



LFC Academy, Liverpool

Ecological Desk Study

Prepared For: LFC Academy

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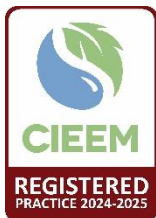
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The conclusions and recommendations contained in this document are based upon information gathered by TEP and provided by third parties. Information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been independently verified by TEP, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document.



Nothing in this report constitutes legal opinion. If legal opinion is required, the advice of a qualified legal professional should be secured.

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Annex A: Key Ecological Legislation and National Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Environment Partnership (TEP) was commissioned by LFC Academy in August 2025 to complete a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for a site called LFC Academy in Liverpool.
- 1.2 The works are for upgrades to the current LFC Training Academy in the form of new buildings and linkages between the site buildings.
- 1.3 To inform the PEA an Ecological Desk Study was also completed. This Ecological Desk Study report details the method of data gathering and interpretation and presents the findings of the desk-based assessment.
- 1.4 This report is not sufficient in isolation to support a planning application. This report should be read in conjunction with the PEA (TEP Report Ref: 11306.002).

Site Location

- 1.5 The site (central grid reference SJ 42373 98504) is within the administrative area of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. The site is surrounded by commercial developments to the east and residential development to the west. The A5208 is to the south of the site. To the north of the site is more training fields, part of the LFC academy but outside the site boundary. The site is currently used as a major sporting training ground (Figure 1).

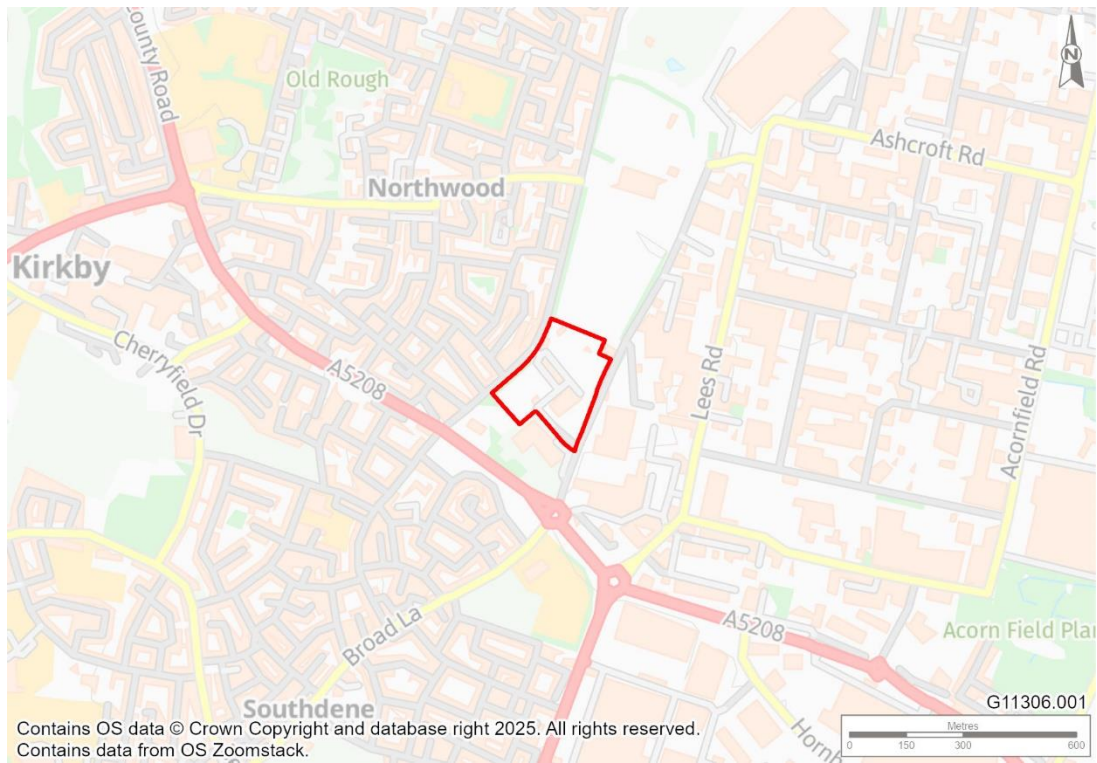


Figure 1: Site Location

2.0 Methods

Scope and Data Sources

- 2.1 The ecological Zone of Influence (ZOI) is an area defined by the ecological assessment within which valued ecological features may be subject to significant biophysical changes as a consequence of the proposed development under assessment.
- 2.2 For the purposes of this assessment, the preliminary ZOIs (pZOI) within which ecological features were searched for as part of this desk study were varied according to the geo-spatial and/or legal significance of the feature. The scope and the pZOIs applied for this desk study, which were searched from the central grid reference, are summarised in Table 1.
- 2.3 Species records for within the last ten full years (i.e. from 01/01/2015 to present) were obtained from Merseyside BioBank Record Centre in August 2025. This report lists protected and notable species records obtained in the data search that are listed under any of the following:
- Protected species listed under Schedule 2 (animals) or Schedule 5 (plants) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (EPS);
 - Protected bird species under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended (WCA1);
 - Protected animal species under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended (WCA5);
 - Protected plant species under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended (WCA8);
 - Invasive non-native plant species under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended (WCA9);
 - Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 (IAS);
 - Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (PBA);
 - Species of principal importance (SPI) listed by requirements under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
 - Red and Amber listed Birds of Conservation Concern (BRd/BAm); and
 - Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species (LBAP).
- 2.4 An absence of records does not indicate the absence of protected species from the search area.

2.5 Geological sites are not designated for ecology reasons and is therefore excluded from further consideration in this ecological assessment.

Table 1: Scope and preliminary ecological Zones of Influence (ZOI)

Scope	Key Source(s)	ZOI
Policy and Related Guidance (Chapter 3.0 and 4.0)		
- Land allocations and relevant environment / biodiversity policy - Local biodiversity priority habitats and species - Habitat Network / Nature Recovery Network	- Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy 2016 (Adopted 2016)¹ - Knowsley Local Plan Interactive Map² - North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan³	As applicable to site
Statutory wildlife sites (Chapter 5.0)		
- Ramsar and proposed Ramsar sites - Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), including possible SAC and SAC with marine components - Special Protection Areas (SPA) and potential SPA - Marine Conservation Zones	- Natural England⁴ - Knowsley Local Plan Interactive Map	10km
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - National Nature Reserves (NNR) - Marine Nature Reserves (MNR) - National Parks		5km
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR) - Country Parks - Strategic Nature Areas		2km
Non-statutory wildlife sites (Chapter 5.0)		

¹ Knowsley Council (2025) [Online]. Local Plan Core Strategy. Knowsley Local Plan: Core Strategy [21.08.25].

² Knowsley Council (2025) [Online]. Local Plan Policies Map. [Local Plan Policies Map](#) [21.08.25].

³ Merseyside BioBank (2025) [Online]. North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan. [Merseyside Biodiversity Group – Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service](#) [21.08.25].

⁴ Public sector information.

Scope	Key Source(s)	ZOI
- Local Wildlife Site (LWS) - Regional Parks - Green Wedges - Wildlife Corridors	- Merseyside BioBank Records Centre - Knowsley Local Plan Interactive Map - North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan	2km
Notable habitats (Chapter 6.0)		
- Ancient Woodland - Habitats of principal importance - Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) habitats - Main rivers - Peaty Soils	- Natural England⁴ - Environment Agency⁵ - Merseyside BioBank Records Centre - North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan - Google Earth	0.25km
Protected or notable species (Chapter 7.0)		
Pre-existing records for protected or notable species, non-native invasive species	Merseyside BioBank Records Centre	2km
- Protected species licences granted by Natural England - Great crested newt survey pond records (2017 – 2019) held by Natural England	Natural England⁴	2km

⁵ Environment Agency (2025) [Online]. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency> [Accessed 02.09.25]

3.0 Legislation and Policy

3.1 The following summarises the legislation and planning policy which may have relevance to the scheme. Only legislation and policy of key relevance to biodiversity are listed. Further information is provided in Annex A.

- The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat ('Ramsar Convention'⁶ or 'Wetlands Convention');
- The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention⁷);
- The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention⁸ or CMS)
- The Convention on Biological Diversity (Biodiversity Convention⁹ or CBD)
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017¹⁰ (the 2017 Regulations);
- Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019¹¹ (the 2019 Regulations);
- Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981¹²;
- Environment Act 2021¹³;
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000¹⁴;
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006¹⁵;
- Hedgerow Regulations 1997¹⁶;
- Protection of Badgers Act (PBA)1992¹⁷;
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act (WMPA) 1996¹⁸;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024¹⁹;

⁶ Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, Ramsar, 2.2.1971 <https://www.ramsar.org/>

⁷ Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. Bern, 1979 <https://www.coe.int/>

⁸ Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Bonn, June 1979 <https://www.cms.int/>

⁹ Convention on Biological Diversity, Rio de Janeiro, June 1992 <https://www.cbd.int/>

¹⁰ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/1012) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1012/>

¹¹ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/579) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2019/579/>

¹² Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 c. 69 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/>

¹³ Environment Act 2021 c.30 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/>

¹⁴ Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 c. 37 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/>

¹⁵ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 c. 16 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/>

¹⁶ The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 (SI 1997/1167) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1997/1160/>

¹⁷ Protection of Badgers Act 1992 c. 51 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/>

¹⁸ Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 c.3 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/3/>

¹⁹ National Planning Policy Framework (2024). Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>

- Government Circular 06/2005²⁰.

Local Planning Policy

Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (2016)

- 3.2 The current Local Plan is the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (adopted 2016). This sets out the vision for future development in the borough. Local Plans are used to help decide on planning applications and other planning related decisions. In effect, they are the local guide to what can be built where, shaping infrastructure investments and determining the future pattern of development in the borough.
- 3.3 The following policies relate to biodiversity and nature conservation:
- Policy C52 - Development Principles
 - Policy CS8 - Green Infrastructure
 - Policy CS19 - Design Quality and Accessibility in New Development
 - Policy CS21 - Greenspaces and Trees
 - Policy CS23 - Renewable and Low Carbon Infrastructure
 - Policy CS24 - Managing Flood Risk

Site Allocations

- 3.4 The site is allocated by Policy CS2, CS8 and CS21 (Ref Interactive Map) for existing major sporting uses in Knowsley's Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan, (adopted 2016).
- 3.5 Land adjacent to the site is allocated by Policy CS4 and EC3 (Ref Interactive Map) for Primarily Industrial Area in Knowsley's Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Local Plan, (adopted 2016).

Saved Policies

- Policy ENV3 Light Pollution
- Policy DQ4 - Trees and development

²⁰ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) 'Government Circular: Geological and Biological Conservation – Statutory obligations and their implications within the planning system' ODPM circular 06/2005, DEFRA circular 01/2005
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7692/147570.pdf

4.0 Biodiversity Initiatives and Strategies

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP)

- 4.1 The North Merseyside BAP covers Liverpool, Knowsley, St Helens and Sefton. There are also close links with Wirral.
- 4.2 The North Merseyside BAP includes local habitat action plans for the following priority habitats:

Land	Sea
■ Conifer Woodland ■ Lowland Mixed Broad-leaf Woodland ■ Wet Woodland ■ Lowland Wood-pasture and Parkland ■ Urban Trees ■ Lowland Acid Grassland ■ Lowland Heathland ■ Urban Grasslands ■ Lowland Raised Bog ■ Field Boundaries ■ Urban Green Infrastructure	■ Coastal Sand Dunes ■ Coastal Saltmarsh
Freshwater	
■ Canals ■ Ponds ■ Reedbeds	

- 4.3 The North Merseyside BAP priority species for which local species action plans have been produced include:

Amphibians/Reptiles	Mammals
■ Common Lizard ■ Sand Lizard ■ Great Crested Newt ■ Natterjack Toad	■ Bats ■ Brown Hare ■ Red Squirrel ■ Water Vole
Birds	Plants
■ Corn Bunting ■ Grey Partridge ■ Lapwing ■ Skylark ■ Song Thrush ■ Urban Birds	■ Bluebell ■ Dune Helleborine ■ Purple Ramping-fumitory ■ Isle of Man Cabbage ■ Petalwort ■ Sand-grass ■ Sefton Coast Plants ■ Stoneworts
Invertebrates	
■ Dark Green Fritillary ■ Dragonflies ■ Grayling Butterfly ■ Vernal Mining-bee ■ Northern Dune Tiger Beetle ■ Sandhill Rustic Moth	

National Habitat Network

- 4.4 Habitat Network maps are produced by Natural England in response to the Lawton report (Making Space for Nature, A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network²¹).
- 4.5 These maps provide a useful baseline for the development of a Nature Recovery Network (NRN) as required within the 25 Year Environment Plan and for LRNS proposed within the Environment Act.
- 4.6 The Habitat Network maps in conjunction with other datasets and local knowledge can identify opportunities for biodiversity action. The Habitat Network comprises (a)

²¹ Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.A., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., & Wynne, G.R. (2010) Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network. Report to Defra

Existing Habitats (HPI and associated habitats) and (b) Network Enhancement and Expansion Zones. These latter zones include:

- Network Enhancement Zone 1: Land connecting existing habitats which is likely to be suitable for habitat creation. Action in this zone to expand and join up existing habitat patches and improve the connections between them can be targeted here.
- Network Enhancement Zone 2: Land connecting existing habitats which is less likely to be suitable for habitat creation. Action in this zone that improves the biodiversity value through land management changes and/or green infrastructure provision can be targeted here.
- Fragmentation Action Zone: Land within Enhancement Zone 1 that connects existing habitats patches which are currently highly fragmented and where fragmentation could be reduced by habitat creation.
- Network Expansion Zone: Land beyond the Network Enhancement Zones with potential for expanding, linking/joining networks across the landscape.

4.7 The site has no elements of the National Habitat Network (Figure 2).



Key
 Site boundary
 Site boundary - 250m buffer

No records found.

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Project:
Liverpool Football Club Academy

Title:
Combined Habitat Networks

Drawing Number:
G11306.004

Scale:
1:7,500 @ A4

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05/09/2025

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BJ

Approved:
JC

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Figure 2: The Local Habitat Network

Nature Recovery Network

- 4.8 In March 2023, the Government published its regulations and guidance which set out how Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) are to be prepared and has appointed 'Responsible Authorities' to guide the preparation of each LNRS.
- 4.9 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has been appointed Responsible Authority for preparing the local Nature Recovery Network for Merseyside and the strategy is currently under development.

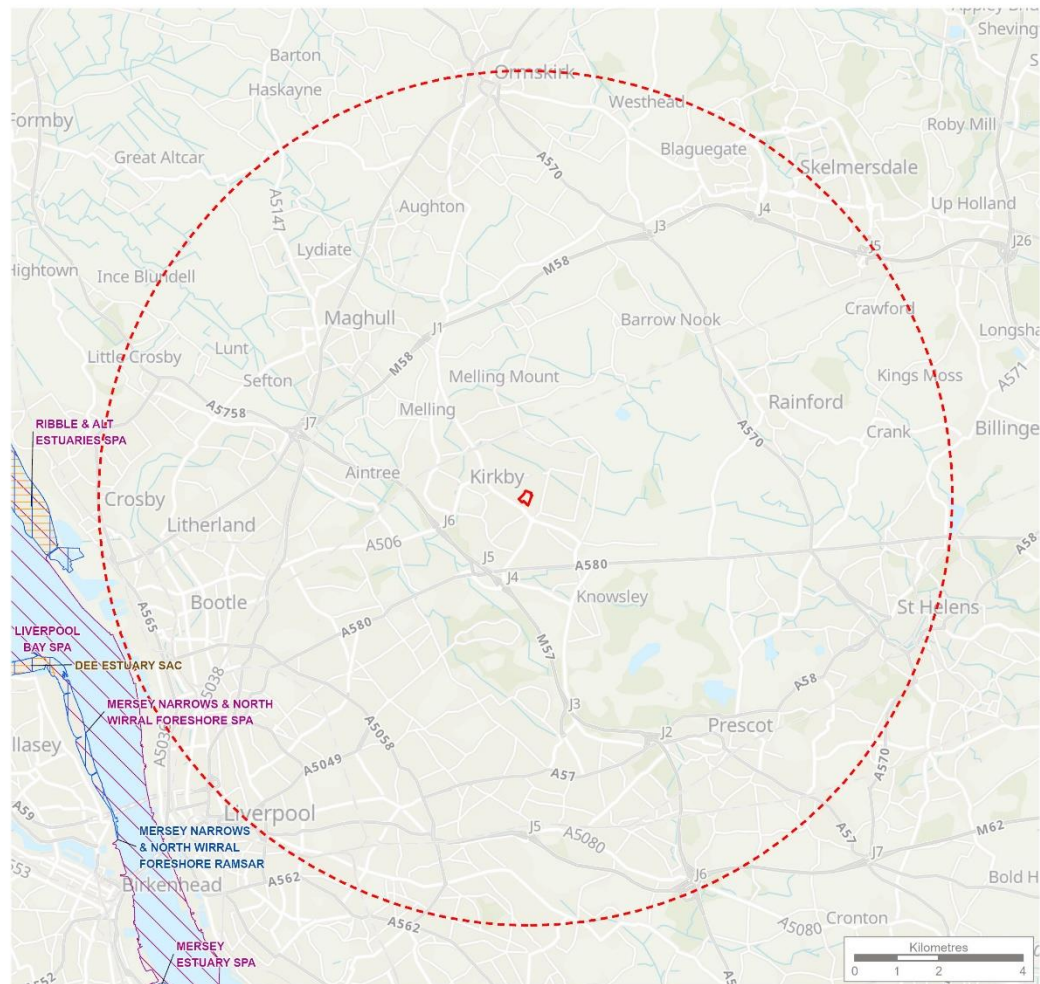
5.0 Wildlife Sites

Statutory Sites

- 5.1 Table 2 and Figures 3, 4 and 5 summarise the statutory designated wildlife sites within influencing distance of the site.

Table 2: Statutory wildlife sites within influencing distance of the site

Site Name	Designation	Distance and Direction from Site
Statutory wildlife sites of international significance within 10km of the site (Figure 3)		
No statutory sites of international significance were located within 10km of the site.		
Statutory wildlife sites of national significance within 5km of the site (Figure 4)		
No statutory sites of national significance were located within 5km of the site.		
Statutory wildlife sites of local significance within 2km of the site (Figure 5)		
Acornfield Plantation	LNR	1.1km east



- Key**
- Site boundary
 - Site boundary - 10km buffer
 - Ramsar
 - Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Special Protection Area (SPA)

Sites searched for were as follows:

- Ramsar
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

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Title
Internationally Designated Sites Within a 10km Buffer

Drawing Number
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Scale
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Date
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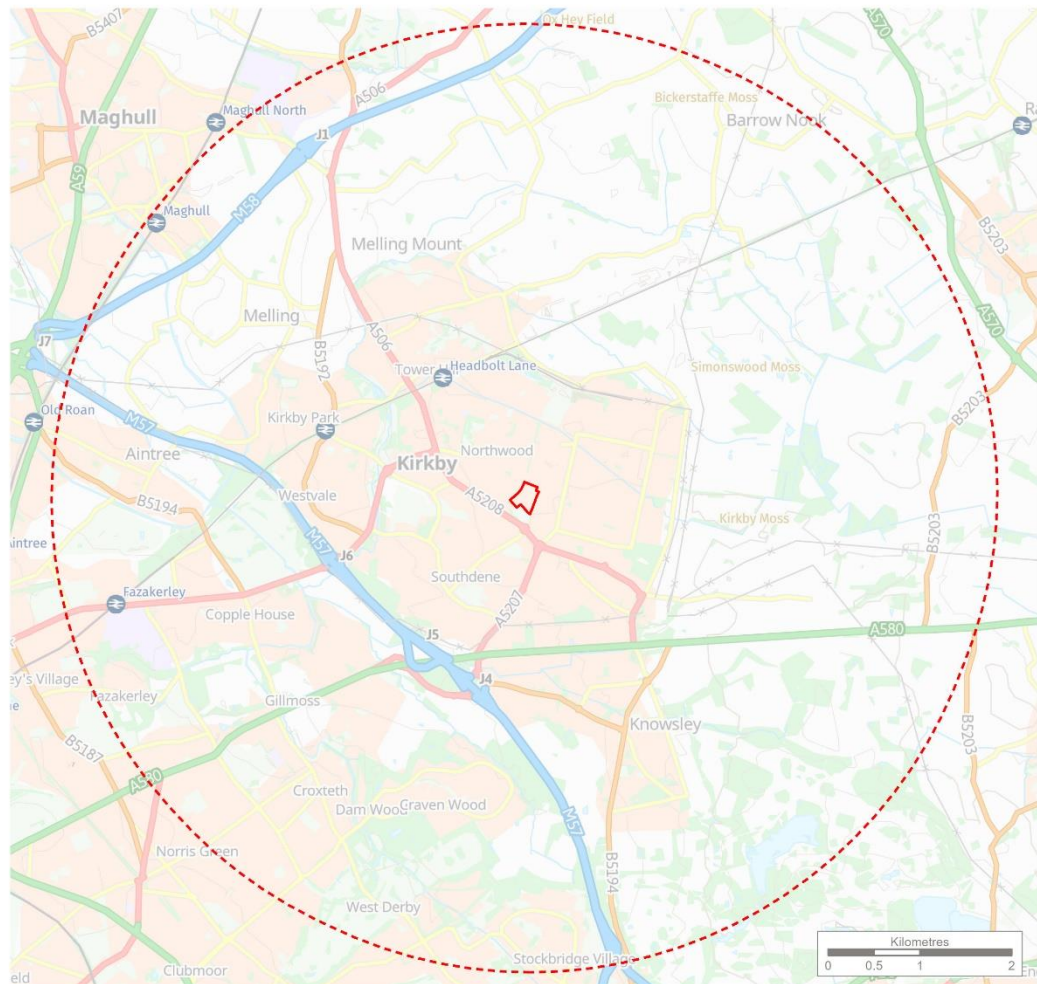
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Figure 3: Statutory wildlife sites of international significance within 10km of the site



Key
 Site boundary
 Site boundary - 5km buffer

Sites searched for were as follows:
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - National Nature Reserve (NNR)

No records found.

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Project:
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Title:
Nationally Designated Sites Within a 5km Buffer

Drawing Number
G11306.006

Scale:
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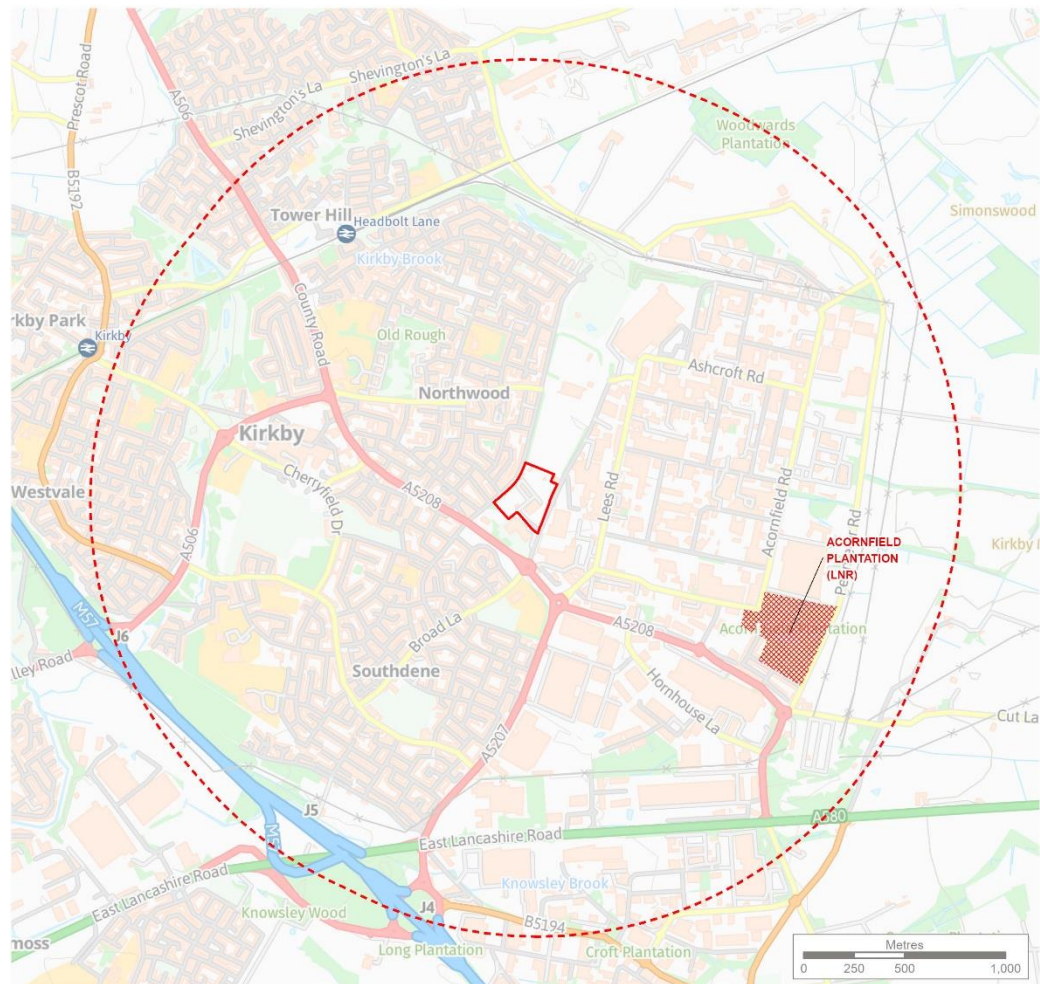
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Figure 4: Statutory wildlife sites of national significance within 5km of the site



Key
 Site boundary
 Site boundary - 2km buffer
 Local Nature Reserve

Sites searched for were as follows:
 - Local Nature Reserves

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 Tel 01925 844004 e-mail tep@tep.uk.com www.tep.uk.com

Project:
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Title:
 Statutory Locally Designated Sites Within a
 2km Buffer

Drawing Number
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Figure 5: Statutory wildlife sites of local significance within 2km of the site

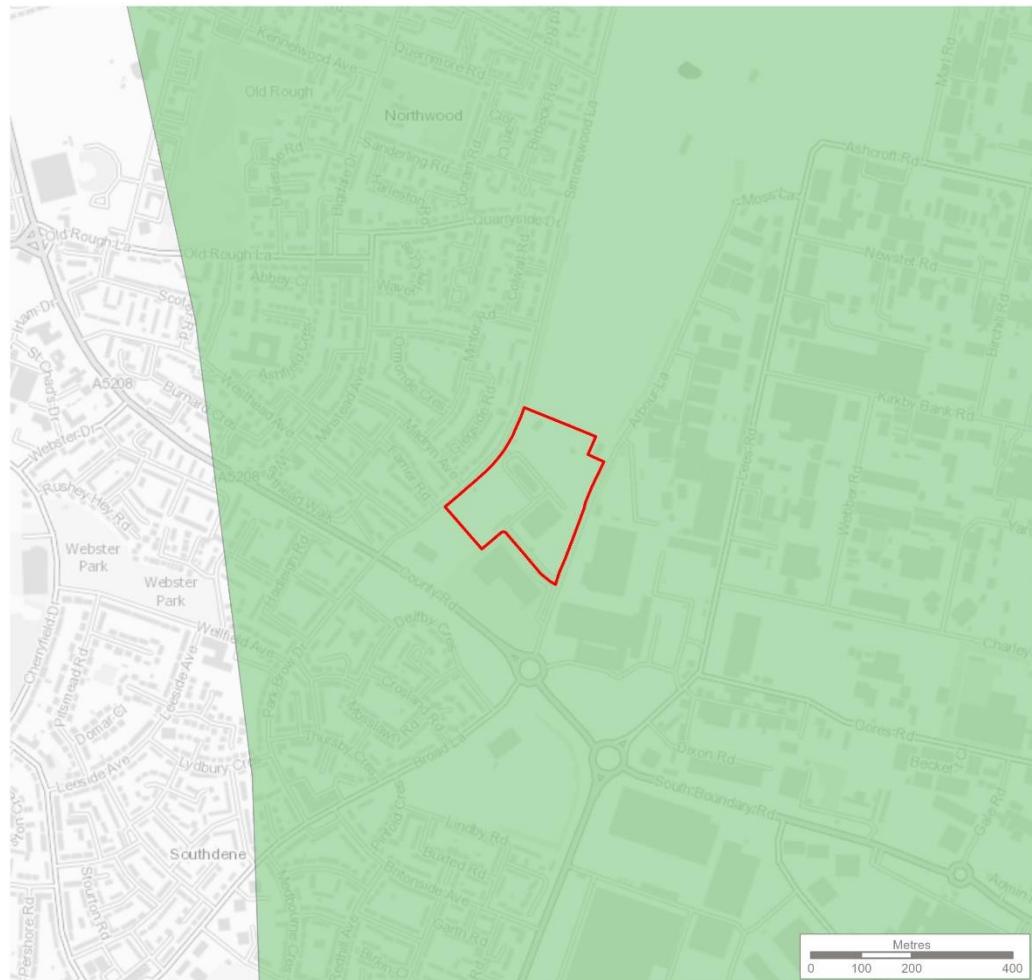
SSSI Impact Risk Zones

- 5.2 The site lies within three SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) – these are zones determined by Natural England that identify likely impacts upon SSSIs, SACs, SPAs or Ramsar sites that may result from planned development.
- 5.3 Figure 6 illustrates and references the IRZs that overlap with the site. The relevant IRZ and risk criteria are cross-referenced in Table 3.

Table 3: SSSI Impact Risk Zones crossed by the site

1 Proposal	2 LPA should consult Natural England on likely risks from the following:		
IRZ	A	B	C
All Planning Applications	NA	NA	NA
Infrastructure	Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.	Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.	NA
Wind & Solar Energy	Solar schemes with a footprint > 0.5ha, all wind turbines.	NA	NA
Minerals, Oil & Gas	NA	NA	NA
Rural Non-Residential	NA	NA	NA
Residential	NA	NA	NA
Rural Residential	NA	NA	NA
Air Pollution	Livestock & poultry units with a floorspace > 500m ² , slurry lagoons > 4000m ² .	Livestock & poultry units with a floorspace > 500m ² , slurry lagoons > 4000m ² .	NA

1 Proposal	2 LPA should consult Natural England on likely risks from the following:		
Combustion	General combustion processes >50MW energy input. Including: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/combustion.	General combustion processes >50MW energy input. Including: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/combustion.	NA
Waste	Landfill. Including: inert landfill, non-hazardous landfill, hazardous landfill.	NA	NA
Composting	NA	NA	NA
Discharges	Any discharge of water or liquid waste of more than 20m ³ /day that is discharged to ground (ie to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream.	NA	NA
Water Supply	NA	NA	NA
Notes 1	NA	NA	NA
Guidance	https://magic.defra.gov.uk/Metadata_for_magic/		



Key
 Site boundary
Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zones
 Zone A



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PARTNERSHIP

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Title
 Sites of Special Scientific Interest - Impact Risk Zone

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Figure 6: SSSI Impact Risk Zones relevant to the site (refer to Table 3 for IRZ criteria)

Non-Statutory Wildlife Sites

- 5.4 Table 4 shows the non-statutory designated wildlife sites within influencing distance of the site.

Table 4: Non-statutory wildlife sites within 2km of the site

Site Name	Designation	Distance and Direction from Site
Kirkby Brook, Northwood	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	0.6km north
Otis Meadow	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.0km south
Acornfield Plantation	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.1km east
Northwood Forest Hills	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.1km north
Charley Wood	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.2km east
Meadow, Kirkby (Mill) Brook of Old Hall Lane	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.3km west
Kirkby Brook	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.3km west
Kraft Operational Land	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.4km south
Kirkby Brook, including Mill Brook	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.7km northwest
Knowsley Brook	Knowsley Local Wildlife Site	1.7km south

6.0 Notable Habitats

6.1 No notable habitats are present within the site (Figure 7).



Key
 Site boundary
 Site boundary - 250m buffer
Notable Habitats
 Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land
Notable Watercourses
 Statutory main rivers (England)

Note: Notable habitats and peat locations are identified from MAGIC Map and Natural England Peaty Soils Location data respectively, and will need to be confirmed through field survey.

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Title
 Notable Habitats Within and Adjacent to the Site

Drawing Number
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Figure 7: Notable habitats within 0.25km of the site

7.0 Protected and Notable Species

Protected Species Licences

- 7.1 A review of Natural England's open datasets for granted protected species licences did not return any class licence returns or pond survey data for great crested newts between 2017 and 2019 within 2km of the site.
- 7.2 No Natural England European Protected Species mitigation licences have been identified within 2km of the site. These are detailed in Table 5 below.

Pre-existing Species Records

- 7.3 Protected and notable species records returned from Merseyside BioBank Record Centre for the last ten full years within 2km of the site are summarised on page 25-27. The terms and conditions of this data state this data is valid until August 2026.
- 7.4 The following species were returned within 2km of the site boundary:
- Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (EPS, WCA5, S41, LBAP) – 3 records.

Species Records Summary: LFC Academy, Liverpool

Amphibians	
Species	Count
Common Frog <i>Rana temporaria</i>	12
Great Crested Newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	3
Smooth Newt <i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>	4

Flora	
Species	Count
Bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	1
Corn Spurrey <i>Spergula arvensis</i>	1
Cornflower <i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	1
Fringed Water-lily <i>Nymphoides peltata</i>	6
Himalayan Balsam <i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	42
Himalayan Cotoneaster <i>Cotoneaster simonsii</i>	1

Flora	
Japanese Knotweed <i>Fallopia japonica</i>	3
Large-leaved Lime <i>Tilia platyphyllos</i>	1
Parrot's-feather <i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>	3
Rhododendron ponticum <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	5
Three-cornered Garlic <i>Allium triquetrum</i>	4
Water Fern <i>Azolla filiculoides</i>	1
Welsh Poppy <i>Meconopsis cambrica</i>	1

Invertebrates	
Species	Count
Alder Leaf Beetle <i>Agelastica alni</i>	11
Azure Damselfly <i>Coenagrion puella</i>	2
Black-tailed Skimmer <i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	1
Blue-tailed Damselfly <i>Ischnura elegans</i>	4
Brown Hawker <i>Aeshna grandis</i>	7
Common Blue Damselfly <i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	2
Common Darter <i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	8
Common Hawker <i>Aeshna juncea</i>	2
Emperor Dragonfly <i>Anax imperator</i>	4
Large Red Damselfly <i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>	2
Migrant Hawker <i>Aeshna mixta</i>	1
Southern Hawker <i>Aeshna cyanea</i>	4

Terrestrial Mammals (Bats)	
Roost Records	
Species	Count
NA	NA
Other Records	
Species	Count

Terrestrial Mammals (Bats)	
Bat <i>Chiroptera</i>	2
Common Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	6
Daubenton's Bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	1
Myotis Bat species <i>Myotis</i>	2
Noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	3
Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus</i>	1
Soprano Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	4

Terrestrial Mammals (Other)	
Species	Count
Grey Squirrel <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	3
Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	24

Fish	
Species	Count
European Eel <i>Anguilla anguilla</i>	2

Annex A: Key Ecological Legislation and National Policy

Relevant Legislation

International Conventions

- a. The UK is a Contracting Party to numerous environmental conventions, the commonest form of international agreements to encourage a coordinated response to managing the environment. Key environmental conventions ratified in the UK include:
- The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat ('Ramsar Convention'²² or 'Wetlands Convention') - provides the only international mechanism for protecting sites of global importance;
 - The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention²³) - imposes legal obligations on contracting parties, protecting over 500 wild plant species and more than 1,000 wild animal species;
 - The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention²⁴ or CMS) - provides strict protection for endangered migratory species. The UK has currently ratified four legally binding Agreements under the convention relating to bats (EUROBATS), African-Eurasian migratory birds (AEWA), small cetaceans in the Baltic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) and albatrosses and petrels (ACAP) in addition to five Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and is non-party range state to a further Agreement and a further MoU;
 - The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO World Heritage Convention) - seeks to protect both cultural and natural heritage;
 - The Convention on Biological Diversity (Biodiversity Convention²⁵ or CBD) - provides a legal framework for biodiversity conservation. Within the UK, delivery of the CBD and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020²⁶ is guided by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework²⁷.

²² Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, Ramsar, 2.2.1971 <https://www.ramsar.org/>

²³ Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. Bern, 1979 <https://www.coe.int/>

²⁴ Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Bonn, June 1979 <https://www.cms.int/>

²⁵ Convention on Biological Diversity, Rio de Janeiro, June 1992 <https://www.cbd.int/>

²⁶ In October 2010, at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the CBD in Nagoya, Japan, the Parties adopted a new 'Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020' along with its 20 'Aichi targets'. <https://www.cbd.int/sp/>

²⁷ The framework is overseen by the Environment Departments of the four UK governments working through the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group. It demonstrates how the UK, through each of the four countries, contributes to achieving the 'Aichi targets', and identifies the activities required to complement the individual country biodiversity strategies <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-post-2010-biodiversity-framework/>

- b. The legal obligations of the multiple Conventions to which the UK is a Contracting Party are enacted through a suite of national environmental legislation. The most relevant are described in the following paragraphs.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations`

- c. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017²⁸ (2017 Regulations) transposed the land and marine aspects of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and certain elements of the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) (known as the Nature Directives) into domestic law.
- d. The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019²⁹ (2019 Regulations) amends the 2017 Regulations to make them operable following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (EU). Most of the changes involve transferral of functions from European Commission to the appropriate authorities in England and Wales, also extending to Scotland and Northern Ireland and applies to Scotland and Northern Ireland (including the adjacent territorial sea to a limited degree), as regards reserved and excepted matters respectively. It also amends Section 27 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to maintain existing protections and enforcement for species of wild birds.
- e. All other processes or terms in the 2017 Regulations remain unchanged and existing guidance and obligations (of a competent authority) remain relevant.

National Site Network

- f. Under the 2019 Regulations, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) in the UK no longer form part of the EU's 'Natura 2000' ecological network, but instead (along with new SACs and SPAs designated under the 2019 Regulations) form the new National Site Network (NSN). Ramsar sites⁶ do not form part of the NSN but remain protected in the same way as SACs and SPAs.
- g. Proposals which may significantly affect a site belonging to the NSN and which are not connected with or necessary to the management of that site require (by Regulations 63 and 64 of the 2017 Regulations, as amended by Regulations 24 and 25 of the 2019 Regulations, respectively) competent authorities to undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the plan or project in view of that site's conservation objectives. This process is commonly referred to as a 'Habitats Regulations Assessment' (HRA). The assessment must consider the potential effects both of the plan/project itself and in combination with other plans or projects. Where an adverse effect on the site's integrity cannot be ruled out, and where there are no alternative solutions, the plan or project can only proceed if there are

²⁸ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/1012)
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/>

²⁹ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/579)
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/579/>

imperative reasons of over-riding public interest (IROPI) and if the necessary compensatory measures can be secured.

Protected Species

- h. Certain animals and their breeding sites or resting places are protected under Regulation 43 of the 2017 Regulations, which makes it illegal to:
 - Deliberately capture, injure or kill any such animal or to deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal;
 - Deliberately disturb such an animal; and
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.
 - i. Disturbance is defined in the 2017 Regulations as an activity which is likely to impair a species' ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture young or, in the case of animals hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate, migrate or which may affect significantly the local distribution or abundance; of the species.
 - j. A bat's resting place is known as a roost site. Because bats tend to be faithful to roost sites but their biology is such that different roost site characteristics are preferred at different times of the year by different species for different functions, a bat roost is considered to be afforded protection even when it is not occupied.
 - k. Certain plant species are protected under Regulation 47 of the 2017 Regulations against deliberate picking, collecting, cutting, uprooting or destruction. It is also an offence to be in possession or control and to transport any live or dead plant or part of a plant of such a species which has been taken in the wild.
 - l. The 2017 Regulations (Regulation 55) enables a relevant licensing body to grant a licence for certain activities that may affect animal or plant species protected by the above provisions. The purpose must conform to one of those listed under Regulation 55(2). For most development related activities, the purpose normally relates to Regulation 55(2)(e) 'preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequence of primary importance for the environment' – commonly known as the IROPI test. Regulation 55(9) introduces two further tests that the licensing body must consider:
 - There is no satisfactory alternative; and
 - The favourable conservation status of the species concerned will be maintained and/or enhanced.
 - m. Under Regulation 9(1) of the 2017 Regulations (as amended), competent authorities "must exercise their functions which are relevant to nature conservation... so as to secure compliance with the requirements of the Directives". Regulation 9(3) requires a competent authority, in exercising any of its function, to
-

“have regard to the requirements of the Directives so far as they be affected by the exercise of those functions.” Local planning authorities must therefore consider the above three ‘tests’ when determining if planning permission should be granted for developments likely to cause an offence under the Regulations.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

- n. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)³⁰ (WCA) is a major legal instrument for wildlife protection in the UK. In respect of habitats and flora, the WCA protects important habitats and/or species as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The designation of UK Ramsar sites⁶ has usually been underpinned through prior notification of these areas as SSSI and accordingly they receive statutory protection under the WCA.
- o. The obligations of the Bern Convention⁷ (the protection of wild plant and animal species and their natural habitats) are transposed into law for England and Wales³¹ by the WCA. The legal requirement for the protection of migratory species listed by the Bonn Convention⁸ is also provided by the WCA.
- p. All wild birds (as defined by the WCA and with exception to species listed in Schedule 2) are protected under the WCA, which makes it illegal to:
 - Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) of any wild bird; or
 - Take or destroy the eggs of any wild bird.
- q. Special penalties are available for offences related to birds listed in Schedule 1, for which there are additional offences of disturbing these birds at their nests, or their dependent young. The Secretary of State may also designate Areas of Special Protection (subject to exceptions) to provide further protection to birds. The WCA also prohibits certain methods of killing, injuring, or taking birds, restricts the sale and possession of captive bred birds, and sets standards for keeping birds in captivity.
- r. Certain animal species (listed under Schedule 5) of the WCA receive protection which makes it illegal (with certain exceptions) to:
 - Intentionally kill, injure or take any such animal;
 - Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct any place used for shelter or protection by any such animal;

³⁰ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 c. 69 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/>

³¹ In Scotland by the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) and in Northern Ireland by Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb such animals while they occupy a place used for shelter or protection.
- s. The Environment Act (EA) 2021 amends the licensing regime under Section 16 of the WCA 1981 to enable licences to be granted (in England only) for reasons of overriding public interest. This new purpose will enable those involved in development activities to apply for a derogation under the WCA for species domestically protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981.
- t. The amendments introduced by the EA 2021 at Section 16(3) requires that licensed may only be granted (in England) where:
 - there is no other satisfactory solution, and
 - the grant of the licence is not detrimental to the survival of any population of the species of animal or plant to which the licence relates.
- u. Plant species listed under Schedule 8 of the WCA 1981 are protected from unauthorised intentional picking, uprooting and destruction.
- v. It is an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any plant that is included in Schedule 9.

Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

- w. Part III of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)³² deals specifically with wildlife protection and nature conservation. It requires that Government Departments have regard for the conservation of biodiversity, in accordance with the CBD. In addition, it requires that The Secretary of State publishes a list of living organisms and habitat types that are considered to be of principal importance in conserving biodiversity.
- x. CROW also amends the WCA, expanding the terms of offences to include reckless activity. It increases the legal protection of threatened species, by also making it an offence to “recklessly” obstruct access to a sheltering place used by an animal listed in Schedule 5 of the WCA or “recklessly” disturb an animal occupying such a structure or place.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

- y. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)³³ places a duty to conserve biodiversity on public authorities in England. It requires local authorities and government departments to have regard to the purposes of conserving biodiversity in a manner that is consistent with the exercise of their

³² Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 c. 37 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/>

³³ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 c. 16 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/>

normal functions such as policy and decision-making. 'Conserving biodiversity' may include enhancing, restoring or protecting a population or a habitat.

- z. Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to publish and maintain lists of species and types of habitats which are regarded by Natural England to be of "principal importance" for the purposes of conserving biodiversity in England.
- aa. These habitats and species of principal importance (HPI and SPI) are drawn from earlier lists of United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species and Habitats. The Section 41 (S41) lists of HPI and SPI are needed by decision-makers in local and regional authorities when carrying out their duties under Section 40 of the Act.

Environment Act 2021

- bb. The Environment Act 2021³⁴ was passed into law in November 2021. The Act applies only to England, although many of its measures are designed to be operable across the UK with the consent of devolved administrations. The Act requires statutory long-term (15+ years) targets to be set (and monitored, reported and reviewed) in the four priority areas of waste reduction, air quality, water resources and biodiversity as well as additional targets relating to species abundance and fine particulates by 2030.
- cc. The Environment Act amends the Town and Country Planning Act 1990³⁵ in that planning permissions granted after the provisions come into force³⁶ are deemed to be subject to a condition prohibiting the start of development before a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority (LPA).
- dd. The biodiversity gain plan must demonstrate a net gain of at least 10% in the biodiversity value of the development site "as at the time the development is completed". Biodiversity net gain must be demonstrated by calculations using the biodiversity metric (currently version 3.1 published by Natural England).
- ee. The Environment Act introduces Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), a new system of spatial strategies for nature, covering the whole of England. LNRS are to be prepared and published by the 'responsible authority', namely the local authority, mayoral authority or National Park authority whose area is, or is within, the strategy area, the Broads Authority or Natural England. Section 40 of the NERC Act (duty to conserve biodiversity) makes provision about the duties of public authorities in relation to LNRS.

³⁴ Environment Act 2001 c.30 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/>

³⁵ Town and Country Planning Act 1990 c. 8 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/>

³⁶ The Biodiversity Gain provision of the Environment Act requires the Secretary of State to first publish detailed regulations (see s147(3) of the Act). These are anticipated in November 2023.

- ff. A ‘responsible authority’ is to be appointed to lead each LNRS area, which could include LPAs and which in mayoral combined authorities is highly likely to be the mayor. The responsible Authority must map the most valuable existing natural habitat in its area and develop a biodiversity strategy, including specific proposals for creating or improving habitats and priorities for nature recovery.
- gg. In addition to the above, the Environment Act Part 6 (Nature and biodiversity) will also:
- Strengthen the biodiversity duty through amendments to Section 40 of the NERC Act.
 - Impose a duty upon Local Authorities to consult on street tree felling;
 - Strengthen woodland protection enforcement measures;
 - Introduce Conservation Covenants (agreements between a landowner and a responsible body);
 - Protected Site Strategies (prepared and published by Natural England) to improve the conservation and management of a protected site (including SACs, SPAs listed before exit day, Sites of Community Importance (SCI)³⁷ listed before exit day and those sites proposed before exit day as SACs).
 - Species Conservation Strategies (prepared and published by Natural England) to improve the conservation status of any species of flora or fauna, with which a LPA in England and any prescribed authority must have regard so far as relevant to its functions, including when discharging its duties under the 2017 Regulations (as amended);
 - Prohibit larger UK businesses from using commodities associated with wide-scale deforestation (where ‘forest’ is defined as *“an area of land of more than 0.5 hectares with a tree canopy cover of at least 10% (excluding trees planted for the purpose of producing timber or other commodities)”*, which includes *“land that is wholly or partly submerged in water whether temporarily or permanently”*);
 - Require regulated businesses to establish a system of due diligence for each regulated commodity used in their supply chain, requires regulated businesses to report on their due diligence, introduces a due diligence enforcement system.

Hedgerow Regulations 1997

- hh. Important hedgerows are protected from removal by the Hedgerows Regulations³⁸ (as amended). Regulation 3 defines the hedgerows to which the Regulations apply.

³⁷ SCIs are established under the European Union Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and are (under the Habitats Directive) the pre-requisite step for establishing SACs and SPAs.

³⁸ The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 (SI 1997/1167) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/1997/1160/>

Regulation 4 sets out the criteria for identifying “important hedgerows” including ecological, landscape or historical/cultural reasons. Under the Hedgerow Regulations it is against the law to remove or destroy certain hedgerows without permission from the local planning authority. Works to “important hedgerows” are exempt under the Hedgerow Regulations if planning consent is granted which allows their removal.

- ii. The identification of important hedgerows also provides an additional means to value hedgerows aside from their botanical value (e.g. species richness) as the assessment of importance also includes characteristics relating to maturity and structure (e.g. associated features, connectivity, integrity) which will affect the functional value of the hedgerow.

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

- jj. Badgers and their setts receive statutory protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (PBA)³⁹. This makes it an offence to wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, or to attempt to do so; or to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett.
- kk. Sett interference includes disturbing badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access to it. A badger sett is defined in the legislation as “any structure or place, which displays signs indicating current use by a badger.”

Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

- ll. All UK wild mammals are afforded a degree of protection from certain cruel acts. The Act is intended to preserve animal welfare more so than nature conservation. The Act makes it an offence to use a variety of methods to intentionally cause suffering to a wild mammal. It also has exemptions including in relation to euthanasia and otherwise lawful use of certain methods of killing.

Relevant National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

- mm. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF24)⁴⁰ sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied at a local level in development plans and how developers should address them. The Framework places great emphasis on plans and developments contributing to sustainable development.

³⁹ Protection of Badgers Act 1992 c. 51 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/>

⁴⁰ National Planning Policy Framework (2024). Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf>

- nn. Policy relating to sustainable design, climate resilience and green infrastructure are integrated throughout the NPPF. Relating to the planning and delivery of large-scale developments, Paragraph 22 requires that a vision should look at least 30 years ahead.
- oo. Paragraph 77 identifies a number of considerations to help guide such large-scale proposals including consideration of opportunities presented by the scope for net environmental gains, ensuring sustainable communities, quality of places, rates of delivery and establishment of Green Belt around or adjoining new developments of significant size.
- pp. Paragraph 136 states that “Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are put in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and that existing trees are retained where possible.”
- qq. Paragraph 162 states that plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, considering the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures. Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts.
- rr. Furthermore paragraph 164 requires that new development should be planned to avoid increased impacts from climate change. In areas which are vulnerable from impacts of climate change these should be mitigated against and managed through suitable adaption measures, such as green infrastructure.
- ss. Part 15 Paragraphs 187 to 195 relate expressly to conserving and enhancement the natural environment. Paragraph 187 requires that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

- minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- tt. Paragraphs 188 and 189 relate designated sites, prioritising allocation of land with least environmental or amenity value, establishing a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancement landscape networks and the sensitive location and design of development within the setting of designated sites to avoid or minimise impacts upon those sites.
- uu. Paragraphs 192 to 195 specifically relate to habitats and biodiversity. Under paragraph 192, plans should identify, map and safeguard designated sites of importance for biodiversity and wider ecological networks (corridors and stepping stones) that connect them, promote conservation, restoration and enhancement of these networks, priority habitats and priority species recovery in addition to pursuing measurable biodiversity net gain.
- vv. Paragraph 193 requires local planning authorities to apply the following principles when determining planning applications:
- If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
 - 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;

- Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats⁴¹ should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and;
 - Development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.”
- ww. Paragraph 194 stipulates that the following should be given the same protection as habitats sites⁴²:
- potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
 - listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and
 - sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.
- xx. Paragraph 195 confirms the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.
- yy. Paragraphs 196 to 201 relate to ground conditions and pollution, including light pollution. Paragraph 198(c) requires policies and planning decisions ensure that new developments limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

Government Circular 06/2005

- zz. Government Circular 06/2005⁴³ remains pertinent in national policy even though PPS9, which it originally supported, was revoked by the NPPF. NPPF24 references the Circular and the guidance contained within, namely the statutory obligations for

⁴¹ Noted by NPPF24 as “Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen”.

⁴² Defined by NPPF24 as “Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites”.

⁴³ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) ‘Government Circular: Geological and Biological Conservation – Statutory obligations and their implications within the planning system’ ODPM circular 06/2005, DEFRA circular 01/2005
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7692/147570.pdf

biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

- aaa. The Circular provides guidance on the protection of designated international and national nature conservation sites, non-designated sites, the conservation of species, and advice on the related issues and statutory powers.
- bbb. Part IV relates to conservation of species protected by law and confirms the presence of such a species is a material consideration for planning decisions. Paragraph 99 states “It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have addressed in making the decision”.
- ccc. Paragraphs 104 to 117 summarise legal status of species afforded protection under the Habitats Regulations (now, the 2017 Regulations) and the licensing process while paragraphs 118 to 122 explain the same for species afforded protection under the WCA. Paragraphs 123 and 124 summarise the protective status of badgers under the PBA. Paragraph 124 states that *“the likelihood of disturbing a badger sett, or adversely affecting badgers’ foraging territory, or links between them, or significantly increasing the likelihood of road or rail casualties amongst badger populations, are capable of being material considerations in planning decisions. Although consideration of the case for granting a licence is separate from the process of applying for planning permission, a planning authority should advise anyone submitting an application for development in an area where there are known to be badger setts that they must comply with the provisions of the Act”*.



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