

Forest Farm, Chippenham
Environmental Statement

Chapter 3
Environmental issues and methodology



3 Environmental issues and methodology

Introduction

- 3.1 This chapter explains the identification of the environmental issues considered and outlines the overall approach taken to the EIA. Specific methodologies for each of the specialist studies are given in the relevant topic chapters.

The scope of the EIA

- 3.2 Scoping is the identification of the range of significant issues likely to arise as a result of the proposed development. Scoping also ensures that significant issues are addressed in detail, while those of lesser relevance are considered accordingly. This is an important exercise, undertaken at an early stage of the EIA process, which allows effort to be concentrated on significant issues and avoids unnecessarily complicated examination of minor ones.
- 3.3 tor&co undertook a scoping exercise and produced an EIA scoping report in March 2025. This document provided a summary of the proposals, identified the potential main environmental effects to be addressed within the EIA and scoped out issues that did not require consideration.
- 3.4 The following factors influenced the breadth of the scoping exercise, and so the EIA:
- The scale and nature of the project
 - The physical characteristics of the proposals
 - Application site characteristics
 - Neighbouring land uses
 - Environmental designations
- 3.5 Copies of the EIA scoping report accompanied the EIA scoping opinion request made to Wiltshire Council. A number of statutory bodies and non-statutory organisations were also consulted (table 3.1).

Wiltshire Council: Planning, Highways, Landscape, Urban Design, Public Protection, Open Space, Archaeology, Drainage, Ecology, Conservation, Climate, Housing, Rights of Way and Strategic Planning
Natural England
Environment Agency
Historic England
Active Travel England
Sport England
Wessex Water
Wiltshire Police
Table 3.1: Scoping consultees

- 3.6 A copy of the EIA scoping report (including details of the scoping methodology), the responses from the consultees and the council's formal scoping opinion can be found in technical appendix A.

Key issues identified during scoping

- 3.7 Responses were received from a number of the organisations consulted and as a result some additional potential issues were identified. A summary of the key issues raised is provided in table 3.2 and these are set out in full in

technical appendix A. In accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations, the ES has been based on the scoping opinion and technical appendix A includes signposting for where issues raised in the opinion are addressed in the ES.

Topic	Key issues identified in the scoping report	Additional issues raised during consultation
Air quality and climate*	Increased traffic emissions post-construction	No additional issues raised
Community, social and economic effects	- Changes to local population and demography - Increased provision of market and affordable housing - Increased demand for and provision of local facilities	Effects on health and wellbeing from increased noise and emissions
Cultural heritage	- Effect on archaeological remains on the site during construction - Change to the settings of listed buildings in the vicinity of the site during and post-construction - Change to the setting of Derry Hill (Old) conservation area during and post-construction - Change to the setting of the Bowood registered park and garden during and post-construction	- Effects on historic landscape character - Effects on non-designated heritage assets, including the Wilts & Berks Canal
Ground conditions	It is proposed that ground conditions is not scoped into the EIA	No additional issues raised
Land use and land take	It is proposed that land use and land take are not scoped into the EIA	No additional issues raised
Landscape and visual effects	- Changes to the land cover of the site - Changes to the landscape character of the site and effects on surrounding landscape character areas - Changes to views from designated landscapes and townscapes - Changes to other sensitive views, including from residential properties and public rights of way	Effects on landscape fabric
Major accidents / disasters	It is proposed that major accidents and disasters are not scoped into the EIA	No additional issues raised
Natural heritage	- Loss of existing habitats and creation of new habitats on the site - Effects on protected and priority species from habitat loss and disturbance during and post-construction	No additional issues raised
Noise and vibration	It is proposed that noise and vibration are not scoped into the EIA	No additional issues raised
Traffic and transport	- Increased traffic generation post-construction - Provision of new pedestrian and cycle links - Increased use of public transport	Increased traffic generation during construction
Waste and natural resources	It is proposed that waste and natural resources are not scoped into the EIA	No additional issues raised
Water environment	It is proposed that the water environment is not scoped into the EIA	- Effects on flood risk and surface water drainage - Increased demand for wastewater treatment
Table 3.2: Key issues identified during scoping *Note that while climate is not considered in a separate ES chapter, information on measures to reduce the proposed development's greenhouse gas emissions and minimise its vulnerability to climate change is provided in chapter 2 and the effect of climate change on flood risk is addressed in chapter 10		

Assessment methodology

Introduction

- 3.8 An environmental effect is an alteration, positive or negative, to some aspect of the environment that occurs as a result of the proposed development. It is essential that the EIA methodology is comprehensive and focused. It must predict and measure the degree of effect and identify mitigation requirements. The method used should be objective, consistent and adaptable, and as free from analytical bias as possible.
- 3.9 It is important that the assessment methodology distinguishes between the sensitivity of the receptors and the type and size of change that will affect them, either directly or indirectly. It is also important that the ES is clear and effective in communicating the results of the assessment to the determining planning authority, the general public and professionals involved with appraising the development proposals.

Guidance and best practice

- 3.10 The methodologies used for the assessment of specific issues are discussed in the relevant chapters of this ES. Where appropriate, use has been made of published guidance and information on best practice, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) web-based National Planning Practice Guidance: *Environmental Impact Assessment* (updated 2020). The guidance has been considered in conjunction with the EIA Regulations.

Difficulties in compiling information

- 3.11 The EIA Regulations require that the ES should include an indication of any difficulties (technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered by the applicant in compiling the required information, together with the main uncertainties involved. Where such difficulties and uncertainties have been experienced, they are discussed in the relevant ES topic chapters and / or technical appendices.

Determining the significance of effects

- 3.12 The evaluation of effect significance is fundamental to the EIA process. The degree of an effect determines the resources that should be deployed in avoiding or mitigating an adverse effect and identifies the actual value of a beneficial effect. As far as possible, standard words have been used to define degrees of effect (i.e. 'very substantial', 'substantial', 'moderate', 'slight' and 'negligible'), but not so rigorously as to stifle flexibility or particular individual requirements.
- 3.13 The degree of an effect is determined by the interaction of two factors: the magnitude, scale or severity of the impact or change, and the value, importance or sensitivity of the environmental resource being affected. This is then used to determine whether an effect is significant. If the degree of effect is moderate or above then the effect is considered to be significant in EIA terms. Slight or negligible effects are not considered to be significant for the purposes of the EIA.

- 3.14 Sensitivity and magnitude categories have been developed for the environmental topics, based on a combination of best practice guidance and expert judgement. These are provided in the specialist topic chapters. Any assumptions made during the assessment process have been reported in the text. Figure 3.1 shows the general matrix used to determine the degree of each identified effect, and thus whether it is significant. This matrix has been developed by tor&co and is used in the assessment of the various environmental impacts to enable meaningful comparisons to be made. Where assessments depart from this methodology to accord with other best practice requirements, the revised methodologies are fully explained in the relevant chapters.
- 3.15 The assessment of the potential effects also takes account of timescale, permanence and whether the effects are adverse or beneficial, as appropriate (for example, 'a long term but reversible, substantial, significant adverse effect').

Identification of mitigation measures, monitoring and residual effects

- 3.16 The results of the assessment of significance have helped to guide the mitigation measures proposed. At the end of each of the environmental assessments, where relevant, there is a 'residual effects' table, which summarises the significant environmental effects remaining after mitigation. This includes a measure of the confidence placed in the prediction of each potential residual effect, such as 'absolute', 'reasonable' or 'limited'. Where appropriate, measures to monitor significant adverse effects have been identified.

Cumulative effects

- 3.17 The potential for cumulative effects with other proposed or consented developments in the vicinity of the site has been assessed for each environmental topic, where relevant (see chapter 11). The developments to be included in the cumulative effects assessment were identified during the EIA scoping process. At that stage, prior to the withdrawal of the draft local plan, it was proposed to assess the potential for cumulative effects with the remainder of the wider South Chippenham allocation. However, now that the local plan has been withdrawn, only the elements of the former allocation that are at scoping stage or have submitted a planning application were included in the cumulative effects assessment.
- 3.18 The following developments were therefore included in the cumulative effects assessment⁽¹⁾ (figure 3.2):
- Land South of Chippenham (application not yet submitted; scoping reference PL/2025/06656): up to 500 dwellings, land for a primary school, youth play provision (a neighbourhood equipped area of play and local equipped area of play) and natural play area, allotments and associated highways, landscape, drainage and infrastructure works, including provision of a road linking the A4 London Road and the A4 Pewsham Way

¹ Information on dwellings remaining to be constructed has been taken from Wiltshire Council's (June 2026) *Housing Land Supply Statement Base Date: April 2025*.

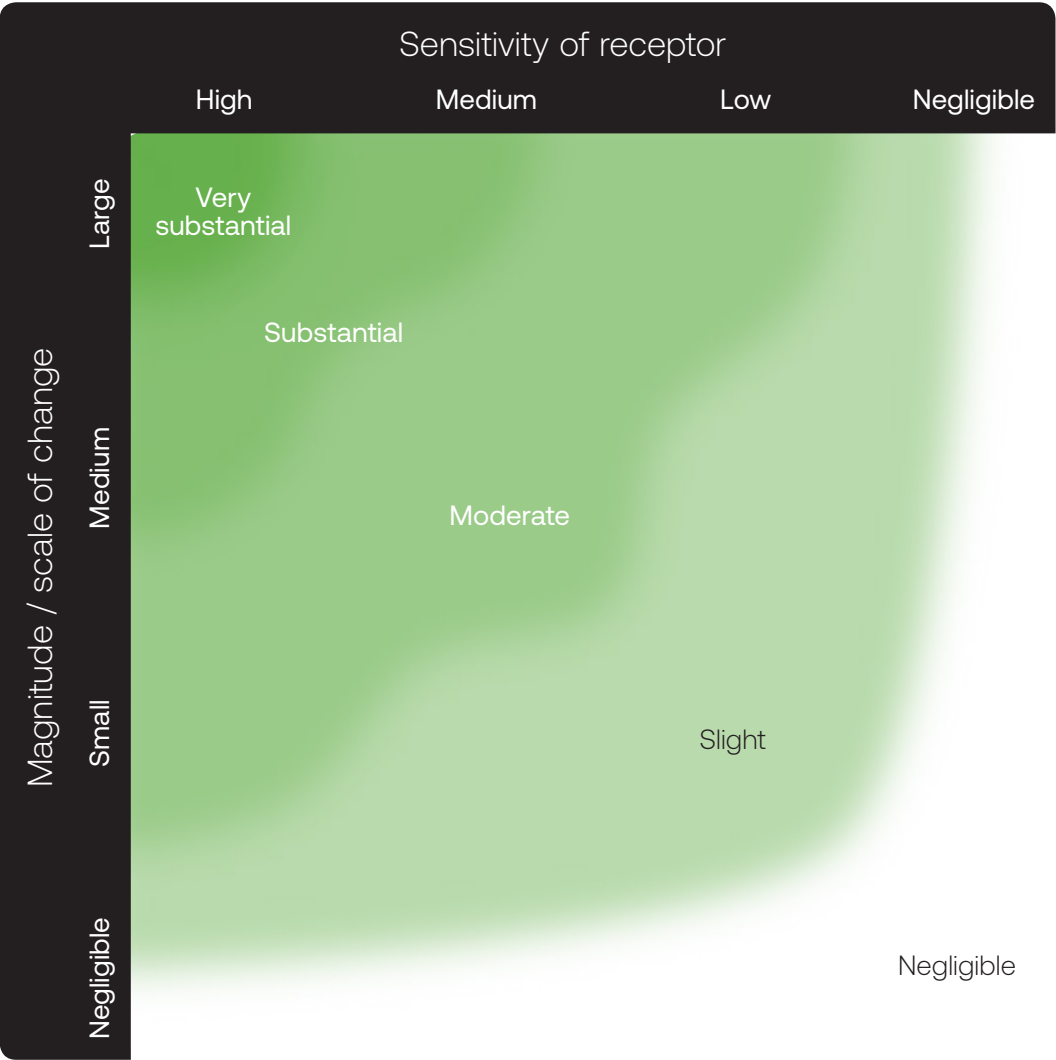
- Land East of Showell Farm (application reference: PL/2026/03545): up to 400 dwellings, land for a local centre, accommodating commercial, business and service uses (use class E), drinking establishment and hot food takeaway (sui generis), and local community uses (use class F2), open space and landscaping to include natural green space, amenity green space, area of formal play, allotments and community orchard, sustainable drainage infrastructure and ground remodelling
- Land at Rawlings Farm, Cocklebury Lane, Chippenham (application reference: 15/12351/OUT): up to 650 dwellings, 5 ha of employment-generating space, a two-form entry primary school and up to 10 ha of new public open space, including a country park
- Land at Showell Farm, Patterdown Road, Chippenham (application reference: N/13/00308/OUT): 50,000 m² of B1(b) (research and development), B1(c) (light industrial), B2 (general industrial) with ancillary B1(a) (office), and B8 (storage and distribution) with ancillary B1(a) employment development (construction ongoing, opening of the first 19,305 m² due in 2026)
- Land at North Chippenham, Hill Corner Road, East of A350, Chippenham (application reference: N/12/00560/OUT): up to 750 dwellings, up to 12,710 m² of employment development (B1 / B2 / B8), a local centre (A1 (retail), D1 (non-residential institutions), D2 (assembly and leisure)), a primary school, woodland management facilities, a new link road and public open space (construction ongoing, primary school and employment floorspace remaining to be constructed as of April 2025)
- Rowden Park, Patterdown Road, Chippenham (application reference: 14/12118/OUT): mixed use urban extension comprising up to 1,000 dwellings, one-form entry primary school, up to 400 m² retail convenience store, four shops up to 400 m² (A1-A5 (retail, financial and professional services, restaurants and cafés, drinking establishments and hot food takeaways)), community uses up to 700 m² (D1 and D2), and public open space including a riverside park, formal and informal recreational facilities and allotments (construction ongoing, 797 dwellings and all other uses remaining to be constructed as of April 2025)
- Land at Hunters Moon, Chippenham (application reference: 16/12493/FUL): outline application for the demolition of existing buildings and structures and the development of up to 450 dwellings, up to 2.41 ha of employment (B1, B2 and B8) development and public open space and full application for 140 dwellings, 10 B1 employment units and public open space (construction ongoing, 71 dwellings and employment floorspace remaining to be constructed as of April 2025)
- Langley Park, Chippenham (application reference: 16/03515/OUT): demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment for up to 400 dwellings, a 69-bed hotel with up to 199 m² café, discount foodstore of up to 1,741 m² and up to 13,656 m² of B1, B2 and B8 floorspace (construction ongoing, 329 dwellings and employment floorspace remaining to be constructed as of April 2025)
- Land at Showell Nurseries, Chippenham (application reference: 17/08554/OUT): approximately 120 dwellings and public open space
- Land off the B4069 East of Barrow Farm, Langley Burrell, Chippenham (application reference: PL/2022/04681): up to 230 dwellings, a local centre comprising commercial business and service uses (use class E) with a gross internal area limit of 675 m², of which no more than 200

m² shall be used for retail (E(a)), drinking establishment and hot food takeaway (sui generis), and public open space

- Land at Forest Gate, Pewsham, Chippenham (application reference: PL/2021/06112): development of a solar farm of up to 49.9 MW of generating capacity, comprising the installation of solar photovoltaic panels and associated infrastructure, including customer cabin, customer substation, DNO substation and equipment, inverter and transformer substations, spare part container, associated battery storage, access tracks, fencing and landscape planting

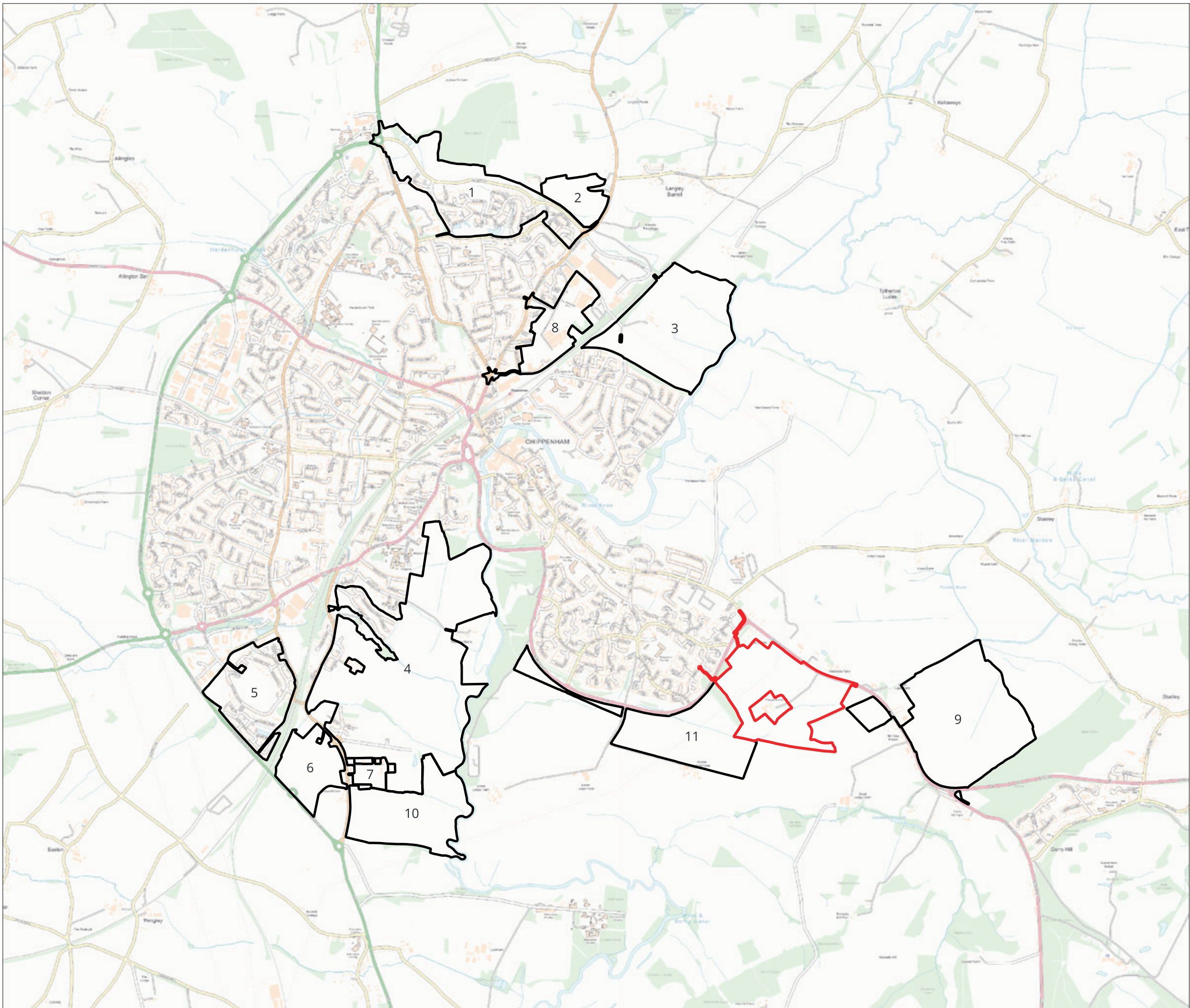
3.19 Not all the developments are relevant to all of the environmental topics; the projects that have been considered are clarified in each assessment.

Determination of significance matrix

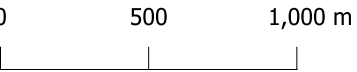


Significance

If the degree of effect is moderate or above, then the effect is considered to be significant.



- Application site boundary
- Applications
- 1. Land at North Chippenham
- 2. Land East of Barrow Farm
- 3. Land at Rawlings Farm
- 4. Rowden Park
- 5. Land at Hunters Moon
- 6. Land at Showell Farm
- 7. Land at Showell Nurseries
- 8. Langley Park
- 9. Land at Forest Gate
- 10. Land East of Showell Farm
- 11. Land South of Chippenham



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