

## ◆ Ecology

### INTRODUCTION

1. Intermodal Logistics Park North Ltd. (‘the Applicant’) is promoting proposals for a new strategic rail freight interchange (SRFI) and associated development on land to the east of Newton-le-Willows, in the jurisdictions of St Helens, Wigan and Warrington Councils. An SRFI is a large multi-purpose freight interchange and distribution centre linked into both the rail and trunk road systems. SRFIs reduce the cost of moving freight by rail and encourage the transfer of freight from road to rail, thereby reducing carbon emissions and contributing to the UK’s target to achieve net zero by 2050.
2. Under the Planning Act 2008, the proposals qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). Accordingly, an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) is to be made to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), which will examine the DCO application on behalf of the Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport.
3. Before making a DCO application, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Proposed Development will be undertaken in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (‘the EIA Regulations’). EIA is a process that provides the decision maker with sufficient information about the likely environmental effects of a project and is used to improve the environmental design of a development proposal. The first stage of this process was the submission of a request for a formal scoping opinion under Regulation 10 of the EIA Regulations.
4. The Applicant submitted an EIA Scoping Report to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2024. This outlined the work undertaken to date and sought advice from the Inspectorate on the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development and the topics that needed to be assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A Scoping Opinion was received in December 2024 and this will be used to inform the EIA process for the Proposed Development. A summary of the main comments received and how the Applicant intends to address these are set out in the table below.

**Table 1 Scoping Opinion comments and responses**

Inspectorate’s Comments	Applicant’s Response
The Inspectorate considers that there is potential for effects on Manchester Mosses SAC and Rixton Clay Pits SAC from air quality emissions	The Applicant will scope potential impacts on Manchester Mosses SAC and Rixton Clay Pits SAC into the assessment, this will also

Inspectorate’s Comments	Applicant’s Response
<p>associated with the Proposed Development. These sites cannot therefore be scoped out at this stage. The ES should also ensure appropriate cross reference between the ecology assessment and other relevant aspect assessments to ensure consistency.</p>	<p>include a screening for a Habitat Regulations Assessment, which will be produced separately. The expectation is that potential impacts are limited to air quality emissions, primarily associated with a potential increase in vehicular movement on the M62 in close proximity to the SAC designations.</p>
<p>The Inspectorate does not agree that other statutory designated sites can be scoped out of the assessment at this stage.</p>	<p>The Applicant will scope potential impacts on all other designated sites into the assessment, until such a time when the study area is discussed/confirmed with relevant consultation bodies. This will include a review of any impact risk zones associated with statutory designations, and assessment if the development falls into part of the IRZs.</p>
<p>The Inspectorate notes that field surveys, including for breeding and wintering birds, have not yet been completed. The Inspectorate considers that arable land cannot therefore be scoped out of the assessment at this stage.</p>	<p>The Applicant notes that as a habitat, the arable land’s value is limited to the value it provides for breeding and non-breeding birds, and any potential impacts on breeding/non-breeding birds have already been scoped in separately to this item, the Applicant will agree this approach with the relevant statutory bodies and report this in the ES.</p>
<p>The Scoping Report seeks to scope out effects on otter and water vole on the basis of there being no aquatic habitat within the area of the Proposed Development. The ES should be supported by appropriate baseline data and surveys and in the absence of agreement with relevant consultation bodies, the Inspectorate does not therefore agree this matter can be scoped out of the assessment at this stage.</p>	<p>The Applicant has assessed the ditch present along the boundary with Highfield Moss, during the UK Habitats survey and it was determined to offer no suitability for water voles/otter, and furthermore the ditch will have a significant buffer from the Proposed Development footprint due to the buffer that is already planned to be implemented for the Highfield Moss SSSI. The Applicant will agree this approach with the relevant statutory bodies and report</p>

Inspectorate's Comments	Applicant's Response
	<p>this in the ES. Should further surveys identify any change in potential for this species group within the habitats that are present, further otter/water vole surveys would be undertaken, however this is not expected at this stage.</p>
<p>The Inspectorate notes that field surveys have not yet been completed for the whole of the Proposed Development to confirm all potential habitat for reptiles. Where a lack of suitable habitat for reptiles is confirmed through field survey, the Inspectorate agrees this matter can be scoped out. The Inspectorate does not therefore agree this matter can be scoped out at this stage.</p>	<p>The Applicant will scope potential impacts on reptiles into the assessment, to be considered within the ES, although agrees with the Inspectorate that effects can likely be ruled out within the ES following the collection of survey data within the areas not yet surveyed.</p>
<p>Other non-statutory sites within 2km of the Proposed Development. In the absence of further evidence demonstrating there is no potential for significant effects, or clear agreement that this is the case with relevant consultation bodies, the Inspectorate does not agree to scope these matters out of the assessment. Accordingly, the ES should include an assessment of effects on non-statutory sites.</p>	<p>The Applicant will scope potential impacts on non-statutory sites into the assessment, to be considered within the ES.</p>
<p>The ES should include an assessment of air quality emissions including from combustion plant effects, in conjunction with the assessment of air quality effects. The approach, study area and receptors for this assessment should be discussed and agreed with relevant consultation bodies.</p>	<p>The Applicant agrees that the Ecology ES Chapter will include an assessment of effects in association with air quality impacts. The production of this will involve liaison with air quality consultants to identify all potential impacts on designated sites in relation to air quality/emissions.</p>
<p>The Inspectorate considers that the proposed study area may therefore need to be extended beyond 2km to account for the wider scope of potential impact-pathways.</p>	<p>The Applicant notes this comment, and expects to discuss study areas of designated sites with Natural England in the next Discretionary Advice Service meeting. When identifying impacts for air quality, the Applicant will look to have a greater study area (up to 10km from the</p>

Inspectorate’s Comments	Applicant’s Response
	site) to consider SSSIs and likely impacts.
The proposed CEMP should include control and management measures for other invasive non-native species (INNS) in addition to Himalayan Balsam where these are identified through further desk and / or field-based studies.	The proposed CEMP will include considerations for other INNS as identified based on the results of further desk/field studies. It will also include measures to ensure any material brought in during the construction phase is appropriately screened for any INNS.
Tree surveys should also be carried out and identify whether any trees present could be veteran or ancient trees or whether ancient woodland is present. An assessment of effects on these receptors should be provided where they are identified and where significant effects are likely to occur.	The Applicant notes this comment. Surveys to date have not identified any veteran/ancient trees (or ancient woodland) within the woodland, where relevant, an assessment on these receptors will be included within the ES.
Baseline survey scopes should include consideration of existing buildings or structures within the Proposed Development. The approach and methodology for surveys should be discussed and where possible agreed with relevant consultation bodies.	The survey scope planned for 2025 shall include an assessment of all existing buildings within the Proposed Development, including a preliminary bat roost assessment (PBRA) to identify roosting potential for bat species. The survey scope/methodology will be agreed with Natural England.
Specific survey and assessment data relating to the presence and locations of receptors that could be subject to disturbance, damage, persecution, or commercial exploitation resulting from publication of the information, should be provided in the ES as a confidential annex.	The Applicant notes this comment, and confirms that any such sensitive ecological data gathered will be published within a confidential annex to the ES.

5. This Topic Paper outlines the approach, methodology, and scope of assessment for the Proposed Development, in respect to ecology and biodiversity.
6. It sets out ecological and biodiversity receptors of relevance, and the approach to the baseline data gathering and assessment of the Proposed Development’s impacts during construction and operation.

7. The following aspects have been considered as part of the scope and methodology for biodiversity:
- Internationally, nationally and locally designated statutory/non-statutory sites;
  - Priority and non-priority habitats; and
  - Protected and notable species groups.
8. This topic paper has been compiled by appropriately qualified, experienced, and competent experts. The author of this chapter is David Paton MEnvSci QCIEEM, an ecological consultant at Tyler Grange. This chapter has been reviewed and approved by Joseph Dance BSc (Hons) MCIEEM, Regional Ecology Director at Tyler Grange, and by John Moorcroft BSc. MSc. MCIEEM. CEnv, Associate Ecologist at Tyler Grange.

## RELEVANT LAW, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

9. The DCO application will be determined pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 and relevant regulations, the National Networks National Policy Statement ('NPSNN', adopted 2024) and the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF', 2024). Relevant local planning policy are material considerations and have been taken into account in developing the scope and approach to the ecology assessment.

### Legislation

#### *The Environment Act 2021*

10. The Environment Act gained Royal Assent in November 2022. Whilst the premise of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been around prior to this, the Assent of the Act sets the Framework for future legislation to be changed. These changes were legally adopted as part of Schedule 14 of the Town and Country Planning Act for all major planning applications in February 2024 and further applied to 'small' sites in April 2024. It is expected that these changes will apply to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in November 2025, but paragraph 4.26 of the 'National Networks – National Policy Statement' discusses BNG as being outside of the 'mandatory' Environment Act framework for NSIPs.

#### *The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended)*

11. In Britain, the WCA 1981 (as amended) is the primary legislation protecting habitats and species. SSSIs, representing the best examples of our natural heritage, are notified under the WCA 1981 (as amended) by reason of their flora, fauna, geology or other features. All breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young are protected under the Act, which makes it illegal to knowingly destroy or disturb the nest site during nesting season. Schedules 1, 5 and 8 afford protection to individual birds, other animals and plants.

#### *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (CHSR) 2017 (as amended)*

12. The European Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, 1992, often referred to as the 'Habitats Directive', provides for the protection of key

habitats and species considered of European importance. Annexes II and IV of the Directive list all species considered of community interest. The legal framework to protect the species covered by the Habitats Directive has been enacted under UK law through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

### ***The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000***

13. The CROW Act 2000 strengthens the species enforcement provisions of the WCA 1981 (as amended) and makes it an offence to 'recklessly' disturb a protected animal whilst it is using a place of rest or shelter or breeding/nest site.

### ***The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006***

14. Provides a list of habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.

### ***The Hedgerow Regulations 1997***

15. The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 were introduced in England and Wales to protect important hedgerows. They require landowners to notify the local planning authority before removing or damaging any hedgerow that meets certain criteria. If the local planning authority determines that the hedgerow is important, they can issue a retention notice, prohibiting its removal.
16. The regulations apply to most countryside hedgerows, but do not affect hedges in domestic gardens. They aim to preserve hedgerows for their ecological benefits, such as providing habitat for wildlife and helping to prevent soil erosion.

### ***The Protection of Badgers Act 1992***

17. The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 was introduced in the UK to protect badgers and their setts. It makes it illegal to intentionally kill, injure, or capture a badger, or to damage or destroy a badger sett. The Act also prohibits the disturbance of badgers while they are in their setts.
18. The Act aims to conserve badger populations and protect their habitats. It is a criminal offense to violate the provisions of the Act, and offenders can face fines or imprisonment.

### ***The Animal Welfare Act 2006***

The Animal Welfare Act 2006 is the principal law relating to animal welfare, protecting all vertebrate animals. The act aims to enforce a duty of care to owned animals, and prohibits forms of animal cruelty including causing unnecessary suffering, mutilation, and poisoning.

## **Policy**

### ***National Networks – National Policy Statement (the NPSNN) (March 2024)***

19. The NPSNN sets out the need for, and government's policies to deliver, development of

Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) on the national road and rail networks in England. The NPSNN is the primary basis for the Secretary of State for making decisions on development consent applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) in England.

20. Within the NPSNN, Biodiversity is discussed within Sections 4 and 5. These sections discuss how Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) should be applied in conjunction with the mitigation hierarchy, and does not change or replace existing environmental obligations. Applicants should also identify and deliver appropriate opportunities for nature recovery and wider environmental enhancements. For NSIPs, a government Biodiversity Net Gain statement will set out the concept and policy requirements for BNG – when these provisions are commenced for NSIPs (expected to be November 2025), the Secretary of State will need to be satisfied that the biodiversity gain objective in any relevant Biodiversity Gain Statement has been met.
21. Paragraph 5.47 of the NPSNN also states how the applicant should show how their proposal will deliver biodiversity net gain in line with the requirements in a Biodiversity Gain Statement.

#### ***National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024***

22. The updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2024 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. Section 15 of the NPPF discusses biodiversity matters, which are summarised as ensuring planning decisions contribute to enhancing the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, along with avoiding impacts in the first instance.

#### ***St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037***

23. This planning document sets out the framework for the growth and development of the Borough. It identifies how and where new development and regeneration should take place and thereby promotes and manages the future development of the Borough.
24. Relevant planning policies from the Statutory Development Plan include:
  - Policy LPC06 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
  - Policy LPC07 - Greenways
  - Policy LPC08 - Ecological Networks
  - Policy LPC10 - Trees and Woodland
  - Policy LPA02 - Development Principles
  - Policy LPA08 - Green Infrastructure
25. Relevant supplementary planning guidance includes:
  - Trees and Development SPD

- Biodiversity SPD (June 2011)

**Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy 2013**

26. This planning document sets the framework for an Allocations and Development Management Local Plan. Sets out detailed planning policies, designate areas and allocate land for development.
27. Relevant planning policies from the Unitary Development Plan include:
  - Policy EV2C - Features of Major Importance to Nature Conservation and Wildlife Corridors.
28. Relevant planning policies from the Core Strategy include:
  - Policy CP17 Environmental Protection.
29. Relevant planning policies from Places for Everyone (adopted March 2024) include:
  - Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places
  - Policy JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

**Warrington Local Plan 2021/22**

30. This planning document provides the statutory planning framework for the entire Borough for the period 2021/22 to 2038/39. Used to guide decisions on planning applications and to identify areas where investment and growth should be prioritised.
31. Relevant planning policies from the Core Strategy include:
  - Policy DC3 Green Infrastructure
  - Policy DC4 Ecological Network
  - Policy ENV8 Environmental and Amenity Protection

**Standards and Guidance**

32. The below table summarises the relevant standards and guidance that are applicable to the ecological assessment of the Proposed Development.

**Table 2** Table summarising standards and guidance of relevance to the assessment.

Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<i>Ecological Impact Assessment (EiA)</i>	The guidelines provide a structured approach for identifying and



Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p>Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition (2017). Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)</p> <p>CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.</p>	<p>assessing potential ecological impacts of development projects.</p>
<p><b><i>Statutory Nature conservation Designations</i></b></p> <p><u>Legislation</u></p> <p>CHSR- All plans and projects (including planning applications) which are not directly connected with, or necessary for, the conservation management of a habitat site, require consideration of whether the plan or project is likely to have significant effects on that site.</p> <p>Section 28 of the WCA - Assent from Natural England is required for any operation likely to damage the special scientific interest of a SSSI.</p> <p><u>Planning Policy</u></p> <p>NPPF - Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.</p> <p>National Networks NPS (NPSNN) – Section 5.58 of the NPSNN states that the most important sites for biodiversity in the UK are those afforded special protection by the Habitats Regulations. These sites are designated as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas and are collectively known as habitats sites. The following should be given the same protection as sites legally protected by the Habitats Regulations: potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special</p>	<p>There is a legal requirement to ensure the scientific interest of the adjacent SSSI is not damaged as a result of development.</p> <p>There is a legal requirement to consider the potential wider effects of the Proposed Development on European nature conservation designations both alone and in combination with other plans or projects.</p> <p>These requirements are reinforced by both national and local planning policy.</p>

Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p>Areas of Conservation, listed or proposed Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites); and sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites.</p> <p>Section 5.61 of the NPSNN states that where a proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest is likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments), development consent should not normally be granted. An exception should only be made where the benefits of the development proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.</p> <p>Local Planning Policy (St Helens):</p> <p>LP06 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.</p>	
<p><b><i>Habitats</i></b></p> <p><u>Legislation</u></p> <p>The Environment Act 2021 makes the requirement for BNG mandatory.</p> <p>The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 – requires LPA and other planning authorities to consider the protection of priority habitats in exercising its functions (in this case determination of planning applications).</p> <p><u>Planning Policy</u></p> <p>NPPF - To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:</p> <p>(a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships</p>	<p>There is a legal requirement for developments to achieve a 10% BNG and for any priority habitats to be protected. It is anticipated that this will apply to NSIPs from November 2025.</p> <p>Development needs to ensure any veteran trees or irreplaceable habitats are protected from the adverse effects of development.</p> <p>Development layout also needs to consider how it can contribute towards maintaining and enhancing green networks, maintaining and enhancing tree and woodland cover.</p>

Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p>for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and</p> <p>(b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.</p> <p>National Networks NPS (NPSNN) – Section 5.46 of the NPSNN states that the applicant should consider the potential direct and indirect impacts on ecosystems including the impacts on habitats and protected species and the interactions between these, and provide environmental information proportionate to the likely impacts of the infrastructure on biodiversity and nature. The applicant should show how the project has taken advantage of opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity and geological conservation interests as well as consider how their proposal will deliver biodiversity net gain in line with the requirements in a Biodiversity Gain Statement.</p> <p>Local Planning Policy (St Helens)- all relevant to habitats:</p> <p>LP06 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation</p> <p>Policy LPC07 - Greenways</p> <p>Policy LPC08 - Ecological Networks</p> <p>Policy LPC10 - Trees and Woodland</p> <p>Policy LPA02 - Development Principles</p> <p>Policy LPA08 - Green Infrastructure</p> <p>Trees and Development SPD</p> <p>Biodiversity SPD (June 2011)</p> <p><u>Guidance</u></p> <p>Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit. JNCC, Peterborough</p>	<p>These guidelines provide a resource for conducting ecological assessments and environmental audits. It provides a standardised</p>

Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p>Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmons, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 – Habitat Definitions</p>	<p>methodology for identifying and classifying habitats in the UK.</p>
<p><b><i>Protected Species</i></b></p> <p><u>Legislation</u></p> <p>CHSR and WCA - applies in respect of European Protected Species (EPS) Great Crested Newt (GCN), bats, and otters;</p> <p>WCA - applies in respect of water vole, reptiles and breeding birds;</p> <p>CRoW Act 2000 – makes consideration of protected species a material consideration when LPAs determining planning applications; and</p> <p>Protection of Badgers Act 1992 – Compliance with this legislation is a material consideration in determining any planning application.</p> <p><u>Planning Policy</u></p> <p>National Networks NPS (NPSNN) – Section 5.69 of the NPSNN states that many individual wildlife species receive statutory protection under a range of legislative provisions. Some species and habitats have been identified as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales and therefore requiring conservation action. The Secretary of State should ensure that applicants have taken measures to ensure these species and habitats are protected from the adverse effects of development by using requirements, planning obligations, or licence conditions. The Secretary of State should refuse consent where harm to the habitats or species and their habitats would result, unless the benefits of the development (including need) clearly outweigh that harm.</p> <p>Local Planning Policy (St Helens)- relevant to protected species:</p>	<p>These articles of legislation and planning policy require LPAs to consider the legislation protecting species and their Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) in the planning process.</p>

Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p>LP06 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.</p> <p><b><i>Amphibians</i></b></p> <p><u>Survey and Mitigation Guidance</u></p> <p>Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.</p> <p>Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. &amp; Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>). Herpetological Journal 10(4), 143-155.</p> <p>ARG UK (2010) ARG UK Advice Note 5, Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability. Available at: <a href="https://www.arguk.org/info-advice/advice-notes/9-great-crested-newt-habitat-suitability-index-arg-advice-note-5/file">https://www.arguk.org/info-advice/advice-notes/9-great-crested-newt-habitat-suitability-index-arg-advice-note-5/file</a></p> <p>NatureMetrics (2023) GCN eDNA testing. Available at: <a href="https://www.naturemetrics.com/wildlife-services/gcn-edna/">https://www.naturemetrics.com/wildlife-services/gcn-edna/</a></p> <p>Biggs J, Ewald N, Valentini A, Gaboriaud C, Griffiths RA, Foster J, Wilkinson J, Arnett A, Williams P and Dunn F (2014). Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt. Appendix 5. Technical advice note for field and laboratory sampling of great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i> environmental DNA. Freshwater Habitats Trust, Oxford.</p>	<p>These resources provide guidance for developers and landowners on how to minimise the impact of their projects on Great Crested Newt populations. They provide a standardised methodology for amphibian surveys and provide advice on best practices for Great Crested Newt conservation, including habitat management and monitoring.</p>
<p><b><i>Badgers</i></b></p> <p><u>Survey and Mitigation Guidance</u></p> <p>Harris S., Cresswell, P., Jefferies, D. (1989) Surveying Badgers. The Mammal Society, London.</p> <p>Wilson, G., Harris, S., McLaren, G. (1997) Changes in the British badger population 1988 to 1997. People’s Trust for Endangered Species, London.</p> <p>Cresswell, P., S. Harris, D. J. Jefferies (1990) The history,</p>	<p>These resources provide a comprehensive overview of badger surveying and mitigation practices in the UK, including legal requirements and best practices for badger surveys in the context of development projects.</p>

Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p>distribution, status and habitat requirements of the badger in Britain. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, England.</p> <p>Natural England (2022) Badgers: surveys and mitigation for development projects, Natural England standing advice, Available at:  <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/badgers-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/badgers-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects</a></p> <p>Andrews, R. (2013). The Classification of Badger (<i>Meles meles</i>) Setts in the UK: A Review and Guidance for Surveyors. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management - In Practice 82: 27-31</p> <p>McDonald, P. J., Allen, T. P (2011) Provision of artificial badger setts and use of remote camera monitoring to determine Eurasian badger <i>Meles meles</i> sett occupancy, Suffolk, England. Conservation Evidence 8, 107-110</p>	
<p><b><i>Bats</i></b></p> <p><u>Survey and Mitigation Guidance</u></p> <p>Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.</p> <p>Mitchell-Jones, A.J, &amp; McLeish, A.P. (eds). (2004) 3rd Edition Bat Workers' Manual., JNCC, Peterborough, ISBN 1 86107 558 8</p> <p>Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London. ISBN-978-1-7395126-0-6</p> <p>Collins, J. (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. 3rd edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London. (Superseded by the 4th Edition listed above, but still referenced for context of evolution of survey methodology and guidance).</p> <p>Bat Tree Habitat Key (2018) Bat Roosts in Trees: a guide</p>	<p>These guidelines provide comprehensive information on bat surveys, mitigation, and habitat assessment in the UK.</p>

Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p>for identification and assessment for tree-care and ecology professionals. Pelagic Publishing, Exeter.</p>	
<p><b>Birds</b></p> <p><u>Survey and Mitigation Guidance</u></p> <p>Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win I. (2021) The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. <i>British Birds</i> 114: 723-747</p> <p>Bibby, C.J., Burgess, N.D., Hill, D.A. and Mustoe, S.H. (2000) <i>Bird census techniques</i>. Academic Press, London.</p> <p>Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D.W., &amp; Evans, J. (1998) <i>Bird Monitoring Methods: A Manual of Techniques for UK Key Species</i>. The Royal Society for the protection of Birds, Sandy, Bedfordshire, England.</p> <p>Bird Survey &amp; Assessment Steering Group. (2023). <i>Bird Survey Guidelines for assessing ecological impacts</i>, v.1.1.0. Available at: <a href="https://birdsurveyguidelines.org">https://birdsurveyguidelines.org</a></p>	<p>These resources provide information on bird populations, census techniques, and survey methodologies in the UK.</p>
<p><b>Otter</b></p> <p><u>Survey and Mitigation Guidance</u></p> <p>Garcia de Leaniz, C., Forman, D. (2006) Non-intrusive monitoring of otters <i>Lutra lutra</i> using infrared technology. <i>Journal of Zoology</i> 270(4):577-584.</p> <p>Natural England standing advice on otters at <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/otters-advice-for-making-planning-decisions">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/otters-advice-for-making-planning-decisions</a></p> <p>Kruuk, H., Carss, D.N., Conroy, J.W.H. and Durbin, L. (1993). Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) Numbers and Fish Productivity in Rivers in North East Scotland. <i>Symposium of the Zoological Society</i>, 65, 171-191.</p> <p>Chanin P (2003). <i>Monitoring the Otter Lutra lutra</i>.</p>	<p>These resources offer a range of information on otter ecology, survey methods, and conservation practices in the UK.</p>

Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p>Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No. 10, English Nature, Peterborough.</p> <p>Findlay, M. A., Briers, R. A. &amp; White, P. J. C. (2020) Component processes of detection probability in camera-trap studies: understanding the occurrence of false-negatives. <i>Mammal Research</i>, 65, 167–180.</p>	
<p><b>Reptiles</b></p> <p><u>Survey and Mitigation Guidance</u></p> <p>Froglife (1999) Reptile Survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation. Froglife Advice sheet 10. Froglife, Halesworth.</p> <p>Natural England (2022) Reptiles: advice for making planning decisions. Available at: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reptiles-advice-for-making-planning-decisions#:~:text=This%20is%20Natural%20England's%20O%27standing,standing%20advice%20for%20protected%20species.">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reptiles-advice-for-making-planning-decisions#:~:text=This%20is%20Natural%20England's%20O%27standing,standing%20advice%20for%20protected%20species.</a></p>	<p>These resources provide information on conducting reptile surveys and making planning decisions related to reptiles in the UK.</p>
<p><b>Water Vole</b></p> <p><u>Survey and Mitigation Guidance</u></p> <p>Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016) <i>The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook</i> (Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Mammal Society, London.</p> <p>Dean, M. (2021) <i>Water Vole Field Signs and Habitat Assessment A Practical Guide to Water Vole Surveys</i>. Pelagic Publishing, London</p> <p>Strachan, R., Moorhouse, T. and Gelling, M. (2011) <i>Water Vole Conservation Handbook</i>. Third Edition. Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Oxford</p>	<p>These resources provide information on water vole surveys, mitigation, and conservation in the UK.</p>
<p><b>Invertebrates</b></p>	<p>These resources provide information on invertebrate</p>



Standards and Legislation	Relevance to Assessment
<p><u>Survey and Mitigation Guidance</u></p> <p>Buglife (2015) Good planning practice for invertebrates: information sheets on surveys and mitigation.</p> <p>Available at:  <a href="https://www.buglife.org.uk/resources/planning-hub/good-practice-planning-for-invertebrates/">https://www.buglife.org.uk/resources/planning-hub/good-practice-planning-for-invertebrates/</a></p>	<p>surveys, mitigation, and conservation in the UK.</p>

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

**Site location**

33. The DCO Site is located on the eastern extent of Newton-le-Willows in a flat, agricultural landscape. The DCO Site is located within the local authority areas of St Helens Borough Council, within the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority; Wigan Council, within the Greater Manchester Combined Authority; and Warrington Borough Council.
34. The DCO Site is split broadly in two sections:
  - the Main Site – land to the east of the M6 motorway, to the south of the Chat Moss Line and to the west of Winwick Lane incorporating the triangular parcel of land located to the west of Parkside Road and to the north of the Chat Moss Line;
  - the Western Rail Chord – land to the west of the M6 motorway, which bisects the DCO Site in a northwest southeast orientation, and to the east of the West Coast Mainline.
35. The majority of the land contained within the Main Site is bound to the north by the Chat Moss Line (Liverpool-Manchester railway line), to the west by the M6 motorway and to the southeast by Winwick Lane (A579). The Main Site south of the Chat Moss Line is approximately 198 hectares in size. The Highfield Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is also adjacent to the north of the DCO Site, which is described in more detail below. A number of other uses exist at the Main Site currently, including:
  - Kenyon Hall Airfield, which is a small airfield used by the Lancashire Aero Club for recreational flying of small propeller planes;
  - Warrington Model Flying Club, which is a model club for radio controlled model aircraft; and
  - Highfield Farm, which is comprised of two agricultural/residential buildings set within a curtilage surrounded by agricultural fields.
36. The majority of the Main Site is comprised of agricultural fields used for arable crops, with

some small patches of woodland in the east. There are also a number of residential properties, farmsteads and a commercial yard within the Main Site. Parkside Road (A573) runs through the DCO Site to the south before passing over the M6 where it provides access to Parkside Link Road West.

37. The triangular parcel of land located to the north of the Chat Moss Line and to the east of Parkside Road also forms part of the Main Site.
38. The Western Rail Chord of the DCO Site is approximately 12 hectares in size and is bordered to the west by the West Coast Mainline railway, to the north by the Chat Moss Line and to the east by the Parkside West Development. The Western Rail Chord is comprised of safeguarded land for the rail-turn head to enable trains to be serviced to and from the North and the East.
39. The Western Rail Chord is comprised of scrub land and areas of woodland which are set within the context of an area of redevelopment with commercial uses proposed, which is known as Parkside West, and is currently being promoted through the Town and Country Planning Act process.

### Baseline environment

40. The following section summarises the baseline environment of the DCO Site, determined using the results of the surveys conducted to date, including:
  - UK Habitats Classification (UKHabs) Survey.
  - Badger Survey.
  - Wintering Bird Surveys.
  - Breeding Bird Surveys.
  - Great Crested Newt eDNA Surveys.
  - Bat Activity Surveys.
  - Bat Static Detector Deployments.

### Habitats

41. The DCO Site is located on the eastern extent of Newton-le-Willows in a flat, agricultural landscape. The DCO Site is located on land to the north of Junction 22 of the M6, spanning east and west of Parkside Road (A573), with the Western Rail Chord extending west of the M6. The land contained within the Draft Order Limits comprises the following habitats summarised in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 Habitats and descriptions present within the DCO Site.**

<b>Habitat</b>	<b>Description</b>
Arable Land	The DCO Site is dominated by arable land, which makes up the majority of open field habitat. Offers little ecological value due to modified/arable nature.
Amenity Grassland	Small areas of amenity grassland are present on site, consisting of gardens of farmhouse complexes that are present within the site boundary. This habitat does not provide either botanical diversity or structure to be of ecological value.
Bare Ground	Some areas of bare ground are present within and around areas of arable land. Offers no suitability/resource for wildlife.
Broad-leaved Woodland (Priority Habitat)	A large area of broad-leaved woodland is present in the north-western area of the site. Is present over a large area, and displays a good species diversity.
Semi-improved Grassland	Large swathes of semi-improved grassland are present in multiple locations across the site. Displays significant diversity to provide a resource for local wildlife.
Ponds (Priority Habitat)	Two ponds are present within the DCO Site. Although access to these was not obtained during the initial site visit their continued presence based on aerial imagery is assumed. Habitat type inherently offers opportunities and resources to local wildlife.
Hardstanding	Multiple areas of hardstanding making up roads/pathways are present within the DCO Site. Offers no suitability/resource for wildlife.
Buildings	Multiple buildings associated with farmhouse complexes were present within the DCO Site. This habitat provides no inherent value for biodiversity.

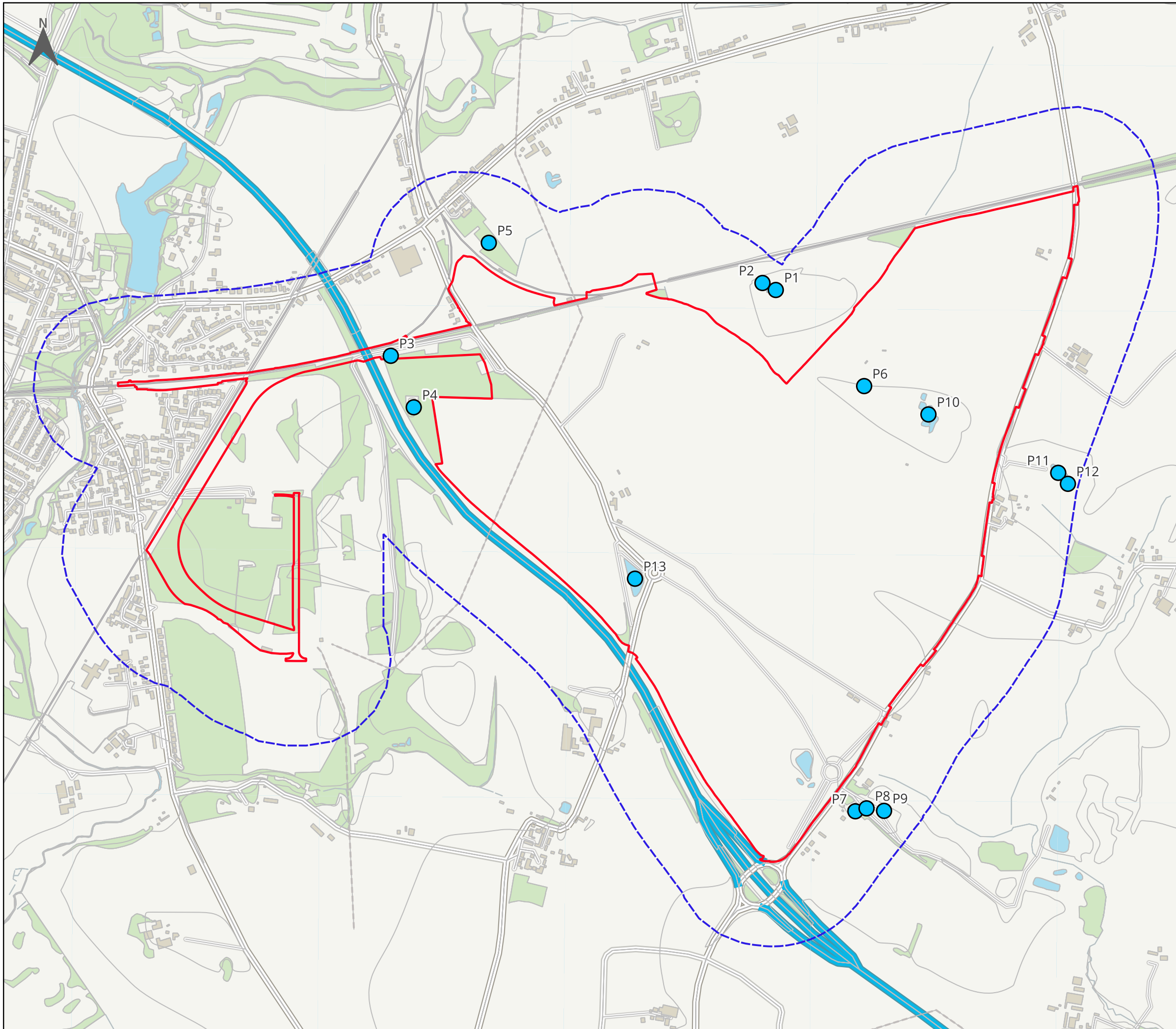
Habitat	Description
Native Hedgerow (Priority Habitat)	Numerous lengths of native hedgerow are present within the site and along site boundaries. Displays significant diversity and structure to provide a resource for local wildlife.
Ornamental Hedgerow	Lengths of ornamental hedgerow are present around the farmhouse area in the site. Hedgerow consists mainly of non-native species and is of insufficient area to provide any significant resource for wildlife.
Line of Trees	A line of mature broad-leaved trees is present along the boundary of the DCO Site where it borders Highfield Moss SSSI. Displays significant maturity and structure to provide a resource for local wildlife.
Scattered Broad-leaved Trees	A number of scattered early-mature broad-leaved trees are present across the DCO Site. Semi-mature to early-mature, this habitat demonstrates suitable age and structure to provide a significant resource for wildlife.
Invasive Non-native	Significant volumes of Himalayan balsam (invasive non-native species), is noted to be present along Parkside Road, and making up a portion of the understorey in the eastern area of the woodland on the DCO Site.

**Species**

42. Initial ecological studies confirm that:

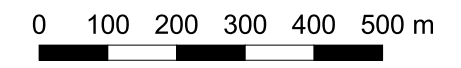
- The DCO Site is used by a typical assemblage of farmland bird species both breeding and non-breeding, some of which are of conservation concern (RSPB/BTO – Birds of Conservation Concern) including skylark *Alauda arvensis*, yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava* and yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella* (Red List – Birds of Conservation Concern).
- eDNA surveys of 2 of the 9 off-site ponds in 2023 and 2024 confirmed the likely absence of GCN in those ponds. Two ponds are present on the DCO Site (although these are outside the study area available in the 2024 period and have thus not been surveyed in full). In addition, a newly created drainage feature associated with the constructed Parkside Link Road is present on the DCO Site, as identified in Figure 4.

- Bat activity surveys and static deployments confirm the presence of the following bat species: common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, noctule bat *Nyctalus noctula*, Myotis species *Myotis*, and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*. This assemblage bat species is considered to be typical of the surrounding landscape, comprising common and widespread species.
  - No badger setts have been identified within the areas surveyed to date within the current draft Order Limits, although an active outlier sett exists within an area of woodland associated with Highfield Moss SSSI situated to the north of the DCO Site.
43. Based on the habitats recorded within the baseline surveys to date and the desktop study results, the DCO Site has the potential to support the following species/species groups:
- Amphibians including great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus*, common frog *Rana temporaria* and common toad *Bufo bufo*. There is no habitat within the DCO Site or adjacent to it to support any other species of amphibian;
  - Badgers;
  - Bats;
  - Birds (breeding and non-breeding);
  - Hedgehog;
  - Records of two rare invertebrate species have been received for the land to the west of the DCO site, these being records of water beetle *Helochares lividus* and Cinnabar moth *Tyria jacobaea*; and
  - Potentially water vole / otter (should suitable habitats be identified in the habitat survey of sections of the wider DCO Site yet to be surveyed).



# INTERMODAL LOGISTICS PARK (ILP) NORTH

Date: 22-01-2025  
 Paper size: A3  
 Scale: 1:11,000



- Boundaries**
- ▭ Draft Order Limits
  - ▭ 250m Site Buffer
- Pond Location Plan**
- Ponds Within 250m



**Figure 4:  
GCN Survey Scope Plan**

APFP Regulation:	-
Document Ref:	-
Drawing Number:	Figure 4
Drawing Status:	INFORMAL CONSULTATION
Revision:	P04
Drawn by:	DP
Approved by:	JM

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### *Designated Sites*

44. A 10km zone around the DCO Site has been used as the study area for considering impacts on internationally designated sites, which is the typical distance used when considering impacts on such designations. Two internationally designated sites considered to be of international ecological importance are present within 10km of the DCO Site. Manchester Mosses SAC is situated 5.40km south-east of the DCO Site, and Rixton Clay Pits SAC is situated 7.58km south-east of the DCO Site. Given the proximity of the DCO Site to both of these SACs, a Stage 1 Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report will be completed as part of the HRA process to confirm potential impact pathways on the SACs. Where likely significant effects cannot be ruled out, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken as part of the overall Habitat Regulations Assessment.
45. Rixton Clay Pits SAC is designated for its internationally important population of GCN. However, given the distance between the DCO Site and the SAC, the GCN populations associated with the SAC are separated from the DCO Site and would not be affected. No other impact pathways are anticipated on this SAC and this will be confirmed as part of a Stage 1 Habitat Regulations Assessment screening report.
46. A 2km zone around the DCO Site has been used as the study area for considering impacts on nationally designated sites. Highfield Moss SSSI is situated immediately adjacent to the north-eastern boundary of the DCO Site and is of close enough proximity for potential impacts on this designated site to arise from the Proposed Development. No other nationally designated sites are present within the 2km study area.
47. The study area has been widened to 10km in respect of European Nature Conservation designations: and includes the following designations: Manchester Mosses SAC (including Holcroft Moss, Risley Moss and Bedford and Astley Mosses SSSI components) and Rixton Clay Pits SAC.
48. A number of local non-statutory designated sites, including Sites of Biological Interest (SBI) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), of county importance are located both adjacent and within 2km of the DCO Site. 2km has been used as the study area when assessing impacts on non-statutory sites. These are:
  - Highfield Moss SBI (immediately adjacent to north of the DCO Site)
  - Newton Lake and southern woodland LWS (0.42km north-west)
  - Willow Park LWS (0.44km north-west)
  - Gallows Croft LWS (0.56km south-west)
  - Newton Brook LWS (0.63km south-west)
  - Mesnes Park and Stream LWS (0.69km north-west)
  - Castle Hill LWS (0.76km north-west)

- Haughton Green Pool LWS (1.16km south-east)
- Woodland east of Wargrave Road LWS (1.18km west)
- Ellam’s Brook LWS (1.62km north-west)
- Old Hey Wood LWS (1.70km west)
- Red Brow Wood LWS (1.86km west)
- Collingwood Road, openspace LWS (1.88km west)
- Fox Covert LWS (1.90km north-west)
- Haydock Park Woodlands LWS (1.92km north-west)
- Mucky Mountains LWS (1.94km west)
- Croft Grasslands LWS (1.98km south-east)
- Sankey Brook LWS (2.0km west)

## DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

49. The Proposed Development is a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) and associated development, comprising:
- provision of a rail terminal serving up to 16 trains per day, including ancillary development such as container storage, cranes for the loading and unloading of shipping containers, Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) parking, rail control building and staff facilities;
  - a rail turn-back facility within the Western Rail Chord;
  - up to c.767,000 square metres (m<sup>2</sup>) (gross internal area) of warehousing and ancillary buildings with a total footprint of c.590,000m<sup>2</sup> and up to c.177,050m<sup>2</sup> of mezzanine floorspace, subject to ongoing design and market assessment, comprising a mixture of units with the potential to be rail-connected, rail served and additional units;
  - new road infrastructure and works to existing road infrastructure;
  - provision of overnight lorry parking for users of the SRFI;
  - new energy centre and electricity substations, including central battery storage and potential provision of central Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units to augment the grid supply in the case of demand exceeding instantaneous firm and variable supplies;
  - provision of photovoltaics and battery storage on site;

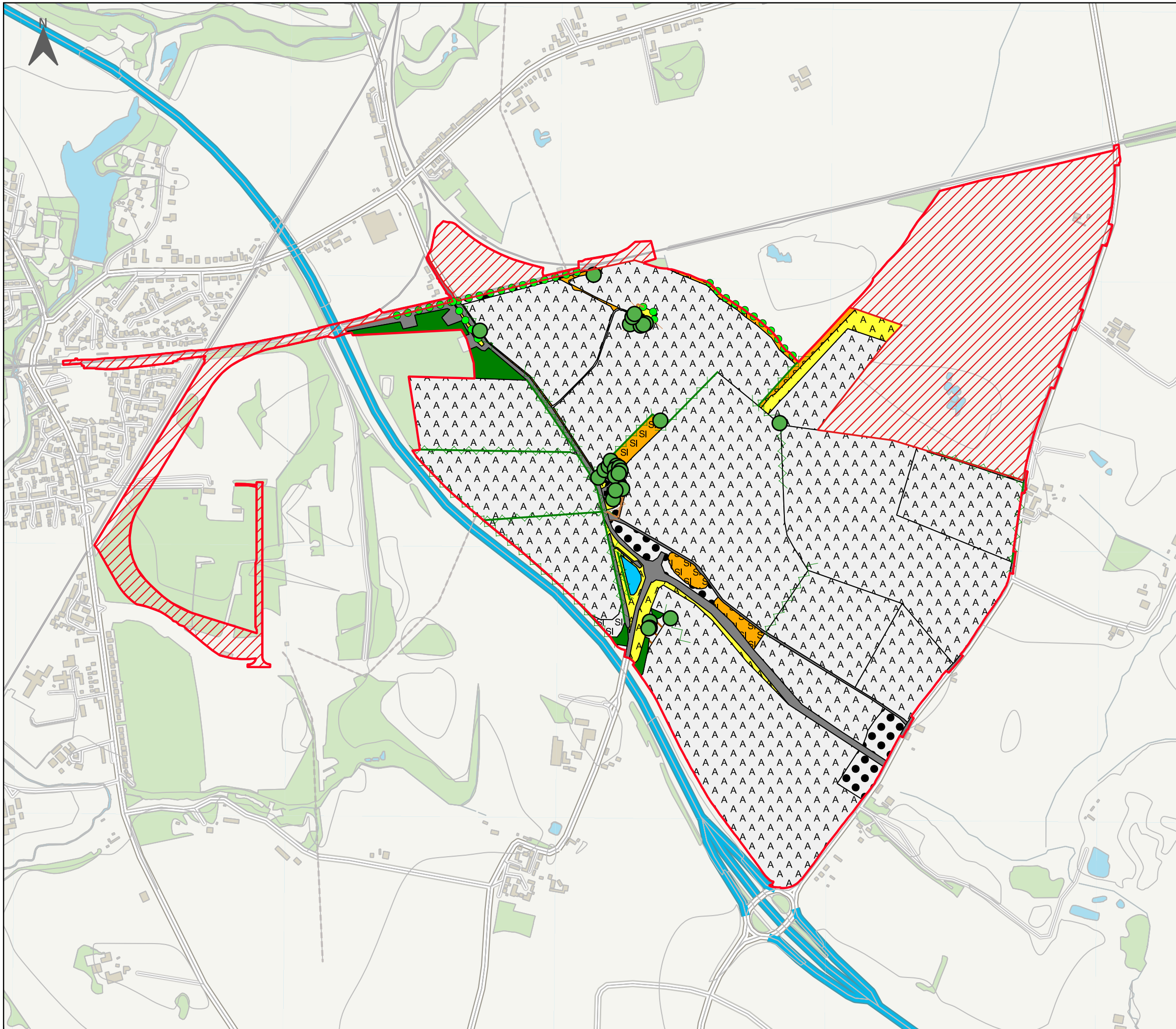


- strategic landscaping and open space, including alterations to public rights of way and the creation of new ecological enhancement areas;
- demolition of existing on-site structures (including existing residential dwellings / farmsteads and commercial premises);
- potential relocation of the Huskisson Memorial; and
- earthworks to regrade the DCO Site to provide appropriate access, connections to the railway, development plots and landscape zones.

## OUR APPROACH TO THE ASSESSMENT

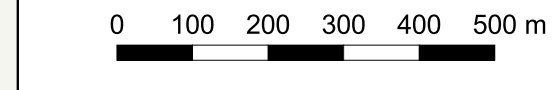
### Study Area and Survey Methodology

50. Surveys are planned to be undertaken across the entirety of the DCO Site and Highfield Moss SSSI (where relevant and agreed with Natural England), and will inform the design development process for the Proposed Development and the EIA.
51. The approach discussed below entails a range of protected species surveys which have been conducted within the DCO Site to date. These surveys have currently been conducted covering only a portion of the DCO Site (illustrated in Figure 1 seen overleaf), but will be built on during the 2025 season to cover the entirety of the DCO Site.



# INTERMODAL LOGISTICS PARK (ILP) NORTH

Date: 22-01-2025  
 Paper size: A3  
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**Boundaries**  
 □ Draft Order Limits  
 ▨ To be Included in 2025 Scope

**Baseline Habitats**  
**Baseline - Point Habitats**  
 ● Scattered Broad-leaved Tree

**Baseline - Line Habitats**  
 — Native Hedgerow  
 — Defunct Native Hedgerow  
 — Ornamental Hedgerow  
 ● Line of Trees

**Baseline - Polygon Habitats**  
 ● Bare ground  
 ■ Buildings  
 ■ Cultivated/disturbed land - amenity grassland  
 ■ Cultivated/disturbed land - arable  
 ■ Hardstanding  
 ■ Other tall herb and fern - ruderal  
 ■ Poor semi-improved grassland  
 ■ Neutral grassland - semi-improved  
 ■ Scrub - dense/continuous  
 ■ Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural  
 ■ Standing Water



**Figure 1:  
 Habitat Features Plan**

APFP Regulation:	-
Document Ref:	-
Drawing Number:	Figure 1
Drawing Status:	INFORMAL CONSULTATION
Revision:	P01
Drawn by:	DP
Approved by:	JM

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### ***UK Habs / Extended Phase I Habitat Survey Walkover***

52. Much of the draft Order Limits have already been subject to a UK Habitat Classification survey (these areas are illustrated in Figure 1) and this will be extended to the entirety of the draft Order Limits prior to statutory consultation and submission of the Environmental Statement. Although largely superseded by the UK Habitat Classification survey, the principles of ‘extended’ phase 1 habitat surveys will also be employed. The ‘extended’ part of the survey (which UK Habitat Classification does not do) assesses the suitability of habitats for protected/notable species. The desk study data and existing habitat/species survey data obtained has already allowed an assessment of the potential presence of protected/notable species in the current parts of the draft Order Limits which haven’t been fully surveyed.

### ***Great Crested Newt***

53. In order to confirm the presence or likely absence of GCN, some of the waterbodies within the DCO Site and within 250m of the DCO Site have been subject to environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis, which provides a positive or negative result for GCN DNA. Water samples are taken by a licensed ecologist using a sterile kit and sent to an approved laboratory. This approach follows standard methods, which are approved by Natural England and provides a rapid means of establishing the presence / likely absence of GCN. Not all ponds within 250m of the draft Order Limits have been available to access at this stage, so the survey scope will be extended to all ponds within 250m where access is agreed. Where access is not agreed, a precautionary approach will be taken whereby GCN presence will be assumed.

### ***Bats***

54. The following surveys have already been partially completed in accessible parts of the draft Order Limits, and will be extended to the entirety of the draft Order Limits prior to statutory consultation. The surveys are conducted to assess the presence/likely absence of roosting bats within the DCO Site and their distribution across the DCO Site in terms of foraging and commuting:
- Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) – External and internal building inspection survey to assess potential of buildings on the DCO Site to support roosting bats;
  - Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) – Ground level inspection of trees to assess potential of trees on the DCO Site to support roosting bats;
  - Climbed Tree Inspection – Aerial inspection of trees assessed from the ground as providing bat roost potential;
  - Day-time Bat Walkover (DBW) – Walkover of the DCO Site to assess potential bat activity including foraging areas and potential commuting routes;
  - Emergence presence / absence surveys - to determine presence or likely absence or roosting bats within trees;
  - Bat activity transect – to assess the species assemblage present at the DCO Site and to

identify significant commuting routes and foraging locations; and

- Automated static detector deployment – to supplement the activity transect surveys by leaving static bat detectors to record for five consecutive nights per transect survey.

### ***Badgers***

55. A badger survey has already been completed across the accessible parts of the draft Order Limits and this will be extended to the entirety of the draft Order Limits for the statutory consultation. This survey comprises two main elements, the first of these is a thorough search for evidence of badger setts. If any setts are encountered, each sett entrance is noted and plotted, even if the entrance appeared disused. The number of holes comprising each sett is then recorded and setts classified as disused, partially used or active. The results will be compiled within a confidential, separate badger report not available to the general public, given the continued persecution of this species.

### ***Birds***

56. The following surveys have already been partially completed in accessible parts of the draft Order Limits, and will be extended to the entirety of the draft Order Limits prior to statutory consultation. The surveys are conducted to assess the presence and distribution of bird species across the DCO Site:
- Breeding bird surveys – four walked transect surveys have been undertaken between the months of April-July 2024 across the accessible areas of the draft Order Limits. This will be extended to the entirety of the draft Order Limits for the statutory consultation during April – July 2025. This method is based on a territory mapping methodology in accordance with published guidance. The identity and activity of all birds, either seen or heard inside the DCO Site or within 50m of its boundary, is then recorded on maps of a suitable scale.
  - Non-breeding (wintering) bird surveys – six walked transect surveys have been undertaken between the months of October 2023 – March 2024 across the accessible areas of the draft Order Limits. This will be extended to the entirety of the draft Order Limits for the statutory consultation. Surveys are currently underway for the same October-March season for the 2024/2025 winter season, and these shall cover the entirety of the draft Order Limits. The survey methodology follows guidance produced by the Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group for non-breeding bird surveys. The objective of the surveys is to identify the presence or likely absence of notable bird species.

### ***Invertebrates***

57. A preliminary review of the local data search has been undertaken to assess the likely presence of notable or protected invertebrate species of relevance to the habitats that are known to be within the DCO Site, which may be present within the draft Order Limits. A full invertebrate scoping exercise will then be completed once all habitat data is available to assess if targeted invertebrate surveys are required where larval food plants or other suitable

habitat is present.

58. It is noted as part of the review of the data search, that two notable invertebrate species (water beetle and Cinnabar moth) are present within close proximity to the western rail chord within the Parkside West allocation which is yet to be surveyed. However, much of the DCO Site is known to comprise intensive agricultural land which is of limited value to invertebrates.
59. Following the full review of existing records, an assessment of habitat suitability for rare invertebrate species (including the notable species mentioned above) will be undertaken as part of the UK Habs / extended phase 1 habitat survey of the remainder of the DCO site that is yet to be surveyed.

### ***Water vole / Otter***

60. There were no watercourses recorded within the extent of the DCO Site surveyed to date that would be suitable for supporting either water vole or otter populations. The balancing pond recorded on the western side of the DCO Site (see Figure 1 Habitat Features Plan) may have some limited suitability for water vole, though a lack of habitat connections to other waterbodies / watercourses means that their presence is unlikely. Where development would affect this habitat or habitat within 5m of the bank top, a further detailed water vole survey would be undertaken.
61. Land which lies outside of the area which has not been already surveyed will be subject to a UK Habs and Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey which will identify any suitable water vole / otter habitat which might be present. Where necessary, further detailed survey work to determine presence / absence of water voles / otter would be undertaken to inform the ecological assessment.

## **Assessment and Reports**

### ***Desk Study***

62. A desk-based study has been conducted whereby records of designated sites and records of protected and priority species have been purchased and interrogated for the DCO Site and the surrounding landscape. This process has identified the presence of protected sites and protected/notable fauna and flora in the surrounding landscape. The data returned from this exercise has informed the proposed scope of ecological survey/assessment and is referenced throughout this topic paper where relevant. Further investigations will be undertaken as the DCO process progresses, which may require additional interrogation with regards to the designated features of the nearby non-statutory designated sites, to confirm potential impact pathways. The aim of the data search is to collate existing ecological records for the DCO Site and adjacent areas to inform the scope of survey effort and potential impacts on protected/notable species.

### ***Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)***

63. The Proposed Development is committed to demonstrating an overall net gain in biodiversity exceeding 10%, in line with current legislative and planning policy requirements, and shall be assessed against the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Where possible, gains in

biodiversity will be achieved on site, and any shortfall in units will be mitigated through off-site compensation. The process shall be iterative, and follow the mitigation hierarchy, in order to maximise the on-site value of the site through consultation with the design team and stakeholders.

### ***Evaluation***

64. The evaluation of habitats and species is defined in accordance with published guidance. The scale of importance of each ecological feature is assigned within a defined geographical context, namely international and European, national, regional, county, and local. Below these are features considered to be of negligible importance.
65. Consideration will also be given to legally protected or controlled species which are 'important features' in the context of this assessment, for which mitigation measures are required to ensure legal compliance, regardless of their geographic scale of importance. Thus, it is possible for a feature of negligible ecological importance to be legally protected and hence require mitigation.
66. Evaluation is based on various characteristics that can be used to identify ecological features likely to be important in terms of biodiversity. These include site designations (such as SSSIs, or for undesignated features, the size, conservation status (locally, nationally or internationally), and the quality of the ecological feature. In terms of the latter, quality can refer to habitats (for instance if they are particularly diverse, or a good example of a specific habitat type), other features (such as wildlife corridors or mosaics of habitats) or species populations or assemblages.

### ***Impact Assessment***

67. The assessment of impacts arising from the Proposed Development will be undertaken in accordance with CIEEM's Ecological Impact Assessment Guidelines, taking into account the type/duration of impact and the importance of the ecological receptor in question.

## **LIKELY MAIN EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSALS**

### **Construction Phase**

#### ***Designated Sites***

68. The following items have been scoped into this assessment in relation to potential impacts on designated sites arising from the construction phase of development:
  - Disturbance of and degradation to habitats/species associated with Highfield Moss SSSI/SBI as a result of run-off and changes to the hydrological regime of the SSSI.
69. A buffer between the SSSI and development will be embedded into the layout of the Proposed Development. The extent of the buffer will be determined primarily based on technical assessment work, and will also take on board inputs from discussion with Natural England via their Discretionary Advice Service (DAS).

70. Given the lack of connecting habitat, extended distance (i.e. beyond the terrestrial range of GCN from breeding ponds) from the DCO Site and absence of other potential impact pathways, no impacts on Manchester Mosses SAC and Rixton Clay Pits SAC/SSSI are expected and these sites are scoped out of further assessment. This will also be confirmed as part of the HRA Stage 1 Screening Report.
71. There are no other designated statutory nature conservation sites within the Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development, so all other statutory sites are scoped out. Given the relative proximity of other non-statutory designations (SBIs), non-statutory sites are scoped into requiring further assessment.

### **Habitats**

72. The following items have been scoped into this assessment in relation to potential impacts on habitats arising from the construction phase of development:
- Habitat loss or gain associated with changes in land use resulting from the Proposed Development.
  - Loss of ecological connectivity through severance of habitats resulting in fragmentation, arising from habitat loss and/or the creation of partial or complete barriers to the movement of species.
73. Habitats considered to be potentially impacted by the construction phase of the Proposed Development include grassland, hedgerows, lines of trees, scattered trees, broad-leaved woodland, ponds, and ditches.
74. Arable habitat has been scoped out of this assessment from an ecological perspective, due to its overall insignificance within the context of similar habitat locally. An agricultural land classification (ALC) assessment will be undertaken for the Proposed Development and submitted as part of the DCO application.

### **Fauna**

75. The following items have been scoped into this assessment in relation to potential impacts on protected species arising from the construction phase of development:
- Disturbance and displacement of fauna from a change in normal conditions (light, noise, human activity) resulting in indirect loss of foraging and commuting habitat or resting and/or breeding sites.
  - Death or injury of fauna associated with construction activity and the movement of construction vehicles.
76. Protected species scoped into the assessment and considered to be potentially impacted by development at this stage include amphibians (GCN, smooth newt, palmate newt, common frog, common toad), badgers, bats, birds (breeding and non-breeding), hedgehogs, reptiles, water voles, otters, and invertebrates.

## Operational Phase

### *Designated Sites*

77. The following items have been scoped into this assessment in relation to potential impacts on designated sites arising from the operational phase of development:
- Disturbance of and degradation to habitats/species associated with Highfield Moss SSSI/SBI resulting from changes to hydrological regime and habitat degradation from increased recreational use of the SSSI.
78. All other statutory and non-statutory designations have been scoped out of this assessment due to distance and lack of potential impact pathways with the potential to affect designated features during the operational phase.

### *Habitats*

79. The following items have been scoped into this assessment in relation to potential impacts on habitats arising from the operational phase of development:
- The introduction of new or improved habitats associated with the establishment of new areas of habitat across the DCO Site.
  - Lack of management of created and retained habitats leading to overall decline and degradation of existing and newly created habitats.
80. Retained habitats considered to be potentially impacted by the operational phase of development include grassland, hedgerows, lines of trees, scattered trees, broad-leaved woodland, ponds, and ditches.
81. Arable habitat has been scoped out of this assessment from an ecological perspective, due to its overall insignificance within the context of similar habitat locally, and such habitat would be removed as part of the construction phase of the Proposed Development and not feature in the operational phase. An agricultural land classification (ALC) assessment will be undertaken for the Proposed Development and submitted as part of the DCO application.

### *Fauna*

82. The following items have been scoped into this assessment in relation to potential impacts on protected species arising from the construction phase of development:
- Disturbance associated with maintenance of the Proposed Development, including the use of artificial lighting, increased noise and general habitat degradation.
83. Protected and notable species considered to be potentially impacted by development include amphibians (GCN, smooth newt, palmate newt, common frog, common toad), badgers, bats, birds (breeding and non-breeding), hedgehogs, and invertebrates.
84. Other species groups (including otter/reptiles/water voles/invertebrates) have also been



scoped into the assessment at this stage on a precautionary basis until the full extent of the habitats within the DCO Site are surveyed and mapped, at which point further assessment can be made to determine if habitats on site offer any suitability for these species groups.

## PROPOSED APPROACH TO MITIGATION

### Construction Phase

85. At this stage, baseline ecological data is still being gathered so the full extent of ecological impacts, and associated mitigation, are unknown. As the data is gathered and as part of the design development process, however, the need for mitigation will be identified and agreed through consultation with the relevant consultees (Natural England, Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service MEAS, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit GMEU). Based on the data gathered so far, however, it is anticipated that there will be a need for the following broad mitigation principles:

### *Designated Sites*

86. The following avoidance and mitigation measures are proposed in relation to designated site receptors that have been scoped into this assessment and have potential to be impacted on during the construction phase of the Proposed Development:

- Implementation of a buffer zone between construction activities on the DCO Site and Highfield Moss SSSI, situated immediately adjacent to the northern boundary of the DCO Site;
- Drainage design of the development must ensure there would be no adverse impact on Highfield Moss SSSI, where possible the drainage strategy should improve the hydrology supporting mossland (peat forming) habitats;
- Provision of greenspace areas within the Proposed Development footprint as an attractive option for the DCO Site workers to utilise as an alternative to the SSSI, therefore reducing recreational impacts on the SSSI.
- Preparation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to incorporate measures to manage potential impacts on the neighbouring SSSI arising from development activities and control/management of Himalayan balsam.

### *Habitats*

87. The following avoidance and mitigation measures will be considered in relation to habitat receptors that have been scoped into this assessment and have potential to be impacted on during the construction phase of development:

- Design to include the retention of existing habitats of value on the DCO Site (i.e. woodland, ponds, hedgerows, trees etc.) where possible, in line with development proposals;
- Preparation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) containing

measures to manage potential impacts on retained habitats arising from development activities.

### ***Fauna***

88. The scope of mitigation required for protected/notable faunal groups will be identified once the baseline use of the DCO Site by the relevant species, and associated level of importance is established. This will be the subject of consultation with NE, GMEU and MEAS once data is available and as the Proposed Development design progresses.

## **Operational Phase**

### ***Designated Sites***

89. The following avoidance and mitigation measures will be considered in relation to designated site receptors that have been scoped into this assessment and have potential to be impacted on during the operational phase of the Proposed Development:
- Positive nature conservation management of the landscape buffer zone between the operational DCO Site and Highfield Moss SSSI;
  - Ensure Drainage regime supporting Highfield Moss does not deteriorate or get modified;
  - Management of greenspace areas within the Proposed Development footprint as an attractive option for the DCO Site workers to utilise as an alternative to the SSSI, therefore reducing recreational impacts on the SSSI.

### ***Habitats***

90. The following avoidance and mitigation measures will be considered in relation to habitat receptors that have been scoped into this assessment and have potential to be impacted on during the operational phase of the Proposed Development:
- Input into a parameters plan and an illustrative landscape masterplan, as well as completion of a BNG assessment to ensure the DCO Site proposals deliver a measurable net gain in biodiversity.
  - Preparation of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) containing measures to ensure newly created habitats reach the required conditions set out in the BNG assessment, and retained habitats are managed to not degrade over time.

### ***Fauna***

91. The following avoidance and mitigation measures will be considered in relation to protected species receptors that have been scoped into this assessment and have potential to be impacted on during the operational phase of development:
- Preparation of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) containing

measures to ensure opportunities for protected species groups are retained and enhanced within the DCO Site long-term.

- The DCO Site layout and design to, where possible, retain sensitive ecological features of importance to protected species groups (i.e. retain dark corridors along the DCO Site boundaries to maintain opportunities for foraging/commuting bats).

**NEXT STEPS**

92. Further work is programmed to advise on the ongoing design and ecology mitigation of the Proposed Development – this will be an iterative process, whereby ecology and biodiversity considerations will have an influence on the proposed form of the built development. Further work will consist of a combination of survey work for protected species groups, and desk based assessment compiling the results of surveys and concluding on the scope and scale of mitigation required.

93. We will seek to engage in further consultation with statutory and non-statutory consultees including Natural England, and the ecology teams in St Helen's, Wigan, and Warrington Councils for comment on scoping outputs at this topic paper, which will inform further work. This will build on the introductory meeting been held with Natural England to introduce the site and known constraints. Further in-depth meetings are proposed to commence in February 2025 with Natural England and district council representatives. These meetings will include consultation with specialist staff members on the following topics:

- Study area, receptors, and mitigation in relation to Ecology and Biodiversity.
- Mitigation in relation to Highfield Moss SSSI.
- Hydrological regime of the site and Highfield Moss SSSI.
- Study area, receptors, and mitigation in relation to Air Quality.

**Protected Species Survey Work**

94. Further ecology survey work for a number of protected species groups has been identified as necessary to inform mitigation requirements for the Proposed Development. Methodologies and rationale for these are summarised in Table 4 below.

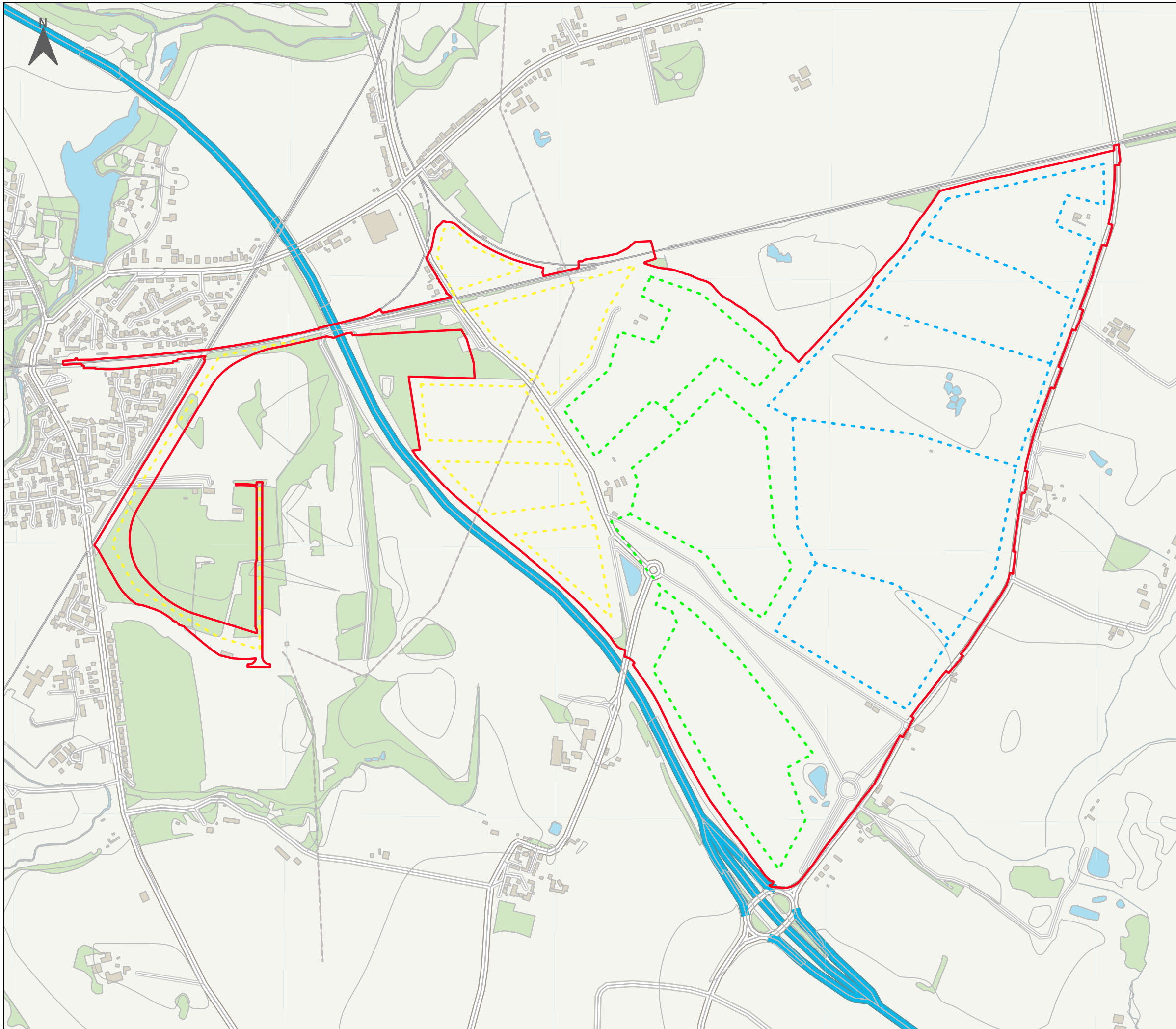
**Table 4 Summary of ecology surveys proposed to be conducted for the DCO Site.**

Protected Species Group	Survey Type and Description	Rationale
Amphibians (GCN, smooth newt, palmate newt, common frog, common toad)	<b>Great Crested Newt eDNA survey</b>  To be conducted Apr-Jun 2025  Methodology involves the collection of water samples from all ponds on site and	Determine a likely presence/absence of this species group within the site, and inform on scope/scale of further

Protected Species Group	Survey Type and Description	Rationale
	<p>within 250m of the site boundary. Samples are then analysed in a lab to identify DNA evidence of GCN and conclude a likely presence or absence of this species. Ponds that are subject to this assessment are illustrated in Figure 4.</p>	<p>mitigation requirements.</p>
<p>Badgers</p>	<p><b><i>Badger Survey</i></b></p> <p>To be conducted Spring 2025</p> <p>Walkover survey of the site area (and 30m of adjacent land where access permits) to identify the presence of any badger setts, and record evidence of foraging/commuting badgers.</p>	<p>Determine a likely presence/absence of this species group within the site, and inform on scope/scale of further mitigation requirements.</p>
<p>Bats (roosting)</p>	<p><b><i>Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA)</i></b></p> <p>To be conducted Spring 2025</p> <p>Internal and external inspection of all buildings within the site area to determine their potential for roosting bat species, and identify any need for further survey work.</p> <p><b><i>Ground-level Tree Assessment (GLTA)</i></b></p> <p>To be conducted Spring 2025</p> <p>Ground level assessment of trees on site expected to be lost with site proposals to determine their potential for roosting bats and identify any need for further survey work.</p>	<p>Determine a likely presence/absence of this species group within the site, and inform on scope/scale of further mitigation requirements.</p>
<p>Bats (foraging/commuting)</p>	<p><b><i>Bat Activity Surveys</i></b></p> <p>To be conducted Apr-Oct 2025</p> <p>Dusk surveys consisting of walked transect routes covering the entirety of the site,</p>	<p>Determine the level of presence of this species group within the site, and inform on scope/scale of further</p>

Protected Species Group	Survey Type and Description	Rationale
	<p>during which surveyors identify commuting/foraging bat species, and record flight paths and areas of high activity. Three surveys to be conducted between the months of April-October.</p> <p><b><i>Static Bat Detector Deployments</i></b></p> <p>To be conducted Apr-Oct 2025</p> <p>Deployment of static bat detectors in strategic locations across the site area, which are left to record in-situ for a minimum of 5 days to determine species and numbers of commuting and foraging bat species utilising the site. Monthly deployments between the months of April-October.</p> <p>A survey plan illustrating proposed transect routes and static detector locations can be seen in Figure 3.</p>	<p>mitigation requirements.</p>
<p>Birds (breeding)</p>	<p><b><i>Breeding Bird Surveys</i></b></p> <p>To be conducted Apr-July 2025</p> <p>Surveys consisting of walked transect routes covering the entirety of the site, during which surveyors identify the scale of bird species utilising the site, and map bird territories. Four surveys to be conducted between the months of April-July.</p> <p>A survey plan illustrating proposed transect routes can be seen in Figure 2.</p>	<p>Determine the level of presence of this species group within the site, and inform on scope/scale of further mitigation requirements.</p>
<p>Birds (non-breeding)</p>	<p><b><i>Wintering Bird Surveys</i></b></p> <p>Commenced Oct 2024 – Mar 2025</p> <p>Surveys consisting of walked transect routes covering the entirety of the site, during which surveyors identify the scale</p>	<p>Determine the level of presence of this species group within the site, and inform on scope/scale of further mitigation requirements.</p>

Protected Species Group	Survey Type and Description	Rationale
	<p>of bird species utilising the site, and map over-wintering birds utilising the site. Six surveys to be conducted between the months of October-March.</p> <p>A survey plan illustrating proposed transect routes can be seen in Figure 2.</p>	



# INTERMODAL LOGISTICS PARK (ILP) NORTH

Date: 22-01-2025  
 Paper size: A3  
 Scale: 1:10,000



**Boundaries**  
 □ Draft Order Limits

**Proposed Bird Survey Scope**

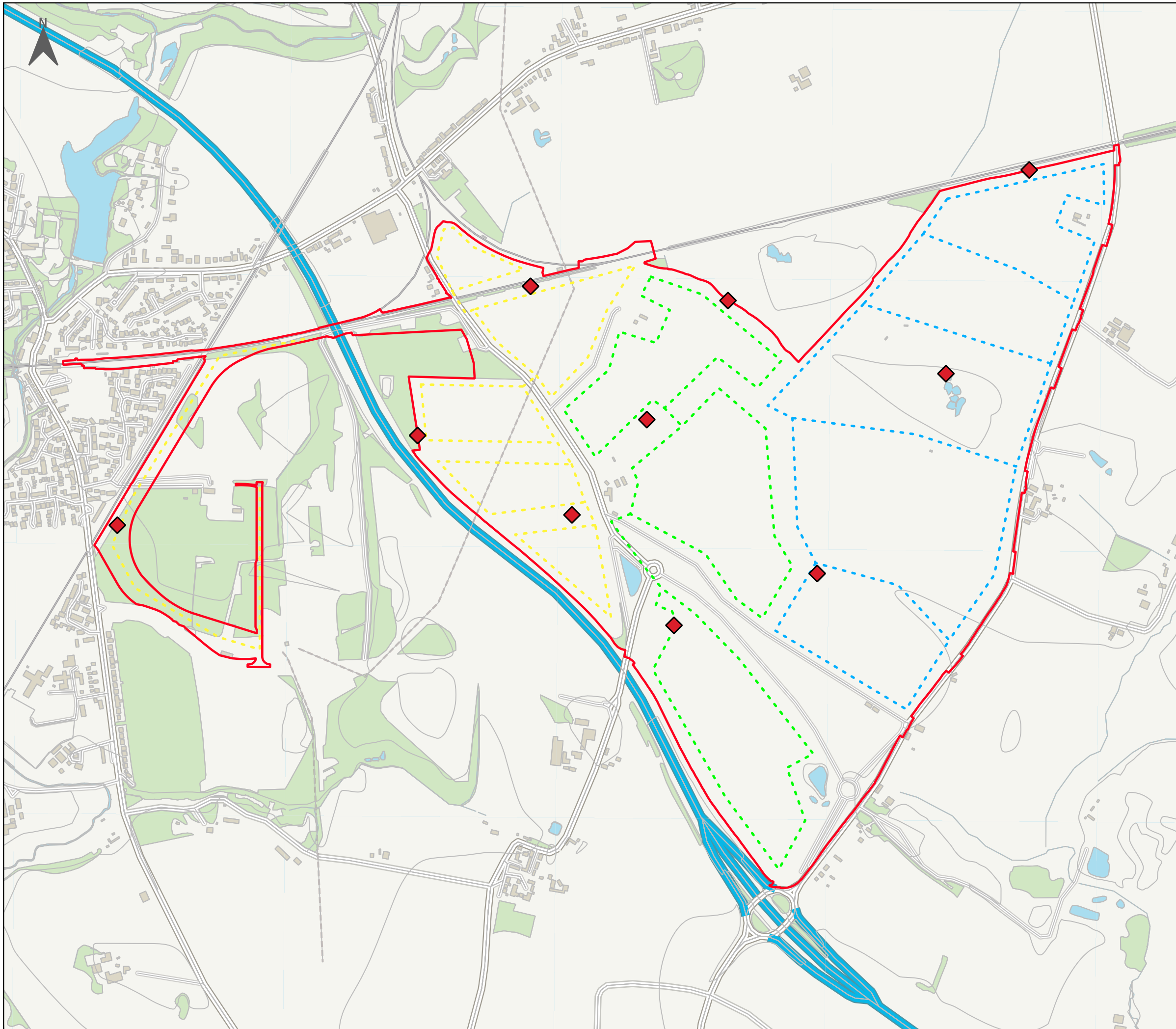
**Transect Routes**  
 - - - Route 1  
 - - - Route 2  
 - - - Route 3



**Figure 2:  
 Bird Survey Scope Plan**

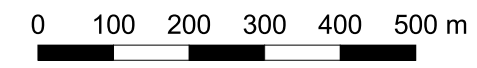
APFP Regulation:	-
Document Ref:	-
Drawing Number:	Figure 2
Drawing Status:	INFORMAL CONSULTATION
Revision:	P02
Drawn by:	DP
Approved by:	JM

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# INTERMODAL LOGISTICS PARK (ILP) NORTH

Date: 23-01-2025  
 Paper size: A3  
 Scale: 1:10,000



- Boundaries**  
 □ Draft Order Limits
- Proposed Bat Survey Scope**  
 ◆ Suggested Static Detector Locations
- Transect Routes**  
 - - Route 1  
 - - Route 2  
 - - Route 3



**Figure 3:  
 Bat Survey Scope Plan**

APFP Regulation:	-
Document Ref:	-
Drawing Number:	Figure 3
Drawing Status:	INFORMAL CONSULTATION
Revision:	P03
Drawn by:	DP
Approved by:	JM

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**Desk-based Assessments**

95. Results of the above described ecological surveys will be compiled into ecological reports to summarise the constraints that are identified, and describe the mitigation requirements arising from the Proposed Development in relation to ecological matters. Desk-based outputs, their purpose, and the rationale behind them, are detailed in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 Summary of desk-based outputs pertaining to the ecology and biodiversity of the site.**

Output	Description / Rationale
Technical Baseline Report	<p>Preparation of technical ecology report to describe the baseline conditions of the site area following completion of ecological surveys outlined in Table 4 above.</p> <p>Will provide important context for the next stage of the assessment and be a key factor in understanding the scope of mitigation requirements.</p>
Ecology and Biodiversity chapter for Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR)	<p>Ecology chapter of PEIR document, describing the ecological factors of the preliminary environmental assessment.</p> <p>This document will be used to inform during pre-application process for the Proposed Development.</p>
Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment	<p>Calculation of the overall net gain or loss in ecological value of the Proposed Development. This will use baseline data gathered throughout ecological surveys to determine the overall baseline value of the DCO Site, and utilise development proposals to also calculate the projected value of the DCO Site post-development.</p> <p>The baseline and post-development values will then be used to calculate an overall net gain or loss associated with the Proposed Development. This process will be iterative, and ongoing liaison with the project team will ensure the post-development biodiversity value is maximised on site.</p>
Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP)	<p>This document will set out long term management prescriptions and objectives for the Proposed Development in order to ensure the creation and ongoing management of ecological features are provided as part of the Proposed Development.</p>
Construction and Environmental	<p>This document will set out avoidance and mitigation measures that will be implemented during the construction phase of development to</p>

Output	Description / Rationale
Management Plan (CEMP)	ensure that any impacts to ecological features are avoided, reduced or negated entirely.
Ecology ES Chapter	<p>This ES chapter will set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All survey and desk-based methodologies.</li> <li>• Avoidance and scheme design measures.</li> <li>• Construction and operational phase impacts.</li> <li>• Mitigation measures for the Proposed Development.</li> </ul> <p>This document will be the cumulative collation of all ecological baseline data, and will determine the final scope of mitigation requirements associated with the Proposed Development.</p>

96. This topic paper forms part of the material available for the informal consultation that is taking place between 27 January 2025 and 21 March 2025. Should you wish to comment on this paper or any other matters related to the Proposed Development you can respond to the informal consultation via:

- ILP North website – [www.tritaxbigbox.co.uk/our-spaces/intermodal-logistics-park-north](http://www.tritaxbigbox.co.uk/our-spaces/intermodal-logistics-park-north)
- Email [ilpnorth@consultationonline.co.uk](mailto:ilpnorth@consultationonline.co.uk)
- Freepost ILP North
- 01744 802043