3. EXISTING LAND USES AND ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

3.1 This chapter summarises the existing land uses and activities currently occurring on, and around, the sites of the three applications. The chapter also identifies the key environmental characteristics of the sites of the three applications and their surroundings, thereby identifying potential sensitive receptors which may be affected by the four Development Scenarios.

3.2 Where significant differences in existing land uses and activities exist between each of the three applications (and hence four Development Scenarios), these are explained in detail within each of the technical chapters of this Environmental Statement (ES) (Chapters 7 to 17 inclusive). A full description of the baseline conditions currently existing within the three application sites, as relating to individual environmental issues, is also provided in each of the technical chapters.

3.3 This chapter should be read in conjunction with Figures 3.1 to 3.7 inclusive.

LOCATION AND SETTING OF THE APPLICATION SITES

3.4 As noted in Chapter 1: Introduction and illustrated on Figure 1.1, the sites of the three applications are located in the highly urbanised Victoria area of central London and fall within the administrative boundary of Westminster City Council (WCC). Considered together, these sites occupy an area of approximately 2.3ha and are centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 528970 179241.

3.5 Figure 1.3, within Chapter 1: Introduction, illustrates the boundaries of the three application sites and the four Development Scenarios. Chapter 1 also provides a description of the three planning applications.

TOPOGRAPHY

3.6 The three application sites all lie within the floodplain of the historic River Tyburn. Indicative of their floodplain location, the three application sites are low lying with a relatively flat topography. The lowest point lies at 3.3m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at Allington Street within application 1, with levels rising to a maximum of 5.6m AOD at Buckingham Palace Road on the western boundary of application 1.

3.7 The existing layout and levels of the three application sites are shown on Figure 3.1.

PREDOMINANT LAND USES

3.8 Figures 3.2 to 3.4 illustrate the predominant land uses currently existing both within, and immediately surrounding the three application sites. Photographs illustrating key existing land uses are presented in Figures 3.5 and 3.6.

Land Uses within the Application Sites

3.9 The sites of the three applications all currently comprise a variety of land uses and are almost entirely covered by built form, roads or areas of hardstanding. The application sites are dominated by office buildings, with some limited retail and residential land uses, together with the 134 room Thistle Westminster Hotel situated within application 1. As can be appreciated from Figure 3.2, the three application sites currently contain few areas of public realm and limited areas of vegetation. Table 3.1 summarises the quantum of existing land uses within the three application sites.

Table 3.1: Existing Land Uses within the Three Application Sites

Land Use Class	Estimated Gross External Area (GEA) (m^2)		
	Application 1	Application 2	Application 3
Office (B1)	33,903	4,651	3,605
Retail (A1-A5)	8,206	2,494	731
Residential (C3)	6,974	-	-
Hotel (C1)	7,270	-	-
Leisure (D1, D2 and sui-generis)	822	-	-
Total	**57,175**	**7,145**	**4,336**

3.10 In addition to the existing land uses within each application site, for reader clarity the existing land uses per Development Scenario are set out within Table 3.2, as this information forms the basis of assessments within the ES.

Table 3.2: Existing Land Uses within the Four Development Scenarios

Land Use Class	Estimated Gross External Area (GEA) (m^2) and/or Number of Rooms			
	Development Scenario 1 (applications 1,2 and 3)	Development Scenario 2 (applications 1 and 2)	Development Scenario 3 (applications 1 and 3)	Development Scenario 4 (application 1)
	GEA	GEA	GEA	GEA
Office (B1)	34,949	34,949	33,903	33,903
Retail (A1-A5)	10,700	10,700	8,471	8,471
Residential (C3)	6,974	6,974	6,974	6,974
Hotel (C1)	7,270	7,270	7,270	7,270
Leisure (D1, D2 and sui-generis)	822	822	822	822
Total	**60,715**	**60,715**	**57,440**	**57,175**

3.11 Figure 3.7 indicates that the Applicant owns a significant amount of land on the three application sites. A summary description of the main land uses currently existing on, and under, the three application sites is set out below. It should be noted that, as shown on Figure 3.2, there is a degree of overlap between the three application sites and as such, certain structures (e.g. Elliot House) are situated within more than one application.

Above Ground

Application 1

3.12 As shown on Figure 3.2, the site of application 1 is surrounded by Bressenden Place to the north, Victoria Street to the south, Buckingham Palace Road to the west and to the east by property numbers 3-7 Bressenden Place, the Duke of York Pub, Victoria Palace Theatre and property numbers 120-124 Victoria Street.

3.13 Roadways situated within the site of application 1 comprise Allington Street, Allington Court and Warwick Row, as well as a section of Bressenden Place in the north. The site of application 1 also includes sections of footpath along Buckingham Palace Road, Victoria Street and Bressenden Place.

3.14 Immediately to the north of Victoria Street, land uses within the site of application 1 include office buildings of mainly 4-7 storeys west of Allington Street (Figure 3.5, Plate 1) and residential land uses within Allington Court and Allington Towers. To the east of Allington Street within application 1 is Elliot House, a middle-rise office building with retail units at ground floor level (Figure 3.5, Plate 2), as well as retail property at numbers 9-11 Bressenden Place.

3.15 To the north of Allington Street within the boundary of application 1, serviced accommodation is provided at Lake View Court, which also contains six floors of offices along Buckingham Palace Road. Adjacent to the south of Lake View Court within application 1 is the four-star Thistle Westminster Hotel (Figure 3.5, Plate 3) with the 10-storey Carrier House, which provides office accommodation, situated directly opposite to the east on Warwick Row. The northern area within application 1 includes three public houses: The Kings Arms and The Stage Door on Allington Street and The Stag on Bressenden Place.

Application 2

3.16 As shown on Figure 3.2, the site of application 2 is surrounded to the north by a parcel of undeveloped land and The Stag public house, to the south by Victoria Street, to the east by Bressenden Place and Portland House and to the east by Allington Street (and associated residential uses), the Duke of York pub and Victoria Palace Theatre.

3.17 Roadways situated within the site of application 2 comprise a section of Bressenden Place in the east, a small section of Victoria Street in the south and a small section of Allington Street in the west. Sections of existing footpaths adjacent to these roads are also contained within the site of application 2.

3.18 Existing above-ground structures within application 2 include Elliot House, numbers 10-12 Allington Street, retail uses within numbers 3-11 Bressenden Place and office/retail uses within numbers 120-124 Victoria Street.

Application 3

3.19 As shown on Figure 3.2, the site of application 3 is surrounded to the north by Bressenden Place and the government offices at Eland House, to the south by the Victoria Palace Theatre and numbers 3-7 Bressenden Place, to the east by Portland House and to the west by Carrier House and Allington Street. Roadways contained within the site of application 1 comprise a section of Bressenden Place, and associated footpaths, in the west.

3.20 Existing above-ground structures within application 3 comprise The Stag public house, Elliot House, numbers 10-12 Allington Street, numbers 9-11 Bressenden Place and an area of undeveloped land, which is located to the southeast of The Stag public house.

Below Ground

3.21 Full descriptions of how each application would interact with, or avoid, existing below-ground structures are provided in Chapter 5: The Proposed Development Scenarios. However, a brief description of the below-ground structures which overlap with each application site boundary is provided below, and illustrated on Figure 3.4.

Application 1

3.22 As shown on Figure 3.4, the site of application 1 overlaps with various below ground structures, including the London Underground Limited (LUL) Victoria Line, and associated Victoria Station Upgrade (VSU) zone, which runs north-south beneath the application 1 site. The Crossrail Tunnel proximity zone also runs along the western boundary, and bisects the northwestern corner of the application 1 site.

3.23 The King's Scholars' Pond Sewer (KSPS) runs along a north-south axis beneath application 1, whilst the Western Deep Sewer runs beneath application 1 in an east-west direction to the north of Allington Street and also in a north-south direction, adjacent to the KSPS. Several shallow sewers are also situated beneath application 1 running under Victoria Street, Buckingham Palace Road, Allington Street and Warwick Row.

Application 2

3.24 Existing below-ground structures within the site of application 2 comprise the LUL Victoria Line, and associated VSU zone, as mentioned for application 1 above, as well as the District and Circle line, which runs east-west and intersects with the far southeastern corner of the site. The KSPS, Western Deep Sewer and shallow sewers are also situated beneath the site of application 2, as shown on Figure 3.4.

Application 3

3.25 Existing below-ground structures within the site of application 3 also include the Victoria Line, and associated VSU zone, the KSPS and Western Deep Sewer, as shown on Figure 3.4. However, due to the smaller extent of application 3, there is less overlap with the LUL Victoria Line and the KSPS.

Off-Site Land Uses

3.26 As illustrated on Figure 3.2, a mix of land uses surrounds the three application sites. Those in the immediate vicinity, or of particular significance in the wider surrounding area, are described below. Due to the close proximity of the application sites with one another, the description of surrounding land uses relates to all three application sites and provides the context within which the four Development Scenarios, as described in Chapter 5: The Proposed Development Scenarios, would come forward.

3.27 It is, however, recognised that in the instance of applications 1 and 3 (Development Scenarios 3 and 4), buildings on Bressenden Place (numbers 3-7) and Victoria Street (numbers 120-124) would constitute surrounding land uses, as they are not located within the boundary of these applications.

3.28 The southern side of Victoria Street is fronted by 4-7 storey buildings including retail units at ground floor level and offices above, with residential properties also located within these properties at numbers 185-187 Victoria Street (Figure 3.6, Plates 1, 2 and 3). The Grade II listed Little Ben Clock is situated at the junction of Victoria Street and Wilton Road (Figure 3.6, Plate 4). The Grade II listed Victoria Palace Theatre and the adjoining unlisted Duke of York Public House

are located immediately east of Allington Street and north of Victoria Street (Figure 3.6, Plates 5 and 6), though they are situated outside the boundaries of the three application sites.

3.29 Further to the south of Victoria Street, fronting the north side of Terminus Place, are various mixed-use buildings including retail use at ground floor level and offices ranging from the 10-storey Victoria Station House to single-storey retail buildings (Figure 3.6, Plate 7). The Shakespeare Public House, which includes a flat above, fronts the western part of Terminus Place.

3.30 The Victoria Bus Station is situated at Terminus Place (Figure 3.6 Plates 8 and 10) and, beyond that, lies the Grade II listed Victoria Railway Station (Figure 3.6, Plate 11) and the Grade II* listed Grosvenor Thistle Hotel adjacent to the west of Victoria Station (Figure 3.6, Plate 12).

3.31 Other residential land uses to the south of the three application sites are provided by seven storey buildings fronting Carlisle Place and Vauxhall Bridge Road, including Evelyn Mansions adjacent to the southeast. The Grade I listed Westminster Cathedral is located approximately 200m to the east of the boundary to the three application sites. Fronting Wilton Road are mainly middle-rise office buildings together with the Grade II* listed Apollo Theatre.

3.32 To the east and northeast, the sites of the three application sites are surrounded by large scale office buildings and retail units on Bressenden Place and Victoria Street (Figure 3.6, Plate 13), including Eland House and BP House. Residential dwellings are present further east including the 17-storey Roebuck House ('The View') and terraced houses along Palace Street (Figure 3.6, Plate 14).

3.33 The 30-storey Portland House is located on the opposite side of Bressenden Place to the east of the three application sites (Figure 3.6, Plate 15). The recently completed Cardinal Place development is situated approximately 100m north east of the boundary to the three application sites and consists of retail at ground floor level with restaurant, art gallery and roof garden above (Figure 3.6, Plate 16).

3.34 To the immediate north of the boundary of the site of application 1, the Hotel Rubens fronts Buckingham Palace Road (Figure 3.6, Plate 17). To the west of the Hotel Rubens, on the opposite side of Buckingham Palace Road, lies the Grade I Listed Royal Mews (Figure 3.6, Plate 18) and a further 250m northwest is Buckingham Palace. The Royal Parks (St James' Park, Green Park and Hyde Park) are located approximately 400m, 500m and just over 800m north east, north and northwest of the boundary to the three application sites respectively.

3.35 To the west of the boundary of the site of application 1 are a number of low rise residential dwellings along Buckingham Palace Road, Eaton Lane and Victoria Square (Figure 3.6, Plates 19 and 20).

Transportation and Access

3.36 The three application sites have excellent links to public transport with Victoria Railway Station, located approximately 150m to the south, providing frequent local and national services to a range of destination in south and southeast England, including Gatwick Airport, Brighton, Portsmouth, Southampton, Maidstone and Ashford.

3.37 LUL Victoria, District and Circle Line services also provide London-wide access from Victoria, with pedestrian accesses to these lines provided within close proximity to the three application sites at Wilton Road (to the Victoria Line) and at Victoria Street and Terminus Place (to the District and Circle Line).

3.38 Victoria Bus Station is located approximately 75m to the south of the three application sites at Terminus Place and of the 19 bus services passing through Victoria, 18 utilise the bus station at Terminus Place, providing access to destinations across central and suburban London.

3.39 Taxi services are accessible via two taxi ranks to the front and rear of Victoria Railway Station, with queuing for the Terminus Place rank (at the front of the station) on Wilton Road and Vauxhall Bridge Road.

3.40 The main vehicular access to the three application sites is from the A302/A202 Inner Ring Road, which consists of Vauxhall Bridge Road and Wilton Road to the south and Grosvenor Gardens to the west. Additional vehicular access is provided via Buckingham Palace Road from the north and south and Victoria Street from the east.

3.41 Within the three application sites the highway network predominantly consists of Allington Street and Warwick Row, which generally bisect the sites from east to west and north to south, as shown on Figure 3.2. Whilst Victoria is located within the London Congestion Charging Zone (CCZ), all streets within the application sites form part of the 'toll free route'. There is currently limited on-street car parking provision within the boundary of the three application sites, including 25 metered, pay and display and resident parking bays, and 128 off-street parking spaces.

3.42 Pedestrians can currently access the three application sites from footpaths on all adjacent roads, as well as the public transport infrastructure described above. However, there is very little dedicated public realm currently existing within the three application site boundaries and the majority of pedestrian routes are congested and/or come into conflict with existing road traffic.

3.43 Shared bus and cycle lanes are provided along Victoria Street, Bressenden Place and Buckingham Palace Road. However, there is little current provision for cycle parking within the boundary of the three application sites.

3.44 Further details regarding the above issues are provided in Chapter 10: Transportation and Access.

Built Heritage and Views

3.45 Built heritage features in the vicinity of the three application sites are shown on Figure 3.3. While there are no designated built heritage features within the application sites, the Grade II listed Victoria Palace Theatre (Figure 3.6, Plate 5) and the Grade II listed Little Ben Clock (Figure 3.6, Plate 4) are situated immediately adjacent to the south. In addition, seven conservation areas and numerous other listed buildings exist in close proximity to the boundary of the three application sites.

3.46 With respect to views, the protected strategic viewing corridor of King Henry VIII's Mound to St Paul's Cathedral impinges upon the northwestern corner of application 1. Further details on built heritage and views are provided within Volume 3: Townscape, Conservation and Visual Assessment.

Air Quality, Noise and Vibration

3.47 In line with Government requirements, WCC have carried out a number of studies into ambient air quality within the borough. It has been concluded that levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO_2) and fine particulate matter (PM_{10}) are likely to exceed the relevant national air quality objectives (notwithstanding the four Development Scenarios). As such, WCC have declared the entire borough an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

3.48 The noise environment within, and surrounding, the three application sites is dominated by traffic movements associated with the local highway network, including Victoria Street, Bressenden Place and Buckingham Palace Road. Main sources of vibration are currently associated with the operation of the sub-surface LUL Victoria, District and Circle Lines.

3.49 Further details on air quality, noise and vibration are provided in Chapter 10: Air Quality and Chapter 11: Noise and Vibration.

Ground Conditions and Contamination

3.50 Geological maps for the area indicate that the geology beneath all three application sites comprises Alluvium, underlain by River Terrace Deposits, underlain by the London Clay Formation and finally the Lambeth Group.

3.51 The three application sites have previously been used for a range of activities (most notably as part of the Stag Brewery and its associated infrastructure). Such uses have the potential to give rise to 'hot spots' of historically contaminated ground, however, existing basements and underground infrastructure may have removed potential sources of contamination.

3.52 Key underground constraints beneath the sites of the three applications are described above and shown on Figure 3.4 and include:

- The KSPS running along a north-south axis beneath all three applications in the east;
- The Western Deep Sewer running along an east-west axis north of Allington Street and also north-south adjacent to the KSPS within all three applications;
- Several shallow sewers running along Victoria Street, Buckingham Palace Road, Allington Street and Warwick Row (within all three applications);
- The LUL District and Circle Lines running east-west beneath the southeastern corner of application 2;
- The LUL Victoria line running north-south beneath all three applications in the east;
- VSU zone adjacent to the Victoria Line (within all three applications); and
- Safeguarded Crossrail 2 zone adjacent to the west, and within the northwest boundary, of application 1.

3.53 Further details on the above issues are provided in Chapter 13: Ground Conditions and Contamination.

Archaeology

3.54 The three application sites are not located within any Area of Special Archaeological Priority. However, the sites have been identified as an area of interest for potential palaeo-environmental deposits. It is also possible that medieval and post-medieval deposits have the potential to be present beneath the three application sites. The greatest potential for archaeological remains is likely to be under the existing roads where basements have not been previously constructed.

3.55 Archaeological issues are discussed further within Chapter 12: Archaeology.

Surface Water Drainage and Flood Risk

3.56 The three application sites lie within the historic floodplain of the river Tyburn. However, this is now culverted and runs deep under the surface. There are therefore no surface water features within the three application sites. The closest surface water feature is the River Thames, which is located approximately 1.2km south and east of the three application sites at its closest point.

3.57 According to the Environment Agency, the three application sites lie within Flood Zone 3a, which means that they have a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding (>1%) or 1 in 200 or greater annual probability of tidal flooding (>0.5%). However, this classification does not take into account the existing flood defences on the River Thames. Accounting for the existing flood defences, the three application sites are defended to the statutory level of 5.41m AOD.

3.58 Further details regarding water resources and flooding are contained within Chapter 14: Surface Water Drainage and Flood Risk.

Ecology

3.59 The three application sites are currently dominated by buildings and paved areas with very little green space. Green areas and vegetation are minimal, with the exception, of a few ornamental trees, and the application sites are therefore considered to be of low ecological value. Further details on ecology are provided within Chapter 2: EIA Methodology.

POTENTIALLY SENSITIVE RECEPTORS

3.60 A review of existing and surrounding land uses both on, and within the vicinity of, the application sites, has identified a range of receptors and/or environmental constraints, which could potentially be sensitive to environmental effects resulting from the proposed Development Scenarios. The identified receptors are listed in Table 3.3 below and shown on Figures 3.2 to 3.4 and relate to all three application sites (i.e. all four Development Scenarios).

Table 3.3: Potentially Sensitive Receptors

Category	Sensitive Receptor/Land Use
Transportation and Access	Existing and future on- and off-site road users and pedestrians.
	Existing and future public transport capacities and public transport users.
Occupants of residential properties	Existing residents at Allington Towers within application site 1 which would not be demolished during the early stages of the demolition and construction works. Existing residents surrounding the sites of the three applications at the Duke of York Public House, Roebuck House, Evelyn Mansions, Victoria Square and along Victoria Street, Buckingham Palace Road, Eaton Lane, Vauxhall Bridge Road and Carlisle Place. Future residents of the proposed Development Scenarios.
Commercial Properties	Existing and future occupants and users of commercial premises surrounding the three application sites, including the Grade II listed Victoria Palace Theatre and the adjacent Duke of York Public House.
Views	The protected strategic viewing corridor of King Henry VIII's Mound, Richmond to St Paul's Cathedral (impinging the northwest of application 1); Non-statutory but recognised important views including: • Views from Westminster Bridge to the Palace of Westminster; • Views from Albert Embankment to the Palace of Westminster; • Views from Buckingham Palace; and • Views from St James' Park, Hyde Park and Green Park.
Built Heritage	Westminster Palace, Westminster Abbey and Saint Margaret's Church World Heritage Site approximately 850m east of the boundary to the three applications. Conservation Areas in proximity to the three application sites, including: • Westminster Cathedral Conservation Area to the southeast; • Royal Parks Conservation Area to the northwest; • Grosvenor Gardens Conservation Area to the west; • Birdcage Walk Conservation Area approximately 150m north east; • Belgravia Conservation Area approximately 150m west; • Pimlico Conservation Area approximately 250m to the south; and • Vincent Square Conservation Area approximately 350m to the southeast. Surrounding listed buildings including: • The Grade II listed Victoria Palace Theatre, Victoria Street • The Grade II listed Little Ben Clock at the Victoria Street/Wilton Road junction; • The Grade I listed Royal Mews to the northwest; • The Grade II* listed Apollo Victoria Theatre to the southeast; • The Grade II listed Victoria Station to the south; • The Grade II* listed Grosvenor Hotel to the southwest; • The Grade I listed Westminster Cathedral to the east; • The Grade II* listed Clergy House and Archbishop's House to the southeast; and • Various other Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings to the west at Buckingham Palace Road, Grosvenor Gardens, Eaton Lane, Beeston Place, Victoria Square and Lower Grosvenor Place.
Air Quality	The WCC borough-wide Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
Archaeology	Potential archaeological remains beneath the three application sites.

Category	Sensitive Receptor/Land Use
Surface Water Drainage and Flood Risk	Potential underlying groundwater resources; Existing and future surface water drainage capacity; and The floodplain of the River Thames.
Ground conditions	Various underground infrastructure including: • Various shallow sewers; • King's Scholars' Pond Sewer; • Western Deep Sewer; and • London Underground tunnels for the Victoria, District and Circle Lines. Safeguarded Crossrail 2 zone adjacent to the west, and within the northwest, of application 1. Victoria Station Upgrade (VSU) zone within the east of the three applications.