

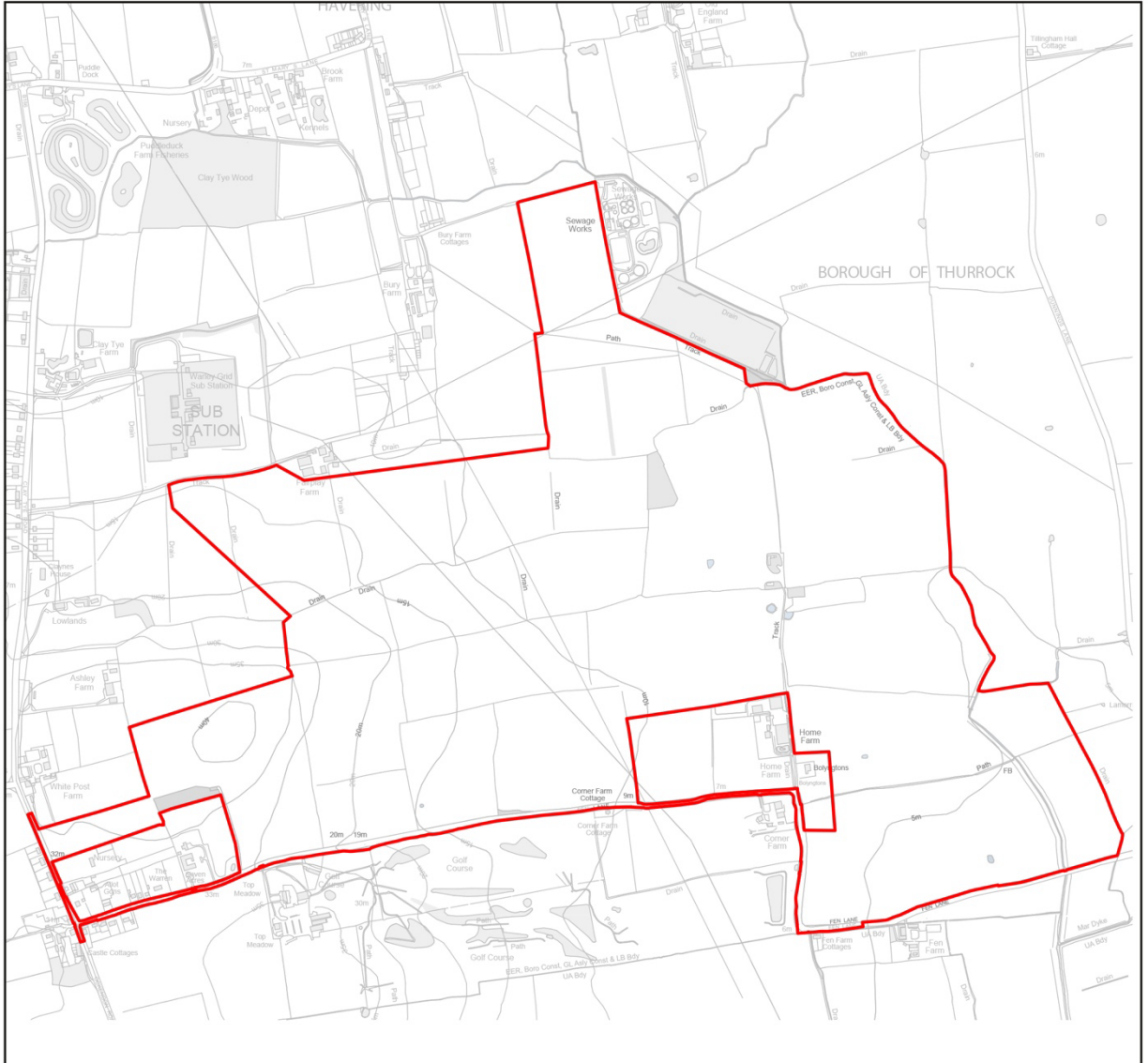
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1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The East Havering Data Centre Campus Local Development Order (LDO) grants planning permission for up to 400,000 square metres of development comprising data centre floorspace (sui generis) plus associated external plant and security, indoor horticulture facilities, district heating energy centre, electrical substations and distribution infrastructure and a visitor's centre. It also permits the construction of new access roads, civil engineering works, hard and soft landscaping, and the formation of an ecology park. The boundary of the LDO is shown on Plan 1.
- 1.2 This Order is adopted by the Council under the powers conferred on it as the LPA by sections 61A–61D of and Schedule 4A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (“the Act”) and pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and shall be known as the ‘East Havering Data Centre Campus Local Development Order’.
- 1.3 The LDO is being promoted by the London Borough of Havering to support the UK Government's aspirations to kickstart a data revolution across the UK and to contribute towards Havering, London and the UK's data capacity and data security needs.
- 1.4 In September 2024, the Government designated UK data centres – the buildings which store much of the data generated in the UK – as ‘Critical National Infrastructure’. It means that data housed and processed in UK data centres such as NHS patient records and sensitive financial investment information, is less likely to be compromised during outages, cyber-attacks and adverse weather events. Putting data centres on an equal footing as water, energy and emergency services systems will mean the data centre sector can now expect greater government support in recovering from and anticipating incidents, giving the industry greater reassurance when setting up business in the UK and helping generate economic growth for all.
- 1.5 The new protections will also boost business confidence in investing in data centres in the country, an industry which already generates an estimated £4.6 billion in revenues a year.¹ Awarding Critical National Infrastructure status shows the fundamental importance of data centres and the government's commitment to ensuring the UK data industry remains secure and stable.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/data-centres-to-be-given-massive-boost-and-protections-from-cyber-criminals-and-it-blackouts#:~:text=Data%20centres%20powering%20the%20economy,minimising%20impacts%20on%20the%20economy>.



 LDO Boundary

EAST HAVERING DATA CENTRE CAMPUS

PLAN 1:
PROPOSED LDO BOUNDARY



Scale 1: 15 000 @ A4



Contains Ordnance Survey data
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- 1.6 The NPPF consultation document (July 2024), which led to the current (December 2024) version of the NPPF, confirms data centres are forecast to support a UK tech sector worth an additional £4.5 billion and 678,000 jobs by 2025. The document makes it clear that planning policies should reflect our broad economic and infrastructure priorities, including supporting rapidly advancing commercial opportunities such as data centres, which will be the foundation of the UK's future.

Objectives and Purpose

- 1.7 The objective of the LDO is to facilitate the development of data centre floorspace to contribute towards meeting the significant need for additional capacity to serve the London cloud region and to create the certainty and stability businesses need to invest in the digital economy which is essential to drive economic growth at the national and local level.
- 1.8 As a secondary objective, the LDO will enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt through the creation of an Ecology Park and visitor's centre and through a programme of habitat creation, tree planting and management, will deliver significant biodiversity gains.
- 1.9 The purpose of the LDO is to simplify planning control and to give greater flexibility to developers, occupiers and other users to develop and use new premises. It is designed to improve investor confidence and allow rapid construction of development.

2. The Need for Data Centres

Government Policy

- 2.1 Digital infrastructure, including data centres, drive growth across the economy by connecting businesses and public services thereby enabling them to be more efficient and productive. Data centres make a significant contribution to the UK economy, generating an estimated £4.6 billion in revenue each year (2021) and forecast to support a UK tech sector worth an additional £4.5 billion and 678,000 jobs by 2025.
- 2.2 As set out in the National Data Strategy², the UK is already a leading digital nation, and home to the highest number of data centres in Western Europe. Boosting the resilience of the sector will help the country top the global leagues for data security and support the UK government in its mission of achieving sustained economic growth.
- 2.3 The data market in the UK (i.e. money made from products or services derived from digitised data) is the largest in Europe and globally the UK now sits behind only the US and China in terms of venture capital investment.
- 2.4 In September 2024, the Government designated UK data centres – the buildings which store much of the data generated in the UK – as ‘Critical National Infrastructure’. This means that data housed and processed in UK data centres such as NHS patient records and sensitive financial investment information, is less likely to be compromised during outages, cyber-attacks and adverse weather events. Putting data centres on an equal footing as water, energy and emergency services systems will mean the data centre sector can now expect greater government support in anticipating and recovering from incidents, giving the industry greater reassurance when setting up business in the UK and helping generate economic growth for all.
- 2.5 In November 2024, the Government published a green paper³ setting out its vision for a modern industrial strategy to deliver the certainty and stability businesses need to invest in the high growth sectors that will drive its growth mission. The strategy focuses on eight sectors which offer the highest growth opportunity for the economy, one of which is digital and technologies. It notes that further additional data centre capacity and access to fast, secure and reliable digital connectivity is essential to enabling economic growth and to reap the transformational productivity benefits of digitalisation and the adoption of AI.
- 2.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024 seeks to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Paragraph 85 confirms that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic

² National Data Strategy, DCMS (December 2020)

³ Invest 2035: The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy

growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

- 2.7 Local planning policies are required to pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for uses including data centres (paragraph 86 (c)) and to recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes planning policies which make provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries, and for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries, including data centres and grid connections (paragraph 87 (a)).

Need for data centres

- 2.8 Data centres underpin the world's digital economy. Transportation, energy, finance, national security, health systems, and other essential services all rely on real-time data stored in and accessed through data centres. The sensitivity and importance of this information shapes the facility's requirements, while the communication needs dictate the data centre's connectivity to the world.
- 2.9 The Covid-19 pandemic significantly accelerated digital transformation, triggering a surge in video conferencing through Microsoft Teams, Google Video and Zoom, as well as online retail and streaming services such as Netflix. As the demand for internet-based services such as these increases so does the demand for data centre space, with one type of service, public cloud, currently accounting for more than 75% of all demand in the UK.
- 2.10 Cloud computing is in essence, the storage of and access to data and programs over the internet instead of a computer's hard drive. Public cloud facilities are physical data centres in specific geographic locations containing servers, storage systems and other equipment. They are designed to guarantee essentially uninterrupted services to support companies' computing systems and data storage needs.
- 2.11 Hyperscale data centres are typically the largest form of data centre in terms of space and power. Historically power consumption in a hyperscale data centre was on average 20-50MW, however due to the exponential growth in the market, hyperscale demand has resulted in increasingly larger requirements with new facilities frequently exceeding 100MW of IT power. This is due to the fact that customers need to be sure that the Cloud Service Providers (CSPs) have adequate capacity in their data centre portfolios to be able to migrate their entire business onto their cloud platform over the deployment timeline.
- 2.12 To make their services readily accessible worldwide, CSPs usually organise their cloud infrastructure into different geographical regions, known as cloud regions. A region is a set

of availability zones (AZs) in a designated geographical area. Each AZ within a region is connected independently to all other AZ within the same region using redundant, low-latency private fibre optic links, ensuring high-speed and reliable communication and replication. These interconnections prevent any one AZ from becoming a single point of failure for communication between other AZs. Each AZ is fully independent, featuring redundant (backup) power and cooling.

- 2.13 Major cloud providers (e.g. AWS (Amazon Web Services), Microsoft, Google) select regions and AZs closest to business operations to provide the lowest possible latency to end-users and customers, thereby achieving the highest performance possible.
- 2.14 Data centre capacity growth globally has been driven by the locations of major centres of economic activity, in the most data hungry sectors. In Europe, data centre hubs are located in Frankfurt, London, Amsterdam, Paris and Dublin (referred to as the FLAPD markets) due to their large populations, their prime and large business districts, being major financial hubs and locations for large corporate organisations, and availability of utilities, technology and transportation.
- 2.15 The physical distance between public cloud data centres within cloud regions is limited by the speed at which data can physically travel i.e. latency, which is dependent on distance and the fibre infrastructure. To keep up with the significant demand, public cloud data centres typically require optical fibre for data transmission.
- 2.16 Proximity between data centres within AZs and between AZs reduces network latency allowing for faster data transmission and improved performance particularly for applications that require real-time processing or frequent data access. Having a low latency network within a single cloud region enables efficient disaster recovery solutions. In the event of failure in one data centre of AZ, backup resources can quickly take over from an alternative removing or minimising any downtime for the customer. For this reason, public cloud data centres must be sufficiently close to each other to effectively serve a single cloud region.

Need for data centre capacity in London

- 2.17 The principal need within the UK market centres around the London cloud region.
- 2.18 The role of London in the data centre market is a result of several factors including that it is the major global financial and business centre in Europe, it has excellent connectivity and secure and reliable power supplies and the largest concentration of IT personnel and data centre expertise in Europe.
- 2.19 The London data centre market has over 1.4GW of live IT power, the second largest data centre market in the world after Northern Virginia in the USA. It grew from its dominant

financial industry, the early adopters of data centres and fibre outside telecommunication switching houses. The banks' decision to open facilities and take colocation in Slough (originally due to the location of both land and power) led it to becoming London's key development location. This trend led to the London data centre market extending outside the London metropolitan area.

- 2.20 AWS operates three AZs in its London cloud region, situated in Slough, Hayes and Hemel Hempstead. Slough and West London host multiple AZs from different cloud providers, including Microsoft, making it the largest submarket in London in terms of built capacity.
- 2.21 Whilst data centres continue to be developed throughout Greater London, Knight Frank⁴ notes that 95% of the end user demand is from cloud customers who require interconnectivity within pre-defined 'Availability Zones'. Therefore the proximity of any new data centre to the public cloud region and its users is a key consideration in evaluation site suitability.
- 2.22 The London Cloud market is now experiencing severe supply constraints within its core AZs as demand continues to outpace available supply. While the London market has secured substantial power for future development, there is a shortage of readily available and confirmed power to meet cloud demand over the next five years.
- 2.23 As noted in the Inspector's Report to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in connection with an appeal against the refusal of an application for a data centre of 84,000sqm in Abbots Langley⁵, there is no centrally produced figure for data centre need at either the national or the regional level. Montagu Evans on behalf of the appellant in this case, calculated the need based on the assessment of need prepared by JLL that was accepted by the Inspector in the Woodlands Park appeal in Iver⁶, projected forward to 2029. It indicated a very substantial growth in the need for data centre capacity across London, with a central forecast of 3,824 MW during the period 2024-2029, 95% of which is for public cloud data centres.
- 2.24 Knight Frank produced a report on data centre development to support an application for a 187,000sqm data centre on land to the east of South Mimms Service Station in September 2024⁷. It suggested an IT demand of 2,350 MW to the end of the decade of which 2,000 MW will be from public cloud providers. It noted that there was only 477 MW of supply announced to come forward for the remainder of the decade (including the 96 MW at Abbots Langley), 165 MW of IT of which was already reserved to end users leaving available IT at 312 MW, significantly short of the 2,000 MW required for public cloud.

⁴ Data Centre Development Report – Land to the East of South Mimms Service Station – Knight Frank (September 2024)

⁵ See IR208 of Appeal Ref: APP/P1940/W/24/3346061

⁶ Appeal Ref: APP/N0410/W/24/3347353

⁷ Data Centre Development Report – Land to the East of South Mimms Service Station (Knight Frank) September 2024

- 2.25 The data in the Knight Frank report is based on known requirements and historic take-up rates (actual leased or developed capacity). This figure will inevitably be lower than the overall 'need' due to the historic constraints in supply such as limited power availability and scarcity of suitable land.
- 2.26 Savills were appointed by Digital Reef to provide advice based on their knowledge of the data centre market in the UK. The data relied upon in the Woodlands Park appeal, which originated from JLL, more closely reflects Savills view of the underlying market requirement driven by strong structural factors which are primarily cloud migration and digital infrastructure adoption.
- 2.27 Savills state that there is currently 1,289MW⁸ of secured data centre capacity within the principal sub-markets in London i.e. where the site has been acquired, planning permission obtained and power secured. A significant portion of this power depends on the new Iver B substation at Uxbridge Moor which has faced significant delays and is not anticipated to be completed until 2029. Delays in power delivery are limiting the ability to meet the current need for public cloud services in London.
- 2.28 It is clear that even if the current amount of secured data centre capacity in London was doubled (based on the quantum of need accepted in the Abbots Langley case) there would still be a significant shortfall at 2029. There is therefore an urgent need for additional data centre capacity to meet demand in the London cloud region and to ensure that the UK retains its competitive edge in attracting data centre investment and maintaining its leading position in Europe's digital economy.
- 2.29 The extent of the need for new data centres is such that additional hyperscale public cloud data centres within existing or new AZs, are the only realistic option for meeting that demand. However, there are few sites that can serve the London cloud region with secured power for scalable growth.
- 2.30 To meet the growing demand, new facilities entering the market are becoming significantly larger. Hyperscale cloud providers now require the ability to scale up to 100MW or more in a single deployment or within a short time frame, prompting wholesale operators to develop much larger facilities, often surpassing 100MW in power.
- 2.31 The significant constraints in power and land availability within core locations are pushing demand for expansion beyond the traditional AZs. To deliver the necessary resilience and acceptable levels of latency to end users within the cloud region, new deployment would need to be as close as possible to existing, established infrastructure.

⁸ East Havering Data Centre Campus – UK Data Centre Need and Supply Assessment (August 2025)

- 2.32 The Slough AZ and adjacent AZs in Hayes and West London have the largest quantum of public cloud infrastructure serving the London cloud region and include provision from all of the major public cloud providers. The search for available power to facilitate new data centre capacity should therefore focus on sites that are as close as possible to the Slough AZ and with good access to the existing fibre network, connectivity hubs and network points such as the London Internet Exchange.
- 2.33 A 'reasonable distance' for hyperscalers will be a product both of actual distance and the quality (i.e. capacity and speed) of the fibre infrastructure. Access to essential utilities, including a Grid Supply Point (GSP), power transmission infrastructure and major fibre routes are always critical considerations.
- 2.34 Savills have looked at the physical characteristics of the European data centre landscape for public cloud facilities across the FLAPD markets. The current distance between data centres within AZs ranges from an estimated 30km in Frankfurt to 58km in Amsterdam. It has grown over time reflecting the increase in demand for live IT capacity and the issues in securing available land and power.
- 2.35 Based on the latency constraints determining end-user requirements, and supported by analysis of the FLAPD markets, a new deployment capable of contributing to meeting the needs of the London cloud region within approximately 60km from the AZ clusters in Slough and West London would be functionally and commercially acceptable. A new site within this search area would provide additional resilience for the Slough and West London AZs and new capacity within the London cloud region.
- 2.36 New deployment should be as close as possible to the Slough AZ which (along with the adjacent cluster of AZs in Hayes and West London) is the largest quantum of public cloud infrastructure serving the London cloud region. Connectivity to a single AZ and provider would significantly constrain the commercial function of a new location.

Power availability

- 2.37 Digital Reef has secured a contract with UKPN to deliver a minimum of 160MVA from existing Warley GSP by 2029 and a total of 600MVA by 2033 from the proposed new Warley GSP. Consideration has therefore been given to whether there are any other GSPs closer to the Slough AZ that could deliver the same amount of power within the same or better timescale as provided for in the agreement between Digital Reef and UKPN.
- 2.38 By the time the first tranche of power is available in 2029, the construction programme provided by Digital Reef indicates that the first two data centres will be completed and the construction of two further data centres will be well underway. As such, Digital Reef's proposal will be able to begin to contribute to meeting the identified need as soon as the

power becomes available in 2029. It follows that delay to the delivery of power will have serious negative implications on the delivery of operational data centre floorspace to meet identified needs.

- 2.39 Noveus, a utility infrastructure specialist advising Digital Reef, has undertaken an assessment of the status of each GSP within a reasonable distance of the Slough Availability Zone, to ascertain what power, if any, would be available now and what is anticipated to be available in 2029 on the basis of upgrades to existing GSPs or planned new GSPs.
- 2.40 It should be noted that power networks and the application system are dynamic and can change as a result of the number and type of applications for connections and the acceptance of connection offers. The information obtained by Noveus reflects the position at 29th January 2025 when new connection applications were paused pending the outcome of Connections Reform.
- 2.41 Connections Reform refers to the major overhaul of the electricity transmission connections process being led by the National Energy System Operator (NESO) with an objective of creating a connections queue aligned with the government's Clean Power 2030 Action Plan. Currently the number of contracted applicants and capacity for electricity connections for generation projects far exceed the requirement to meet the clean generation capacity required by 2030 (200-225GW) and net zero requirements for 2035/2050. These reforms aim to remove unviable projects from the queue and prioritise those critical to delivering clean power and wider industrial decarbonisation.
- 2.42 At January 2025 there was no GSP closer to the Slough AZ that had sufficient power to support a hyperscale facility by 2029 than that already contracted to Digital Reef at Warley. The only power available that was not already allocated to customers was at Highbury GSP and that only had 10-20 MVA, well below the minimum required for a hyperscale data centre.
- 2.43 The timescales for constructing a new GSP or upgrading the transmission or distribution network are significant. It can take from between just under five years to nearly eight years from entering into a contract before power would be available. This includes time for acquisition of land, designing the layout and infrastructure, securing planning permission (or other form of approval) and completing the works.
- 2.44 Upgrades to the existing network or GSP may be able to be completed in a shorter timeframe than the provision of a new GSP, however this would be dependent on lead in times for plant and equipment, land acquisition and the ability to take network outages as well as the condition of the existing GSP, its equipment, voltage and environmental factors. It is understood that an upgrade to a GSP to provide significant power would take almost five years from the initial application to transmission or distribution operators.

- 2.45 Whilst it is acknowledged that the electricity transmission connections process is currently the subject of a major overhaul through Connections Reform, it is not anticipated that the amount of power available at 2029 will materially change given the lead in time for the necessary upgrade to an alternative GSP to create the resilience required by a data centre.
- 2.46 Prior to Connections Reform there was a well-established secondary market for NESO power connections with parties trading their agreement for a grid connection. However power contracts with Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) such as UKPN are dedicated to the development site and cannot be changed to another site. The power contracts can change hands with the sale of a site, but the power remains dedicated to the development site. There is therefore no prospect of the 600MVA secured by Digital Reef being traded for use on another site.
- 2.47 As there are no GSPs closer to the Slough AZ with sufficient available power at 2029 than Warley, the search area for potential alternative sites was centred on the Warley GSP.

Consideration of Alternatives to the Proposed Development

Alternative Site Assessment

- 2.48 Savills undertook an assessment of alternative sites that could accommodate a hyperscale data centre campus of approximately 340,000 sqm, associated infrastructure and ancillary floorspace on behalf of Digital Reef.
- 2.49 A staged approach was undertaken to the consideration of alternative sites. The first stage involved the identification of a Focused Search Area (FSA) based on the established need for data centre floorspace and specific locational requirements including the availability of power and fibre.
- 2.50 As energy is lost as it travels, a shorter cable route minimises risk and optimises efficiency. Data centres should therefore be as near to the GSP as possible to provide maximum resilience and security for the power supplies. Whilst the commercially preferred maximum separation distance between a data centre and relevant GSP would be up to 5km, a distance of 10km has been used in the consideration of alternative sites for added robustness. This search area was accepted by Hertsmere Borough Council in relation to proposals for a 187,000sqm data centre on land to the east of South Mimms Service Station.⁹ The FSA for the assessment of alternative sites was therefore defined as land within 10km of Warley GSP.

⁹ Hertsmere Borough Council planning application reference 24/1152/OUTEI

- 2.51 A search for sites was undertaken by Savills of land within the FSA across each of the five local authorities¹⁰ based on publicly available data, land owned by LBH, sites that the LPA had been made aware of during the early stages of preparing a new Local Plan and sites that were being actively marketed.
- 2.52 Savills initially assessed all of the identified sites against a series of minimum requirements covering issues such as size, shape and topography, flood risk, power, fibre, ownership and availability.
- 2.53 Of the 16 sites identified within the FSA, 12 did not meet the minimum requirements and were therefore not further assessed.
- 2.54 Of the remaining sites, Savills concluded that there were no available sites outside the Green Belt nor any sites within the Green Belt which comprised to any material extent previously developed land, or sites that would qualify as Grey Belt.
- 2.55 It was concluded that the only site that is demonstrably available and potentially suitable, is the proposed development site.

¹⁰ London Borough of Havering, Thurrock Council, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Brentwood Borough Council and Basildon Council

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied and is a material consideration in planning decisions. The main material policies of the NPPF are set out below.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 3.2 Chapter 6 of the NPPF specifies the need to build a strong, competitive economy. Paragraph 85 states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, with paragraph 86 specifically requiring planning policies to identify suitable locations for data centres.
- 3.3 NPPF makes it clear that the specific locational requirements of different sectors should be addressed. Paragraph 87 requires provision to be made for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries, and for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries (including data centres and grid connections).
- 3.4 Chapter 10 states that significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. Paragraph 110 recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and this should be taken into account in decision-making.
- 3.5 Paragraph 115 requires sustainable transport modes to be prioritised taking account of the vision of the site, the type of development and its location and for safe and suitable access to the site to be achieved for all users. Priority should be given to pedestrian and cycle movements within the scheme and with neighbouring areas and access to high quality public transport should be facilitated as far as possible (paragraph 117).
- 3.6 The need to make effective use of land is set out in Chapter 13. Paragraph 129 states that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account a range of factors including local market conditions and viability, the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services, the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting or of promoting regeneration and change and the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.
- 3.7 Chapter 13 confirms the importance the Government attaches to protecting Green Belts by preventing urban sprawl and therefore keeping land permanently open.
- 3.8 The five purposes of Green Belts are (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; (c) to assist in

- safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and (e) to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (paragraph 143).
- 3.9 Local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance beneficial uses of land within the Green Belt including providing opportunities to provide access, sport and recreation, to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity, or to improve damaged and derelict land (paragraph 151).
- 3.10 National Forest and Community Forests, which offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns and cities, are covered by paragraph 152. It confirms that the National Forest Strategy and an approved Community Forest Plan may be a material consideration in deciding planning applications. Proposals for development with National or Community Forests in the Green Belt should be subject to normal policies for controlling development in Green Belts.
- 3.11 When considering planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 153 makes it clear that '*very special circumstances*' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 3.12 Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the stated exceptions listed in paragraph 154 apply. These include buildings for agriculture and forestry, facilities including buildings for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments, the extension or replacement of a building, limited infilling in villages, limited affordable housing for local community needs, limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land.
- 3.13 Other forms of development including mineral extraction, engineering operations, local transport infrastructure, the reuse of buildings and material changes in the use of land or development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order of Neighbourhood Development Order would also not be inappropriate provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 3.14 Paragraph 155 confirms that commercial development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where it would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan, there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed and the development would be in a sustainable location.
- 3.15 Chapter 15 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the local environment including by recognising the economic and other benefits of the best and

most versatile agricultural land and of trees and woodland and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity (paragraph 187).

- 3.16 Paragraph 193 makes it clear that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

Draft National Planning Policy Framework (2025)

- 3.17 Consultation on the draft NPPF published in December 2025 is currently underway and therefore it attracts very limited weight in decisions on development proposals in England.

The London Plan 2021

- 3.18 The main material policies of the London Plan are considered to be as follows.
- 3.19 In order to conserve and enhance London's global economic competitiveness, Policy GG5, growing a good economy, states that those involved in the planning and development must ensure that London's economy diversifies and therefore the benefits of economic success are shared more equitably across London. There is a need to plan for sufficient employment and industrial space in the right locations to support economic development and regeneration; ensure that London continues to provide leadership in innovation, research, policy and ideas; and identify the benefits of a transition to a low carbon circular economy in order to strengthen London economic success.
- 3.20 Policy GG6, increasing efficiency and resilience, states that those involved in planning and development need to help London to become a more efficient and resilient city by improving energy efficiency and supporting the move towards a low carbon circular economy.
- 3.21 Policy E4, land for industry, logistics and services to support London's economic function, states that sufficient supply of land and premises in different parts of London should be provided and maintained in order to meet current and future demands for industrial and related functions.
- 3.22 Policy G2, London's Green Belt, sets out that Green Belt should be protected from inappropriate development, which defined in Paragraph 147 in the NPPF as harmful to the Green Belt and should only be approved in very exceptional circumstances.
- 3.23 Policy G5 states that major development proposals should contribute to the greening of London by including urban greening as a fundamental element of site and building design, and by incorporating measures such as high-quality landscaping (including trees), green roofs, green walls and nature-based sustainable drainage.

- 3.24 Policy G6 requires Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation to be protected. Where harm is unavoidable and where the benefits of the development proposal clearly outweigh the impacts on biodiversity, the mitigation hierarchy shall be applied. In the first instance, damage to the significant ecological features should be avoided, if this is not possible, the overall spatial impact shall be minimised and mitigated through improvements to the quality and management of the rest of the site. If this is not possible, off site compensation of better biodiversity value shall be delivered.
- 3.25 Policy G6 also states that development proposals should manage impacts on biodiversity and aim to secure net biodiversity gain and those which reduce deficiencies in access to nature should be considered positively.
- 3.26 Policy G7 requires existing trees of value to be retained. Where tree removal is required, there should be adequate replacement based on the existing value of the benefits of the trees removed.
- 3.27 Policy HC1 confirms that development proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings, should conserve their significance by being sympathetic to the assets' significance and appreciation within their surroundings. The cumulative impacts of incremental change from development on heritage assets and their settings should also be actively managed. Development proposals should avoid harm and identify enhancement opportunities by integrating heritage considerations early on in the design process.
- 3.28 Assets of archaeological significance should be identified and harm avoided or minimised through design and appropriate mitigation (Policy HC1).
- 3.29 Policy D3 seeks to make the best use of land by following a design-led approach that optimises the capacity of sites. Development should respond to a site's context and capacity for growth and existing and planned supporting infrastructure. Development proposals should encourage and facilitate active travel with convenient and inclusive pedestrian and cycling routes, crossing points, cycle parking and legible entrances to buildings. Proposals should also aim for high sustainability standards and take into account the principles of the circular economy.
- 3.30 Delivering good design is also covered by Policy D4. It confirms that masterplans and design codes should be used to help bring forward development and ensure it delivers high quality design and place-making. Design quality should be retained by ensuring maximum detail appropriate to the design stage is provided to avoid the need for later design amendments and ensuring that planning conditions provide clarity regarding the quality of the design.
- 3.31 Policy D8 seeks to encourage opportunities to create new public realm where appropriate and to ensure appropriate management and maintenance arrangements are in place which maximise public access and minimise rules governing the space to those required for its safe management in accordance with the Public London Charter.

- 3.32 Policy D11 states that development proposals should maximise building resilience and minimise potential physical risks, including those arising as a result of extreme weather, fire, flood and related hazards. Development should include measures to design out crime, deter terrorism, assist in the detection of terrorist activity and help mitigate its effects.
- 3.33 Fire safety is covered under Policy D12. It states that all development proposals must achieve the highest standards of fire safety and ensure that they are constructed in an appropriate way to minimise the risk of fire spread.
- 3.34 Policy SI 1 states that development proposals should not lead to further deterioration of existing poor air quality, create new areas that exceed air quality limits, or create unacceptable risk of high exposure to poor air quality. As a minimum, development proposals must be Air Quality Neutral.
- 3.35 Policy SI 2, Minimising greenhouse gas emissions, makes it clear that major development should be net zero-carbon by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in operation and minimising both annual and peak energy demand. Part B of the policy notes that major development proposals should include a detailed energy strategy to demonstrate how the zero-carbon target will be met within the framework of the energy hierarchy. Part E states that major development proposals should calculate and minimise carbon emissions from any other part of the development, including plant or equipment, that are not covered by Building Regulations.
- 3.36 Policy SI 3 requires energy masterplans to identify heat loads from existing buildings that can be connected to future phases of a heat network, opportunities for low and ambient temperature heat networks, possible land for energy centres and/or energy storage and heating and cooling network routes, infrastructure and land requirements for electricity and gas supplies and opportunities to maximise renewable electricity generation.
- 3.37 Policy SI 4 requires major development proposals to demonstrate through an energy strategy how they will reduce the potential for internal overheating and reliance on air conditioning systems.
- 3.38 Policy SI 5 states that development proposals should minimise the use of mains water infrastructure, achieving at least the BREEAM excellent standard for 'Wat 01' water category or equivalent and should incorporate measures such as smart metering, water saving and recycling measures.
- 3.39 Policy SI 7 requires the submission of a Circular Economy Statement for referable applications which demonstrates how waste has been reduced.
- 3.40 Policy SI 12 states that development proposals should ensure that flood risk is minimised and mitigated and that residual risk is addressed.
- 3.41 Policy SI 13 requires development proposals to aim to achieve greenfield run-off rates and ensure that surface water run-off is managed as close to its source as possible. Drainage

- should be designed and implemented in ways that promote multiple benefits including increased water use efficiency, improved water quality, and enhanced biodiversity, urban greening, amenity and recreation.
- 3.42 Policy T1 requires all development to make the most effective use of land, reflecting its connectivity and accessibility by existing and future public transport, walking and cycling routes, and ensure that any impacts on London's transport networks and supporting infrastructure are mitigated.
- 3.43 Policy T2 states that development proposals should deliver improvements that support the ten Healthy Streets Indicators, reduce the dominance of vehicles on London's streets and be permeable by foot and cycle and connect to local walking and cycling networks as well as public transport.
- 3.44 Policy T4 requires the submission of a transport assessment to ensure that impacts on the capacity of the transport network are fully assessed. Where appropriate, mitigation will be required to address adverse transport impacts that are identified.
- 3.45 Policy T5 states that development proposals should help remove barriers to cycling and create a healthy environment in which people choose to cycle. Appropriate levels of cycle parking should be provided which should be secure and well-located.
- 3.46 Policy T6 states that car parking should be restricted in line with levels of existing and future public transport accessibility and connectivity. Provision should be made for infrastructure for electric or other Ultra-Low Emission vehicles.
- 3.47 Policy T9 confirms that the Mayor will charge the Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy to secure funding towards transport infrastructure of strategic importance. Planning obligations, including financial contributions will be sought to mitigate impacts from development.

Havering Local Plan 2016 – 2031

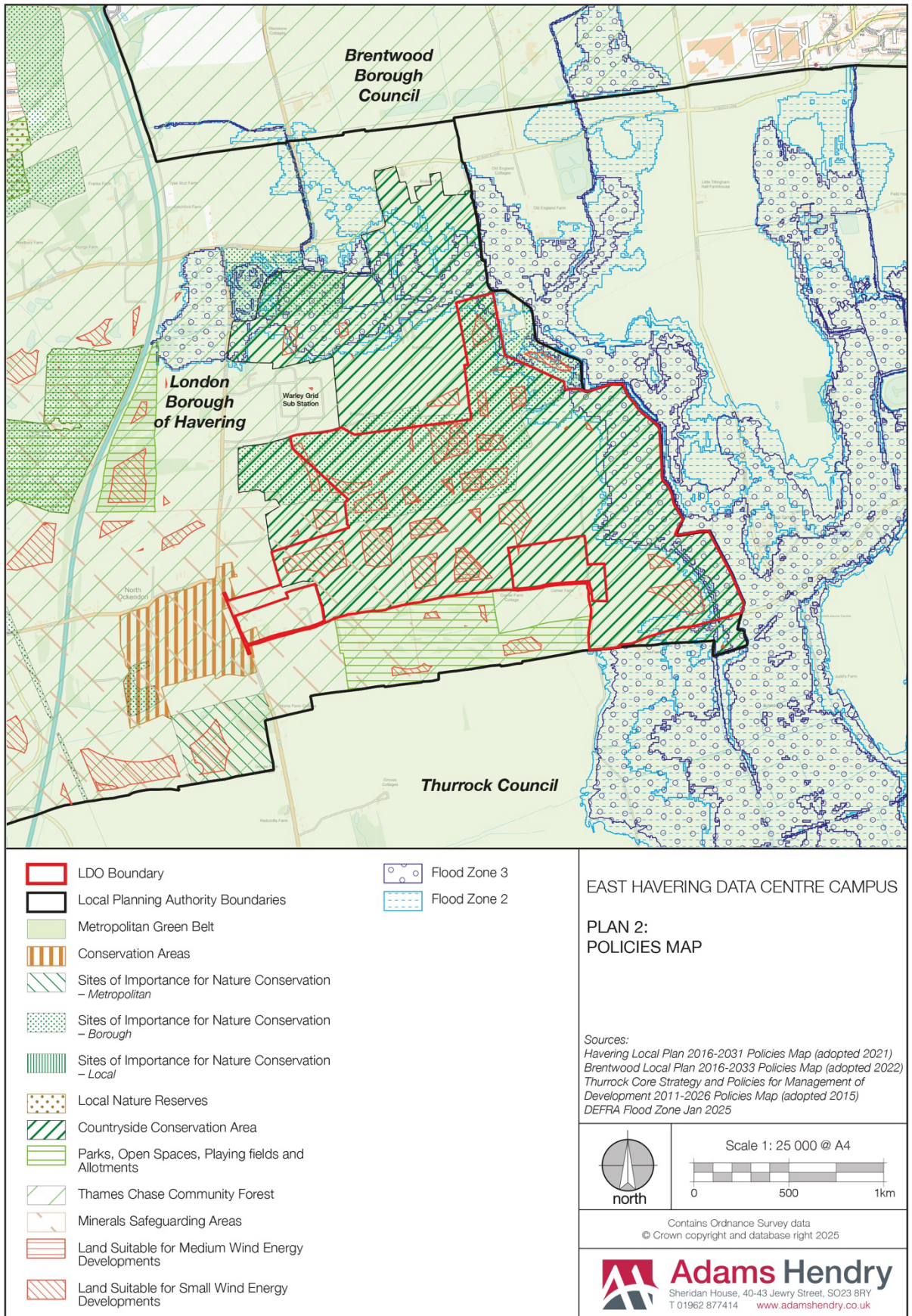
- 3.48 The main material policies of the Havering Local Plan are considered to be as follows.
- 3.49 Policy 19, Business growth, notes that the council is committed to building a strong and prosperous economy in Havering.
- 3.50 Policy 22, Skills and training, notes that the Council will encourage employment and skills development opportunities for local residents by supporting major development proposals. These proposals should be committed to provide a minimum local labour target of 20% during construction and end user phase for major or mixed use developments. Major development proposals should also make the notification of all vacancies associated with the development and its end use through the Council's employment service and offer opportunities to local businesses within their supply chains. Policy 22 makes it clear that wherever local labour

- targets cannot be achieved, and all opportunities to meet this target have been explored a commuted sum payable to the Council will be required.
- 3.51 Policy 23, transport connections, states that the Council will support and encourage developments in Havering in locations that are most accessible by a range of transport options, ensures safe and efficient use of the highway and demonstrates that adverse impacts on the transport network are avoided or where necessary mitigated.
- 3.52 Policy 27, landscaping, sets out that the Council will support development proposals that incorporate a detailed and high quality landscape scheme. It also states that all proposals should prove that adequate arrangements have been made for future maintenance and management and major development proposals should be supported by a comprehensive Management Plan.
- 3.53 Policy 26, urban design, confirms that the Council will promote high quality design that contributes to the creation of successful places in Havering. Development proposals that are inter alia informed by, respect and complement the distinctive qualities, identity, character and geographical features of the site and local area and that are designed in accordance with the principles of Secured by Design will be supported.
- 3.54 Whilst not strictly applicable to non-residential development, the aspects of Policy 7 that relate to the need to protect the amenity of existing and future residents by supporting development that does not result in unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy or outlook, unacceptable loss of daylight and sunlight and unacceptable levels of noise, vibration and disturbance, have been considered.
- 3.55 Policy 28 acknowledges the significance and value of Havering's heritage assets. Where a development proposal is judged to cause harm then it will be assessed against the relevant test in the NPPF.
- 3.56 Policy 29, green infrastructure, states that the Council is keen on maintaining and expanding the network of green spaces and natural features in Havering and enhancing the benefits of green infrastructure to the environment, economy and community.
- 3.57 Policy 30 relates to biodiversity and geodiversity. It states that development which would adversely affect the integrity of Specific Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation will not be permitted except for reasons of overriding public interest, or where adequate compensatory measures are provided. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission will normally be refused.
- 3.58 Policy 32 states that the Council will support development that seeks to avoid flood risk to people and property. The Council will seek to reduce the risk from surface water flooding by requiring development proposals to provide sustainable drainage systems.

- 3.59 Policy 33, air quality, states that the Council will support development which is at least air quality neutral, optimises the use of green infrastructure to reduce pollution concentrations and exposure, delivers measures to support active travel to reduce emissions, meets the targets for carbon dioxide reduction in the London Plan and minimises emissions from construction.
- 3.60 Policy 34 confirms that the Council will support development proposals that do not unduly impact upon amenity, human health and safety and the natural environment by noise, dust, odour and light pollution, vibration and land contamination.
- 3.61 Policy 36, Low Carbon Design and Renewable Energy states that the Council will seek to optimise the energy efficiency of buildings and support low carbon and renewable energy developments including energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings. In addition, the Council will require major development to prioritise connection to any existing or planned decentralised energy networks and, where feasible, integrate combined heat and power systems on site.

Policies Map - Site Specific Designations

- 3.62 The LDO site lies within Green Belt, the protection and enhancement of which is identified as a strategic objective in the Local Plan. The entire site also lies within a Countryside Conservation Area and the Thames Chase Community Forest.
- 3.63 An area along the eastern boundary of the site proposed for inclusion within the Ecology Park lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3.
- 3.64 The northern part of the site, including the proposed cable routing area, is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (Borough).
- 3.65 The site also includes a number of parcels of land suitable for small and medium wind energy developments, where proposals for wind turbines will be supported where they are in accordance with Policy 36.
- 3.66 A small part of the site to the west (the majority of which would be within the Ecology Park) lies within a Minerals Safeguarding Area. Policy 37 allows non-mineral development in such areas including where the development is required for open air recreation and would be otherwise acceptable or there is an overriding need for the incompatible development.
- 3.67 Plan 2 overleaf shows the designations applicable to the site.



4. Environmental Context

Site and Surroundings

- 4.1 The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt, approximately 30km east of Central London to the northeast of the village of North Ockendon. It forms part of the Thames Freeport economic zone established by the Government in 2021 to help boost global trade, attract inward investment and generate employment opportunities.
- 4.2 The administrative boundary of Thurrock Council adjoins the site to the east and south. The boundary with Brentwood Borough Council lies approximately 1.4km to the north. At their closest points, South Ockendon and the village of Bulphan, both within the jurisdiction of Thurrock Council, are located approximately 3.5km southwest of the site and 1.7km to the east respectively. Upminster, within the administrative boundary of the London Borough of Havering, is approximately 4.5km to the west and the village of West Horndon within the borough of Brentwood is approximately 2km to the north-east.
- 4.3 The site has direct access to Fen Lane to the south of the site which connects to Junction 29 of the M25 via the B186/B187 and the A127. The A127 is approximately 1.9km to the north of the site boundary. Junction 30 of the M25 can be accessed via the B186, the A1306 (Arterial Road North Stifford), approximately 5.5km south, and the A126. The M25 is to the west of the site at a distance of 900m at its closest point.
- 4.4 The site is predominantly in agricultural use and currently consists of parts of four arable farms, with associated field boundaries, ditches and vehicular access tracks/roads. It also includes a field shelter, a small agricultural building and two storage areas (including waste stockpiles and bulk above ground storage tanks) located adjacent to the end of the main access track from Fen Lane and remnants of old farm buildings that have been demolished.
- 4.5 The site also includes land within the public highway on Fen Lane and Ockendon Road. The part of Fen Lane within the site is a narrow single-carriageway rural road providing access to several residential properties, farms, Ladyville Lodge Care Home and Top Meadows Golf Club and Hotel. Fen Lane has no footways along most of its length, except for a very narrow footway on the north side of the carriageway which extends approximately 45m back from the junction with B186 Ockendon Road.
- 4.6 The part of B186 Ockendon Road within the site is a single-carriageway rural road providing access to Fenlands Nursery and residential properties. It also includes a priority chicane approximately 260 m to the north of the junction with Fen Lane.

- 4.7 The Mardyke flows south along the north-east boundary and crosses the south-east corner of the site before flowing into the Thames Estuary at Purfleet. Parts of the site to the east (within the proposed ecology park) are within flood zones 2 and 3.
- 4.8 The site is designated as a Countryside Conservation Area and within the Thames Chase Community Forest in the adopted Havering Local Plan.
- 4.9 Two UK Power Networks (UKPN) 132 kilovolt (kv) overhead power lines cross the site which distribute power to and from the Warley substation to the north-west of the site as presented in Figure 2.3. A powerline crosses the centre of the site in a north-west to south-east alignment, crossing Fen Lane and across the eastern confines of the Top Meadow Golf Course. The other power line briefly crosses the northern most part of the site in an east to west alignment, abutting the southern edge of Fen Farm Sewage Works.
- 4.10 The site is also crossed by the Hordon to Abridge High Pressure Gas Pipeline and is therefore within a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) major hazard zone. A low pressure gas main also crosses the western most confines of the site on a north-south alignment.
- 4.11 The following Public Rights of Way (PRoW) cross the site:
- Footpath 233 from Fen Lane to Bury Farm which crosses through the centre of the site; and
 - Footpath 283 from Fen Lane to Ockendon Road which crosses the western most confines of the site.
- 4.12 The whole of the London Borough of Havering has been declared as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for exceedances of the annual mean NO₂ objective and the daily mean PM₁₀ National Air Quality Strategy Objective/2006)¹¹.
- 4.13 To the north of the site are agricultural fields and an unnamed road. Bury Farm sewage works is immediately adjacent to the north-east site boundary. The Upminster sewage works grass beds Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) is adjacent to the north-east of the site boundary.
- 4.14 To the east of the site, are further agricultural fields beyond which is Dunnings Lane. The Grade II Blankets farmhouse is located approximately 300m to the east of the site.
- 4.15 A small cluster of industrial buildings is located to the south-east.
- 4.16 Immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the site and north of Fen Lane are the closest residential properties of Home Farm, which also includes a number of commercial buildings which are part of the wider Home Farm Estate, and Bolyngtons, accessed via an unnamed road off Fen Lane.

¹¹ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), 2023. UK Air Information Resource. Online. Available at: https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/details?aqma_ref=464

- 4.17 To the south of Fen Lane is the Top Meadow Golf Course, Corner Farm and Fen Farm and Fen Farm Cottages.
- 4.18 Agricultural fields and woodlands are adjacent to the south-western boundary of the site, beyond which is a small cluster of residential properties, Ladyville Lodge Care Home and Fenlands Nursery.
- 4.19 The site contains no listed buildings. The closest listed building to the site is the Grade II Russell Cottage is approximately 130 m to the south-west of the site boundary.
- 4.20 Adjacent to the far west boundary is Ockendon Road/Clay Tye Road (B186), with further residential properties beyond.
- 4.21 The Clay Tye Wood (SINC), an area of Ancient Woodland is approximately 600 m to the west.
- 4.22 The village of North Ockendon is located within a Conservation Area, part of which borders a short length of the western site boundary (see Figure 2.2). Cranham Conservation Area is located approximately 1.6 km west of the site boundary at its closest point.
- 4.23 Agricultural fields, Fairplay Farm and an unnamed access road to Fairplay farm are adjacent to the north-western boundary, beyond which is Warley substation, a battery storage scheme (approximately 1.7 ha), Clay Tye Road (B186) and further residential properties.
- 4.24 The Warley substation covers an area of approximately 4.6 ha and consists of a National Grid 275 KV four-switch mesh sub-station and a UKPN 132 kV sub-station. The National Grid sub-station provides the power supplies to the UKPN sub-station. The National Grid sub-station is supplied by 2 x 275 kV circuits from Tilbury grid supply point (GSP) and Elstree GSP.
- 4.25 Bury Farm is located appropriately 250 m to the north-west of the site boundary.

5. Description of Development

- 5.1 The LDO will permit, subject to a range of controls, a total of 400,000m² of commercial floorspace including 340,000m² of data centre use and 50,000m² of indoor horticultural use.
- 5.2 Electrical infrastructure and associated plant and equipment to serve the development would also be permitted alongside and any operations or engineering works necessary to enable the delivery of the development including excavation and earthworks, installation of underground services and utilities, creation of estate roads and associated infrastructure and highway works on Fen Lane and Ockendon Road.
- 5.3 The LDO will also secure the delivery of an Ecology Park on land adjoining the data centre campus to the north of Fen Lane.
- 5.4 The LDO is in four main parts (set out in Schedule 1), which permit:
- Part 1: Erection of Buildings
 - The erection, extension or alteration of a building for use as a data centre, campus management, campus security, indoor horticulture use, district heating energy centre or visitor centre.
 - Development would not be permitted by Part 1 if it would result in the total amount of floorspace exceeding:
 - 340,000m² in data centre use;
 - 50,000m² in indoor horticulture use;
 - 3,300 m² in district heating centre use;
 - 2,700 m² in campus management; and
 - 600m² of visitor centre use.
 - Part 2: Other Development
 - The creation and use of land as an Ecology Park and the construction of a Locally Equipped Area for Play.
 - Part 3: Associated Infrastructure
 - Including internal roads, vehicle parking and serving, hard and soft landscaping, foul and surface water drainage infrastructure, vehicle refuelling and washing facilities, utilities infrastructure (electricity, gas, water, telecommunications) including any substations or pumping stations, CCTV and lighting.

- Part 4: Site Preparation Works
 - Including earthworks required to change the level of any land, provision of temporary site offices and welfare facilities and the external storage of plant and equipment.
- 5.5 The four parts of the LDO are each subject to specific limitations and conditions. Schedule 2 also sets out general conditions applicable to all development, including compliance with the East Havering Data Centre Campus Design Code and Code of Construction Practice. It also includes a number of conditions that require further details to be submitted to the local planning authority for approval at certain trigger points e.g. prior to commencement or occupation/first use of development.
- 5.6 Taken together with the matters set out in Section 5, including the s106 obligations which include a requirement for occupiers to comply with the East Havering Data Centre Campus Travel Plan and Landscape and Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan, development may come forward without the need for further planning permission over the lifetime of the LDO.
- 5.7 The Council believes that the LDO is an effective, expedient and proportionate way of contributing towards Havering, London and the UK's data capacity and data security needs. The Council further believes that there are adequate procedural and substantive safeguards set out in the LDO as described in this Statement and set in full in the LDO and its compliance documents.
- 5.8 Facilitation of the development through an LDO will have advantages in terms of timing and delivery of the scheme benefits over a traditional planning application. It is flexible enough to accommodate changes in technology and design whilst providing the necessary certainty to secure investment for the significant costs associated with the delivery of power and the capital expenditure required for electrical, mechanical and cooling systems.
- 5.9 Paragraph 52 of the NPPF encourages the use of LDOs to set the planning framework for particular categories of development where the impacts would be acceptable and in particular where this would promote economic, social or environmental gains for the area.
- 5.10 Impacts arising from the development to be permitted by the LDO have been mitigated to an acceptable degree. It would promote significant economic, social or environmental gains for the area and is therefore considered an appropriate mechanism for the delivery of much needed data centre capacity.

6. Conditions, Controls and Legal Agreement

- 6.1 Development to be permitted by Schedule 1 of the LDO will be subject, in each case, to the restrictions and conditions set out in the relevant Part of Schedule 1. Schedule 2 of the LDO sets out further general conditions that will all apply to all classes of development.
- 6.2 These conditions are in place to ensure that the development proceeds in an appropriate manner to deliver the objectives of the LDO and to ensure the delivery of a high quality development supported by the necessary infrastructure and services.
- 6.3 The LDO will not grant planning permission for any development which would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site (i.e. a Special Protection Area under the Birds Directive or a Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive) or a European offshore marine site. Further the LDO will not grant planning permission for any development affecting a listed building or development which is Schedule 1 development within the meaning of Regulation 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 6.4 Various Codes and Plans are referred to in the conditions accompanying the LDO. These compliance documents set out detailed guidance to control overall design quality, construction management practices, landscape and ecological mitigation and management related to the Data Centre Campus and Ecology Park. These ensure that the LDO fulfils the requirement to enable delivery of an acceptable and sustainable development.
- 6.5 Development permitted by the LDO must accordingly comply with the requirements set out within the compliance documents:
- East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO Design Code; and
 - East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO Code of Construction Practice; (CoCP);
- 6.6 The s106 agreement accompanying the LDO requires the implementation of and compliance with the East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO Travel Plan and the East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO Landscape and Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan (LEMMP).
- 6.7 The Design Code sets out the minimum applicable standards to be applied to the building plots, infrastructure and Ecology Park and, amongst other things restricts the locations of certain types of buildings as well as their maximum height. Its purpose is to establish the parameters for the development and to ensure that a high and consistent standard of design is maintained throughout the Campus and Ecology Park to provide a sustainable and stimulating working environment whilst at the same time enabling the commercial requirements of individual occupiers to be met.
- 6.8 The CoCP provides a framework for compliance for all site preparation and construction

works. It establishes site-wide codes of practice and protocols, detailed work methodologies and provides a framework for the management of environmental impacts including specific control measures for managing noise levels, air quality, water resources, ecology and archaeology. All necessary environmental permits, licences and regulatory notifications will still have to be obtained.

- 6.9 Ecological mitigation and enhancement measures are set out in the Design Code. The LEMMP includes a requirement for continued management and surveillance and sets out monitoring protocols for terrestrial ecology. These are secured through a combination of conditions and planning obligations.
- 6.10 The LDO Travel Plan sets out measures to reduce the impact of the Data Centre traffic on local communities and to promote sustainable modes of transport for employees and deliveries and servicing.
- 6.11 An agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the s.106 Agreement), between the Council and the owners of land within the LDO boundary will be entered into, before the LDO is made, to ensure, primarily, that the mitigation necessary to support the development will be delivered when required.
- 6.12 In summary, it will secure the delivery of the following measures:
- Management and access to the Ecology Park and associated walking/cycle routes
 - Delivery and use of the visitor's centre
 - Implementation and monitoring of the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
 - Green Belt Mitigation Compensation
 - Delivery of mitigation for skylark
 - Delivery of the horticultural facility and use of waste heat
 - Contribution to a district heating network feasibility study and utilisation of waste heat
 - Contribution towards carbon offset schemes
 - Submission of as-built energy performance estimates for all buildings
 - Requirement to enter into a s278 agreement to deliver highway works
 - Delivery of a shuttle bus and coach services
 - Implementation and monitoring of the Travel Plan
 - Travel Plan levy
 - Submission of a car park management plan
 - Contribution to active travel
 - Contribution towards traffic calming measures on Ockendon Road and Fen Lane
 - Public transport contribution
 - Accessible transportation provision between the bus stop on Ockendon Road and data centre/horticultural facility
 - Contribution towards the making good of the construction traffic routes
 - Contribution to Traffic Management Order to implement and enforce a no

waiting/parking in the vicinity of the site

- Highways agreement to enable abnormal loads to access the site
- Local procurement
- Local employment and training
- Social value
- Air quality neutral
- Mayoral CIL
- Legal costs, administration and monitoring

7. Duration of LDO

- 7.1 The LDO would be active for a period of 20 years from the date it is made. Following the end of this period, the LDO will cease to apply.
- 7.2 Development started under the provision of the LDO prior to its expiry can be completed following the expiry of LDO.
- 7.3 The developments that have taken place under the LDO will be allowed to continue to operate but no new development will be allowed under the terms of the LDO following its expiry. Such new development would require separate planning permission in the normal course.
- 7.4 Any proposed amendments to the Order following review by the Local Planning Authority will be subject to the consultation procedures set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (or its successor).

8. Implementation of the LDO

Discharge of Conditions

- 8.1 The LDO is subject to a number of conditions, many of which will need to be discharged prior to development commencing. The developer must submit the necessary applications for approval in writing before a prior notification submission is made using the East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO Discharge of Condition Form (appended to the LDO).
- 8.2 All other relevant conditions will need to be discharged at the appropriate trigger points set out in the specific condition.
- 8.3 The LPA will endeavour to determine applications to discharge conditions within eight weeks of submission, however failure to determine an application within this time period does not imply that the application is acceptable.

Prior Notification of Development

- 8.4 Once all pre-commencement conditions have been discharged in writing, notification of the proposed development permitted by the LDO must be made to the London Borough of Havering prior to the commencement of development using the East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO Prior Notification of Development form (appended to the LDO).
- 8.5 The London Borough of Havering will confirm in writing, within 28 days of receipt of the completed Prior Notification of Development form, that:
- the proposed development is permitted under the terms of the LDO and therefore can proceed without the requirement for a planning application, or
 - whether a separate planning application is required as the proposed development is beyond the scope of the LDO, or
 - further information is required, specifying the required details and reasons for them.
- 8.6 Failure of the local planning authority to respond in writing within the 28 day period will be deemed as confirmation that the proposal is compliant with the provisions of the LDO.

Non-Material and/or Minor Material Amendments

- 8.7 Notification of proposed non-material and minor material amendments to works previously

confirmed as being permitted under the LDO can be made at any point using the East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO Non-Material and/or Minor Material Amendment Notification Form. This provision does not allow an amendment to the Order itself; all amendments must be within the scope of the LDO.

8.8 The London Borough of Havering will confirm in writing, within 28 days of receipt of the completed non-material and/or minor material amendment form, that:

- where works are proposed, the development is permitted under the terms of the LDO and therefore can proceed without the requirement for a planning application, or
- where works have been carried out, the development would have been permitted under the terms of the LDO and can be retained, or
- whether a separate planning application is required as the development is beyond the scope of the LDO, or
- further information is required, specifying the required details and reasons for them.

9. Monitoring

9.1 The LDO will be subject to regular and continuous monitoring to assess its effectiveness. The monitoring scheme will allow the Local Planning Authority to:

- check and monitor the development's compliance with the LDO and Section 106 obligations; and
- collect data to enable the LPA to measure the achievement of the LDO in delivering national and local growth and economic objectives.

9.2 The Data Centre Campus developers will be obliged to supply the Council with an annual monitoring report, which will comprise data on such topics as:

- the total number of jobs (FTE) at the entire development, broken down by employment type and location;
- statistics on number of employees/trainees/apprentices engaged/employed in accordance with the local employment and training clauses;
- the amount of Data Centre floorspace in occupation;
- the amount of Data Centre floorspace that is completed but not in occupation;
- annual water usage for data centre cooling, including proportion of mains and harvested water; annual water usage for non-data centre cooling purposes (not including horticulture);
- the achievement of BREEAM standards for any building within the entire development; and
- the amount of heat recycled through the energy centre.

10. Revocation of the LDO

- 10.1 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) may exercise its powers to amend or withdraw the Order (provided by section 61A [6] of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) at any time. The Council would do so if, in the Council's view, the LDO had consistently failed to meet the objectives in making the LDO as set out at Section 1 of this Statement of Reasons, and it is considered that amendments to the Order would not overcome this, or, if changes in material considerations require the LDO to be revoked, amended or revised.
- 10.2 Should the local authority determine that the LDO, in part or in whole, will be revoked or amended or revised, it will give the landowner(s) and any other interested parties a minimum of 6 months' notice prior to any such revocation, amendment or revision.
- 10.3 In pursuance of the Town and Country Planning Act s.61D, development that has commenced lawfully before this Order is revoked, amended or revised (as the case may be), may be completed notwithstanding that the effect of the revocation, amendment or revision is to withdraw permission for the same.

11. Preparation of the LDO

- 11.1 The LDO has been prepared in accordance with s.61A to 64D of, and Schedule 4A to, the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, and articles 38 and 41 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended); and the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 11.2 The Council is satisfied that it fully complies with the necessary legislative requirements.
- 11.3 Regulation 80 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations') must be applied to the making of an LDO. This requires the Council as 'competent authority' to decide if a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The decision on whether to make an LDO can only be taken if it is first determined that there are not likely to significant effects.
- 11.4 A report to inform a Habitats Regulations Assessment carried out for the purposes of the Habitats Regulations confirms that the LDO would not have a likely significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 11.5 The preparation of the LDO included both informal consultation - with technical consultees only during the drafting of the Order and a formal period of consultation. The consultation included the Environmental Statement (ES), compliance documents and supporting strategies.
- 11.6 The information included within the ES on potential significant effects is based on the Scoping Opinion issued by the Council pursuant to Part 7 Regulation 32(6) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (as amended) issued on 23rd May 2024. This was subject to formal consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies.
- 11.7 The LDO is supported by key compliance documents: a Design Code, a Code of Construction Practice, a Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Management Plan and a Travel Plan. These, in turn, are informed by a series of technical strategy documents and assessments, including a Flood Risk Assessment, Transport Assessment, Heritage Statement, Green Belt Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment.
- 11.8 Preparation of the LDO has involved a partnership between Digital Reef, the potential beneficiary of the LDO, and the London Borough of Havering, as local planning and highway authority.

- 11.9 Evidence prepared by Digital Reef and its consultants has been relied upon to support the LDO. Key documents include information on need and alternative sites prepared by Savills, details on the availability of power prepared by Noveus and an assessment of the potential economic benefits prepared by Oxford Economics.
- 11.10 Technical information on the delivery of the LDO development has been provided by Digital Reef including on earthworks, drainage, landscape and biodiversity net gain.
- 11.11 All of the material produced by or on behalf of Digital Reef has been carefully scrutinised by the local planning authority in accordance with the Tameside duty. This places on obligation on the decision maker to make sufficient or due inquiry of the submitted information.

12. Main Considerations

- 12.1 The main considerations applying to the development to be permitted by the proposed LDO are as follows:
- a. Whether there is sufficient need for the amount of data centre floorspace in this location generally;
 - b. Whether there are alternative sites that could meet this need within the same or better timescale;
 - c. Whether there is a plan-led solution;
 - d. Whether the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and if so, whether very special circumstances exist to justify it;
 - e. Whether the proposed development would result in harm to a designated heritage asset and if so whether public benefits are sufficient to outweigh that harm;
 - f. Whether the development complies with the development plan;
 - g. Whether any harm arising from the proposal would be outweighed by other considerations so as to justify the development.
- 12.2 This Statement relies on detailed technical evidence submitted alongside the LDO, principally in the Environmental Statement. It does not seek to cover every issue but rather focuses on significant effects. Further information on other issues can be found in the supporting evidence.

Data Centre Need

- 12.3 It is widely accepted that there is a significant and urgent need for additional data centre capacity to ensure that the UK retains its competitive edge in attracting data centre investment and maintaining its leading position in Europe's digital economy.
- 12.4 Whilst there is currently no centrally produced figure for data centre need at either the national or regional level, evidence contained in recent appeal decisions would suggest a figure in the region of 3,824MW is needed to serve the London cloud region by 2029.
- 12.5 The extent of the need is such that additional hyperscale public cloud data centres within existing or new AZs, are the only realistic option for meeting that demand. New deployment should be as close as possible to the Slough AZ to avoid constraining the commercial function of a new location.
- 12.6 Digital Reef has secured a contract with UKPN to deliver in principle a minimum of 160MVA from existing Warley GSP by 2029 and a total of 600MVA by 2033 from the proposed new Warley GSP. There are no other GSPs closer to the Slough AZ that could deliver the same

amount of power within the same or better timescale as provided for in the agreement between Digital Reef and UKPN.

- 12.7 The site at East Havering is the only site that can deliver hyperscale data centre floorspace by 2029. The level of need for data centre development is so great, that even if it were possible to upgrade other GSPs capable of serving the London cloud region in the short to medium term (noting that an upgrade is likely to take at least five years), these sites are likely to be required in addition to, not instead of, the site at East Havering.
- 12.8 The proposed East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO would permit a significant amount of data centre floorspace capable of serving the London cloud region. It has the potential to boost the resilience of the sector and contribute to data security and sustained economic growth at a national, regional and local level and is in accordance with economic objectives set out in the NPPF, Policies GG5 and E4 of the London Plan and Policy 19 of the Havering Local Plan.
- 12.9 It is clear that there is a demonstrable need for data centre capacity to serve the London cloud market. As sufficient power for a hyperscale facility is only available at Warley GSP, the location of a new facility must be within 10km of Warley.

Alternative Sites

- 12.10 In order to test whether there were any other available sites that were more suitable for a data centre campus of the scale proposed than the one at East Havering, a comprehensive assessment of sites over 40ha within 10km of Warley GSP was undertaken.
- 12.11 There were only three sites that met the minimum requirements (all of which were in the Green Belt) and of these, the only one that was demonstrably suitable and available was the site at East Havering. Even if the other three identified sites were considered to be available such that they are equal in terms of Site Assessment considerations to the LDO site, the LDO site is “oven ready” (including with a developer in place and a power agreement secured (which cannot be transferred to another site)), the site is well advanced in the planning process and, as such, is in a position to be developed (subject to the making of the LDO) and contribute to meeting the need. There is no indication that those other sites are in that position and all indications are that they are not.
- 12.12 The Sites Assessment used a minimum size threshold of 40ha which is less than the 60ha identified for potential data centre use on the proposed LDO site (Build Zones A-G). This would allow for some level of disaggregation once parking, landscaping, fencing and ancillary structures have been accounted for.
- 12.13 To further disaggregate the floorspace would mean that the benefits of delivery of a hyperscale data centre would be compromised. These include the opportunity to provide operators with flexibility to scale up to meet future increases in customer demand and the

additional resilience provided to an operator by having multiple data centres on the same site in the event of an outage affecting a single data centre.

- 12.14 Resilience is also provided through dedicated connections to existing AZs in Slough and West London, where all of the major operators have a base. The proposed data centre campus is large enough to provide hyperscale capabilities for a number of different operators without compromising latency, increasing its attractiveness to the widest possible market.
- 12.15 By 2029 the first data centres at East Havering would be operational and utility connections (power, fibre and water) would be in place. Given the overwhelming shortage of data centre capacity to serve the London cloud market and the severe constraints on the availability of power, it would be irrational not to fully utilise the available power at Warley GSP and capitalise on the existing infrastructure connections, avoiding the cost and disruption associated with its provision at numerous other sites.
- 12.16 The development proposed to be permitted through the LDO would make a significant contribution to meeting the need for data centre floorspace at the right time and in the right location. The significant constraints on the availability of power mean that there are no other sites capable of accommodating a hyperscale data centre of this scale to serve the London cloud region within the short to medium term. The contribution to meeting the urgent need for data centre floorspace and the lack of alternatives to the site should therefore be attributed substantial weight.

The Absence of a Plan-Led Solution

- 12.17 In considering whether to make an LDO for the proposed development, it is necessary to consider what provision the development plan makes for such uses.
- 12.18 Paragraph 86 c) of the NPPF states that planning policies should pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including identifying suitable locations for data centres. There are no policies specific to data centres in the London Plan and no sites identified for new data centres in the adopted Havering Local Plan.
- 12.19 Work has commenced on a review of the London Plan. The consultation document 'Towards a New London Plan' published in May 2025 recognises the importance of data centres in supporting the London economy. In response to a question to the Mayor in June 2025¹², it was confirmed that the GLA has commissioned a study to forecast data centre growth in London to inform future policy, and the identification of suitable locations for data centres. This study has yet to be published.

¹² <https://gla.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s117552/Minutes%20-%20Appendix%203%20-%20Written%20Answer%20Report.pdf>

- 12.20 The Havering Local Plan was adopted in November 2021 with a commitment to undertake an immediate review. In January 2026 the Council published its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2024/25 which provided an updated programme, with Regulation 18 consultation anticipated in summer/autumn 2026. An updated evidence base is currently being prepared and in line with the requirement in the NPPF and the emerging London Plan is expected to include an assessment of the need for additional data centre capacity within the Borough and the identification of suitable sites.
- 12.21 As there is no current or emerging plan-led solution to meet the need for data centres in either the London Plan or the Havering Local Plan and given the extent of Green Belt in the Borough, it is somewhat inevitable that the only available and suitable site is in the Green Belt.
- 12.22 The absence of a Plan led solution carries material weight in favour of the proposal and engages the tilted balance set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

Impact on the Green Belt

- 12.23 The NPPF makes it clear at paragraph 155 that commercial development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where it would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the Plan, there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed and the development would be in a sustainable location.
- 12.24 For the purposes of decision-making, 'grey-belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purpose (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143.
- 12.25 LUC was commissioned by the LPA to undertake an independent assessment of the proposed development on the East Havering site given its location in the Green Belt. This included an assessment as to whether the site should be considered as grey belt.
- 12.26 The site is not previously developed land. LUC considered that the site very strongly contributed to purpose (a) i.e. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas as it lies relatively close to the built up area of Greater London, it is predominantly free of existing development and there are no physical features in reasonable proximity strong enough to restrict and contain development.
- 12.27 The contribution to purpose (b) i.e. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another was considered by LUC to be moderate as it lies on the periphery of a moderate gap between Cranham and Basildon, the site is predominantly free of existing development and comprises a large but not substantial part of the gap and development would have no material impact on visual separation between towns.

- 12.28 LUC concluded that the contribution to purpose (d) i.e. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns to be weak to none as land does not form part of the setting of a historic town, with no visual, physical or experiential connection to the historic aspects of a town.
- 12.29 LUC also considered the site in terms of its contribution to purpose (c) – to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and purpose (e) – to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 12.30 The contribution of the site to purpose (c) was considered to be very strong as it is part of the countryside and therefore the Green Belt designation contributes to preventing encroachment on it, it is predominantly free of development and it could have a significant urbanising influence on adjacent Green Belt land, particularly to the north and east which sit on lower land.
- 12.31 In respect of purpose (e), LUC concluded that all Green Belt land makes an equal contribution to this purpose.
- 12.32 As the site makes a very strong contribution to purpose (a), it does not meet the definition of grey belt land. The proposed development is therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt under the terms of the NPPF and therefore it must be demonstrated that very special circumstances exist for the scheme to be permitted
- 12.33 In addition to the identified harm to green belt purposes, LUC also concluded that there would be a loss of openness following the proposed development. Build Zones A-G have relatively little space between them and that space would make no significant contribution to the openness of adjacent Green Belt land, rather it would have an urbanising influence on it.
- 12.34 Build Zone H, identified for predominantly heated horticultural uses (glasshouses), is isolated from other areas of proposed development on the site and would likely not affect the openness of the Green Belt.
- 12.35 The remaining parts of the site are to remain undeveloped and open, other than the introduction of pedestrian/cycle routes. It is not anticipated that cycle and pedestrian movements would have a significant impact on openness.
- 12.36 The wider urbanising influence of the built development would not be extensive (relative to its size) because of a combination of the wider Green Belt's dominant open views of the wider countryside (making it more resilient) and the planned planting and mounding around the scheme designed to screen a significant proportion of the urbanising influences within it.
- 12.37 In addition to the efforts made to mitigate the impacts of the development through design

and landscaping, contributions will be sought through the s106 agreement to positively enhance the beneficial uses of certain areas of Green Belt in the Borough to compensate for the Green Belt impacts of the proposal. Securing enhancements to the beneficial use of the Green Belt accords with paragraph 151 of the NPPF.

- 12.38 A contribution of £6.924m would be required for the enhancement of 40 different identified sites within the Green Belt. Enhancements include improvements to biodiversity, PRoW, boundary fences and signage, new play areas and seating, Multi-Use Games Areas etc. As well as positively enhancing their beneficial use, 18 of the sites identified for enhancement are within the Thames Chase Community Forest and will contribute to some of the objectives in the approved Thames Chase Forest Plan.
- 12.39 The development is however inappropriate development and causes harm to green belt purposes and openness. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF makes it clear that local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The assessment of whether very special circumstances exist is set out in Section 13 of this Statement.

Impact on Heritage Assets

- 12.40 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty upon the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses when considering whether to grant planning permission which affects a listed building or its setting.
- 12.41 A similar duty applies in respect of conservation areas under section 72 of the aforementioned Act. This requires the local planning authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area in respect of development within a conservation area.
- 12.42 There are no heritage assets that would be directly affected by the proposed development; however, the setting of some heritage assets would be affected.
- 12.43 The Heritage Statement which was produced by MOLA on behalf of the LPA, identifies where the setting of a heritage asset has the potential to be affected as set out below.

Description	Grade	Distance	Potential and reason for setting to be affected
North Ockendon	NA	Adjacent to the west and shared	Low – intervisibility

Description	Grade	Distance	Potential and reason for setting to be affected
Conservation Area		boundary	
Kilbro	Grade II	Adjacent to the south-west	Very low – negligible intervisibility
Russell Cottage	Grade II	Adjacent to the south-west	Low – limited intervisibility
The Forge	Grade II	Adjacent to the south-west	Very low – negligible intervisibility
No. 7 Castle Cottages	Grade II	40 m south-west	Very low – no intervisibility
Old England	Grade II	470 m north-east	Low – possible intervisibility
Blankets Farmhouse	Grade II	300 m east	Low – limited intervisibility
Bury Farmhouse	Grade II	290 m west of the northern end of the site	High –substantial intervisibility, substantial change within current open landscape.

- 12.44 The North Ockendon Conservation Area (NOCA) Appraisal outlines eight key views within the conservation area from where the historic and architectural merits can be appreciated. Only two of these views have the potential to be affected by the proposed development; one is looking north up Ockendon Road, which includes No. 7, Castle Cottages in the foreground and the other lies further north along Ockendon Road, looking eastwards into the junction of the B1421 and the B186, towards White Post Farm.
- 12.45 The impact of the proposed development on the significance of the NOCA would be limited both by landscaping in the western part of the site and the row of newer houses along Ockendon Road. However, it would nonetheless remove a large swathe of agricultural land to the east that would lessen the rural feel of the village.
- 12.46 There would be negligible intervisibility between the proposed development and Kilbro and The Forge with no effect on key views of the buildings. Therefore, the proposed development would not have an impact on their setting, their significance or the ability to appreciate them as individual listed buildings.
- 12.47 The roofline of the proposed development may appear within views of Russell Cottage and the locally listed White Post Farm at the north-eastern corner of the NOCA. However, the visibility of the proposed development would be extremely limited and the limited extent of change would not affect the significance of these listed buildings.
- 12.48 The road widening works along North Ockendon Road and Fen Lane would result in very minor change to the setting of the NOCA and the heritage assets within it and would have

no adverse effects on its significance.

- 12.49 The immediate settings of the three designated heritage assets to the north and east of the site (Bury Farmhouse, Old England and Blankets Farmhouse) all comprise partially converted farmyards which house operations that are not necessarily all connected with farming. As a result, the settings do not make a meaningful contribution to the significance of the farmhouses because the connection between the buildings and their yards has been eroded.
- 12.50 Old England lies approximately 1 km to the north-east of Build Zone D. Due to distance, intervening vegetation, the layout of the Build Zones and the restrictions on massing and scale, the proposed development would have no effect on the significance of this asset.
- 12.51 The northernmost part of the proposed development would be visible in the view looking south towards the frontage of Bury Farmhouse. However, the vast majority of the proposed development would lie further to the south allowing the asset to remain prominent within the view. When considered from this viewpoint, the changes to the setting that would be introduced by the proposed development would not be sufficient to alter the significance of the asset.
- 12.52 The Build Zones and parts of the ecology park would also lie within peripheral views of Bury Farmhouse from the lane to the north-east which leads to Bury Farm Sewage Works. These views are sensitive to change because of the simple openness and flat topography which is devoid of buildings, aside from the farm itself and electricity pylons. The proposed development would represent considerable change within this landscape by removing a large swathe of open farmland so that the new built form would appear significantly larger than the heritage asset, at a similar height to the pylons. The asset would no longer be prominent within the view. Consequently, the proposed development would have a substantial negative impact on the significance of the asset when viewed from the lane to the north-east, although the most important view, looking south towards the frontage of Bury Farmhouse, would not be substantially impacted.
- 12.53 Blankets Farmhouse lies approximately 800m to the east of the Build Zones and is separated from them by Lamorna and outbuildings on the west side. No substantial changes would be made to the immediate setting of the farmhouse and its significance is unlikely to be affected.
- 12.54 MOLA conclude that the level of harm caused to the significance of the NOCA would be in the lower range of less than substantial harm. This is largely due to the fact that most key elements of the special characteristics would be unaffected and the limited intervisibility due to intervening built form, the introduction of mounds and landscaping within the ecology park and the distance to the Build Zones. The wider landscape setting of the NOCA is not visible from within it, but it provides a key element of rural isolation. This key quality would be eroded by the proximity of the development but would not considerably reduce the

significance of the NOCA.

- 12.55 The level of harm to the significance of Bury Farmhouse is considered to be in the mid-range of less than substantial harm. When viewed from the north-east, moderate peripheral visual impact would occur within the landscape setting, which is sensitive to change, which leads to some harm to significance in this view.
- 12.56 Great weight and importance are attached to the harm to Bury Farmhouse and its setting. Although the development is located outside the NOCA, as a matter of planning judgment, great weight and importance is attached to the adverse effect on the significance of the Conservation Area too.
- 12.57 Paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm of the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 12.58 National Planning Practice Guidance¹³ (NPPG) makes it clear that public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental objectives as described in paragraph 8 of the NPPF. Public benefits should flow from the development. They should be a nature or scale to be of benefit to the public at large and not just be a private benefit.
- 12.59 The economic objective described in the NPPF centres on the need to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
- 12.60 It is irrefutable that there is an urgent and overwhelming need for data centre floorspace. As noted in the National Data Strategy, boosting the resilience of the sector will help the country top the global leagues for data security and support the UK government in its mission of achieving sustained economic growth.
- 12.61 The proposed development will make a significant contribution to the need for data centres serving the London cloud region and will result in an investment of £2.26 billion in the UK economy and £1.87 billion in the Havering economy.
- 12.62 The s106 also requires a contribution of £50k per annum for the duration of the LDO for the creation of employment within the Borough including through the jobs brokerage service (Havering Works). It also includes a best endeavours requirement to secure local procurement.
- 12.63 The economic benefits of the scheme carry significant weight.

¹³ Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 18a-020-20190723

- 12.64 The NPPF describes social objectives as supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities including the fostering of well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.
- 12.65 It is not possible to quantify the social benefits of the proposed development in the same way as for economic benefits, but that does not mean that they do not exist or that they should not be attributed any weight.
- 12.66 As noted in the Woodlands Park decision¹⁴, almost everything relating to medical and legal matters, transport and news media is grounded in digital infrastructure. The NHS is cited as an example of a 'cloud-first' approach to its use of technology in order to reduce cost but more importantly allow staff, medical and administrative, to be more innovative and productive in the service and care provided to NHS uses.
- 12.67 There would also be social benefits from the delivery of the Ecology Park including the network of footpaths and cycleways and the visitor's centre, which will be available as an education resource for local schools and for use by local community groups.
- 12.68 The s106 would include a requirement for a social value strategy that delivers 1% of construction and 2% of end user employees time to be committed to volunteering for initiatives as part of the Borough's Social Value Strategy.
- 12.69 The social benefits flowing from expanded digital infrastructure and the provision of the above should therefore be given significant weight.
- 12.70 The environmental objective described in the NPPF seeks to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 12.71 The proposed Ecology Park would deliver an on-site biodiversity net gain of 62.45% area units, 85.64% hedgerow units and 236.55% watercourse units. The delivery of the Ecology Park would be secured by the s106 and the biodiversity net gain would be secured by the East Havering Data Centre Campus Landscape and Ecological Mitigation Management Plan.
- 12.72 Each data centre building would be required to achieve at least BREEAM Excellent rating and would aim to be net zero carbon (i.e. cause no net release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse emissions into the atmosphere). Where this is not possible, buildings would achieve an on-site carbon reduction of at least 40% beyond Building Regulations. Where it is clearly demonstrated that it is not possible to achieve the zero-carbon target on site, any shortfall would be provided through a cash in lieu contribution to the borough's carbon offset

¹⁴ See paragraph 8.43

fund to be secured through a planning obligation.

12.73 The environmental benefits of the scheme should also be attributed significant weight.

12.74 It is considered that the harm to the setting and thereby the significance of the NOCA and to the significance of Bury Farmhouse, to which great weight and importance is attached in both cases, is outweighed by the considerable public benefits of the development which the LDO permits.

Archaeology

12.75 During the construction stage, there is a predicted potential for the truncation or complete removal of archaeological remains. It is considered that the adverse effects on buried heritage assets could be offset by a staged programme of archaeological evaluation and were necessary, mitigation with dissemination at an appropriate level to increase knowledge and appreciation of the buried heritage assets.

12.76 Following the implementation of archaeological mitigation the proposed development would not give rise to significant residual effects for most archaeological remains, apart from prehistoric and/or Roman settlement remains for which there would be a significant adverse residual effect due to the extent of earthworks and the construction of foundations.

12.77 There is no certainty that the development would affect prehistoric and/or Roman settlement remains, but if remains were encountered, the effect would be significant adverse. For this reason the impact of the proposed development on buried heritage assets only carries moderate weight.

Socio-Economic Impacts

12.78 Digital Reef appointed Oxford Economics (OE) to advise on the local economic impact of the proposed data centre campus.

12.79 Based on data provided by Digital Reef (which has been reviewed and verified by consultants appointed by the LPA), OE estimate that the construction phase would generate a Gross Value Added (GVA) average of £38 million and 330 job years of employment across Havering each year. Cumulatively, this amounts to £804 millions of GVA and 6,970 job years through the 21-year development phase. Employment will mostly be in the construction sector at the proposed development site itself, although it will support more than one further job year of employment across the Havering economy for every four directly employed at the proposed development site.

12.80 Across the national economy, OE estimate that the construction phase would generate an

average of £121 millions of GVA, creating or sustaining 1,340 job years of employment and £28 million in taxes, each year. Cumulatively, this amounts to £2.53 billion of GVA, 28,120 job years of employment, and £586 million of taxes through the 21-year development phase.

- 12.81 The operational phase of the proposed development would create highly productive, permanent employment across the Havering economy. OE estimate that the proposed development could generate £281 million of GVA and create or sustain 620 jobs across Havering once fully operational in 2045, including 350 on average highly-productive and well-remunerated jobs at the proposed development site itself. The operational phase would equate to a 2.3% increase in Havering's total GVA, and a 0.5% uplift to employment, relative to the baseline forecast for the local economy.
- 12.82 The operational phase would create employment opportunities for residents of varying skill levels. It is estimated that almost a third of employment would be in elementary trades, while a majority of jobs would not require degree-level qualifications. Across the national economy, OE estimate that the proposed development could generate £393 million of GVA, 1,780 jobs, and £56 million in taxes once fully operational in 2045.
- 12.83 The Environmental Statement, which is based on the outputs from the OE report, concludes that the impact of increased construction employment and training, as well as the associated GVA and local spending would be significantly beneficial at the borough level.
- 12.84 Once operational, the ES concludes that additional spending in the local economy as a result of new and sustained jobs is estimated to be beneficial but not significant at the borough level.
- 12.85 The substantial investment in both the national and local economy is a major benefit of the scheme and therefore carries significant weight.

Noise and Vibration

- 12.86 The construction of the proposed development would result in significant adverse noise effects at receptors within 50m of Fen Lane due to the additional road traffic in the peak year of construction, and in significant adverse effects at receptors within 50m of the proposed highway works on Fen Lane and Ockendon Road due to construction activity noise.
- 12.87 The operation of the proposed development would similarly result in a significant adverse noise effect on receptors within 50m of Fen Lane due to the additional road traffic generated by the completed development.
- 12.88 The road traffic noise effects of the proposed development with construction traffic from the Lower Thames Crossing would be no worse than the effects of the proposed development

alone.

- 12.89 Given that the noise during construction is temporary and only a limited number of properties (including a small part of the Ladyville Care Home) would be affected once the site is operational, this harm is attributed moderate weight.

Soils and Agriculture

- 12.90 During the construction stage, there would be a permanent irreversible loss of 75ha of agricultural land within the Build Zones of which 28.6ha is best and most versatile (BMV) land in grade 3a; the remainder being in grade 3b.
- 12.91 The 114.1 ha of land within the proposed ecology park (of which 34.6 ha is in grade 3a and 79.5 ha is in grade 3b) would also be removed from agricultural production but is potentially reversible.
- 12.92 Any agricultural land affected by the installation of the cable routes connecting the site to Warley substation would be restored upon completion.
- 12.93 The heavy-textured soils are sensitive to disturbance and handling, but the implementation of soil resource management measures with the LDO compliance documents would reduce the effect on soil resources. With this additional mitigation in place, the residual construction effects on soil resources are considered to be:
- Permanent significant adverse within the Build Zones;
 - Permanent, but potentially reversible, significant adverse within the ecology park; and
 - Temporary and reversible, not significant adverse within the cable routing connecting to Warley substation.
- 12.94 Only 15% of the site comprises BMV land that would be permanently and irreversibly lost as a result of the built development. Whilst this would have an effect on food security, this is mitigated to a small extent by the introduction of food production associated with the heated horticulture. The loss of agricultural land is therefore given moderate weight.

Landscape and Visual

- 12.95 During construction works, there is potential for adverse effects on both landscape and visual receptors.
- 12.96 Some of the on-site landscape planting within the ecology park would be delivered early in the construction programme to help lessen impacts. However, the most pronounced effects would be associated with changes to the landscape fabric on the site, and the introduction of tall plant and machinery e.g. cranes.

- 12.97 The effects of the construction stage and completed development stage for scenario 1 (end of LDO 2045) and scenario 2 (10 years following the end of the LDO i.e. 2035) on landscape character would be significant adverse for the site and immediate context (500 m from the site boundary).
- 12.98 The effects on landscape character would be adverse but not significant for host Landscape Character Area (LCA) 7: Essex Plateau and the adjoining LCA A1: Bulphan Fenland.
- 12.99 The effects of the construction stage of the proposed development on visual amenity during the day-time would be significant adverse at viewpoints from ten PRow.
- 12.100 The effects of the completed development stage for scenario 1 and 2 on visual amenity during the night-time would be significant adverse at viewpoints from three PRow.
- 12.101 The cumulative effects of the construction stage in combination with the proposed development on visual amenity during the day-time would be significant adverse at 16 viewpoints.
- 12.102 The proposed development will be seen as an alien feature in the landscape and will adversely affect both landscape and visual receptors. This harm is attributed significant weight.

Residential Visual Amenity Assessment

- 12.103 Ramboll was appointed by the LPA to prepare a Residential Visual Amenity Assessment of the proposed development. The findings of this assessment show that significant effects would be experienced at ten properties, with five of these also experiencing significant cumulative effects.

Property	Completed Development		Cumulative	
	Scenario 1*	Scenario 2*	Scenario 1*	Scenario 2*
6 Bury Farm	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse
2 Blanket Cottages	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse
Glass House Retreat	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse
5 Fen Farm Mews	Moderate to Major	Moderate to Major	Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse

	Adverse	Adverse		
Fen Farm Cottages	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse
Bolyngtons	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate to Major Adverse	No cumulative schemes visible	No cumulative schemes visible
Corner Farm Cottage	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	No cumulative schemes visible	No cumulative schemes visible
Home Farm	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	No cumulative schemes visible	No cumulative schemes visible
Corner Farm	Moderate to Major Adverse	Moderate Adverse	No cumulative schemes visible	No cumulative schemes visible
Lower Meadow Farm	Major Adverse	Major Adverse	No cumulative schemes visible	No cumulative schemes visible
*Scenario 1: end of LDO				
*Scenario 2: 10 years post LDO				

12.104 The RVAA considers whether the effect of the development on Residential Visual Amenity:

- would be of such nature and/or magnitude that it potentially affects living conditions or 'residential amenity';
- would be considered unacceptable; and
- would be of sufficient gravity as to represent a matter of public interest which is likely to be given material weight in the exercise of planning balance.

12.105 These three matters together constitute the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold (RVAT) against which the proposed development has been assessed.

12.106 Relevant individual or combined factors that would contribute to the threshold being reached or exceeded include effects that are:

- overbearing - of such scale and dominance relative to the residential environment and views that the proposed development can be said to represent a significant detractor or change to views and the character of landscape both within and adjoining the property;
- overwhelming - representing overpowering and/or oppressive effects that are largely unavoidable at the property;
- oppressive - effects that may be considered intolerable or of such an extent that they result in a sense of ill-ease and/or discomfort; and
- pervasive - effects are ubiquitous or experienced extensively throughout the property, curtilage and associated access points.

12.107 Ramboll concluded that in all cases, the RVAT would not be exceeded as a result of the proposed development.

12.108 The harm to residential amenity should be attributed moderate weight.

Other Environmental Impacts

12.109 No significant adverse effects are predicted on transport and accessibility, air quality, ecology, water resources and flood risk or climate change during construction or operation of the proposed development.

12.110 Limited weight is attributed to the harm from the development on transport and accessibility, air quality, ecological receptors, water resources and flood risk and climate change.

Transport and Accessibility

12.111 During construction and on completion, the effects on driver, pedestrian and cyclist delay and on public transport are considered to be adverse, but not significant. The effects on severance are considered to be neutral.

12.112 The effects on non-motorised user amenity during construction and on completion is considered to be beneficial for most non-motorised users, and adverse for non-motorised users associated with the private residences and care home on Fen Lane.

12.113 The effects on fear and intimidation in the construction stage are considered to be adverse, and neutral on completion.

Air Quality

12.114 Air quality impacts from dust and construction traffic would be adverse but not significant as would the completed development stage traffic effects.

12.115 The dispersion modelling assessment of the emergency generator testing regime showed the effect at human health and ecological receptors would be adverse but not significant for all pollutants assessed.

12.116 With abatement (SCR) in place, there would be no significant effects on ecological receptors from NOx emissions. There would be no significant effects on human health receptors.

Ecology

12.117 During construction, adverse effects on ecologically sensitive receptors and biodiversity are

likely to arise however these effects would not be significant.

12.118 The effects during the construction stage on designated sites, habitats, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, birds, bats, badgers, water voles and other species would be adverse but not significant. These effects would be temporary and reduce as new habitat is created and becomes established over time.

12.119 On completion of the proposed development, beneficial effects on biodiversity are likely to arise as a result of the introduction of extensive new habitats within the ecology park.

12.120 The effects on habitats would be beneficial and significant, and beneficial but not significant for designated sites, invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, birds, bats, badgers and water vole. There would be no effects on other protected and notable species.

Water Resources and Flood Risk

12.121 During construction and on completion of the proposed development, there would be no significant effects on water resources and flood risk.

Climate Change

12.122 The proposed development would result in adverse, but not significant effects in respect of climate change resilience and greenhouse gas emissions during construction and completion.

Equalities Impact Assessment

12.123 The LPA has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that the proposed development does not lead to unlawful discrimination, and that it advances equality of opportunity and fosters good relations between those with a protected characteristic¹⁵ and all others (the Public Sector Equality Duty – PSED).

12.124 Aecom were appointed by the LPA to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment to consider the effects of the proposed development on groups with protected characteristics.

12.125 The EqIA has identified potential beneficial equality effects as follows:

- During construction and operation increased employment opportunities may benefit local populations, particularly those underrepresented in employment statistics. Increased employment opportunities may have positive socio-economic impacts for

¹⁵ Protected characteristics are defined under the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership.

lower-income households in more deprived urban areas near London.

- The proposed development may have positive impacts through new skills and training opportunities provided as part of the Employment and Skills Plan, such as outreach and engagement with schools.
- There may be wider long-term benefits generated through employment, skills and training opportunities which may be transferrable to other long-term jobs created through increased demand in related industries. The ecology park and accessible footways may have positive mental and physical health benefits for local residents, particularly for those who are mobility impaired who may typically face barriers when accessing green space.
- The connections between footpaths and public transport may positively impact the local community, particularly those more reliant on public transport. The introduction of lighting along pathways may also improve perceptions of safety for protected characteristic groups, particularly women.

12.126 However, there remains some potential negative equality impacts resulting from the proposed development. These include:

- During construction and operation there may be negative environmental impacts including increased noise, vibration and air pollution. This may disproportionately impact people with disabilities, older people, children and pregnant women who can be more sensitive to environmental impacts.
- The data centre may have negative visual impacts which may disproportionately impact groups who may spend more time at home, such as older people, people with disabilities, pregnant women and young children.

12.127 These impacts have been mitigated to the greatest extent possible.

Health Impact Assessment

12.128 The LPA appointed Ramboll to prepare a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in line with the requirements of the Havering Local Plan.

12.129 The purpose of a HIA is to identify the positive and negative impacts of a proposed development on human health, and identify ways to mitigate any negative impacts, and potentially enhance positive impacts to address health inequalities.

12.130 The assessment identifies that the proposed development is likely to result in a range of positive health outcomes, alongside some localised adverse effects that are appropriately mitigated through embedded design and management measures.

Environmental Health

- 12.131 The primary environmental health considerations relate to construction and operational impacts including noise, air quality, traffic and changes to the existing landscape. The ES concludes that air quality effects associated with both construction and operation are not significant, reflecting low baseline pollutant concentrations and relatively modest traffic increases. From a health perspective, this suggests limited potential for measurable respiratory or cardiovascular impacts.
- 12.132 Construction noise and road traffic noise along Fen Lane may result in temporary and, for a small number of receptors, locally significant adverse effects. These impacts primarily relate to disturbance and potential annoyance rather than long-term health risks. The implementation of mitigation measures through the Code of Construction Practice (CoCP) is expected to minimise exposure and maintain acceptable living conditions.
- 12.133 Sustainable drainage strategies, climate-responsive design and energy efficiency measures contribute to environmental resilience and support long-term health outcomes by reducing flood risk, improving environmental quality and responding to future climate pressures.

Active environments and accessibility

- 12.134 The proposed development introduces extensive new walking and cycling infrastructure integrated with surrounding public rights of way and public transport connections. These measures improve connectivity within a rural context where active travel infrastructure is currently limited, creating opportunities for increased physical activity, improved access to green space and reduced reliance on private vehicles.
- 12.135 Inclusive and age-friendly design principles embedded throughout the development, including accessible routes, facilities and public spaces, support equitable access for people with mobility impairments, older adults and families, contributing positively to independence, participation and wellbeing.

Social cohesion and community infrastructure

- 12.136 The creation of a publicly accessible ecology park and visitor centre introduces new opportunities for community engagement, recreation, education and volunteering. These elements support mental wellbeing through increased access to nature, social interaction and community participation. Design approaches that minimise severance and enhance connectivity ensure that the development integrates with surrounding communities rather than creating physical or social barriers.
- 12.137 Secure by Design principles and appropriate lighting, surveillance and access

arrangements are expected to enhance perceptions of safety, which may encourage use of public spaces and active travel routes.

Economic and wider determinants of health

12.138 The proposed development is predicted to deliver significant employment and economic benefits at both borough and regional levels, including temporary construction employment and long-term operational jobs. Access to stable employment is a key determinant of health, contributing to improved income security and social wellbeing. The proposed employment and skills strategy secured through planning obligations is important in ensuring that local communities are able to access these opportunities and that benefits are distributed equitably.

Sustainability, climate and long-term health resilience

12.139 The incorporation of renewable energy, waste heat recovery, sustainable construction practices and biodiversity enhancement contributes to climate mitigation and environmental sustainability. These measures support long-term population health by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving environmental quality and enhancing resilience to climate change. The ecology park and associated habitat creation represent significant positive contributions to biodiversity, nature access and environmental wellbeing.

Overall conclusion

12.140 Taking account of embedded mitigation measures, design features and operational management frameworks secured through the LDO, the overall health effects of the proposed development are considered to be predominantly positive. Adverse effects are expected to be localised, temporary or appropriately managed, with no significant residual health risks identified.

12.141 The proposed development demonstrates a comprehensive approach to integrating health considerations within design, environmental management and community infrastructure, supporting positive outcomes across multiple determinants of health including environmental quality, physical activity, social cohesion, economic opportunity and climate resilience.

13. Green Belt Balance

- 13.1 The LDO site does not constitute grey belt and therefore the proposed development would comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 13.2 Paragraph 153 of the NPPF makes it clear that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that ‘very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 13.3 The development proposed to be permitted through the LDO would make a significant contribution to meeting the need for data centre floorspace to serve the London cloud region by 2029 and beyond. There is no Plan led solution in either the London Plan or the Havering Local Plan to meet this need and no alternative sites that would be capable of accommodating a datacentre of this scale in the short term.
- 13.4 It is considered that the overwhelming need for new data centre floorspace, the lack of alternatives to meeting that need and the lack of a plan led solution are all capable of contributing to the very special circumstances required by the NPPF and should be attributed substantial weight.
- 13.5 The development of data centres and ancillary infrastructure would have an urbanising influence on the Green Belt resulting in a loss of openness and harm to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. This harm is attributed substantial weight in accordance with the NPPF.
- 13.6 The contribution to be secured in the s106 agreement towards the enhancement of other Green Belt sites within the Borough as compensation for the impact on the Green Belt arising from the proposals is considered to be material including by furthering the national policy objective of securing opportunities to enhance beneficial use of the Green Belt. As such it is attributed moderate weight.
- 13.7 The proposed development will result in an investment of £2.26 billion in the UK economy and £1.87 billion in the Havering economy as well as significant direct and indirect job creation. The economic benefits of the scheme carry substantial weight.
- 13.8 A financial contribution will be made to secure local employment and training. This carries moderate weight in favour of the scheme.
- 13.9 The social benefits flowing from expanded digital infrastructure, the delivery of the Ecology Park and the visitor’s centre and the requirement for a social value strategy should be attributed substantial weight.

- 13.10 Similarly the environmental benefits of the scheme including the delivery of significant biodiversity net gain, measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change and move to a low carbon economy should also be attributed substantial weight.
- 13.11 The proposals will give rise to harm to green belt openness and purposes, as described above. Harm arises in policy terms as the development is inappropriate development in the green belt, which is by definition harmful. Substantial weight is given to these elements of green belt harm, as required by NPPF para.153.
- 13.12 Having regard to the duty under s66 and s72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the provisions of the NPPF, the LDO is promoted on the basis that any harm to the setting and significance of Bury Farmhouse or the NOCA is clearly outweighed in each case by the considerable public benefits of the development which the LDO permits. The harm to built heritage assets is none the less attributed substantial weight in the green belt planning balance.
- 13.13 Significant weight is attached to harm to landscape and visual impact.
- 13.14 Moderate weight is attached to harm arising from noise, to archaeology, soils and agriculture and on residential amenity.
- 13.15 Limited weight is attached to harm on transport, air quality, ecology, water resources and flood risk and climate change.
- 13.16 Given the substantial positive weight attached to direct and indirect employment generation, need, economic benefits, and the lack of alternative sites, the significant positive weight attached to social benefits including the visitor's centre, the significant positive benefit attached to environmental benefits including BNG, and the delivery of the Ecology Park and the moderate positive weight attached to employment and training, the absence of a plan-led solution and the contributions towards enhancement of the Green Belt, when taken together clearly outweigh the harms identified including that to the Green Belt which is attributed substantial weight.
- 13.17 In light of the above, it is considered that the benefits of the scheme are material considerations which clearly outweigh the green belt and other harms arising from the proposals. As such, the 'very special circumstances' arise to justify the proposals being allowed to proceed, in accordance with paragraph 153 of the NPPF and Policy G2 of the London Plan.

14. Compliance with the Development Plan and Planning Balance

Impact on the Green Belt

- 14.1 As set out in Section 13, the proposed development would constitute very special circumstances and as such would be consistent with the NPPF and Policy G2 of the London Plan. There is no specific policy on the Green Belt in the Havering Local Plan as it relies on the NPPF and the London Plan.

Economic Considerations

- 14.2 The proposed East Havering Data Centre Campus LDO would permit a significant amount of data centre floorspace capable of serving the London cloud region. It has the potential to boost the resilience of the sector and contribute to data security and sustained economic growth at a national, regional and local level and is in accordance with economic objectives set out in the NPPF, Policies GG5 and E4 of the London Plan and Policy 19 of the Havering Local Plan.
- 14.3 The s106 agreement includes a requirement for the submission of an employment and skills strategy securing apprenticeship opportunities and local employment (20% of the construction and operational workforce to be resident within 10 miles of the site) in accordance with Policy 22 of the Havering Local Plan.

Environmental Considerations

- 14.4 The proposed development would result in the loss of approximately 40.9ha of the Fairplay Farm SINC, of which 26ha would be reinstated as ecology park habitat. Whilst the loss of the SINC cannot be avoided, in line with the mitigation hierarchy set out in Policy G6 of the London Plan and Policy 30 of the Havering Local Plan, the impact has been minimised and compensated for through the enhancement of the retained area of the SINC within the LDO site and the delivery of the Ecology Park. Compensatory skylark habitat is also secured through the s106.
- 14.5 Whilst mandatory biodiversity net gain is not required for proposals consented through an LDO, the proposals would deliver significant biodiversity net gain (far in excess of the 10% that would otherwise have been required if the scheme was the subject of a planning application) in accordance with the NPPF, Policy G6 of the London Plan and Policy 30 of the Havering Local Plan.

- 14.6 The LDO Design Code requires the incorporation of green roofs and walls where feasible, and a programme of significant tree planting both on the data centre campus itself and in the adjoining Ecology Park. A nature-based sustainable drainage strategy including swales and attenuation ponds is also proposed. Taken together these measures would contribute to the greening of London in accordance with Policies G5, SI 12 and SI 13 of the London Plan and Policies 27 and 29 of the Havering Local Plan.
- 14.7 Where possible existing trees of value (including all veteran trees) will be retained. Where tree removal is required, these would be replaced in accordance with London Plan Policy G7.
- 14.8 The proposals will not create new areas that exceed air quality limits or create unacceptable risk of high exposure to poor air quality. The s106 includes a requirement for the submission for approval of an Air Quality Neutral Assessment prior to construction within each Build Zone. The LDO is therefore in accordance with Policy SI 1 of the London Plan and Policy 33 of the Havering Local Plan.
- 14.9 The LDO requires the submission and approval of a Whole Life-Cycle Statement, Energy Statement and Circular Economy Statement for each building. It is therefore considered that the requirements of Policy SI 2, SI 4 and SI 7 of the London Plan and Policy 36 of the Havering Local Plan have been met.
- 14.10 In order to maximise the beneficial use of waste heat from the data centres, the LDO includes consent for a District Heating Energy Centre and a requirement that the visitor's centre, campus management and campus security building must utilise this waste heat unless it is not operationally feasible, commercially viable or less carbon-efficient than an alternative. It also includes a requirement to pump the remaining waste heat to the public highway for onward transmission should a beneficial user be identified. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is in accordance with London Plan Policy SI 3.
- 14.11 The LDO imposes a limit on the total amount of potable water used for the cooling process and a limit on the Water Usage Effectiveness for each data centre building per kWh or IT load per annum. Water efficiency measures are also required in the welfare areas of all buildings to reduce water usage. This will be monitored through smart meters in accordance with Policy SI 5 of the London Plan.
- 14.12 Rain water is required to be collected from buildings and utilised as the primary source of water for cooling and irrigation to minimise the use of mains water in accordance with Policy SI 5 of the London Plan. Whilst there is no specific requirement to meet the BREEAM excellent standard for water specifically, data centres, campus management and security buildings are required to achieve BREEAM excellent and the visitor's centre must meet BREEAM outstanding.

- 14.13 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF requires the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land to be recognised in planning policies and decision. The proposed development would result in the permanent loss of 28.6ha of BMV agricultural land and a further 34.6ha of BMV agricultural land would be lost as a result of the creation of the Ecology Park and as such the economic and other benefits of this land remaining in agricultural use would be lost. However, it is considered that the economic and other benefits of the loss of BMV agricultural land are outweighed by the significant economic benefits of the proposed development.

Heritage Considerations

- 14.14 Any harm to the setting and significance of the Grade II listed Bury Farmhouse or the NOCA is clearly outweighed by the considerable public benefits of the development which the LDO permits in accordance with the NPPF and Policy 28 of the Havering Local Plan.
- 14.15 Mitigation has been proposed to minimise as far as possible the impact of the proposed development on the setting of heritage assets. As set out previously, whilst the affected part of setting of Bury Farmhouse does not make a major contribution towards its significance, and the impact of the development on the significance of the NOCA would be limited, the proposed development would not conserve the significance of these heritage assets and would therefore be contrary to Policy HC1 of the London Plan. However as this harm is outweighed by the considerable public benefits arising from the proposed development (in accordance with the NPPF test), limited weight is attached to the conflict with HC1.

Design Considerations

- 14.16 The LDO, including detailed requirements set out in the Design Code, seeks to ensure that the capacity of the site is optimised and to facilitate active travel with a requirement to deliver a network of pedestrian and cycling routes in accordance with London Plan Policies D3 and D4 and Policy 26 of the Havering Local Plan.
- 14.17 The building heights and setbacks secured in the Design Code were informed by an assessment of landscape character and the geographical features of the site in accordance with Policy 26 of the Havering Local Plan. Given the scale of the development, which has been mitigated as far as is practical, there will be a residual adverse effect on landscape and visual character which does not complement the character of the area and in this regard, the proposals are not consistent with Policy 26.
- 14.18 The LDO requires buildings to meet 'Secured by Design' accreditation in accordance with Havering Local Plan Policy 26.

- 14.19 Whilst not strictly relevant to proposals for commercial development, the aspects in relation to amenity of residents set out in parts i-iii of Policy 7 of the Havering Local Plan have been considered. The proposed development would not lead to unacceptable overlooking, loss or privacy or outlook or loss of daylight and sunlight. This is supported by the RVAA which concluded that in all cases the Residential Visual Amenity Threshold would not be exceeded.
- 14.20 Some properties within 50m of Fen Lane would experience an increase in noise as a result of additional traffic from the development. However these are limited in number and the impact in terms of noise is not considered to be unacceptable.
- 14.21 Taken as a whole, the proposed development is considered to be in general accordance with Local Plan Policy 7.
- 14.22 The delivery of the Ecology Park will create significant new public realm and the implementation of the LDO Landscape and Ecological Mitigation and Management Plan will ensure that appropriate management and maintenance arrangements are in place. The requirement to open the Ecology Park to the public is secured in the s106 agreement. It is therefore considered that the proposals are consistent with London Plan Policy D8 (including the Public London Charter) and Havering Local Plan Policy 29.
- 14.23 The Design Code requires materials to be durable and compliant with fire safety standards. No buildings are proposed in Flood Zones 2 or 3 to minimise the potential for flood related hazards. Discussions with the Metropolitan Police have informed the Design Code and measures incorporated to reduce crime and deter terrorism. The perimeter security fence will meet SR1 standards and will be fitted with an intruder detection system. As such the proposals accord with London Plan Policy D11.
- 14.24 The LDO includes a condition requiring the submission and approval of a Fire Statement for each building other than for district heating and horticulture. It is therefore considered that sufficient safeguards have been incorporated to ensure compliance with London Plan Policy D12.

Transport Considerations

- 14.25 The LDO is accompanied by a Travel Plan to reduce the impact of traffic on local communities and to propose sustainable modes of transport for employees, deliveries and servicing. The requirement for the submission of a Construction Travel Plan is secured by the s106 agreement to promote sustainable travel for construction workers.
- 14.26 The s106 also requires a contribution towards active travel and a public transport contribution towards infrastructure improvements required by Transport for London.

- 14.27 Accessible transportation between the bus stop on Ockendon Road and the data centre / horticultural facilities is also secured in the s106. A network for footpaths and cycleways will also connect the campus to Fen Lane and Ockendon Road.
- 14.28 Coach transport will be provided for workers at the horticultural facility and for construction workers between the site and Upminster Station and Ockendon Station. A free shuttle bus will also be provided for employees in perpetuity.
- 14.29 With the above measures in place, it is considered that the proposed development accords with London Plan Policies T1 and T2 and Policy 23 of the Havering Local Plan.
- 14.30 In accordance with London Plan T4, a transport assessment has been prepared and appropriate mitigation identified.
- 14.31 The provision of an appropriate level of car parking (including for electric vehicles) and cycle parking are set out in the Design Code in accordance London Plan policies T5 and T6.
- 14.32 The development to be permitted by the LDO will be liable for the Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy in accordance with London Plan Policy T9.

Other Considerations and Conclusion

- 14.33 Whilst a number of parcels of land are identified as being suitable for small and medium wind energy developments, there is no requirement under Policy 36 of the Havering Local Plan for the site to be reserved for such development and therefore there is no conflict with the development plan arising from the proposed LDO.
- 14.34 A large part of the site that lies within the Minerals Safeguarding Area will be kept free of development as part of the Ecology Park and therefore would be in accordance with Policy 37 of the Havering Local Plan which allows use of such land for open air recreation. As set out elsewhere in this Statement, there is an overriding need for data centre floorspace in this location and therefore non-mineral development would be permissible under Policy 37.
- 14.35 It follows from the analysis set out above there is compliance with a number of development plan policies. There are also conflicts with some development plan policies. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with the London Plan and the Havering Local Plan, taken as a whole.
- 14.36 Neither the London Plan nor the Havering Local Plan make specific provision for data centres. In these circumstances, the tilted balance set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF

is engaged. It makes it clear that a presumption in favour of sustainable balance should be applied unless:

- i. the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance (including Green Belt and designated heritage assets) provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

14.37 There are no policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance that provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed and the adverse impacts of the development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

14.38 Whilst the planning balance lies in favour of the development considering the development plan alone, when considered in light of the NPPF taken as a whole, and other material considerations, the planning benefits of making the LDO are only reinforced.

15. Section 106 Obligations

- 15.1 As set out in section 6 of this Statement, the LDO is accompanied by a s106 agreement securing a number of obligations.
- 15.2 Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 makes it clear that a planning obligation may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission for the development if the obligation is:
- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
 - (b) directly related to the development; and
 - (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- 15.3 The proposed obligations have been considered against the requirement of Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations as follows:

Obligations necessary to secure benefits of the proposed development are delivered

- Management and access to the Ecology Park and associated walking/cycle routes
- Delivery and use of the visitor's centre
- Delivery of the horticultural facility and use of waste heat
- Implementation and monitoring of the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

Obligations necessary to mitigate impacts arising from the proposed development

- Delivery of mitigation for skylark
- Requirement to enter into a s278 agreement to deliver highway works
- Contribution towards traffic calming measures on Ockendon Road and Fen Lane
- Contribution towards the making good of the construction traffic routes
- Contribution to Traffic Management Order to implement and enforce a no waiting/parking in the vicinity of the site
- Highways agreement to enable abnormal loads to access the site
- Implementation and monitoring of the Travel Plan
- Travel Plan levy
- Submission of a car park management plan
- Contribution to active travel
- Public transport contribution
- Accessible transportation provision between the bus stop on Ockendon Road and data centre / horticultural facility
- Delivery of a shuttle bus and coach services

Obligations necessary to meet requirements in the NPPF, London Plan and/or Havering Local Plan

- Contribution towards carbon offset schemes
 - Submission of as-built energy performance estimates for all buildings
 - Local procurement
 - Local employment and training
 - Social value
 - Air quality neutral
 - Contribution to a district heating network feasibility study and utilisation of waste heat
 - Green Belt Mitigation Compensation
 - Mayoral CIL
- 15.4 In order to ensure the proper operation of the s106, there is also an obligation to fund legal costs, administration and monitoring.
- 15.5 All of the above obligations are considered to be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably related to it in scale and kind. The regulation 122 tests are met.

16. Summary and Conclusion

The LDO

- 16.1 The East Havering Data Centre Campus Local Development Order (LDO) grants planning permission for up to 400,000 square metres of development comprising data centre floorspace indoor horticulture facilities, district heating energy centre, electrical substations and distribution infrastructure, a visitor's centre, and an ecology park.
- 16.2 The LDO is being promoted by the London Borough of Havering to contribute towards meeting the significant need for additional data centre capacity to serve the London cloud region and to create the certainty and stability businesses need to invest in the digital economy which is essential to drive economic growth at the national and local level. It will also enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt through the creation of an Ecology Park and visitor's centre and through a programme of habitat creation, tree planting and management, will deliver significant biodiversity gains.
- 16.3 An LDO is flexible enough to accommodate changes in technology and design whilst providing the necessary certainty to secure investment for the significant costs associated with the delivery of power and the capital expenditure required for electrical, mechanical and cooling systems.
- 16.4 Development to be permitted by the LDO will be subject to restrictions and conditions to ensure that the development proceeds in an appropriate manner to deliver the objectives of the LDO and to ensure the delivery of a high quality development supported by the necessary infrastructure and services.
- 16.5 The LDO will not grant planning permission for any development which would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site or for any development affecting a listed building or development which falls within Schedule 1 of the EIA Regulations.
- 16.6 A s106 agreement accompanies the LDO to secure the delivery of key benefits, mitigate as far as practicable any adverse impacts and to meet policy requirements.
- 16.7 The LDO would be in force for 20 years from the date it is made. It will be regularly monitored and may be revoked or revised if it consistently fails to meet the objectives in making the Order.

Need and Alternatives

- 16.8 The London Cloud market is experiencing severe supply constraints within its core AZs as demand continues to outpace available supply, with a particular shortage of readily available and confirmed power to meet cloud demand over the next five years.
- 16.9 The extent of the need for new data centres is such that additional hyperscale public cloud data centres within existing or new AZs, are the only realistic option for meeting that demand. To deliver the necessary resilience and acceptable levels of latency to end users within the cloud region, new deployment would need to be as close as possible to existing, established infrastructure within the Slough AZ.
- 16.10 At January 2025 there was no GSP closer to the Slough AZ that had sufficient power to support a hyperscale facility by 2029 than that already contracted to Digital Reef at Warley. The search area for potential alternative sites was therefore centred on Warley GSP.
- 16.11 There were no available sites outside the Green Belt nor any sites within the Green Belt which comprised to any material extent previously developed land, or sites that would qualify as Grey Belt.
- 16.12 The only site that is demonstrably available and potentially suitable, is the proposed development site.
- 16.13 The development proposed to be permitted through the LDO would make a significant contribution to meeting the need for data centre floorspace at the right time and in the right location. The significant constraints on the availability of power mean that there are no other sites capable of accommodating a hyperscale data centre of this scale to serve the London cloud region within the short to medium term. The contribution to meeting the urgent need for data centre floorspace and the lack of alternatives to the site should therefore be attributed substantial weight.

Plan Led Solution

- 16.14 There is no current or emerging plan-led solution to meet the need for data centres in either the London Plan or the Havering Local Plan.
- 16.15 The absence of a Plan led solution carries moderate weight in favour of the proposal and engages the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Planning Balance

- 16.16 The overwhelming need for new data centre floorspace, the lack of alternatives to meeting that need and the lack of a plan led solution are all capable of contributing to the very

- special circumstances required by the NPPF and should be attributed substantial weight.
- 16.17 The development would have an urbanising influence on the Green Belt resulting in a loss of openness. This harm is attributed substantial weight.
- 16.18 Having regard to the duty under s66 and s72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the provisions of the NPPF, the LDO is promoted on the basis that any harm to the setting and significance of Bury Farmhouse or the NOCA is clearly outweighed in each case by the considerable public benefits of the development which the LDO permits. The harm to built heritage assets is none the less attributed substantial weight in the green belt and overall planning balance.
- 16.19 Given the substantial positive weight attached to direct and indirect employment generation, need, economic benefits, and the lack of alternative sites, the significant positive weight attached to social benefits including the visitor's centre, the significant positive benefit attached to environmental benefits including BNG, and the delivery of the Ecology Park and the moderate positive weight attached to employment and training, the absence of a plan-led solution and the contributions towards enhancement of the Green Belt, when taken together clearly outweigh the harms identified including that to the Green Belt, which is attributed substantial weight.
- 16.20 In light of the above, it is considered that the 'very special circumstances' arise to justify the grant of planning permission for inappropriate development in the Green Belt, therefore in accordance with paragraph 153 of the NPPF and Policy G2 of the London Plan.
- 16.21 As set out in Section 14 of this Statement, the proposals are in accordance with the London Plan and the Havering Local Plan taken as a whole. The application of policies in the NPPF would not provide a strong reason for refusing the development and neither would any adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework, taken as a whole.
- 16.22 The proposed planning obligations are necessary to make the development acceptable and meet the Regulation 122 tests in all other regards and are therefore given appropriate weight in the decision to make the LDO.
- 16.23 The Council believes that the LDO is an effective, expedient and proportionate way of contributing towards Havering, London and the UK's data capacity and data security needs. The Council further believes that there are adequate procedural and substantive safeguards set out in the LDO as described in this Statement and set in full in the LDO and its compliance documents.

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