2 Site and Local Context

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter provides a description of the Site and its setting. Further details of the existing baseline relevant to the proposed scope of the technical assessments are provided in Chapters 6 to 10, including consideration of how the baseline may evolve in the absence of the Proposed Development.

2.2 Site Description

2.2.1 The Site is located in Sipson, within the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) administrative area. The Site is approximately 6.9 ha in size and the northern part of the Site is the former Sipson Garden Centre (which closed in 2011). The southern part of the Site comprises open fields. In 2024, the northern part of the Site was converted into an Airside Support Vehicle servicing and repair centre which remains the extant use on the Site (Planning Ref: 67666/APP/2023/3721).

2.2.2 The Site is located approximately 1km north of Heathrow Airport and immediately to the west of the M4 Spur Road, connecting Junction 4 of the M4 to Heathrow Airport. The Site is c.250m south of the M4 Motorway and is around 2.5km east of the M4/M25 interchange.

2.2.3 The Site is located to the northeast of Sipson village (75m southwest of the Site). The Site is accessed from, and is situated on the eastern side of, Sipson Road with residential properties between the road and the Site. As stated, the Site is situated to the west of the M4 Spur Road, beyond which is Sipson Quarry. To the north, the Site is bounded by a Holiday Inn hotel (currently under refurbishment). To the south, on Sipson Lane, is the Lady Nafisa Secondary School for Girls and residential properties to the west, beyond which lie open fields.

2.2.4 The north and western boundaries are predominantly delineated by trees and shrubs with the rear of residential gardens to the west. An established tree belt is present along the southern boundary, near Sipson Lane. Along the eastern boundary lies the M4 Spur Road with a few trees along the boundary.

2.3 Local Context

Access and Movement

2.3.1 According to TfL's WebCAT planning tool, the Site has a Public Transport Access Level (PTAL) rating of 1a/1b (poor). There are no Public Rights of Way (PRoW) on the Site (see Figure 2.1 below).

2.3.2 The nearest bus stops to the Site are situated on Sipson Road circa 80m to the north of the site access. The bus stops are served by bus route 222 which runs between Hounslow and Uxbridge and operates with an approximate frequency of one service every 10 minutes during the week (Monday-Friday).

2.3.3 The nearest railway station to the Site is West Drayton station which is located approximately 2.2km to the northwest. This provides access to Elizabeth line services between Reading and Abbey Wood, as well as National Rail services between Reading and Paddington. Similarly, Elizabeth Line and Paddington London Underground services are located at the Heathrow Terminals (see Figure 2.2 below).

Figure 2.1 Public Rights of Way Map (Source: London Borough of Hillingdon Website[1])

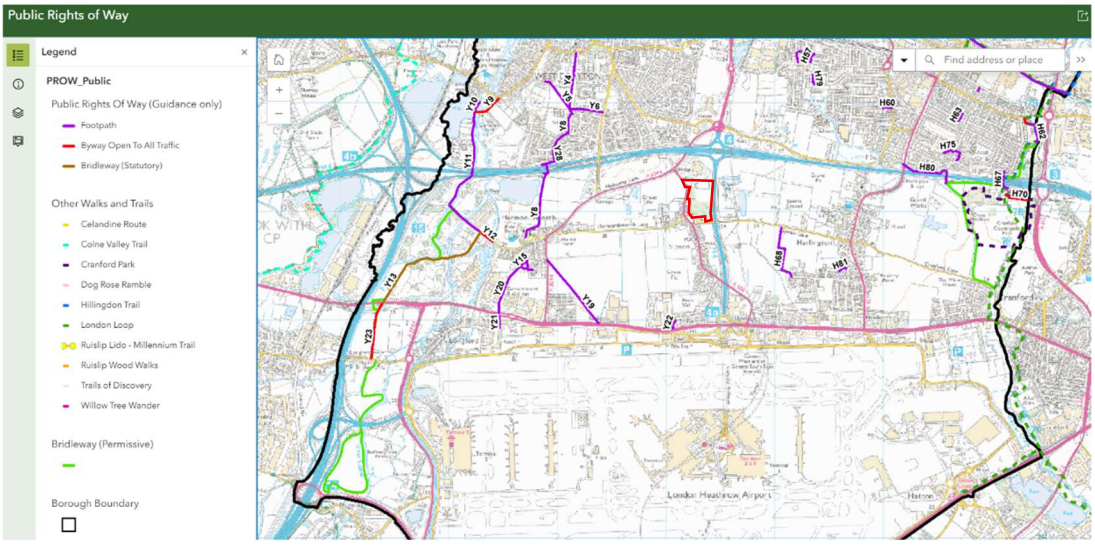
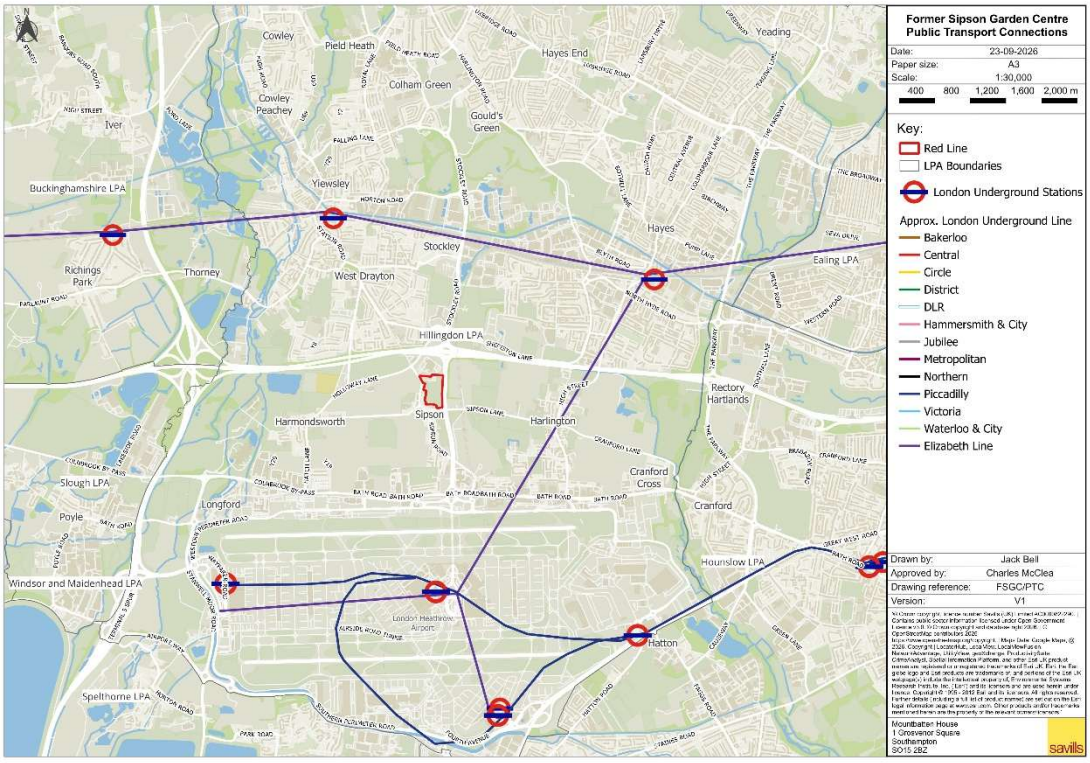


Figure 2.2 Public Transport Connections



[1] Visible at https://pre.hillingdon.gov.uk/public-rights-way/definitive-map-statement

Heathrow Airport Expansion

2.3.4 Heathrow Airport is located approximately 1km south of the Site and there have been well publicised plans for a third runway for the last few decades. At this stage, following the Chancellor of the Exchequer announcing the Government's support for a third runway at Heathrow, the Draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement (June 2026) (HENPS) has been published setting out the policy framework for the expansion of Heathrow. The airport expansion plans detailed in the HENPS currently consist of:

- *'A Northwest Runway having a length of up to 3.5km and forming part of a scheme which, on completion, is capable of enabling at least 260,000 additional air transport movements per annum;*
- *Any new terminal infrastructure or the reconfiguration of terminal facilities associated with the Northwest Runway at Heathrow Airport; and,*
- *Any associated infrastructure, surface access facilities and changes to the strategic road network.'*[2]

2.3.5 Notwithstanding this, Heathrow Airport are only at pre-application consultation stage for the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and have not yet submitted a Development Consent Order (DCO). It is therefore, not considered to be a committed scheme for the purposes of this Environmental Statement. The approach to the assessment of Heathrow is detailed further in Chapter 5.

Agricultural Land Quality

2.3.6 A Site-specific Agricultural Land Classification Report has been prepared to ascertain the agricultural land quality of the Site (see Appendix 2.1).

2.3.7 The Site survey has identified that there are significant areas of disturbance and dereliction on parts of the Site mostly associated with the Former Sipson Garden Centre which are classed as 'Urban'.

2.3.8 To the south of the urban area there is a band of Grade 3a – Good (0.85ha) which then moves into an area of Grade 2 – Very Good (1.96ha) extending west to east across the Site and toward the southeast. The remainder of the Site is Grade 4 – Poor, to the northeast of the urban area, a patch adjacent to the M4 Spur Road and along the southern boundary.

2.3.9 As stated in Appendix 2.1: *"the Site does not comprise a significant area of best and most versatile land and the extent of the disturbance within the Site and the open proximity to commercial enterprises to the north practically limit its future potential to fulfil any agricultural use that would be expected for the best and most versatile land."*

2.3.10 Figure 2.3 and Table 2.1 show the Agricultural Land Classification Survey Results.

[2] Department for Transport (2026) Proposed draft revision to the Airports National Policy Statement: To be known as the Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement. June 2026. [Online] Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/draft-heathrow-expansion-national-policy-statement

Figure 2.3 Agricultural Land Classification Survey Results

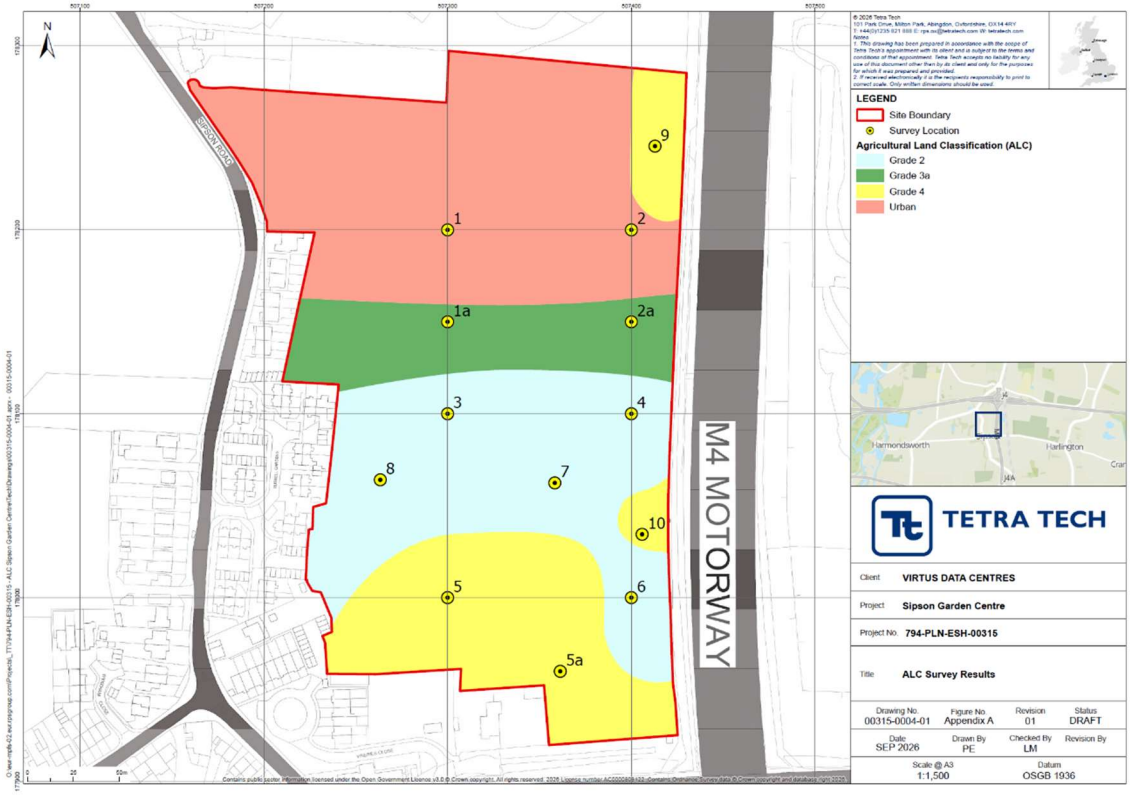


Table 2.1 Agricultural Land Classification Area Survey Results

ALC Grade / Subgrade	Site Area (ha)	Site Area (%)_
Grade 2 (Very Good)	1.96	28
Subgrade 3a (Good)	0.85	12
Grade 4 (Poor)	1.60	23
Urban (derelict)	2.58	37
Total	**6.99**	**100**

Air Quality

2.3.11 The Site is within the Hillingdon Borough-wide Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) which covers the lower two-thirds of the Borough. The AQMA was declared on the 1 September 2003 due to high levels of Nitrogen dioxide NO_2. The Site is also within the Sipson Air Quality Focus Area, reflecting the Site's proximity to London Heathrow Airport.

2.3.12 In the Council's most recent publicly available Local Air Quality Management report[3] annual mean concentrations of nitrogen dioxide were well below the air quality objective (<75%) in 2024 at most locations where monitoring takes place. The only exceptions to this were limited locations, including two immediately downwind of Heathrow Airport. At these locations, annual mean concentrations were still below that air quality objective value (between 75% and 90%).

[3] London Borough of Hillingdon (2025) London Borough of Hillingdon Air Quality Annual Status Report for 2024

2.3.13 Further details on Air Quality and its assessment are provided in Chapter 6 – Air Quality.

Archaeology and Built Heritage

2.3.14 There are no listed buildings on Site. However, within 1km of the Site Boundary there are five Listed Buildings:

- Elder Farmhouse (Grade II), approximately 920m southeast
- The King William IV Public House (Grade II), approximately 150m southwest;
- Lanz Farmhouse (Grade II), approximately 320m southwest
- Sipson House (Grade II), approximately 750m southeast
- War Memorial Cherry Lane Cemetery (Grade II), approximately 650m northeast

Figure 2.4 Heritage Assets within 1km of the Site Boundary (Source: DEFRA MAGIC Maps) [Red – Grade II; Blue – Grade II*; Yellow – Grade I]



2.3.15 A number of Locally Listed Buildings are in proximity to the Site:

- The Plough Public House, located approximately 10m north of the Site;
- No. 228 Sipson Lane (former Baptist Church), located approximately 45m south of the Site; and
- The Sant Nirankari Bhawan (former Cottage Hospital), located approximately 390m south-east of the Site.

2.3.16 *Policy DMHB 7 – Archaeological Priority Areas and Archaeological Priority Zones,* of the London Borough of Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2: Development Management Policies (2020), identifies the Site within the Heathrow Archaeological Priority Zone (Heathrow APZ).

2.3.17 See Appendix 7.1 for the Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment for further information on the assessment of built heritage assets. Further details on archaeology and its assessment are provided in Chapter 7 – Archaeology.

Ecology and Nature Conservation

Habitats

2.3.18 The Site is mainly comprised of modified grassland and some areas of developed land (sealed surface car park, buildings and storage). Smaller habitats around the Site are made up of varying tree species in different habitat formations. There are three small areas of young deciduous trees along the eastern boundary. Two lines of trees are associated with the northern boundary of the Site and are made of deciduous fruit trees. Four non-native trees are present to the northwest corner of the Site, adjacent to the access road.

Figure 2.5 UK Habitats Map (extract from Preliminary Ecological Appraisal)



Protected and Notable Species

2.3.19 **Bats** – The buildings on Site were assessed as having a high suitably for roosting bats due to the building having several holes in the roof and walls allowing access to the interior as well as access points to space inside the walls of the building. All other trees, buildings and structures were assessed as having no features suitable for roosting bats. The mosaic of developed land, grassland and tree lines is suitable for commuting and foraging bats however, part of the Site is lit at night (due to the M4) and therefore, the Site is assessed as having low suitability as a

fly-path lines and foraging habitat. The bat emergence surveys undertaken did not record bats emerging from the buildings on Site.

2.3.20 **Birds** – In terms of breeding birds, no bird nests or notable bird species were observed on Site. There are habitats within the Site that are suitable for foraging and nesting birds including trees and buildings.

2.3.21 **Reptiles** – In terms of reptiles, there are habitats within the Site that are suitable to support low incidental numbers of widespread reptile species including grassland and plantation woodland suitable to support foraging and basking reptiles. Reptiles are not considered to be established on Site in high numbers.

2.3.22 **Great Crested Newts (GCN)** – No waterbodies were identified within the Site or within 250m of the Site without major barriers to movement (e.g. two roads that would act as barriers for potential GCN, if present. Due to the regular mown condition of the Site, the Site is less suitable for the species. No signs of GCN, amphibians or potential hibernaculum were identified during the walkover survey.

2.3.23 **Badgers** – For badgers, no badger setts or signs of badger were identified on Site however, it does contain some suitable habitats that would support badger.

2.3.24 **Other notable species** – Other species including hedgehog, stag beetle and other invertebrates were not recorded on Site. Habitats on Site such as grassland and lines of trees may be suitable to support the presence of notable mammals such as hedgehog. The habitat is of negligible quality for breeding stag beetles or other invertebrates due to the low likelihood of dead wood being retained and due to the mowing regime, respectively.

2.3.25 **Invasive and Non-native Species** – Buddleia, an invasive non-native species not listed in relevant legislation (but is listed in the London Invasive Species Initiative) was identified within the Site with some stands along the western and southern boundary as well as next to the phone tower. Buddleia is also present immediately north of the Site.

Designated Sites

2.3.26 There are no national or local statutory designated Sites on or within 2km of the Site.

2.3.27 There is one Internationally Designated Site within 10km of the Site which is the South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area and Ramsar, located approximately 4.7km to the southwest.

2.3.28 There are two nationally designated nature conservation sites within 5km of the Site which are:

- Staines Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), approximately 4.5km southwest;
- Wraybury Reservoir SSSI, approximately 4.8km southwest;

Non-Designated Sites

2.3.29 There are nine non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the Site, the closest being Stockley Road Rough Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation (SBINC) 800m to the north of the Site.

2.3.30 Further details are provided in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal submitted with the planning application.

Ground Conditions and Contamination

2.3.31 The Site is underlain by superficial deposits comprising the Langley Silt Member and the Taplow Gravel Member. The underlying bedrock comprises the London Clay Formation. Made Ground is not indicated on geological mapping.

2.3.32 Both the Langley Silt Member and the London Clay Formation are classed as unproductive strata; the Taplow Gravel Member is classified as a principal superficial aquifer.

2.3.33 Five active or recently closed landfills are situated within 250m of the Site boundary. The closest landfill received non-biodegradable waste (now closed) and is located 48m to the northeast of the Site. A landfill (licence listed as expired) that accepted other types of waste is 53m northeast of the Site. An active landfill for non-biodegradable waste is located 76m southeast, while an inert landfill is situated 115m to the east of the Site. A further operational waste landfill can be found 128m southwest of the Site.

2.3.34 A Preliminary UXO Risk Assessment by Igne has identified WWII military activities on or affecting the Site and is submitted with alongside the planning application. Igne recommend that a Stage 2 Detailed UXO Risk Assessment is commissioned to clarify the UXO risk to the Proposed Development and should be secured by a suitably worded planning condition.

2.3.35 The Mining Remediation Authority web based interactive map, indicates that the Site is not located within the Coal Mining Reporting Area. This indicates that risks from historical coal mining are low, with no further assessment required.

Noise and Vibration

2.3.36 Baseline sound conditions at the Site are dominated by road traffic noise from the M4 to the east and the north of the Site. Heathrow Airport is also located approximately 1 km to the south of the Site; however, as aircraft activity occurs in an east-west direction out of the airport, they do not have a significant influence on baseline noise levels at the Site.

2.3.37 Further assessment of noise and vibration and their assessment are provided in Chapter 10 – Noise and Vibration.

Surface Water, Flood Risk and Drainage

Flood Risk

2.3.38 The nearest main river is the River Colne approximately 1.8km to the West, and does not appear to be hydraulically linked, due to topography and development in the area. Other watercourses consist of ditches to field boundaries, i.e. a presumed highway ditch along the south side of Harmondsworth Lane to the west of the Site, with a potentially linked section of ditch shown on mapping to the south of Harmondsworth Lane on third party land that has restricted access as it is immediately adjacent to the airport.

2.3.39 The EA Flood Map for Planning shows that the Site, in its entirety, is in Flood Zone 1 which means the Site is at a lower than 0.1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of flooding from fluvial or tidal sources. The Site is also not considered at risk of flooding due to Climate Change (2070 to 2125).

2.3.40 The EA Risk of Flooding from Surface Water (RoFSW) map shows flooding that is likely to occur as a result of rainfall with a 3.3% (1 in 30), 1% (1 in 100) and 0.1% (1 in 1000) chance of happening in any given year. The Site has some areas of surface water flooding. These areas

of surface water flooding are fairly random but do seem to correspond with localised ponding in topographical low points across the Site.

2.3.41 Flooding from other sources (groundwater and reservoirs) is not considered likely according to the Gov.uk Long-Term Flood Risk[4]. The flood risk across the site is set out at Figure 2.7 below.

2.3.42 Further detail is set out in the Flood Risk Assessment submitted as part of the planning application.

Drainage

2.3.43 A Thames Water Combined Sewer runs along Sipson Road. Historically, surface water runoff from the Site will run onto Sipson Road. Review of Site photography shows that there does not appear to be formal Site drainage, with Highway gullies in Sipson Road along the western Site boundary likely draining to combined sewers if Highway drains are not present.

2.3.44 Further detail is set out in the Drainage Strategy submitted as part of the planning application.

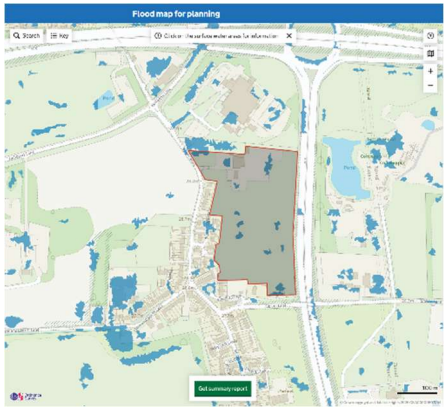
[4] https://check-long-term-flood-risk.service.gov.uk

Figure 2.6 Flood Risk across the Site (Source: Flood Map for Planning)

Fluvial Flood Zone Map with Flood Zone 1 across the Site



Surface Water Flooding 1 in 30



Surface Water Flooding 1 in 100



Surface Water Flooding 1 in 1000



Fluvial Flood Zone Map with 2070 to 2125 allowance



Surface Water Flooding 1 in 30 with 2061 to 2125 allowance



Surface Water Flooding 1 in 100 with 2061 to 2125 allowance



Surface Water Flooding 1 in 1000 with 2061 to 2125 allowance



Utilities

Power

2.3.45 Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) is the electricity Distribution Network Operator (DNO) for the Sipson area. The asset location record drawings received from SSEN indicate that a low voltage and service cables in Sipson Road (within the 22kV network). The low voltage and service cables enter the Site, which serve the former garden centre.

2.3.46 It is currently understood that a new electricity connection will be connected to Laleham Substation, which is approximately 8km south of the Site and is operated by National Grid. This connection would not be available until 2030. Pre-application advice was issued (reference: 67666/PRC/2025/58) which noted that the cable route between the Site and Laleham Substation should be considered within the EIA (see Chapter 5).

Gas

2.3.47 Cadent operate and maintain the gas distribution infrastructure in the area and are responsible for new connections, disconnections and alterations in North London. There are no existing gas pipelines within the Site boundary, however, there is a 12-inch low pressure gas main in Sipson Road (adjacent to the Site). This connects to a 75mm low pressure gas main, also in Sipson Road which serves the adjacent properties

Water

Potable Water

2.3.48 Affinity Water are the statutory water authority in the Proposed Development area and they have a potable water network in and around the Site. This includes a distribution water main in Sipson Road that branches out to serval properties and a 12-inch distribution water main located within the Site boundary. It is located on the eastern side of the Site and runs in a north/south direction.

2.3.49 The asset location record drawings do not identify any connections from the distribution main into the existing Garden Centre, however it is anticipated that there is one.

Foul Sewage

2.3.50 Thames Water are the statutory sewage authority. There is a 525mm diameter foul sewer in Sipson Road to the west of the Site. There is also a 300mm diameter foul sewer adjacent to Sipson Road to the south of the Site. There is a short section of foul sewer entering the Site with an ‘undefined end’ which will require further investigation during detailed design.

Telecoms

2.3.51 There are several telecom operators with existing telecoms infrastructure within the adjacent public highway including Openreach, Virgin Media and Vodafone.

2.4 Summary of Sensitive Receptors

2.4.1 As described in the following technical chapters, a number of sensitive receptors have been identified that have the potential to be significantly affected either directly or indirectly by the Proposed Development. These receptors have been considered in the design and the assessment of the scheme and are outlined below:

- occupiers of existing dwellings and commercial premises in proximity to the Site;
- users of local roads, transport services and public rights of way in proximity to the Site;
- the landscape/townscape character of the Site and its surrounding environs;
- archaeological features both on and in proximity to the Site;
- sensitive receptors that would be introduced to the Site as a result of the Proposed Development, including Site workers and other Site users who would be present during construction; and,
- effects on climate through GHG emissions during the construction and operation phase.

2.4.2 Consideration of whether these receptors are likely to be affected, and if so, to what extent, is provided in each technical assessment chapter (Chapters 6 – 10).