# The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

## Screening Opinion - EIA Required

## Application Reference Number: PL/2025/03725

## Decision Date: 13/05/2025

| | |
|---|---|
| **Applicant:** | The Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, The Chapter Office, 6 The Close, Salisbury, SP1 2EG |
| **Particulars of Development:** | Screening Opinion Request for EIA Assessment of Ground Source Heat Pump Proposal at Leaden Hall PL/2024/00373 - Potential significant impacts on the River Avon SAC, SSSI and SPA |
| **At:** | Leaden Hall, 70 The Close, Salisbury, Wilts, SP1 2EP |

I write with reference to your planning submission referenced above.

The aim of the EIA Regs is to ensure that major projects that are clearly likely to have impacts on the environment are subject to an EIA so that these impacts are fully assessed and understood before planning permission is granted. Development proposals of varying types are categorised in the EIA Regs as either Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 development, depending upon the nature and scale of the development. Development proposals within the former category must always be subject to an EIA, while those within the latter category must be subject to a determination as to whether the proposals are likely to have significant effects on the environment where one of the threshold criteria is exceeded.

In addition, if development falls within Schedule 2 but is within a sensitive location*, even if the minimum criteria is not met,* a screening opinion is still required to decide whether the proposal is likely to have significant environmental impacts and therefore if an EIA would be required.

The first stage of the screening process is therefore to determine whether the development proposals are listed under Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 of the EIA Regs.

**EIA ASSESSMENT:**

The proposed shallow geothermal drilling development would constitute EIA development due to the site's close proximity to the River Avon SAC and the River Avon Systems SSSI, and also the East Harnham Water Meadows SSSI and the Britford Water Meadows both down stream, and the potential for significant impacts on these European and nationally designated sites as a result of the geothermal drilling for the GSHP.

As set out in the Environment Agency's response to the planning application, the geothermal drilling has the potential to result in fracturing within the chalk principal aquifer which has hydraulic connectivity to the River Avon. This could lead to impacts on the hydrology (e.g. reduction in base water flows) and water quality of the River Avon, potentially leading to significant impacts on the river and the qualifying features of the SAC – Desmoulin's whorl snail, sea lamprey, bullhead, Atlantic salmon, brook lamprey and Ranunculus vegetation, and the protected species the river supports.

Natural England have advised that an HRA would be required with regards to the potential impacts of the proposed development on the River Avon SAC. Wiltshire Council concurs with this and as competent authority, would undertake the HRA.

**Please refer to the accompanying report which explains this decision and provides the consultee responses.**

**CONCLUSION:**

Following consideration of the relevant selection criteria for screening Schedule 2 development presented in Schedule 3 of the EIA regulations, the Planning Authority conclude that the proposed development is likely to have significant environmental impacts. Therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Regulation 6(6) of the EIA Regulations, the Planning Authority hereby adopts a screening opinion that **EIA is required in this instance.**

**Signed:**

*Parvis Khansari* - **Corporate Director, Place**

## NOTES

Generally, it will fall to local planning authorities in the first instance to consider whether a proposed development requires an Environmental Impact Assessment. However, the Secretary of State is empowered to make directions in relation to the need for Environmental Impact Assessment. Such screening directions can be made of the Secretary of State's own volition or following a request from any person. Directions of the Secretary of State will normally be made in response to a request from a developer. Where the local planning authority's opinion is that Environmental Impact Assessment is required, or where a local planning authority fails to adopt a screening opinion within 3 weeks (or within an extended period agreed in writing with the person making the request), the person who requested the screening opinion of the local planning authority may request that the Secretary of State make a screening direction.

Requests for a screening direction of the Secretary of State should be made to:

Planning Casework Unit pcu@communities.gov.uk