline and potential for effects and would be submitted with the future planning application. A Transport Assessment would inform the future planning application, where design of the proposed development would seek to mitigate any potential effects of noise or emissions pollution.	N/A
(f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the development concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;	No	The proposed development is not considered to create undue risk of major accidents and/or disasters, including not increasing the risk of exposure to flood risk within the development and site surrounds. The FCA undertaken for the site acknowledges that redevelopment of the site may also offer the opportunity to improve the management of surface water run-off and reduce offsite flood risks.	N/A

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

(g) the risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).	No	Risks to human health are considered to be predominantly limited to those associated with highways safety and access, contamination and pollution, and potential for crime, including terrorism. All risks would be well-managed through design and construction. This would be set out within the Design and Access Statement, Travel Plan and supporting reports submitted with the future planning application.	N/A
--	----	--	-----

Overall, the characteristics of the proposed development as specified by Schedule 3 subsection 1 clauses (a) to (g) do not signal that the development would on its own necessitate an ES. Conclusions against each development characteristic are set out in **Table 1** above.

To assess potential cumulative effects in accordance with subsection 1 clause (b), a review of planning applications for major developments near the site was carried out.

A number of relevant major developments were identified (referred to as ‘cumulative schemes’), including a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and the location of each is shown in **Table 2** below. In identifying the cumulative schemes, consideration was given to their distance from the proposed development, the scale of the development and project timescales.

All major developments are located between 0.25-1.5km from the application site. As the scale of developments identified are non-EIA development, it is considered that there would be no significant cumulative effects associated with the proposed development. Transport and noise assessments for the future planning application would be undertaken with the existing baseline.

It is considered that the Port Talbot Steelworks would not preclude development of the site and would not create undue cumulative effects at the application site.

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

Table 2 Major planning applications within the site surrounds

Development and Location	Application Status (as of October 2022) Decision Date	Planning Application Ref.	Distance from site (km)	Project timescale
Section 73 Application to vary condition 23 (Approved Plans List) of Planning Application P2014/0995 to allow minor material amendments to development, including amended siting of block units, changes to parking and vehicular access. Original planning permission P2014/0995 is for construction of 3no. detached buildings to provide B1 Business units with associated carparking/servicing and infrastructure. Land At Cramic Way Port Talbot	Approved 23 Apr 2020	P2020/0174	0.25	Decision issued – construction not started
Construction of an access road, flood mitigation works, land contamination remediation works, improving the load capacity of the ground and associated works to facilitate the regeneration of a former brownfield land for future commercial development. (additional information relating to water main and flooding) Harbourside Strategic Employment Site Harbourside Road Port Talbot	Approved 5 Oct 2020	P2020/0294	0.3	Decision issued – construction not started
Internal Power Generation Enhancement for Port Talbot Steelworks - Enhancement of existing 95.7 Mega Watt electrical (MWe) power station and installation of two new boilers (nominally 164 Mega Watt Thermal (MWth)) and two turbines (nominally 65 Mega Watt Electrical (MWe)) each. This project is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). Port Talbot Steelworks, Port Talbot	Approved 8 Dec 2015	N/A	1.5km	Decision issued for Development Order Consent

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

Location of development

As set out above, the site is not located within any statutory environmental designations and does not contain any listed buildings or scheduled monuments. The summary of survey reporting undertaken to date including for ecology, flood risk, noise and contaminated land indicates that overall, the site is not considered to be within an environmentally sensitive location.

No statutory designations (ecological, landscape or historical) are located at the site and as such, the application site is not considered to be environmentally sensitive under the EIA Regulations. The site is also not within any areas of significance (either nationally or locally) that would signal that the site's natural environment is at absorption capacity, and therefore the location of development is not considered to warrant the proposals EIA development.

Types and characteristics of the potential impact

Whilst it is understood that the proposed development may lead to environmental impact through the site preparation and construction phases, it is anticipated that these will be minor and of a temporary nature (for the duration of the construction works). Potential effects are identified as being associated with:

- Visual and pollution impacts through the construction phase;
- Potential disturbance to habitat and ecological receptors on and/or off-site;
- Potential increase in surface water run-off; and
- Construction traffic on local roads.

Mitigation for likely impacts during construction would be agreed with the LPA prior to the commencement of works and appropriate conditions could be applied to any future planning permission to mitigate these impacts.

Longer-term potential environmental impacts, associated with the operation of the proposed development are not considered to be complex and are identified as being associated with:

- Provision of a new educational facility to meet community needs;
- Creation of employment opportunities;
- Increase in municipal waste generation;
- Elevated noise levels associated with operation of the educational facility (restricted to opening hours and out-of-hours community use where agreed); and
- Increased pressure on the local highway network and public transport.

As with the construction phase, the scheme will seek to include embedded mitigation which would limit the potential effects and/or ensure that positive effects are experienced locally.

Our ref

602898-84

Date

25 November 2022

It is considered that the proposed development is compatible with the existing uses at the site and in the surrounding area and is unlikely to give rise to potentially significant adverse environmental impacts which would warrant EIA development.

EIA Screening Request

This request for a Screening Opinion is made in accordance with Regulation 6 of the EIA Regulations. The Applicant is of the opinion that due to the existing use and location of the site, alongside the nature of the proposed development, the development is not EIA development requiring an Environmental Statement, as the site is not within a sensitive environment and temporary and permanent effects could be mitigated through design and construction practices. The proposals are therefore not anticipated to result in significant environmental effects.

Should the LPA agree that the proposal is not EIA development, a number of environmental studies will nonetheless be carried out and submitted in support of the future planning application to ensure that social and environmental impacts are considered and assessed as part of the application process.

Below is the list of supporting documents that the Applicant intends to submit with the future planning application. As part of this EIA Screening Opinion Request, we are seeking the LPA's agreement on the list of documents and drawings that should be submitted in support of the planning application to be considered valid.

- Application Forms and Certificates
- Application Plan
- Site Location Plan
- Full sets of plans (including layout plans, general arrangement plans, floor plans, elevations, sections, boundary plans, landscape plans, access plans, service/utility plans, drainage plans, levels plans and materials plans)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement (combined)
- Design and Access Statement
- Drainage Statement
- Ecological Impact Assessment including Biodiversity Net Benefit Assessment;
- Energy Statement;
- Flood Consequences Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Lighting Strategy;
- Noise Impact Assessment;
- Phase I Geo-Environmental Desk Study Report

Our ref

602898-84

Date

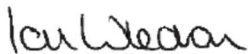
25 November 2022

-
- Phase II Geo-Environmental Assessment Report
 - Pre-Application Consultation Report
 - Planning Statement
 - Transport Assessment
 - Framework Travel Plan
 - Waste Strategy

We trust the information set out in this letter is sufficient to enable the LPA to provide a Screening Opinion within three weeks of receipt of this request in accordance with Regulation 6 of the EIA Regulations.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Ian Wheaton

e ian.wheaton@arup.com

Enclosures

Appendix A – Site Location Plan

Appendix B – Proposed Site Layout