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Planning and Building Standards
By Email

Dear ■■■■,

Request for Screening Opinion Under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 for a Planning Permission in Principle for the Erection of a Green Data Centre and Relocation of Green Space on Land at 1 Redheughs Avenue, Edinburgh, EH12 9RH.

On behalf of the prospective Applicant, Shelborn Drummond Ltd, and in accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations') and Planning Circular 01/2017 'Environmental Impact Assessment regulations', this correspondence comprises a request for a screening opinion in respect of the above development.

The EIA Regulations comprise two schedules of development which identify development for which EIA is mandatory (Schedule 1), and those developments which may require EIA (Schedule 2) if it is likely that the development will have significant effects on the environment by virtue of its nature, size or location.

The proposal does not constitute Schedule 1 development, automatically requiring an EIA, under the terms of the EIA Regulations.

Under the relevant terms of the EIA Regulations Schedule 2, Class 10, includes Infrastructure projects. 10b) includes urban development projects where the area of development exceeds 0.5 hectares. Given an urban development project is proposed, and the PAN red line site boundary (and likely planning application site boundary) exceeds 0.5 hectare in size, the proposal exceeds this Schedule 2 size threshold. As such, this screening letter request assesses the proposal against Schedule 3 criteria. In accordance with the legislation, a proposal should only be subject to EIA where it is likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment.

The Application Site

The proposed application site is located on Land at 1 Redheughs Avenue, Edinburgh (see location plan). The site is within the urban area of Edinburgh and is approximately 5.86Ha in size. The site forms part of the wider Edinburgh Park area and is bounded by Redheughs Avenue to the north, Lochside Court to the west, South Gyle Crescent to the east. The proposed application site is not within a Conservation Area, additionally, there are no listed buildings at the site. The application site is a brownfield site which previously comprised the office building 'Drummond House' which has been demolished in recent years. Approximately one-third of the site remains occupied by an existing car park, which formerly served Drummond House, alongside a centrally located green space.

The site is located 6.9 miles from the centre of Edinburgh, 3 miles from Edinburgh Airport via the A8. the nearest rail connections are South Gyle Station; less than 1 mile to the north, and Edinburgh Park 2.5 miles.



The site falls within Place 19 (Edinburgh Park/South Gyle) of Edinburgh City Plan 2030 Proposal Map. The local of context Edinburgh Park is defined by South Gyle Broadway to the northeast, The City of Edinburgh Bypass to the west, the Scot Rail line running through Edinburgh Park Station to the south.

The surrounding area (Edinburgh Park commercial area) is predominantly characterised by business, office, and industrial uses. The nearest existing residential properties are located approximately 200 metres to the north-east and east of the site. The land to the south-west of the site is currently vacant, however, forms part of the Southern Phase of Edinburgh Park known as the Southern Phase Masterplan. There are multiple recently approved applications associated with the Southern Phase Masterplan, brought forward by Parabola, which primarily comprise of commercial and residential led mixed use development schemes.

The site itself is not subject to any ecological designation and has limited existing biodiversity value.

According to SEPA's flood maps, the site is partially affected by surface water flooding and flooding from a small watercourse.

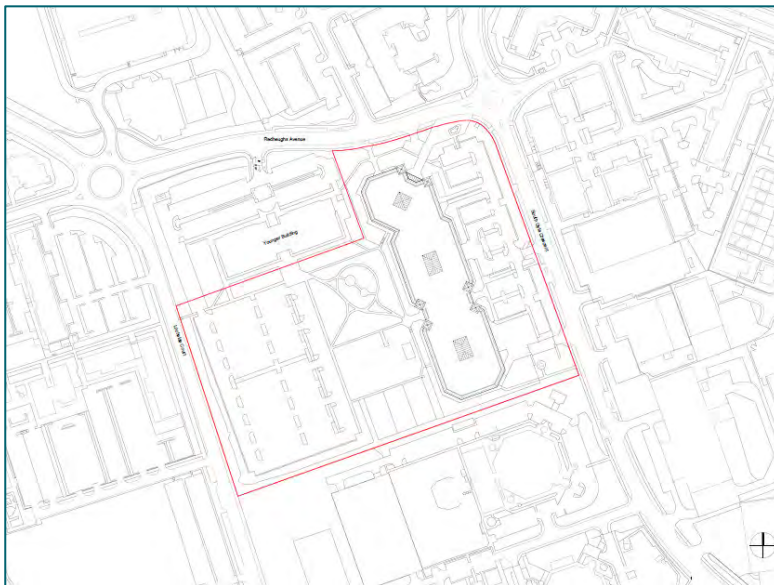


Figure 1: Pre-Application Red Line Site Boundary

Background

The proposed development has been the subject of a pre-application enquiry (24/05561/PREAPP) submitted in November 2024 and comprising a Pre-Application Discussion Document (PADD). City of Edinburgh Council ('CEC') provided a response to the pre-application request 26th March 2025. In addition, a Proposal of Application Notice ('PAN') in respect of the proposed development was submitted to CEC April 2024. It is envisaged that the proposed development will be the subject of a planning application circa August 2025 and will be accompanied by a suite of supporting documents as informed by the pre-application response.



It is also of note that Planning Permission (ref: 22/05659/FUL) was granted on the site on 04 October 2024. This proposal consisted of office development (Class 4), provision of a mobility hub, ancillary retail (Class 1) food and drink (Class 3/Sui Generis) and leisure uses (Class 11), landscaping, car parking, access, infrastructure and associated works. Prior to the submission of this Planning Permission, a Request for EIA Screening Opinion was submitted (ref: 22/03024/SCR). On 01 July 2022, Edinburgh City Council determined that an EIA was not required.

Proposed Development

The proposed development seeks Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) for the erection of a Green Data Centre, and the associated relocation of green space.

Green Data Centres are supported by National Planning Framework 4 ('NPF4') and are recognised as a National Development.

The intention is to submit a PPP application to establish consent for a development that meets the latest requirements of hyperscale data centres, thereby securing an in-principle planning approval. The illustrative design proposed will be based on the most recent IT, power and cooling technology that is compatible with the provision of hyperscale data storage and technical communications.

The site layout for this PPP application will consist of two separate data centre buildings together with associated landscaping, infrastructure, parking and access.

The massing and overall form of the proposed development will be lower than that of the extant permission (ref: 22/05659/FUL) on the site, which comprised six separate office blocks with building heights exceeding 33 metres. The PPP will set a parameter range of approximately 18 to 32 metres in height for the illustrative design. These height parameters are essential to support the technical requirements of the data centre and ensure the feasibility of future detailed design proposals.

The existing centrally located open space will be relocated to the western side of the site, fronting Lochside Court and reconfigured as a new public park that will be fully accessible to the public.

EIA Regulations 2017

As outlined above, the proposal is considered to fall within Schedule 2 of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017, requiring a screening assessment to establish the need for EIA.

Planning circular 1/2017 – Environmental Impact Assessment and the Regulations – is applicable. It is considered that the nature and scale of the proposed development is such that it does not constitute 'EIA development' and does not require assessment in accordance with the EIA Regulations.

The site location is out with any sensitive areas as defined in Planning Circular 1/2017.



Although, it is considered that the proposed development will not require an EIA, the applicant team have considered the potential environmental effects that may arise as a result of the proposed development in relation to Regulation 8 of the EIA Regulations.

The need for EIA of the proposed development should therefore be ‘screened out’ at this stage. The reasoning behind this is set out in the remainder of this letter.

- The proposed development does not give rise to any direct or indirect effects upon the site or the setting of any Listed Building, Scheduled Monument or Conservation Area. Note an LVIA will evaluate the likely effects of the proposed development on skyline views, local views and landscape character.
- The existing road access will have an improved junction to provide visibility to the right and left of the vehicle access and egress to the public road network.
- The proposals will include ecological mitigation and enhancement measures that take account of the biodiversity enhancement requirements of National Planning Framework 4.
- The drainage strategy for the site will incorporate best practise solutions for the collection and discharge of surface water, incorporating attenuation features where it is appropriate and environmentally sensitive to do so.

Schedule 3 sets out the selection criteria which must be applied when determining whether a Schedule 2 development is likely to have “significant effects” on the environment. The three sets of the selection criteria are as follows and considered in Table 1.

- Consideration of the characteristics of the development.
- Consideration of the location of the development; and
- Consideration of the characteristics of the potential impact.

Table 1: Assessment Against Schedule 3: Characteristics of the Development

Characteristics of the Development	Consideration/ Assessment for Screening
(a) The size and design of the development;	<p>The scale, design and mass of the proposals, as well as finishing material and considered landscaping will be key in limiting the visual impact.</p> <p>The building parameters outlined within the PPP application have been carefully designed to meet the functional and technical requirements of the proposed use, while also respecting the height and scale established by the extant planning permission on the site, as well as the proportions of surrounding buildings, particularly those within the emerging mixed-use development being delivered by the ‘Parabola’ Masterplan. The development will sit comfortably within the context of wider consented schemes and the broader place vision for the area.</p> <p>The development will complement the existing landscape character of the area while introducing new</p>

	<p>landscaping features that enhance the environment and provide additional amenity spaces.</p> <p>Appropriate mitigation will be provided to ensure sensitive building design.</p>
<p>(b) cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development;</p>	<p>The site falls within Place 19 (Edinburgh Park/South Gyle) of Edinburgh City Plan 2030 Proposal Map. Edinburgh Park is defined by South Gyle Broadway to the northeast, The City of Edinburgh Bypass to the west, the Scot rail line running through Edinburgh Park Station to the south. The existing area is largely industrial/commercial with elements of residential area bordering onto South Gyle Broadway.</p> <p>The mixed-use development 'Parabola' is located southwest to the site and has been introduced in phases, providing emerging residential community and commercial development.</p> <p>Careful consideration has been given to the siting of the data centre and the new open space to ensure alignment with both the existing and future business, industrial and residential elements of the area. The buildings will be located on the eastern portion of the site, optimising the potential of this area while avoiding any unreasonable impact on the existing and emerging character of Edinburgh Park or on surrounding amenity. The open space has been strategically positioned on the western portion of the site to maximise accessibility and long-term value for the growing business and residential community, particularly in relation to the emerging 'Parabola' scheme.</p>
<p>(c) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water, and biodiversity;</p>	<p>The proposal will be supported by an Ecological Assessment, including the required surveys, and will incorporate ecological mitigation and enhancement measures in accordance with the requirements of NPF4.</p> <p>The proposal will include the relocation of existing landscaped areas and will establish a new publicly accessible open space, enhanced for biodiversity and designed with appropriate plant species</p> <p>Hedgerows as boundary treatments will be proposed where suitable and maintained for the lifetime of the development.</p> <p>Ecological, landscape and drainage reports will be submitted as part of the planning application.</p> <p>The site does not contain any woodland or trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). An Arboricultural Report will be provided to assess the</p>

	<p>condition and value of the existing trees on site. In addition, a detailed Landscape Plan will be submitted, illustrating an enhanced landscaping scheme. New planting will be proposed to mitigate the loss of any existing vegetation and to strengthen the overall character and identity of the area. Furthermore, it is noted that the removal of trees in this location was previously deemed acceptable as part of the extant planning permission for the site (22/05659/FUL).</p>
<p>(d) the production of waste;</p>	<p>The development will seek to minimise on-site construction waste.</p> <p>As far as possible, renewable materials will be used. Solar panels and ground source heat pumps are being considered as renewable / sustainable energy solutions.</p> <p>A waste heat strategy is also being developed to demonstrate how the proposed facility could incorporate systems to capture and repurpose the heat generated by its operations.</p> <p>The drainage strategy for the site will incorporate best practise solutions for the collection and discharge of surface water, incorporating attenuation features where it is appropriate and environmentally sensitive to do so.</p>
<p>(e) pollution and nuisances;</p>	<p>External lighting will be considered carefully in the context of the site's setting. Where required for safe access, low level, sensor-controlled lighting technology will be used, which are highly directional and with minimal external light spill.</p> <p>The existing context is dominated by commercial uses and the proposed development would not require lighting in a form or quantum out of context with its siting.</p> <p>A Noise Impact Assessment will be prepared and submitted with any future planning application. The Assessment will provide a 24hr survey and will provide any mitigation measures inform any future development where appropriate. There are no residential dwellings within approximately 200m of the site.</p>
<p>(f) the risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;</p>	<p>Flood risk has been considered when locating new buildings, supporting avoidance as first principle and ensuring safe access and egress. A full Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy will be prepared and submitted with a future planning application.</p> <p>In addition, an Energy and Utilities Strategy and Sustainability Statement will be prepared and submitted with a future planning application. These documents will outline and advise upon climate change risk assessment.</p>
<p>(g) the risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).</p>	<p>No significant effects are considered likely as a result of the proposed development.</p>

Table 2: Assessment Against Schedule 3: Location of the Development

Location of the Development	Consideration / Assessment for Screening
(a) the existing and approved land use;	The site is currently a vacant brownfield land. The site previously hosted the Drummond Building which was demolished. The site has an extant consent for an office development (22/05659/FUL).
(b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;	No significant effects are considered likely. The site is brownfield land and is considered capable of delivering compliant development with biodiversity, soil, land, water policies.
(c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:	
(i) Wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;	The site is not located within or near wetlands, riparian area or river mouth, this criterion is non-applicable.
(ii) Coastal zones and the marina environment;	The site is not located within or near to a coastal zone nor the marine environment, this criterion is non-applicable.
(iii) Mountain and forest areas;	The site is not located within or near to mountain or forest areas, this criterion is non-applicable.
(iv) Nature reserves and parks;	The site is not located within or near to a nature reserves or parks, this criterion is non-applicable.
(v) European sites and other areas classified or protected under national legislation;	The site has no protected designations on the site and all necessary ecological assessments and surveys will be undertaken to ensure habitats are fully identified and understood. Where mitigation is required, appropriate measures can be secured through matters specified by condition application at a future date.
(vi) Areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in the Union Legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;	N/A
(vii) Densely populated areas;	Whilst within a built-up area, the nearest residential properties are approximately 200m from the site. The development will be of an appropriate scale and massing which will provide a new but compatible use to the area and reprovide green space for public use.
(viii) Landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.	The site is not in a conservation area and there are no listed buildings in proximity to the site. Mitigation measures will be incorporated into the proposed scheme to minimise the effects of the development, a Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Desk Based Archaeological Assessment will be submitted with the planning application to demonstrate that there will be no unacceptable impacts that constitutes EIA development.

Table 3: Assessment Against Schedule 3: Types and Characteristics of the Potential Impacts

Characteristics of the Potential Impacts	Considerations / Assessment of Screening
(a) The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	<p>The site area is approximately 5.86Ha. The proposed development would be no taller than extant permissions and the proposed design is development to respond to the commercial / industrial character of the area.</p> <p>Considered design choices, combined with mitigative planting will ensure that the most notable impacts would be limited to the immediate locality of the site.</p>
(b) the nature of the impact	The design of the proposals has carefully considered the existing land context to ensure the development compliments the existing local character and positively contributes to the wider setting where possible. This includes using complementary vernacular and incorporating priority habitats within the landscape area.
(c) the transboundary nature of the impact	No significant effects are considered likely.
(d) the intensity and complexity of the impact	A full suite of supporting documents will be submitted with any planning application assessing any impact. Any impact is not anticipated to be of high intensity or complexity. Any potential impact will be mitigated appropriately.
(e) the probability of the impact	Any potential impact will be mitigated appropriately. The supporting suite of application reporting documents will outline any suitable mitigation measures as required.
(f) the expected onset, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the impact	Construction impacts will be temporary and short-term. The use is intended to be long term and permanent.
(g) the culmination of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development	No significant cumulative effects are anticipated. Any construction impact will be temporary and managed through an appropriate Construction Management Plan.
(h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.	<p>The reporting has assessed various measures and will recommend appropriate mitigation where necessary, ensuring that any impacts are effectively addressed. The proposal is sustainable and will deliver additional environmental and economic benefits, as outlined in this letter.</p> <p>The proposals will be supported by appropriate technical information to assess any required mitigation.</p>

In the context of these tests, the environmental impact of the proposed development is likely to be limited and not significant.



Conclusion

This screening request includes the required information set in Regulation 8 of the EIA regulations. Considering the above, we consider that the proposal does not constitute EIA development as defined by EIA Regulations. The impact of the proposal on the site and surrounding areas will thoroughly be addressed through the suite of supporting surveys/ assessments/ mitigation referenced above.

For the reasons outlined, it is considered that the proposal would not have significant effects in the environment and does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment to be undertaken under the terms of the EIA Regulations 2017.

It is requested that City of Edinburgh Council confirm agreement that the proposed development does not constitute EIA development and that an EIA is not, therefore, required.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,




Planner

[Scott Hobbs](#) Planning