1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This Environmental Statement has been prepared by the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) project team (see Section 1.5) on behalf of VIRTUS Data Centres (the 'Applicant') to support the planning application for the redevelopment of the Former Sipson Garden Centre (the 'Site').

1.1.2 The Applicant has submitted an Outline planning application to the London Borough of Hillingdon ('LBH') (the Council), which is the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for the Site, seeking planning consent for a new data centre at the Former Sipson Garden Centre, Sipson Road (the 'Site'). The planning application is for:

> *'Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for access) for the redevelopment of the former Sipson Garden Centre site to provide a data centre facility, including associated energy infrastructure, security measures, landscaping, and access arrangements.'*

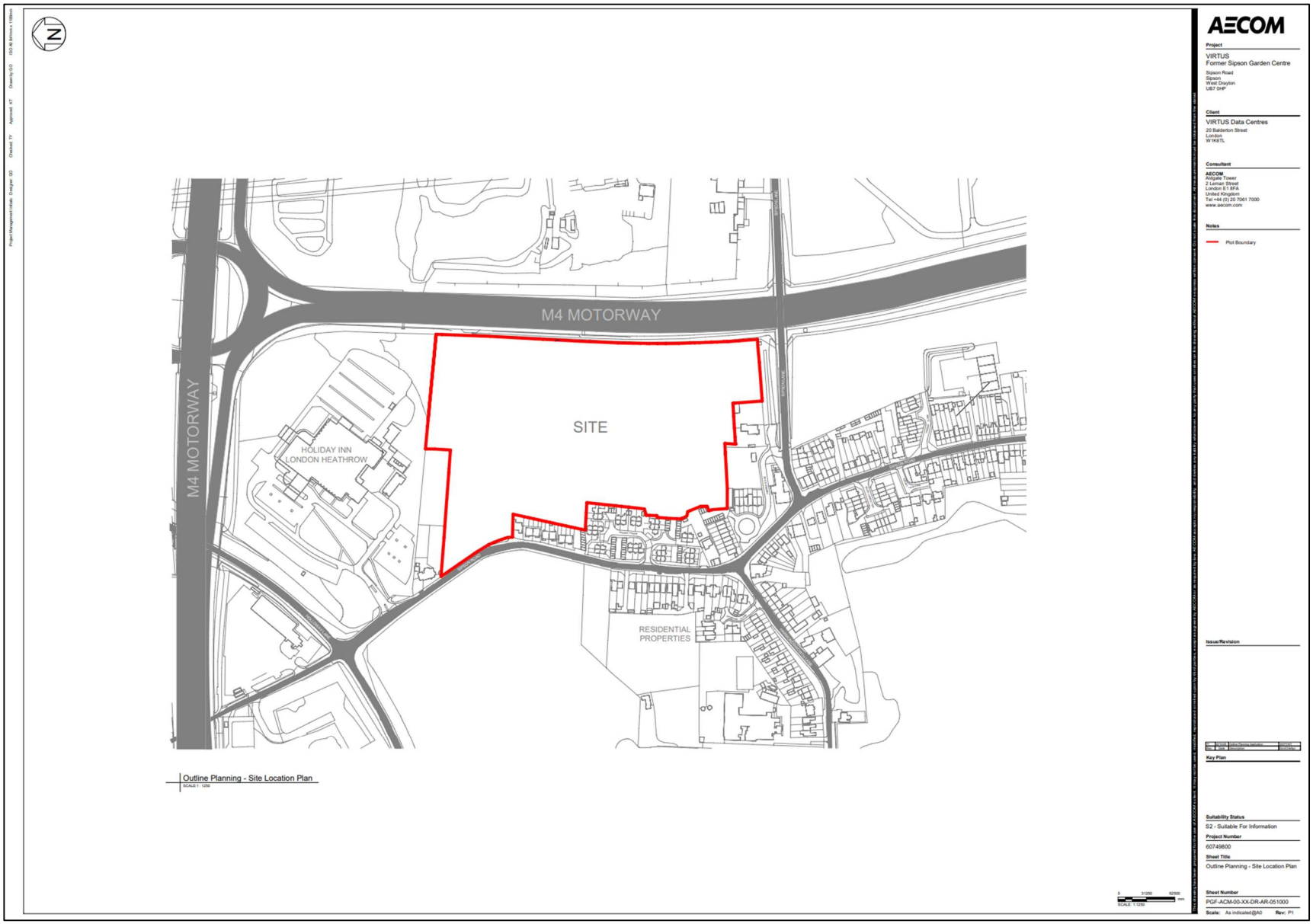
1.1.3 The proposals comprise the demolition of the existing structures on Site and the construction of a new data centre facility with an anticipated operational capacity of approximately 54 megawatts (MW) and would be up to 54,000 m^2 of Gross Internal Floorspace (GIA). This would be broken down into the following elements:

- Demolition of existing structures on the Site (c. 1,265 m^2);
- Data Centre (DC) building (54MW Capacity) (2 storeys of up to 26,000 m^2) and Office / Administration block (2 storeys of up to 6,500 m^2), External Plant (3 storeys of up to 17,500 m^2); for a total of up to 50,000 m^2 (GFA);
- Ancillary Buildings (including substation, pumphouse and water tanks) (1 storey up to 4,000 m^2);
- Landscaping area (approximately 34,195 m^2) – of which proposed as Public Amenity Space (approximately 1,760 m^2);
- Electricity grid connection;
- Car Parking provision of 84 spaces (including, 8no. accessible spaces and 4no. Electric Vehicle spaces); and
- Maximum building height up to 20m.

1.1.4 Further detail is set out in Chapter 3.

1.1.5 The location and the extent of the planning application Site is identified by the red line shown on the Figure below (see separate Figure 1.1 to view full size drawing Ref. PGF-ACM-00-XX-DR-AR-051000 Rev. P1). In total, the Site covers an area of 6.9 hectares (ha).

Figure 1.1 Site Location Plan (Ref. PGF-ACM-00-XX-DR-AR-051000 Rev. P1)



1.2 Planning Context

1.2.1 The development plan for LBH includes the following documents:

- the London Plan (March 2021);
- the Local Plan: Part 1 Strategic Policies (LPP1) (November 2012) (LPP1);
- the Local Plan: Part 2 Development Management Policies and Site Allocations and Designations (January 2020) (LPP2); and
- the West London Waste Plan (July 2015).

1.2.2 All of the above plans are considered to be directly relevant except the West London Waste Plan. It should be noted that the London Plan and both parts of the Local Plan are now more than five years' old, so considered to be out of date.

1.2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) (NPPF) is also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

1.2.4 The 'Next London Plan' is currently out for consultation until 15 October 2026 before Examination in Public in 2027, and adoption in early 2028. The next London Plan is at an early stage and carries very little weight at this stage.

1.2.5 The Site forms part of the Green Belt, albeit a significant proportion of the Site comprises previously developed land following its former use as a garden centre. Planning permission was sought for '*The development of a Centre of Excellence for servicing and repair of Airside Support Vehicles (Use Class B2), consisting of a service building with 7no. service bays and 1no. storage bay, an ancillary two storey office building, with associated hardstanding, parking, a wash bay, plant, solar PVs, landscaping and drainage*' (reference *67666/APP/2023/3721*) on Site. Permission was granted on 7 March 2025 and this remains the extant use on Site.

1.3 Approach to the EIA

1.3.1 The EIA has assessed the following assessment scenarios:

- Baseline / Future Baseline
- Baseline / Future Baseline + The Proposed Development
- The Proposed Development + Wider Committed Development (cumulative sites)

1.3.2 Further details on the approach to the assessment are set out within Chapter 5 – Approach to Assessment.

1.4 Environmental Impact Assessment

1.4.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process that formally considers the demolition, construction and operational aspects of a proposal that may have significant effects on the environment. The findings of an EIA are described in a written report known as an Environmental Statement (ES). An ES provides environmental information about the scheme, including a description of the development, its predicted environmental effects and the measures proposed to mitigate adverse effects: information that is taken into account in the planning decision.

1.4.2 This document is the ES submitted with the planning application for the Proposed Development and sets out the results of the EIA undertaken. This ES is prepared in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations'). A separate Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides a summary of the main findings of the ES.

1.4.3 In August 2026, an EIA Scoping Opinion Request was made to LBH for the Council's EIA Scoping Opinion. The purpose of this was to establish what the Council considers to be the main environmental issues associated with the Proposed Development. The proposed scope of the ES is set out below. At the time of writing, LBH's Scoping Opinion has not yet been issued.

1.4.4 An EIA has been undertaken for the Proposed Development as described in Chapter 3 – Proposed Development. Subsequently, when the Council is deciding whether to grant planning permission, it can do so in the full knowledge of any significant effects predicted and take this into account in the decision-making process.

1.5 Environmental Statement Structure

1.5.1 This ES comprises the Main Report, Figures, supporting Appendices and a separate NTS. Following this introduction and description of the Site, the ES Main Report is organised as follows:

2. Site and Local Context

3. Proposed Development

4. Consultation, alternatives and design evolution

5. Approach to Assessment

6. Air Quality

7. Archaeology

8. Climate change & Greenhouse Gases

9. Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impact

10. Noise and Vibration

11. Summary of mitigation, residual effects and interaction effects

1.5.2 Chapter 2 provides a description of the Site and its surroundings, and Chapter 3 explains each element of the Proposed Development and defines the physical and operational aspects assessed by the EIA. The alternative options considered environmental influences on the design process are explained in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 sets out the approach taken to the assessment.

1.5.3 Environmental issues assessed in the EIA process are then reported in Chapters 6 – 10, with the majority of associated figures provided as separate files (PDF), although some are set within the text of the Chapters. Chapter 11 provides a summary of the proposed mitigation, residual and interaction effects.

1.6 The Project Team

1.6.1 Those working on the EIA of the Proposed Development are shown in the table below.

Table 1.1 Project team

Chapter	Title	Responsibility
1	Introduction	Savills
2	Site description	
3	Proposed Development	
4	Consultation, alternatives and design evolution	
5	Approach to assessment	
6	Air quality	AECOM
7	Archaeology	Savills
8	Climate Change and Greenhouse Gases	AECOM
9	Landscape, Townscape and Visual Impact	Savills/AECOM
10	Noise and Vibration	AECOM

1.6.2 The EIA has been coordinated by Savills with the technical assessments and input undertaken by the project team. An outline of the qualifications/experience of the assessors to demonstrate competency in accordance with the EIA Regulations is provided in Appendix 1.1.

1.7 Availability of environmental information

1.7.1 The Environmental Statement and other planning application documents can be viewed on the Council's planning applications website:

https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/6379/Search-planning-applications

1.7.2 A copy of the ES on USB Flash Drive can be obtained for a charge of £25 from: SouthamptonPlanning@savills.com, Telephone 02380 713 900. A printed copy of the NTS can also be obtained free of charge from Savills.

1.8 Consultation

1.8.1 Should interested parties wish to make representations on the content of this ES, they should be made in writing to:

planning@hillingdon.gov.uk

Planning Department
London Borough of Hillingdon
Hillingdon Council Civic Centre
High Street
Uxbridge
UB8 1UW

1.8.2 Alternatively, representations can be made online by following instructions at:

https://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/article/6379/Search-planning-applications