



Interim Thurrock Transport Strategy

SEA Screening Statement

Thurrock Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

June 2022

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Draft for client comment	A Robinson S Smith	S Smith	J Pearson	28.03.2022
2	Final for consultation	S Smith	J Pearson	J Pearson	26.04.2022
3	Final addressing consultation comments	M Andrew	M Mc Ginley	J Pearson	15.06.2022



Land Use Consultants Limited

Registered in England. Registered number 2549296. Registered office: 250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD. Printed on 100% recycled paper

Contents

Chapter 1	4
Introduction	
Chapter 2	5
Context and content of the Transport Strategy	
Context for the Thurrock Transport Strategy	5
Scope of the Thurrock Transport Strategy	6
Stage of the Interim Thurrock Transport Strategy	9
Chapter 3	10
SEA screening	
Screening assessment	10
Consultation with statutory bodies	16
Chapter 4	17
Conclusion and next steps	
SEA screening conclusion	17
Next steps	18
References	19

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Thurrock Council is in the process of preparing a Transport Strategy. LUC has been appointed by Thurrock Council to consider whether there is a need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be undertaken for the Transport Strategy.

1.2 Thurrock Council has commissioned LUC to carry out SEA Screening of the Interim Thurrock Transport Strategy (TTS) to determine whether an assessment is required under The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633) as amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1232) and The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/1531) **[See reference 1]**. These regulations (as amended) are hereafter referred to as the SEA Regulations.

1.3 The SEA Regulations require the formal assessment of plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment and which set the framework for future consent of projects **[See reference 2]**. The purpose of SEA is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans.

1.4 The objective of this SEA is to ensure that the environmental effects of the Interim TTS are identified during its development, providing the opportunity for negative environmental effects to be avoided, reduced or compensated and for positive environmental effects to be enhanced, where opportunities arise. In this way, environmental considerations can be integrated into the preparation of the Interim TTS.

Chapter 2

Context and content of the Interim Thurrock Transport Strategy

Context for the Interim Thurrock Transport Strategy

2.1 Thurrock is undergoing a period of rapid change - with one of the most ambitious and exciting regeneration programmes in the UK. The emerging Local Plan for Thurrock will set out the Council's plans for around 32,000 new homes over the next 30 years and 21,000 new jobs – a major expansion of the housing supply in the Borough. The growth in Thurrock is part of the much wider growth across the South Essex and Thames Estuary Area. The Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) identifies a need for 96,000 new homes across the South Essex area in the next 20 years, and these new homes will require the development of supporting infrastructure to enable their sustainable growth. This will include transport links across the region and the Interim TTS will recognise the need to strengthen these links within and beyond the South Essex and Thames Estuary Area, as well as within Thurrock itself.

2.2 Within Thurrock, there are significant regeneration schemes. These include the redevelopment of Grays Town Centre (incorporating new crossings of the railway and opening up the riverside), as well as port expansion at Tilbury and London Gateway, and the proposed development of a logistics 'superhub' at Thames Enterprise Park, all as part of the nationally significant Thames Freeport that will stimulate investment in the Borough. Major investment at Purfleet, including a new railway station and film studios, will also rejuvenate the west of the Borough.

2.3 The proposed construction of the Lower Thames Crossing would significantly change the transport network in and around Thurrock. If the scheme goes ahead, the Council will need to mitigate the negative impacts and maximise the benefits for Thurrock residents and business. The potential transformation of Lakeside into a regional town centre, including the expansion of housing and leisure facilities and the development of the Arena Essex site to the north, will change the way in which this major urban centre operates within the Borough.

2.4 All these major developments will fundamentally change the way people and goods move around Thurrock and the wider region at a time of economic uncertainty. They will also fundamentally affect how the Council mitigates and adapts to climate change.

Scope of the Interim Thurrock Transport Strategy

2.5 The emerging Interim TTS will replace the current Thurrock Transport Strategy (2013-2026) once adopted and will outline how the Borough's transport network will change over the period up to 2038.

2.6 The Interim TTS covers the entire borough of Thurrock and sets the framework for developing transport networks to accommodate the proposed local growth in housing and jobs. It includes a vision for the long-term future of Thurrock and sets out a range of proposed strategic objectives and policies that will be in place to deliver this vision.

2.7 The vision is set out in four parts:

1. **Vision statements** – A concise statement of Thurrock's hopes and expectations.

2. **Goals** – Ten interconnected goals that overlap with each other. The goals set a benchmark against which projects and programmes of transport infrastructure can be judged. The goals apply to remodelling existing roads, bridges and other assets and providing new infrastructure to support growth and regeneration. The goals will guide the development of the following stages of the Transport Strategy/Implementation Plan.

3. **Strategic focus area** – Nine strategic focus areas – these are foundations for developing the Transport Strategy. The nine strategic focus areas are:
 - **Growth and regeneration** - Connecting and integrating growth and regeneration opportunity areas.
 - **Modes** - Multi-modal and modal shift.
 - **Rail** - Sub-regional rail connectivity for rail passengers and freight.
 - **Mass Rapid Transit** - A fully integrated sub-regional Mass Rapid Transit System.
 - **River** - River Thames connectivity and breaking down the barrier of the river.
 - **Walking and cycling** - walking and cycling and access for mobility impaired.
 - **Buses** - An efficient, integrated, and high-quality bus network.
 - **Roads** - Planning for multi-modal roads.
 - **Lower Thames Crossing** - Securing local benefits and opportunities offered by the Lower Thames Crossing.

4. **Vision 2050 Diagram** – An abstract diagram illustrating potential transport connections, interchanges, development, and regeneration by 2050.

2.8 The Interim TTS's ten key goals are summarised as follows:

- **Goal 1: An accessible and inclusive network** - a transport network that is accessible for all.

- **Goal 2: Reducing emissions and improving air quality** - reducing all transport emissions, including CO₂, nitrous oxide, noise, and particulates.
- **Goal 3: Climate change resilience and responsibility** – a transport network more adaptable to climate change effects while promoting development travel patterns to minimise and mitigate climate change impacts.
- **Goal 4: Health and wellbeing** - promoting good physical and mental health and community wellbeing.
- **Goal 5: Active travel choices** - encouraging more people to walk and cycle.
- **Goal 6: Modal shift to public transport** - a significant shift from private car use to public transportation for most journeys.
- **Goal 7: Safer roads** - a feeling of safety and security for all transport network users with no deaths and fewer accidents.
- **Goal 8: Facilitating development, growth, and regeneration** - transport infrastructure investment to facilitate growth and renewal.
- **Goal 9: Sustainable development** - coordinating land use and transport planning to avoid, minimise and mitigate negative economic, social, environmental and impacts, including climate impacts.
- **Goal 10: Managing and maintaining** - A well-managed and well-maintained network that is reliable, giving people confidence in journey times.

2.9 The policies can be found in chapters 6 (Regional Movement), 7 (Local Movement) and 8 (Neighbourhood Movement) of the Interim TTS.

2.10 Within chapter 6, policy R1 relates to multi-modal transport, R2-R6 concern rail transport, R7 and R8 consider mass rapid transport, R9-R11 relate to river transport and R12-R13 relate to strategic road policies and schemes. This chapter also includes Major Schemes 1-11. All of these policies and schemes are concerned with Regional Movement.

2.11 Chapter 7 covers policies related to Local Movement within the Borough. Policies L1-L7 concern multi-modal schemes, L8-L12 relate to the bus network, L13-L15 present walking and cycling schemes, L16-L22 detail local road schemes and L23-25 relate to freight. Major Schemes 12 and 13 are also outlined in this chapter.

2.12 Neighbourhood Movement within the Borough is covered within chapter 8. Policies N1-N4 relate to multi-modal schemes and N5-N6 detail walking and cycling schemes.

Stage of the Interim Thurrock Transport Strategy

2.13 Mott MacDonald is currently preparing an Interim TTS on behalf of Thurrock Council. The Interim TTS will be published for public consultation in autumn 2022 and will support the delivery of the aspirations of both the emerging Thurrock Local Plan (due for adoption in 2024) and the Council's wider transport, economic, health and environmental objectives.

Chapter 3

SEA screening

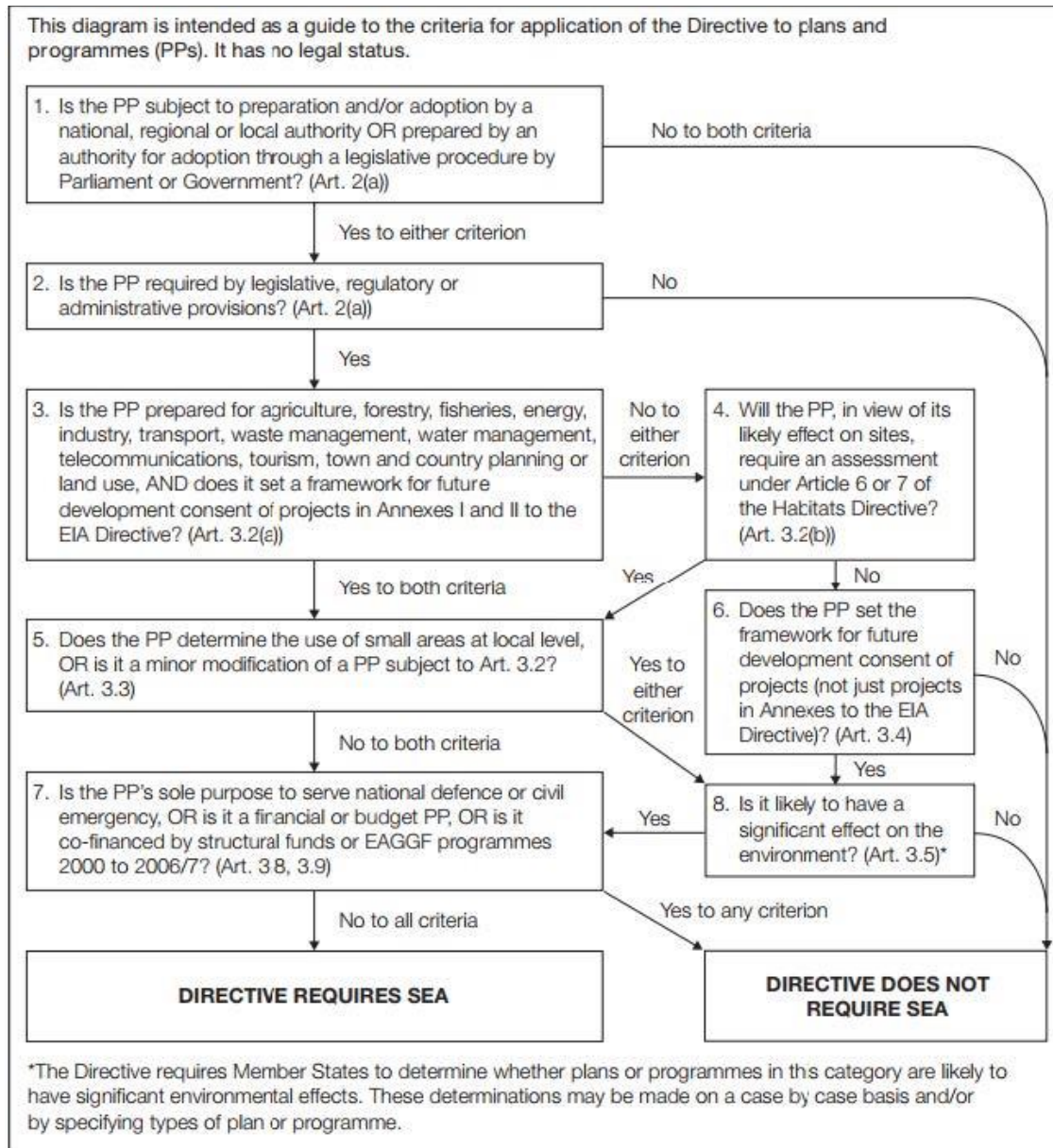
Screening assessment

3.1 An assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the Interim TTS requires SEA in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

3.2 **Figure 3.1** presents a flow diagram entitled ‘Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes’ that is reproduced from the Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, published in September 2005 [See reference 3]. The Practical Guide has been superseded by the national Planning Practice Guidance but it still provides a useful and relevant guide to the process to use in SEA screening decision-making [See reference 4]. Following the United Kingdom’s (UK) departure from the European Union (EU) on 31 January 2020, it entered a transition period, which ended on 31 December 2020. Directly applicable EU law now no longer applies to the UK and the UK is free to repeal EU law that has been transposed into UK law. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/1633) were therefore amended by The Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/1232). As set out in the Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the EU exit amendments to the SEA Regulations [See reference 5], the purpose of the EU exit amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly after the UK has left the EU. No substantive changes are being made by this instrument to the way the SEA regime operates.

3.3 Note that references to ‘PP’ in **Figure 3.1** refer to ‘plan or programme’, in this case, the Thurrock Transport Strategy.

Figure 3.1: Application of the SEA Directive to plans and programmes



3.4 The bullet points below reflect each question outlined in **Figure 3.1** and sub-bullet points provide a response to each question with regard to the Thurrock Transport Strategy.

- Q1 – Is the PP subject to preparation and/or adoption by a national, regional or local authority OR prepared by an authority for adoption through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government?

- Yes - The Thurrock Transport Strategy is being prepared by the Local Authority (Thurrock Council). While not part of the statutory Local Plan, the Interim TTS will respond to, and support delivery of, the emerging Thurrock Local Plan.
- Q2 – Is the PP required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions?
 - Yes – The Interim TTS constitutes the required strategy element of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Thurrock. Local Transport Authorities are required to produce an LTP under the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008.
- Q3 – Is the PP prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use AND does it set a framework for future development consent of projects in Annexes I and II to the EIA Directive?
 - Yes – The Interim TTS relates to transport and includes policies to develop transport networks, including working with partners to deliver new rail interchanges and river crossings, improvements to walking and cycling, and safeguarding land for Mass Rapid Transit. Projects relating to urban development, construction of railways and intermodal terminals are listed under Annex II of the EIA Directive.
- Q4 – Will the PP, in view of its likely effect on sites, require an assessment under Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive?
 - No
- Q5 – Does the PP determine the use of small areas at local level, OR is it a minor modification of a PP?
 - No – The Interim TTS is a Borough-wide strategy.
- Q6 – Does the PP set out the framework for future development consent of projects (not just projects in Annexes to the EIA Directive)?
 - Yes – See response to Q3.

- Q7 – Is the PP's sole purpose to serve national defence or civil emergency, OR is it a financial budget PP, OR is it co-financed by structural funds or EAGGF programmes 2000-2006/7?
 - No
- Q8 – Is it likely to have a significant effect on the environment?
 - There is potential for the Interim TTS to have effects on the environment, due to the potential for transport operations and infrastructure to affect air pollution, noise and visual factors, as well as potential for some of the proposals to result in built development, which could result in further environmental effects, such as changes to surface water runoff. These effects have the potential to be significant, as discussed below.

3.5 Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations sets out the criteria for determining the likely significance of effects. These are listed below, along with comments on the extent to which the Thurrock Transport Strategy meets these criteria.

3.6 The characteristics of the plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to:

- The degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating sources.
 - The Interim TTS sets out policies aimed at improving the transport network at regional, local and neighbourhood scales. This includes policies to support development of the rail, road, river and walking and cycling networks, as proposals for a mass rapid transit (MRT) service. As such, it sets the framework for developing the Borough's transport networks.
- The degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy.
 - The Interim TTS will support the growth set out in the Local Plan. The Interim TTS sets out a commitment to a number of further plans and projects, including a Strategic Plan for Rail, a Cycling and Walking

Infrastructure Plan, and a number of feasibility studies for developing the transport network.

- The relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development.
 - The Interim TTS provides an opportunity to ensure that the development set out in the emerging Local Plan is supported by suitable sustainable transport. The Interim TTS recognises the role of the TTS in helping to overcome health inequalities, including exposure to air pollution, supporting the Government's net zero by 2050 target and responding to the declaration of a climate emergency by Thurrock Council in 2019.
- Environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme.
 - Thurrock includes a variety of sensitive environmental receptors, such as biodiversity and geodiversity designations (including the Thames Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar), historic assets (including listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas), areas of best and most versatile agricultural land, source protection zones, areas at high risk of flooding and the people who live and work in Thurrock. Transport and transport infrastructure have the potential to affect such receptors through changes in air quality and nitrogen deposition, noise, visual disturbance, changes to surface water runoff and through opportunities for active travel, such as walking and cycling.
- The relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (e.g. plans and programmes linked to waste-management or water protection).
 - The plan is not directly for the purposes of implementing of Community legislation on the environment.

3.7 Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to:

- The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects.

- The effects of the Interim TTS are expected to generally be long-term, although any built development projects will also have shorter term construction impacts. Policies that would not result in built development, such as those relating to provision or alteration of bus, rail and ferry services will have reversible impacts, but proposals resulting in built development will be permanent.
- The cumulative nature of the effects.
 - Cumulative effects could arise from the Interim TTS, particularly in combination with the emerging Local Plan and the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, if this is granted consent.
- The transboundary nature of the effects.
 - The Interim TTS focuses on Thurrock. Transboundary effects under the SEA Regulations refers transboundary effects on EU Member States; therefore they are not relevant to the Interim TTS.
- The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents).
 - Transport operations and infrastructure could result in risks to human health and the environment, for example through air pollution, noise disturbance or fuel spillage.
- The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).
 - The Interim TTS covers the whole of Thurrock. There is also potential for neighbouring areas to be affected, particularly where there are proposals close to the local authority boundary or on routes heavily utilised by those passing through Thurrock to and from other areas.
- The value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to: Special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; Exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; and Intensive land-use.
 - Thurrock includes some sensitive environmental receptors, such as biodiversity and geodiversity designations (including the Thames Estuary Special Protection Area and Ramsar) and historic assets (including listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas). In addition, there are 18 Air Quality Management Areas

(AQMA) in Thurrock, as well as areas of best and most versatile agricultural land, source protection zones and areas at high risk of flooding.

- The effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status.
- Thurrock includes part of the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar site.

Consultation with consultation bodies

3.8 The three consultation bodies for SEA in England, namely Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency, were consulted from 29th April to 20th May 2022. The following is a summary of their responses:

■ Historic England

- Historic England supports the conclusion of the SEA Screening Report that the Interim TTS has the potential to result in likely significant environmental effects and that these should be explored through a full SEA. Historic England strongly advises that the conservation and archaeological team of the Council are closely involved throughout the preparation of the SEA of the Interim TTS.

■ Natural England

- No response.

■ Environment Agency

- No response.

Chapter 4

Conclusion and next steps

SEA screening conclusion

4.1 A screening assessment has been undertaken by applying the criteria from the SEA Regulations to determine whether or not the Interim TTS is likely to have significant environmental effects when assessed against the topics listed in the SEA Regulations.

4.2 The Interim TTS sets out a vision, goals and policies to shape development of the transport network within Thurrock. Although, the Interim TTS will not directly impact on land use through the allocation of land for built development, the Interim TTS supports projects that could include built development, such as new rail interchanges, jetties, and multi-modal transport hubs. In addition, various environmental sensitivities in Thurrock have been identified, including biodiversity and historic environment designations, AQMAs and areas at high risk of flooding, all of which could potentially be affected by proposals in the Interim TTS. On this basis, it is considered that the Interim TTS has potential to result in likely significant environmental effects and that these should be explored through a full SEA.

4.3 The consultation response received from Historic England supports the determination that the Interim TTS has the potential to result in likely significant environmental effects and these should be explored through SEA.

Statement of determination

Therefore, for the reasons set out above, it is considered that SEA is required for the Thurrock Transport Strategy.

Next steps

4.4 The next step will be the preparation of a Draft Scoping Report of the Interim TTS. The purpose of the Scoping Report is to provide the context for, and determine the scope of, the SEA of the Interim TTS and to set out the assessment framework for undertaking the later stages of the SEA. In order to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations, the views of the three consultation bodies (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) will be sought in relation to the scope and level of detail to be included in the SEA.

4.1 The Interim TTS will then be subject to SEA with the findings reported in an Environmental Report which will be made available to other stakeholders and the general public for wider consultation alongside the Interim TTS.

4.2 Following the consultation, the submissions and observations received during the public consultation period will be reviewed and considered during the finalisation of the Interim TTS. If the Interim TTS is further revised, these revisions will be subject to further assessment. If there are no further alterations to the Interim TTS, a Final Environmental Report will be prepared and made available on the Council's website. An SEA Statement will be prepared identifying how each of the requirements in the SEA Regulations have been met during the SEA process. The finalised SEA Statement will be published after the TTS is adopted.

LUC

June 2022

References

- 1 It should be noted that the purpose of the amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly after the UK has left the European Union. No substantive changes are made to the way the SEA regime operates.
- 2 Under EU Directives 85/337/EEC and 97/11/EC concerning EIA.
- 3 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7657/practicalguidesea.pdf
- 4 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (various) Planning practice guidance (online) Available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- 5 MHCLG (2018) Explanatory Memorandum to the Environmental Assessments and Miscellaneous Planning (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2018 No. 1232, available at:
https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/1232/pdfs/uksiem_20181232_en.pdf

Report produced by LUC

Report produced by LUC

Bristol

12th Floor, Colston Tower, Colston Street, Bristol BS1 4XE
0117 929 1997
bristol@landuse.co.uk

Cardiff

16A, 15th Floor, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd, Cardiff CF24 0EB
0292 032 9006
cardiff@landuse.co.uk

Edinburgh

Atholl Exchange, 6 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG
0131 202 1616
edinburgh@landuse.co.uk

Glasgow

37 Otago Street, Glasgow G12 8JJ
0141 334 9595
glasgow@landuse.co.uk

London

250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD
020 7383 5784
london@landuse.co.uk

Manchester

6th Floor, 55 King Street, Manchester M2 4LQ
0161 537 5960
manchester@landuse.co.uk

landuse.co.uk

Landscape Design / Strategic Planning & Assessment
Development Planning / Urban Design & Masterplanning
Environmental Impact Assessment / Landscape Planning & Assessment
Landscape Management / Ecology / Historic Environment / GIS & Visualisation