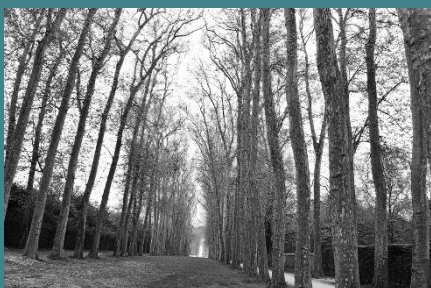


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& design



Ecological Impact Assessment

Client

Bellway Homes Ltd

Project

**Cronton Road,
Cronton**

Date

December 2025

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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared/Date	Approved/Date
-	Issue	PA / 04.12.25	IH / 09.12.25
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B	Final	IH / 22.12.25	

1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Report Scope and Methodology

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) was undertaken following published guidelines on the likely effects upon biodiversity as a result of proposals for an Outline Planning Application at Cronton Road, Cronton.

The assessment draws from a desk study, UKHab Survey and Preliminary Protected Species Survey of the Site and surrounding area which was carried out in January and April 2025. A series of additional detailed surveys were completed in 2025. The surveys comprised species surveys for bats, breeding birds and Great Crested Newts. A Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy (FPCR, 2025) has also been undertaken and should be read in conjunction with this report. A series of wintering bird surveys are on-going for the site. To date two wintering bird surveys have been undertaken per month in February, March and November 2025 and will continue until January 2026.

The site is 4.32ha in extent and comprising a single field of intensively managed grassland, bound by native and non-native hedgerows, tree lines individual trees and a small area of wet woodland. To the north the Site is bordered by a small brook, which features rough grassland, scrub and individual trees on its margins.

Key Findings

The baseline assessment identified the following Important Ecological Features (IEFs) which could be affected by proposals or warrant consideration due to the legal protection afforded them:

- Mersey Estuary SPA/RAMSAR
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Wet Woodland
- Other Rivers and Streams
- Individual Trees
- Hedgerows
- Bats
- Breeding Birds
- Reptiles (legislative context only)
- Himalayan Balsam (legislative context only)

Where possible, the design proposals have sought to retain the Site's most important ecological features and maintain connectivity of onsite and offsite habitat.

Proposals will result in permanent losses of habitats under the footprint of the development. The habitats lost are predominantly of low ecological importance, with the exception of 115m of species poor native hedgerow and four associated mature trees required to facilitate safe access to the site. An additional mature tree will also be lost as well as localised impacts to the watercourse on the northern boundary.

All impacts to onsite habitats are predicted to be not-significant. The loss of all habitats within the Site will be appropriately compensated for through the measures detailed within the associated Biodiversity Net Gain report, the implementation of which via a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will secure a gain in biodiversity value for the site.

A preliminary assessment has concluded that the residual effects on the Mersey Estuary will be neutral. However, the winter bird surveys to inform the assessment are on-going and as such, the detailed impact assessment for this feature has been deferred until the wintering bird surveys have been completed. The wintering bird report will be issued during the determination period on completion of the surveys and will include an impact assessment to this important ecological feature.

The assessment has concluded that there is the risk for impacts to four Local Wildlife Sites, located within 1km of the Site boundary. However, given the distance of these LWS from the Site boundary and the relative size of the development the residual effect of these impacts are predicted to be not-significant.

Where necessary, the detailed lighting strategy for the Site will consider the best practice guidance note set out by the Bat Conservation Trust and the Institute of Lighting Professionals in 2023, 'GN08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night to ensure, wherever possible, that existing and new habitat resources are not negatively affected by artificial lighting during the construction or operational phases.

Following compensation, a minor positive effect is predicted on local breeding bird and bat populations.

Construction phase impacts will be minimised through careful control of construction activities through an industry best practice CEMP. As a result, all other predicted effects on important ecological features are predicted to be neutral.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The following Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. (FPCR) on behalf of the Bellway to accompany an outline planning application for the development of Land of Cronton Road, Cronton, Widnes (Central OS Grid Ref: SJ 49041 88316) herein referred to as 'the Site'.
- 2.2 This EcIA has been prepared with reference to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) EcIA Guidelines. In line with this guidance, the EcIA: describes the Assessment Methodology; establishes the baseline conditions, currently existing at the Site and surroundings; the likely significant environmental effects associated with the proposed development; the mitigation measures required to prevent or reduce any impacts; the likely residual effects after these measures have been employed; the compensation measures required to offset any residual effects; and identifies opportunities available within the proposals to deliver ecological enhancement.
- 2.3 To inform this assessment, a suite of ecological surveys has been undertaken on the Site. The results of these surveys are discussed where relevant in the EcIA report, with details of survey methodologies and results included in separate, reports which should be read in conjunction with this report. These include:
- Appendix A: Bat Survey Report (FPCR, 2025)
 - Appendix B: Great Crested Newt Survey Report (FPCR, 2025)
 - Appendix C: Breeding Bird Survey Report (FPCR, 2025)
 - Appendix D: Biodiversity Net Gain Report (FPCR, 2025)
- 2.4 In Addition to the above a series of wintering bird surveys are in-progress on the Site and will continue until January 2025. Following the completion of the surveys Appendix E: the Winter Bird survey report will be issued, which will also include an updated impact assessment on relevant Important Ecological Features.

Site Context

- 2.5 The site is 4.32ha in extent and comprising a single field of intensively managed grassland, bound by native and non-native hedgerows, tree lines individual trees and a small area of wet woodland. To the north the Site is bordered by a small brook, which features rough grassland, scrub and individual trees on its margins.
- 2.6 The landscape beyond the site to the north and west is predominantly rural, consisting of arable and pasture. The built-up area of Cronton is located to the east of the site and a Public Right of Way (PRoW) runs through the site.

Site Proposals

- 2.7 The proposals for the site are to seek outline planning permission for up to 120 dwellings, with public open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage system (SuDs) and associated infrastructure.

Report Aims and Objectives

2.8 This report has been prepared to achieve the following objectives:

- provide a summary of the methods and results of survey work to establish an ecological baseline;
- identify and describe all potentially significant ecological effects associated with the proposed development on important ecological features;
- set out the mitigation measures required to ensure compliance with nature conservation legislation and to address any potentially significant ecological effects;
- provide an assessment of the significance of residual effects;
- identify appropriate enhancement measures and consider biodiversity net gain; and
- set out the requirements for post-construction monitoring.

3.0 LEGISLATION AND POLICY

3.1 This report has been prepared to establish an Ecological Baseline and to conduct an Ecological Impact Assessment on Important Ecological Features as informed by relevant international, national and local legislation and policy. The national policy and legislation most relevant to this assessment include:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (CHSR) (as amended) in relation to the European Protected Species (EPS) great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) and bats (all species); and European protected sites i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Internationally protected "Ramsar Sites" (collectively known as "National Site Network site" following the UK's exit from the EU). Annex II bat species of particular relevance in relation to SACs designated for bats.
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended) in relation to all wild birds (including Schedule 1 species), other animals (notably Schedule 5 species), flora (those listed in Schedules 8 and 9) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- The Environment Act 2021 which covers a range of environmental protections and enhancements including requiring developments to demonstrate a mandatory biodiversity net gain following publication of secondary legislation;
- Protection of Badgers Act (PBA) 1992 which protects badgers from killing or harm;
- Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 in relation to various priority species and habitats listed under Section 41 (S41);
- Hedgerow Regulations 1997 made under Section 97 of the Environment Act 1995;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2025 which sets out the government's planning policy for England including measure to conserve and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing value landscapes, recognising the value and wider benefits of natural capital and minimising impacts/providing net gains for biodiversity;
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR) as designated most recently by the NERC Act 2006;

- Non-statutory protected local sites including County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) sites;
- Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP); and
- British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Desktop Study

- 4.1 In order to compile existing baseline information, relevant ecological information was requested from both statutory and non-statutory nature conservation organisations including:
- Merseyside Biobank and RECORD LERC ;
 - Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk); and
 - Inspection of colour 1:25,000 OS base maps (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) and aerial photographs from Google Earth (www.maps.google.co.uk) was also undertaken in order to provide additional context and identify any features of potential importance for nature conservation in the wider countryside.
- 4.2 The search area for biodiversity information was related to the significance of sites and species and potential zones of influence, as follows:
- 15km around the application area for sites of International Importance e.g. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar sites.
 - 2km around the application area for sites of National or Regional Importance e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and species records e.g. protected, Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) or notable species.
 - 1km around the application-site for sites of County Importance e.g. Biological Heritage Sites or Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

UKHab Survey

- 4.3 A preliminary baseline habitat survey was undertaken on 3rd January 2025 by Ian Hunter (MCIEEM, Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's (BSBI) Field Identification Skills Competency (FISC) Level 5). An update walkover to confirm habitat classification and condition was undertaken on 16th April 2025 by D Smith (BSBI FISC level 4).
- 4.4 Survey methods broadly followed the UK Habitat Classification System¹ (UKHab) to map habitats present onsite, with minor departures from this methodology to allow for compatibility with the DEFRA metric where applicable. This involved a systematic walk over of the Site to classify the broad habitat types and identify any Habitats of Principal Importance

¹ Butcher, B., Edmonds, B., Norton, L., & Treweek, J. (n.d.) The UK Habitats Classification System V2. UKHab. Available at: <https://ukhab.org/>

(HPI) for the conservation of biodiversity as listed within Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

- 4.5 Species lists were compiled for individual areas and assessments of abundance were made using the DAFOR scale. Vascular plant nomenclature follows the latest edition of Stace (4th edition, 2019)². Whilst the species lists collected should not be regarded as exhaustive, sufficient information was gained during the survey to enable classification and assessment of broad habitat types and identify features likely to be of interest.
- 4.6 Where species are referred to in the text, the common name for the species is used, with the associated scientific name provided within the botanical species lists for the Site in Appendix D1 of the Biodiversity Net Gain Report. Appendix D1a of the BNG report provides the results of the hedgerow surveys.

Faunal Surveys

- 4.7 Following the initial assessment of the Site for protected/notable species potential, a series of further surveys were completed in 2025. These included:
- Bat Activity Surveys in accordance with Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition³
 - Breeding and Wintering Bird Surveys in accordance with Bird Survey Guidelines for Assessing Ecological impacts v.1.1.1
 - Great Crested Newt eDNA Surveys in accordance to Technical advice note for field and laboratory sampling of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) environmental DNA.
 - Great Crested Newt traditional surveys in accordance with Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook,
- 4.8 Further Information on the methodologies employed are provided within the specific species reports in Appendix A to D.

Impact Assessment

- 4.9 The assessment of significant ecological effects has been undertaken in accordance with CIEEM EclA guidelines. In summary, the process involves:
- **Establish Baseline** – this is based on desk study and field surveys which describes the existing and potential Important Ecological Features (IEFs) within the zones of influence specified.
 - **Determine the Scale of Importance of Ecological Features** – importance is determined using geographical frames of reference: Local, Country, Regional, National and International. This assessment is based on a variety of factors, including statutory protection, statutory designation, conservation status, abundance and rarity.
 - **Assess Significant Ecological Effects** –based on the importance of the ecological feature, magnitude of the effect and sensitivity of the features considered. This is description-based rather than applying a matrix which considers construction and operation effects only

² Stace, C.A. (2019) New Flora of the British Isles (4th Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

³ Collins, J. (ed) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition) The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

where relevant. The assessment assumes the proposed layout, intrinsic mitigation and routine ecological mitigation normally conditioned, and these are outlined clearly.

- **Mitigation** – This will be based on the mitigation hierarchy – avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement. Any further mitigation measures required will be outlined to ensure residual effects are lowered to a level considered acceptable. Enhancements will seek biodiversity net gain in line with the NPPF and Local Plan Policy DP19: Biodiversity, Geological Conservation and Green Infrastructure. Monitoring will be considered where applicable.
- **Future Baseline and Residual Effects** – final conclusionary statements for the short, medium and long term.

Limitations

- 4.10 No limitations specific to this survey influenced this assessment.

5.0 RESULTS

Desktop Study

- 5.1 The locations of designated Sites identified through the desktop study search area have been presented on *Figure 1*.

Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.2 The locations of Statutory Designated sites provided by MAGIC are shown on *Figure 2* and presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Statutory Designated Sites within the Desktop Study Search Area

Site Name	Distance from Site at Closest Point	Description (as provided by JNCC)
Mersey Estuary RAMSAR	c.4.4km south	Mersey Estuary is a large, sheltered estuary which comprises large areas of saltmarsh and extensive intertidal sand and mudflats, with limited areas of brackish marsh, rocky shoreline and boulder clay cliffs, within a rural and industrial environment. The intertidal flats and saltmarshes provide feeding and roosting sites for large and internationally important populations of waterfowl. During the winter, the site is of major importance for duck and waders. The site is also important during spring and autumn migration periods, particularly for wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain.
Mersey Estuary SPA	c.4.4km south	Important estuary habitat for populations of wintering birds including Annex 1 species Golden plover, for which the estuary supports 1.2% of the overwintering population in Great Britain.

- 5.3 Mersey Estuary SPA/RAMSAR has been scoped into further assessment and is considered to be of importance at an international scale.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.4 The locations of Non-statutory Designated Sites provided by Merseyside Biobank and RECORD LERC are shown on *Figure 2* and presented in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Non-Statutory Designated Sites within the Desktop Study Search Area

Site Name	Distance from Site at Closest Point	Description (as provided by Merseyside Biobank and RECORD LERC)
George's Wood LWS	119m W	Predominantly a mature broadleaf woodland with a large area of neutral grassland. Other habitats include scrub and wetland. 10 habitats have been recorded on this site, including one Priority BAP Habitat and one regionally important. There are 134 plant species, including one WCA Schedule 8, one species of conservation concern; one regionally important; and four locally rare species. 94.0% of the plants are native to North Merseyside. Colonisation has been aided by man and the site has been physically altered.
Alder Brook LWS	462m S	This brook flows through high quality agricultural land with good habitat diversity. There are eight habitats, two being Priority BAP Habitats and one regionally important. There are 33 plant species, including one locally rare species. 93.9% of the plants are native to North Merseyside. Colonisation has been unaided by man and the site has been physically altered.
Rough Head LWS	658m NNW	A semi-natural broadleaf woodland with ponds and a stream. Dead wood has been left and provides good habitat. Nine habitats have been recorded, including one Priority BAP Habitat and one regionally important. There are 65 plant species, including one WCA Schedule 8; one species of conservation concern; three regionally important; and two locally rare species. 96.7% of the plants are native to North Merseyside. Colonisation has been aided by man and the site has been physically altered.
Pex Hill Country Park LWS	912m NEE	Areas of heathland with associated areas of acidic grassland and oak dominated woodland overlying sandstone. The Quarry area adds diversity. 14 habitats have been recorded, including three Priority BAP Habitats, one priority Habitats Directive; three regionally important; and two locally uncommon. 158 plant species have been recorded, including one WCA schedule 8; one species of conservation concern; five regionally important; and 16 locally rare species. 86.7% of the plants are native to the borough. Colonisation has been unaided by man and the site has been physically altered.

Land East of Foxs Bank Brook LWS	967m NW	A stream valley with broadleaf woodland on the east bank, possibly of ancient origin. Four habitats have been recorded on this site. There are 124 plant species, including one WCA Schedule 8; one species of conservation concern; one regionally important; and seven locally rare species. 81.5% of the plants are native to North Merseyside. Colonisation has been unaided by man and the site has been physically altered.
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- 5.5 Given the nature of the development and the proximity the non-statutory sites, all are scoped into further assessment and considered to be of County importance.

Protected/Notable Species

- 5.6 The locations of protected species records provided by Merseyside Biobank and RECORD LERC are shown on *Figure 1* and presented in *Table 3*.

Table 3: Protected and Notable Species within the Desktop Study Search Area

Species	Relevant Legislation	Distance from Site at Closest Point	Description of Record(s) (as provided by RECORD)
Bats			
Brown Long Eared, <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	WCA SCH 5, HAB REGS SCH2	1.248km WSW	2 records ranging from 2006-2011.
Common Pipistrelle, <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	WCA SCH 5, HAB REGS SCH2, CBAP, NMBAP	1.156km E	19 records range from 2007-2019.
Leisler's Bat, <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	WCA SCH 5, HAB REGS SCH2, CBAP	Within SJ4889 grid square NNW	One record from 2021.
Noctule, <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	WCA SCH 5, HAB REGS SCH2, CBAP, NMBAP	Within SJ4889 grid square NNW	One record from 2021.
Pipistrelle Species, <i>Pipistrellus</i>	WCA SCH 5, HAB REGS SCH2, CBAP, NMBAP	0.911km NW	3 records ranging from 2006-2021.
Soprano Pipistrelle, <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	WCA SCH 5, HAB REGS SCH2, CBAP, NMBAP	1.7764km NNE	7 records ranging from 2007-2021.
Unknown Bat Species, <i>Chiroptera</i>	WCA SCH 5, HAB REGS SCH2, CBAP, NMBAP	0.911km NW	One record from 2021.
Amphibians			
Common Frog, <i>Rana temporaria</i>	WCA SCH 5	0.772km WNW	42 records ranging from 2008-2021.
Common Toad, <i>Bufo bufo</i>	WCA SCH 5, NERC S41	0.772km NW	15 records ranging from 2008-2021.

Species	Relevant Legislation	Distance from Site at Closest Point	Description of Record(s) (as provided by RECORD)
Great Crested Newt, <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	HabRegs2, WCA SCH 5, NERC S41, NMBAP	0.696km NNE	4 records from 2005.
Smooth Newt, <i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>	WCA SCH 5	0.772km NW	13 records ranging from 2008-2021.
Birds			
Black Headed Gull, <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	BoCC Amber	1.840km SSE	One record from 2007.
Bullfinch, <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	BoCC Amber, CBAP	1.786km SSW	2 records from 2011.
Dunnock, <i>Prunella modularis</i>	BoCC-Amber	1.325km S	10 records ranging from 2009-2013.
Firecrest, <i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	WCA Sch1, bocc Green	1.695km SSE	One record from 2016.
Grasshopper Warbler, <i>Locustella naevia</i>	NERC_s41; BoCC-Red	Within SJ4789 grid square NW	2 records, from 2008.
Greenfinch, <i>Chloris chloris</i>	BoCC Red	1.786km SSW	6 records ranging from 2009-2013.
Grey Partridge, <i>Perdix perdix</i>	CBAP, NMBAP, NERC_s41; BoCC-Red	1.300km SE	5 records, ranging from 2005-2013.
House Sparrow, <i>Passer domesticus</i>	CBAP, BoCC Red, nerc s41	1.295km SE	11 records ranging from 2007-2013.
Lapwing, <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	NMBAP, CBAP, NERC_s41; BoCC-Red	1.481km WNW	4 records ranging from 2006-2008.
Linnet, <i>Linaria cannabina</i>	BoCC Red, NERC S41	1.154km E	One record from 2007.
Little Ringed Plover, <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	WCA Sch 1, BoCC Green	Within SJ4789 grid square NW	One record from 2005.
Mallard, <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	BoCC-Amber	1.492km SE	9 records ranging from 2009-2020.
Meadow Pipit, <i>Anthus pratensis</i>	BoCC-Amber	1.154km E	One record from 2007.
Mistle Thrush, <i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	BoCC Red	1.584km SSE	One record, from 2007.
Moorhen, <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	BoCC Amber	0.1154km E	8 records ranging from 2007-2016.
Redwing, <i>Turdus iliacus</i>	BoCC Amber, WCA Sch1	1.341km S	One record from 2010.

Species	Relevant Legislation	Distance from Site at Closest Point	Description of Record(s) (as provided by RECORD)
Reed Bunting, <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	CBAP, BoCC Amber, NERC S41	Two records within SJ4789 grid square NW; One record within SJ5088 grid square E.	3 records ranging from 2005-2010.
Skylark, <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	NERC_s41; BoCC-Red; NMBAP, CBAP	1.154km E	7 records ranging from 2006-2008.
Song Thrush, <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	NMBAP, CBAP, BoCC Amber, NERC S41,	1.033km SSW	16 records ranging from 2005-2013.
Sparrowhawk, <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	BoCC-Amber	1.386km S	3 records ranging from 2011-2013.
Starling, <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	BoCC-Red, NERC S41, CBAP	1.512km SE	7 records ranging from 2005-2015.
Swift, <i>Apus apus</i>	BoCC-Red	0.989km ESE	5 records ranging from 2007-2013.
Tree Sparrow, <i>Passer montanus</i>	CBAP, BoCC Red, nerc s41	0.529km WSW	6 records ranging from 2008-2013.
Willow Tit, <i>Poecile montanus</i>	BoCC Red, NERC S41	Within SJ4789 NW and SJ5090 NE	2 records from 2005.
Willow Warbler, <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	BoCC Amber	1.799km E	1 record from 2009.
Woodpigeon, <i>Columba palumbus</i>	BoCC Amber	1.512km SE	12 records ranging from 2009-2019.
Wren, <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	BoCC Amber	1.154km E	7 records ranging from 2007-2014.
Yellowhammer, <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	CBAP, BoCC Red, NERC S41	1.512km SE	4 records ranging from 2005-2015.
Terrestrial Mammals			
Eurasian Badger, <i>Meles meles</i>	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	Record location is confidential.	1 record.
Brown Hare, <i>Lepus europaeus</i>	nerc s41, CBAP	0.772km NW	11 records ranging from 2009-2022.
European Hedgehog, <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	nerc s41	0.172km ESE	31 records ranging from 2005-2022.
Water Vole, <i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	WCA SCH 5	0.474km W	7 Records ranging from 2006-2010.
Reptiles			
Slow-worm, <i>Anguis fragilis</i>	WCA SCH 5, CBAP	0.353km NE	2 records from 2006.
Invertebrates			
Centre-barred Sallow, <i>Atethmia centrargo</i>	NERC S41	1.502km S	1 record from 2013.

Species	Relevant Legislation	Distance from Site at Closest Point	Description of Record(s) (as provided by RECORD)
Dark-barred Twin-spot Carpet, <i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>	NERC S41	1.814km SSW	2 records from 2010.
Dot Moth, <i>Melanchra persicariae</i>	NERC S41	1.325km S	5 records ranging from 2013-2014.
Dusky Brocade, <i>Apamea remissa</i>	NERC S41	1.386km S	One record from 2011.
Grey Dagger, <i>Acronicta psi</i>	NERC S41	1.814km SSW	One from 2005.
Small Square-spot, <i>Diarsia rubi</i>	NERC S41	1.814km SSW	4 records from 2010.
Spinach, <i>Eulithis mellinata</i>	NERC S41	1.386km S	One record from 2010.
Tormentil Mining Bee, <i>Andrena tarsata</i>	NERC S41, CBAP	0.906km ENE	2 records from 2014.
Wall, <i>Lasioommata megera</i>	NERC S41	Within SJ5088 E	One record from 2010.
Plants			
Bluebell, <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	WCA SCH8K, CBAP	0.226km WNW	35 records ranging from 2005-2022.
Invasive Non-Native Species			
American Mink, <i>Neovison vison</i>	WCA SCH 9	0.881km NE	1 record from 2005.
Crangonyx <i>pseudogracilis</i> , <i>Crangonyx pseudogracilis</i>	WCA SCH 9	1.234km SE	7 records from 2005.
Grey Squirrel, <i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>	WCA SCH 9	0.235km ESE	18 records ranging from 2010-2018.
Himalayan Balsam, <i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	WCA SCH 9	0.580km WSW	17 records ranging from 2006-2021.
Japanese Knotweed, <i>Fallopia japonica</i>	WCA SCH 9	0.869km WSW	17 records ranging from 2005-2020.
New Zealand Pigmyweed, <i>Crassula helmsii</i>	WCA SCH 9	1.505km SE	One record from 2009.
Rhododendron, <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	WCA SCH9	1.742km NNE	4 records ranging from 2007-2015.

UKHab Survey

- 5.7 The locations of the habitats described below are illustrated in Figure 1: UKHab Plan.

Modified Grassland

- 5.8 The majority of the Site was assessed as g4 modified grassland. The grassland was species-poor with a uniform sward throughout. The grassland is dominated by perennial rye-grass with

frequent Italian rye-grass, occasional to frequent Yorkshire fog and occasional to locally frequent creeping bent. The community featured an almost absence of herbs, with only dandelion noted as a rarity.

- 5.9 This species poor grassland is considered typical of pasture environments and is a common and widespread habitat with limited ecological value. This habitat was therefore considered not to be an important ecological feature within the context of this assessment.

Other Neutral Grassland

- 5.10 A narrow strip of other neutral grassland is present along the northern boundary of the site adjacent to watercourse R1. The grassland was classified as g3c5 Arrhenatherum grassland. This grassland dominated by cock's-foot with frequent Yorkshire-fog and common couch, and occasional creeping bent of false oat-grass. Herbaceous diversity was limited to occasional cow parsley, nettle, common ragwort and creeping thistle. Bramble was occasional, with rare broadleaved dock and common hogweed.
- 5.11 This grassland habitat comprises a poor species-richness but provides a range of flowering plants that can be of benefit to a variety of faunal species. This grassland was therefore not considered to be an important ecological feature within the context of this assessment.

Bramble scrub

- 5.12 An area of bramble scrub is present on the northern boundary of the site. The area is dominated by bramble, with occasionally occurring false oat—grass. Yorkshire fog Hawthorn , Sycamore , Pedunculate oak Q, Wild cherry , Elder all occur rarely.
- 5.13 This scrub is a common and widespread habitat with limited ecological value. This habitat was therefore not considered to be an important ecological feature within the context of this assessment.

Mixed scrub

- 5.14 An area of mixed scrub is present in the south of the site. The scrub canopy contains abundant Bramble, frequent pedunculate oak occasional ash, hawthorn, sycamore, wild cherry blackthorn, Grey willow, downy birch and Japanese rose. The understory contains abundant False oat-grass, Common couch, frequent Rosebay willowherb and occasional Soft-rush, Nipplewort Common ragwort.
- 5.15 This scrub is a common and widespread habitat with limited ecological value. This habitat was therefore not considered to be an important ecological feature within the context of this assessment.

Wet Woodland

- 5.16 An area of wet woodland is present along the western border of the site, with about a fifth of the total woodland recorded within the Site boundary. The woodland was recorded along the margins of a pond and featured a canopy of frequent alder, occasional goat willow and rare grey willow. The understorey contains Common ivy , Cleavers , Common nettle , Great willowherb , Cow parsley Creeping thistle False oat-grass Nipplewort Creeping buttercup Reed canary-grass and Bramble.
- 5.17 Wet woodland is a rare and declining habitat type, however, the example recorded on site, did not constitute an optimal example of the type as it was limited in extent and lacked an

appropriate 'natural' ground flora identifiable as an NVC wet woodland type. This habitat was therefore considered to be of no more than Local value

Hedgerows

- 5.18 A total of five hedgerows are present onsite. *Table 4* provide a summary description of each hedgerow and an assessment of their importance and priority habitat status.

Table 4: Onsite Hedgerow Descriptions

Ref	Canopy Species	Length	Description	Priority Habitat?	Condition
H1	Cm, Ps, Qr, Ca, Fe, Rc	101m	Species rich native hedge with trees-associated with ditch.	Yes	Good
H2	Fe, Cm, Sn, Qr, Ap	116m	Native hedgerow	Yes	Poor
H3	Non-native species	25m	Non-Native Ornamental hedgerow dominated by sycamore	No	Poor
H4	Non-native species	48m	Non-Native Ornamental hedgerow dominated by garden privet	No	Poor
H5	Cm,	10m	H5 was a short 10m length of hawthorn hedge along an offsite garden boundary. This hedgerow does not meet the definition of a hedgerow as it is less than 20m in length. As such, the hedgerow was not assessed against the hedgerow regulations criteria, but has been mapped to capture its value.	No	Poor
LoT 1	Qr, Fe, Cm, Sc, Ap, Ug	60m	Line of Trees	No	Moderate

Individual trees

- 5.19 Mature trees were a common habitat feature recorded on the boundary of the Site. These occurred within the linear habitats H1 and Lot1 (not mapped on figure 3), with ten free standing trees recorded and an additional four within hedgerow H2, which have been mapped on Figure 3 as they are being lost to facilitate access. Six of the mapped trees were classified as large (>60cm dbh), eight as medium (>30cm dbh) and three as small (>7.5cm dbh).
- 5.20 Trees are a common habitat type both nationally and locally, however large trees specimens provide intrinsic ecological value. Therefore, trees are considered to be of importance at a Local scale.

Other River and Stream

- 5.21 The watercourse R1, known locally as dog clog brook, passes in a meandering route along the northern boundary of the Site. The channel featured no aquatic vegetation, with only reed canary grass noted at the margins. The banks of the brook were steep and featured a rough

grassland community characterised by cock's-foot, recorded in mosaic with bramble scrub and sycamore standards. The invasive species Himalayan balsam was frequent on the banks.

- 5.22 R1 was considered to be an important ecological feature at a Local scale.

Ditches

- 5.23 Two ditches were recorded on the south-western boundaries of the Site. Ditch D1 runs westwards from the south extent of hedgerow H1 and featured a wet channel approximately 1.5m wide. No aquatic vegetation was noted but reed canary-grass and soft-rush were noted as marginals. The banks featured a rough grassland community characterised again by reed canary-grass, with locally frequent patches of rosebay willowherb and occasional bramble, ivy and alder saplings.
- 5.24 Ditch D2 was recorded on the south-western boundary between Lot1 and H2. The ditch featured a narrow wet channel approximately 0.5m wide. No aquatic vegetation was noted and reed canary-grass was rare at the margins. The banks featured a rough grassland community featuring common couch, with occasional bramble. A large pedunculate oak standard and a small and a medium sycamore were recorded on the banks of the ditch.
- 5.25 The ditches were assessed as being in poor condition and are not considered an ecologically important feature. It is therefore scoped out of further assessment.

Invasive Non-Native Species

- 5.26 The Schedule 9 plant species Himalayan balsam, which was recorded across the site in association with the watercourse R1 to the north. Due to the legislative considerations INNS are included as an IEF in a legislative context.

Fauna

- 5.27 The Site is considered to have the potential to support the following species/groups:
- Badger
 - Bats
 - Birds
 - Great Crested Newts
 - Reptiles
- 5.28 Full details of the further surveys are provided in the appended reports; however *Table 5* summarises the key findings during such specific surveys.

Table 5: Summary of Protected / Notable Species Assessments

Species/Group	Survey Results Summary and / or Site Suitability Assessment
Badger	No records were returned from within the Site or within 2km of the site. No badger setts or other signs of badgers were identified on Site during the badger survey or during the numerous survey visits to the Site. Badgers are considered absent from the Site and immediate surrounds, and are therefore scoped out of further assessment, however, given the transient nature of this species and the suitability of certain habitats on Site, a badger survey update is recommended prior to construction to confirm continued absence of badger. Badger are common and widespread in England and are not considered an Important Ecological Feature. The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 however requires development proposal to have regard for this species.
Bats (Appendix A)	In total, 29 individual trees are located within the Site. Further aerial inspection surveys were undertaken on trees T25 as this tree is proposed to be lost to facilitate Site access and ground level assessment determined that the tree contained potential roosting features. No bats or evidence of bats were recorded using suitable roosting features in the tree. The tree is identified as containing suitability for individual roosting bats and is classified as PRF-I. A single tree within the Site provides suitable roosting habitat. The Site is therefore considered to be of Local importance for roosting bats. The application Site is largely comprised of modified grassland, which is of low suitability for foraging bats and provides little commuting value. Small areas of scrub and wet woodland at the periphery will support more invertebrates and therefore provide higher foraging value. There are no vegetated linear features through the centre of the Site, but hedgerows and lines of trees at the boundaries will provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats. Given the Activity surveys have identified a range of bats using the Site which for the most part included common and widespread species with the most commonly encountered bats including common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> and soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>. Activity was moderately low in Autumn, with a higher level of activity in spring but peaked in summer. Across all surveys, the vast majority of registrations comprised common pipistrelle. Consistent, but low-level use of the Site was recorded by soprano pipistrelle, with sporadic passes by noctule, Myotis species and brown long-eared bat. A low number of registrations by Nathusius' pipistrelle were recorded during the spring static surveys. This species was not encountered during transect surveys. The Site provides foraging and commuting habitat for an assemblage of common and widespread bat species and is therefore considered to be of Local importance. Bats have been scoped into the assessment.

Birds (Appendix B)	A total of 28 species have been recorded within the survey area, including 15 'notable' species – i.e. those that appear on WCA Sch.1, NERC S.41 species of principal importance or the BTO BoCC red/amber lists. Species recorded are typical of the habitat present onsite and all are widespread in England. The grassland field comprising the majority of the Site was of low quality and supported no breeding species, though they do provide supplementary foraging habitat for species such as starling, song thrush, mistle thrush and mallard. The areas of scrub along the northern boundary provided significantly more opportunities for breeding species. Wren, song thrush, reed bunting and yellowhammer were recorded as probable breeders in this habitat. Other habitats around the boundary of the Site included woodland, trees and hedgerows which were also potential breeding areas for several notable species such as woodpigeon, kestrel, whitethroat, dunnock and greenfinch. Despite this, no species were confirmed as breeding on Site. The Site provides some foraging and breeding habitat for an assemblage of widespread bird species, particularly within woodland habitats and it is therefore considered to be no more than of Local importance.
Great Crested Newts (appendix C)	A negative GCN eDNA result was recorded in pond 01 and an indeterminate result was returned for Pond 02. Presence/absence surveys were undertaken and did not identify a population of GCN within the ponds. The Site provides limited but suitable habitat for amphibians eDNA and presence/absence surveys did not identify any GCN. GCN have therefore been scoped out of the assessment
Reptiles	Reptile records within 1km of the Site include slow worm records, Located to the west of the Site. The northern boundary supports moderately species-rich grassland which support an under thatch that provides good habitat for reptiles. The remainder of the Site is considered sub-optimal for reptiles due to its intensively managed nature. The hedgerows and northern are of grassland supports good quality habitat that may be used by reptiles. These habitats are therefore considered to be of site importance for reptile species.

Summary of Important Ecological Features

- 5.29 The suite of surveys have demonstrated that the proposals have the potential to effect a range of important ecological features. These are summarised in *Table 6* and assigned a geographic context based on survey results, relevant legislation and policy.

Table 6: Summary of Important Ecological Features

Ecological Features	Geographical/Ecological Frame of Reference
Mersey Estuary SPA/RAMSAR	International
Local Wildlife Sites	County
Wet Woodland	Local
Other Rivers and Streams	Local
Individual Trees	Local

Ecological Features	Geographical/Ecological Frame of Reference
Hedgerows	Local
Bats	Local
Breeding Birds	Local
Reptiles	N/a - (legislative context only)
Himalayan Balsam	N/a – included in a legislative context.

6.0 DISCUSSION

Development Proposals and Intrinsic Mitigation

- 6.1 The iterative design process, which led to the sites Illustrative Masterplan has sought to retain higher distinctiveness habitats within the site and to strengthen existing ecological corridors. This has been achieved through the following intrinsic ecological avoidance measures.
- 6.2 The higher distinctiveness habitats recorded at the boundary of the Site, namely the woodland, mature trees hedgerows and watercourses will be retained. The exception is the species poor hedgerow H2, located on the southern boundary of the Site and its associated mature tree resource which will be lost to facilitate access and appropriate visibility splay. A replacement species rich hedgerow will be planted outside the visibility splay.
- 6.3 In total four pedunculate oak standards will be lost from the hedgerow (one large and three medium sized). A medium sized sycamore located along ditch D2 will also be lost to proposals.
- 6.4 Retained woodlands and trees will be protected from damage and to allow sufficient room for management in line with RPAs identified in the Arboricultural Assessment.

Standard Mitigation - Core Documents

- 6.5 The following lists the core documents that will secure the mitigation and enhancement measures described in this report. They can be secured through appropriately worded pre-commencement planning conditions, attached to the application to be submitted and discharged prior to the commencement of works.
- Construction and Environmental Management Plan for Ecology (CEMP: Ecology): This pre-commencement document contains the necessary Method Statements to ensure protected species are not unlawfully harmed during ground clearance, earthworks and during construction. The document will include an Ecological Constraints and Mitigation Plan drawing that clearly shows the location of constraints and details mitigation required, where necessary. This will also provide measures for removal WCA Sch9 Invasive Non-native plant species from the Site.
 - Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP): this provides planting/landscape information that includes both the landscape and ecology features and their management for an appropriate period. In accordance with the planning practice guidance (PPG) for BNG, this document can be submitted as part of a Biodiversity Gain Plan once full planning permission has been received. This document can also include ecological enhancement and management information as appropriate to demonstrate how the biodiversity net gain

measures will be delivered and can also include the final Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Plan that shows location of wildlife boxes and other proposed features.

Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on Important Ecological Features

- 6.6 The status of the important ecological features (IEFs) identified within the survey area have been reviewed against the proposals and intrinsic mitigation to determine whether there are any impact pathways and whether any of these will lead to a likely significant effect. These are assessed in *Table 7*. The requirement for additional mitigation measures above the intrinsic mitigation has been considered for each of the IEFs where they can reduce the scale of negative effects or encourage a positive effect.

Table 7. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on Important Ecological Features

IEF: Mersey Estuary SPA /RAMSAR	
Assessment of Impacts	The Site comprises a 4.32ha field of modified grassland, which is suitable, if sub-optimal for wading birds associated with the Mersey Estuary SPA, including Lapwing and golden plover. If used regularly by significant numbers of SPA species, this habitat is considered to be 'functionally linked' to the designated Site and habitat loss could concentrate bird populations on the remaining available habitat, which may result in a negative effect on the SPA. The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, has produced a Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) for the Spatial Development Strategy⁴, which scopes out impacts to most wading birds resulting from the loss of 'functionally linked land' beyond 2km from the SPA. The exceptions are lapwing and golden plover, which the assessment determined have a 15km impact zone. The Site is located 4.4km from the Estuary and has some suitability for golden plover and lapwing, but it is considered sub-optimal due to the small field size, the tall boundary features which restrict sightlines and the regular use by dog walkers. In order to assess the use of the Site by wintering birds, particularly lapwing and golden plover, a series of wintering bird surveys are on-going for the site. To date two wintering bird surveys have been undertaken per month in February, March and November 2025 and will continue until January 2026. In summary, to date the surveys have identified no lapwing or golden plover on site, but low number of Lapwing recorded approximately 500m north of the site boundary on one occasion. This represents approximately 0.19% of Mersey Estuary population based on the latest five year peak mean . During the construction phase the potential impacts to estuary habitats vegetation and fish species could occur from contaminated (silt laden or polluted) surface water run-off. During the operational phase there remains a risk of negative impacts from silt laden surface water entering the estuary through the Site's drainage system, together with surface water

⁴<https://api.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/LCR-SDS-Habitats-Regulations-Assessment-HRA-Screening-of-Likely-Significant-Effects-Nov-2023.pdf>

	contamination from, for example petrochemicals, which are toxic to aquatic life
Mitigation	The adoption of standard pollution methods within the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the construction phase will mitigate any potential pollution issues caused by dust. The detailed surface water drainage strategy for the Site, will include mitigation measures to be adopted in relation to water quality during the operational phase. This will ensure that the surface water run-off will be restricted to greenfield rates, foul water will be treated off-site and the operational maintenance to ensure that the contaminant control measures remain effective can be secured
Residual Effects	<u>The preliminary results of the wintering bird surveys and the nature of the Site strongly indicate that the Site does not constitute functionally linked land for either golden plover or lapwing and any residual effect would be Neutral.</u> <u>However, as the winter bird surveys to inform the assessment are on-going, we have deferred the detailed impact assessment until the wintering bird surveys have been completed. The wintering bird report will be issued during the determination period on completion of the surveys and will include an impact assessment to this important ecological feature</u>

IEF: Locally designated sites	
Assessment of Impacts	There are five Local Wildlife Sites within 1km, the closest being Georges wood LWS, 150m to the west. <u>Recreational Impacts</u> Georges wood doesn't have any formal public access so no impacts from increased recreational impacts are considered likely. Three LWS (Alder Brook, Rough Head, and Land East of Foxs Bank Brook), are all located between 460m-960m from the Site and all linked by the PRow network. Once operational the proposals have the potential to increase recreational use of these LWS such as walking, including dog walking. The increased use could provide higher disturbance rates to both the habitats and species associated with the LWS'. However, the footpaths are subject to existing disturbance, and it is unlikely that increase in usage at these distances from the Site will be sufficient to increase the effects significantly. Pex Hill Country Park is located 900m to the east of the site and given its public park status would be expected to receive an increase in visitors as a result of development. However, given that the park has well marked and maintained walking trails and is managed with public access in mind therefore it is considered that any increase in visitor numbers will not have negative impacts on the designated features of the Site.

	The presence of a dedicated dog walking field adjacent to the Site would also contribute to reducing recreational impacts to local site within the zone of influence. <u>Hydrological Impacts</u> Georges wood does share direct hydrological connectivity to the site via dog clog brook and should this watercourse be negatively affected, for example through a pollution event during construction or thorough ineffective sustainable drainage features discharging polluted surface water into the beck; this impact could be passed through the fluvial system and impact the LWS. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation, there is potential for a not-significant negative effect at a county scale.
Mitigation	The adoption of standard pollution methods within the Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the construction phase will mitigate any potential pollution issues caused by dust. The detailed surface water drainage strategy for the Site, will include mitigation measures to be adopted in relation to water quality during the operational phase. This will ensure that the surface water run-off will be restricted to greenfield rates, foul water will be treated off-site and the operational maintenance to ensure that the contaminant control measures remain effective can be secured
Residual Effects	The successful implementation of the mitigation measures outlined above would ensure that residual effects related to hydrological impacts to Neutral. The risk of impacts from increased recreational use remain following mitigation to the four LWS identified. However, given the distance of these LWS' from the Site boundary and the relative size of the development the residual effect of these impacts are predicted to be not-significant negative, which is of relevance at a county scale.

IEF: Wet Woodland	
Assessment of Impacts	There will be no direct loss of woodland. Proposals will retain and buffer the woodland within areas of proposed greenspace. The retained woodland has the potential to be impacted indirectly during the construction phase of the development by accidental damage, dust deposition, particularly in periods of dry weather and higher wind and compaction from construction traffic. In the absence of mitigation, this could result in damage to the woodland. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation, there is potential for a not-significant negative effect at a local scale.
Mitigation.	Construction phase impacts on retained woodlands will be minimised through careful control of construction activities, in adherence with an industry best practice CEMP.
Residual Effects	Neutral

Important Ecological Feature:	Other rivers and streams
Assessment of Impacts	Proposals have sought to retain and buffer watercourses R1. However, proposals will result in built development within the riparian zone. Proposals will also result in impacts to the watercourses, resulting from drainage outfalls. The number and extent of these will be determined within the detailed design, however these are likely to be small in extent. During the construction phase, there will be the potential for disturbed soil to enter the river, and/or accidental fuel and other pollutant spillages to enter the river resulting in a potential negative effect on aquatic and riparian flora and fauna. During the operational phase there remains a risk of negative impacts from silt laden surface water entering the watercourses through the Site's drainage system, together with surface water contamination from, for example petrochemicals, which are toxic to aquatic life. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation, there is potential for a significant negative effect at a local scale.
Mitigation	The Site has been designed so that the stream is buffered from built development by green space, as shown on the Illustrative Masterplan, thereby minimising impacts during operation. The minimum buffer from the watercourse is 5m where, to the west, gardens and an internal road are present within the riparian zone. However, across the rest of the riparian zone encroachment has been reduced through the replacement of low value agricultural grasslands with wildflower grassland and scrub. The potential Drainage outfalls will be designed sensitively to minimise impacts to the watercourse and riparian zone. This can be achieved by citing the hard engineered headwall back from the channel with a naturalised channel from the outfall then flowing into the channel. The design, construction and monitoring of which will be secured by the detailed drainage strategy for the Site. The adoption of standard pollution methods within the CEMP for the construction phase will mitigate any potential pollution issues. The detailed surface water drainage strategy for the Site, will include mitigation measures to be adopted in relation to water quality during the operational phase. This will ensure that the surface water run-off will be restricted to greenfield rates, foul water will be treated off-site and the operational maintenance to ensure that the contaminant control measures remain effective can be secured.
Residual Effects	The drainage outfall and riparian zone encroachment will impact the functionality of the watercourse, which prior to the compensation measures outlined below will result in a Not Significant Residual Effect at a Local scale.
Compensation/enhancement	The BNG condition will ensure that proposals will result in an overall gain in watercourse units. The BNG Report outlines an option for delivering this through the enhancement of watercourse R1, by reducing the effects of riparian

Important Ecological Feature:	Other rivers and streams
	encroachment and by increasing condition through minor in-channel interventions. Following compensation therefore it is predicted there will be a not-significant positive effect at a Local Scale to this receptor.

Important Ecological Feature:	Mature Trees
Assessment of Impacts	The scheme has been designed to retain existing trees where possible. However, within the illustrative layout, four pedunculate oak standards will be lost from the hedgerow H2 (one large and three medium sized), to facilitate safe Site access. A medium sized sycamore located along dich D2 will also be lost to proposals. The retained trees have the potential to be impacted during construction by accidental damage and via dust deposition. In the absence of mitigation, this could result in habitat loss or degradation. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation, there is potential for a not significant negative effect at a local scale.
Mitigation	Construction phase impacts on retained trees will be minimised through careful control of construction activities, in adherence with an industry best practice CEMP.
Residual Effects	The loss of five mature tree alters the structural and habitat diversity of the site and represents a loss of biodiversity value to local wildlife. However, this loss represents 17% of the trees present within the site and a fraction of available tree resource within the surrounding area. As such, prior to the compensation measures outlined within the BNG report and secured by the BNG condition, this is considered to be a Not Significant Negative effect at a Local scale.
Compensation/enhancement	Outline proposals include planting of an additional 61 new native individual trees and 41 ornamental and non-native street trees.

IEF: Hedgerows	
Assessment of Impacts	Proposals have sought to retain hedgerows wherever possible. Hedgerow H2 will be lost to facilitate safe access and visibility splays. This equates to a direct loss of 115m of species-poor native hedgerow and four associated pedunculate oak standards, as addressed separately above. The retained hedgerows have the potential to be impacted during construction by accidental damage and via dust deposition. In the absence of mitigation, this could result in habitat loss or degradation.

	Therefore, in the absence of mitigation, there is potential for a not significant negative effect at a local scale.
Mitigation.	Construction phase impacts on existing hedgerows will be minimised through careful control of construction activities, in adherence with an industry best practice CEMP.
Residual Effects	Proposals will result in the permanent loss of 115m of native hedgerow. The hedgerow survey demonstrated that this hedgerow is species poor and in poor condition. Boundary hedgerows are a common field boundary marker within the local area. As such, prior to the compensation measures outline within the BNG report, this is considered to be a Not Significant Negative Effect at a Local scale.
Compensation	At this stage, the illustrative landscape masterplan has accounted for the creation of 550m of new species rich hedgerows, with a 125m long species rich hedgerow with trees proposed for the southern boundary of the Site as a direct replacement for the lost hedgerow. This will result in a significant Biodiversity Net Gain in hedgerow units.

IEF: Foraging and Commuting Bats	
Assessment of Impacts	It is unlikely that the proposals will result in any impacts to bat roosts, either directly or by impacting commuting routes of significant roosts (maternity). We can conclude likely absence of high status roosts within the surveyed trees due to a lack of any evidence found to support the presence of bat roosts. There is a residual risk of occasional or intermittent bat use of the roost features identified within tree T25 classified as PRF-I. Bats will often change roost locations, particularly tree roosting bats and lower status roosts. Activity surveys in 2025 recorded low levels of bat foraging and commuting activity over the Site. Proposals have sought to retain and buffer the most suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat where possible. Most notably along the northern boundary and to a lesser extent the western and eastern boundaries. There was no evidence that the habitats on Site provide any significant value to local bat populations. Proposals have sought to retain and buffer the most suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat where possible. Hedgerow H2 will be lost to facilitate safe access and visibility splays. This equates to a direct loss of 115m of species-poor native hedgerow and four associated pedunculate oak standards. A single mature sycamore will also be lost. The loss of these habitats will lead to a loss of suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats and fragment the connectivity across the site. However, commuting and foraging activity was noted along hedgerow H2, but it was noted as a significant resource. Impacts on foraging and commuting bats are possible as a result of increased levels of artificial light during construction and operation, particularly along tree line LoT1, where the static detector recorded the highest levels of bat activity over the course of the surveys. Here, proposals include residential houses, at their closest, within 5m of the treeline, extending to 12m at its northern extent. The houses are likely to increase artificial light levels on the habitat during the operational phase of the development. Furthermore, the baseline light levels at

	the tree line were low in comparison to the urban edge to the east and south. Therefore, changes in lighting are likely to have a greater impact here than in other areas of the Site. As such in the absence of mitigation the proposal will likely result in a negative impact from degradation of foraging and commuting habitat by increased light levels. The limited extent of this this is unlikely to affect any species at a local population level and therefore the impact is not likely to be significant In the absence of specific mitigation, there will be a not significant loss of foraging and commuting habitat, used by low numbers of common and widespread species as a result of hedgerow and tree loss and also localised lighting effects.
Mitigation	Any required works to tree T25 identified as PRF-I must be preceded by a pre works detailed inspection and/or nocturnal survey (where aerial assessment is considered unfeasible) of potential roost features should be to ensure continued likely absence of roosting bats. Should roosting bats be impacted, then work will need to take place under a mitigation licence from Natural England. During construction, appropriate precautions will be incorporated into a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which will be implemented to control the works. To include details of protection of retained habitats during construction. The CEMP should include a lighting strategy in line with current best practice to ensure that retained and new habitat features that are suitable roosting bats are not degraded by new lighting. A lighting strategy should be produced to ensure that retained and new habitat features that are suitable for roosting, foraging or commuting bats are not degraded by new lighting. It is recommended that the lighting design strategy is reviewed (and if necessary updated) for any new development proposals as part of future Reserved Matters applications, to ensure there are no negative impacts to wildlife from lighting. Where necessary, the detailed lighting strategy for the Site will consider the best practice guidance note set out by the Bat Conservation Trust and the Institute of Lighting Professionals in 2023, 'GN08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night to ensure, wherever possible, that existing and new habitat resources are not negatively affected by artificial lighting during the construction or operational phases. This can be secured via a planning condition.
Residual Effects	Not significant negative impact due to residual losses of foraging habitat and potential roosting opportunities.
Compensation	Existing retained hedgerows will be buffered by wildflower grassland which will support a higher diversity of invertebrates. Watercourse R1 will also be buffered from development and enhanced by the creation of native of mixed scrub and wildflower grassland. 550m of new species rich hedgerows and 102 new trees will also improve the foraging resource for bats in these areas. The detailed design should incorporate enhancements such as additional native hedgerow planting and design of the SUDS to incorporate areas of permanent water and planting of suitable wetland and/or riparian species, with a varied vegetation structure. The development will include replacement roosting opportunities in tress and buildings via provision of suitable long lasting bat boxes, and will seek to increase the number of roosting opportunities to those which are lost.

	These measures will have a positive impact on the available resources for bats in the local area.
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IEF: Breeding Birds	
Assessment of Impacts	Proposals will result in the permanent loss of 4.16ha of modified grassland on Site. The grassland doesn't support any breeding birds, but this will reduce the overall availability of foraging resources for the low number of starling, song thrush, mistle thrush and mallard recorded utilising the habitat. Hedgerow H2 will be lost to facilitate safe access and visibility splays. This equates to a direct loss of 115m of species-poor native hedgerow and four associated pedunculate oak standards. A single mature sycamore will also be lost. This will result in a loss of suitable breeding and foraging habitat on Site for a range of species including woodpigeon, kestrel, whitethroat, dunnoek and greenfinch. The scale of the negative impacts will be reduced by the abundance of further suitable habitat in the wider landscape to the Site. Construction operations have the potential to disturb birds using the development area for breeding, roosting, and foraging. Operations likely to disturb breeding birds include noise and displacement during vegetation clearance, initial ground works and some construction activities. If work is carried out during the breeding season, disturbance may lead to nest desertion or the avoidance of the area, thus reducing the suitability of retained nesting areas, such as the woodland and hedgerows. In the absence of mitigation, there will be the risk of a not significant impact to the breeding bird assemblage.
Mitigation	To avoid disturbance to breeding birds, ground and vegetation clearance works will be undertaken prior to the bird-breeding season (March to August, inclusive). If this is not possible, the area will be checked prior to removal of vegetation or ground works by an experienced ecologist. If active nests are found, vegetation will be left untouched and suitably buffered from works until all birds have fledged. Specific advice will be provided prior to undertaking the clearance. This would be a statutory requirement due to the protection of all nesting birds and their nests under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. A suitably qualified ecologist would supervise this.
Residual Effects	The predicted residual effect is not significant negative effect of relevance at a local level.
Compensation / Enhancement	Bellway are a signatory to the 'Homes for Nature Pledge' which will see a bird-nesting brick or box installed for every new home built. These will include universal swift bricks and integrated sparrow and starling boxes within the buildings. A mixture of small hole (26mm and 32mm) boxes placed along the retained habitat around the proposed development area will provide nesting opportunities for blue tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i> and great tit <i>Parus major</i>. These boxes generally have a high uptake rate; and

IEF: Breeding Birds	
	Small open fronted nest boxes again should be on trees which support a climber such as ivy which provides a degree of concealment. These boxes typically attract robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i> and blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i>. Existing retained hedgerows will be buffered by wildflower grassland which will support a higher diversity of invertebrates. Watercourse R1 will also be buffered from development and enhanced by the creation of native of mixed scrub and wildflower grassland. 550m of new species rich hedgerows and 102 new trees will also improve the foraging resource for bats in these areas. The detailed design should incorporate enhancements such as additional native hedgerow planting and design of the SUDS to incorporate areas of permanent water and planting of suitable wetland and/or riparian species, with a varied vegetation structure.

IEF: Reptiles	
Assessment of Impacts	All common reptile species, including grass snake, slow worm, common lizard and adder are partially protected under the WCA. In summary, this legislation protects the species from intentional killing, injury or sale, offering for sale, or possessing, transporting or publishing advertisements for the purposes of sale. Within the Site, the woodland and ditch edges, hedge bases, and rough grassland along the brook offer limited suitable foraging and sheltering habitat for reptile species, should they be present. As such, there is a small risk of killing and injury should reptiles be present within the limited suitable habitat within the Site.
Mitigation	During construction, appropriate precautions will be incorporated into a CEMP which will be implemented to prevent intentional killing or injury which would be a breach of the WCA. This would include a method statement for clearance works in suitable habitat. The method statement would set out appropriate measures which could include: • Timing: works in suitable habitat to be undertaken during the active season for reptiles (which runs March to October); • Hand searching for refuge features; • Vegetation management; • Destructive search, under the supervision of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW); and Relocation of any individuals found to suitable (new or existing) habitats outside the active construction site.
Residual Effects	Neutral

INNS – Himalayan balsam	
Assessment of Impacts	The invasive plant Himalayan balsam was noted along watercourse R1.

INNS – Himalayan balsam	
	Left untreated this may form large stands and potentially out compete native species. Additionally, within the completed development this will likely interfere with landscape planting and cause a nuisance in new gardens. Himalayan balsam is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which imparts a legal obligation for no action to take place which might result in this species being caused to grow in the wild. Furthermore, the presence of this species is undesirable for biodiversity value of the Site. In the absence of mitigation, it is possible that an offence could be committed.
Mitigation	The detailed CEMP will include a strategy for the monitoring and eradication or control of this species prior to, during and after development. Further information can be gained from the Environment Agency information booklet, Guidance for the Control of Invasive Species in or near Fresh Water⁵ and Guidance on Japanese Knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Other Invasive Species produced by DEFRA⁶.

Other Species

Hedgehogs

- 6.7 Given the sub-urban nature of the locality, with farmland interspersed with woodland and gardens, it is considered likely that hedgehog would be present onsite. As part of Bellway's 'Homes for Nature Pledge', hedgehog highways will be implemented, as standard, across proposed gardens whereby a small hole measuring 13x13cm is cut into the base of garden fences to provide an escape route to prevent hedgehogs becoming trapped in gardens.
- 6.8 The habitat enhancement to be delivered by the proposals will improve the Site for this species and the recommendations provided to protect badgers during construction operations will also help prevent harm to hedgehogs.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.9 The planning application is accompanied by a standalone Biodiversity Net Gain strategy which provides a detailed appraisal of the baseline biodiversity value of the Site, as determined through UKHab survey and Condition Assessment and by use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- 6.10 In summary, the Biodiversity Net Gain strategy has determined that the Site has a baseline biodiversity value of 12.76 habitat units, 3.2 hedgerow units and 1.26 watercourse units.
- 6.11 A Biodiversity Net Gain calculation was then completed for the Site, with the onsite post-development habitats based on the illustrative Landscape Masterplan (13294-FPCR-XX-XX-DR-L-0001) and guided by ecological professional judgement.

⁵ Environment Agency, 2003, Guidance for the Control of Invasive Species in or near Fresh Water

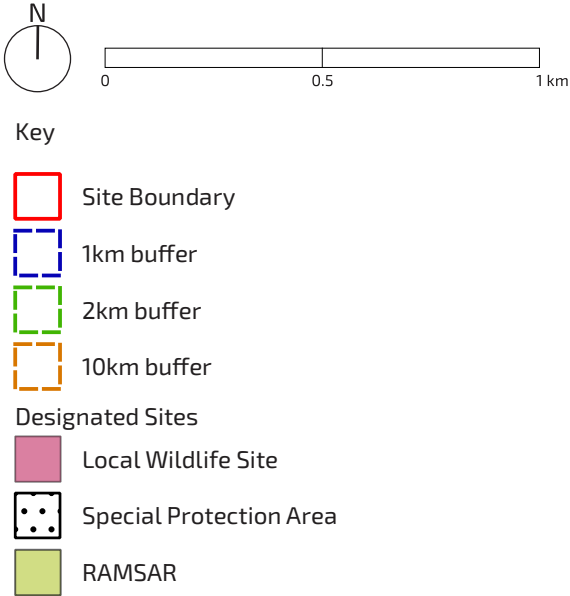
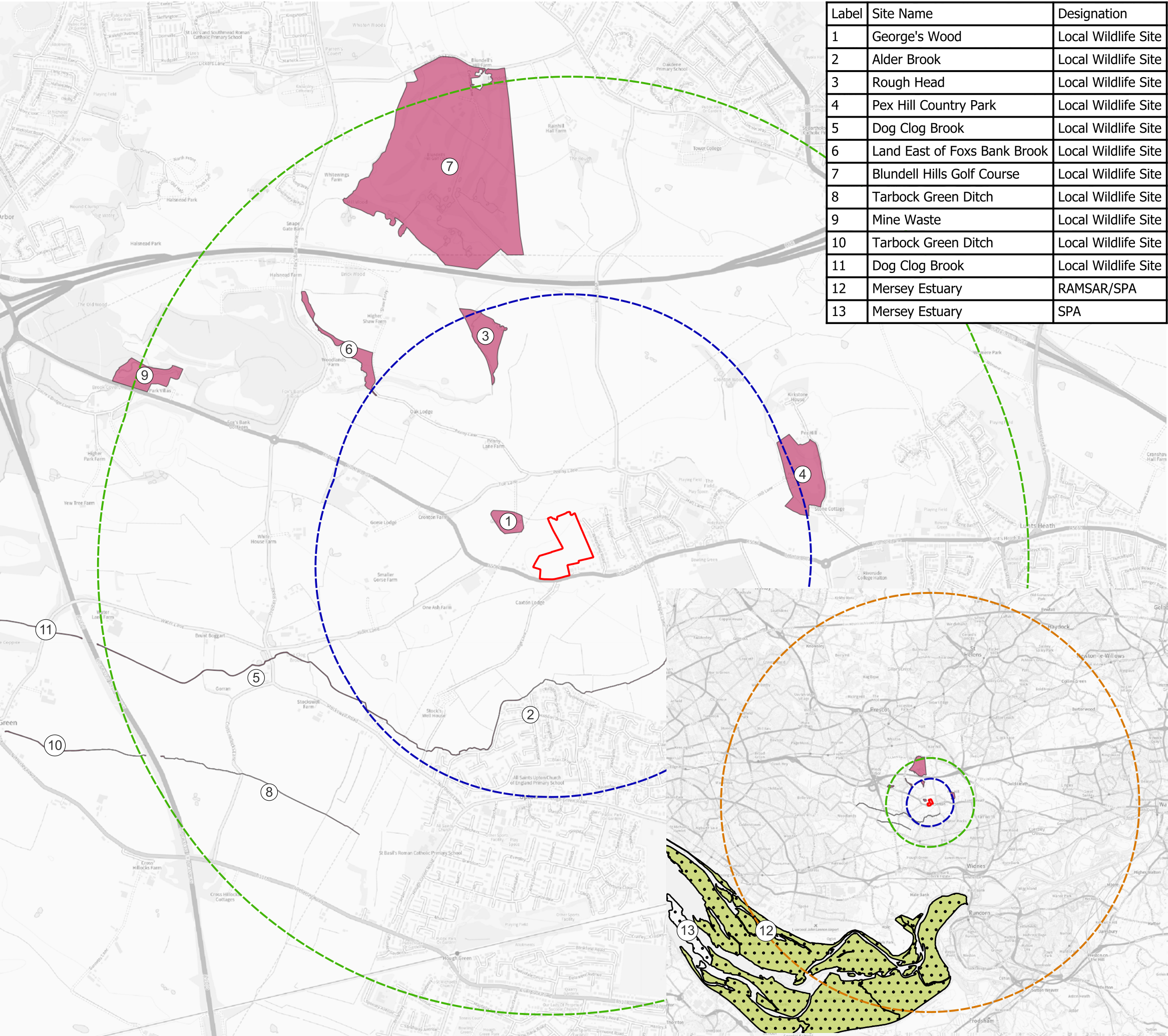
⁶ Department of Food and Rural Affairs, 2013, Guidance: Japanese knotweed, Giant Hogweed and Other Invasive Species available at <https://www.gov.uk/japanese-knotweed-giant-hogweed-and-other-invasive-plants>

- 6.12 The report goes on to outline a realistic and deliverable series of habitat creation and enhancement measures for the Site to be undertaken to contribute to delivering a 10% gain in Biodiversity Value. At present, based on the above, on-site post intervention consists of .74 habitat units, 6.86 hedgerow units and 1.55 watercourse units, which is the equivalent to a 23% loss in habitat units, a 114.53% gain in hedgerow units and a 22.84% gain in watercourse units.
- 6.13 To achieve a net gain of 10%, subsequent approval(s) will require an additional 4.29 units of any habitat type.
- 6.14 In order to achieve a net gain of 10% for the scheme offsite compensation will be required via one or a combination of the following methods: habitat creation or enhancements on additional land under landowner control, the purchase of biodiversity units from a registered offsite provider, or statutory credits as a last resort.
- 6.15 Given the above, it is concluded that proposals can deliver a biodiversity net gain for the scheme, which would be secured by the Biodiversity Net Gain Condition, attached to any planning permission for the proposed development.

FPCR Environment and Design Ltd

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date
29/01/25

client
Bellway

project
**Cronton Road,
Knowsley**

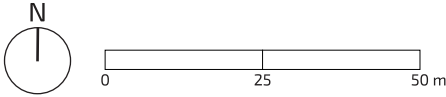
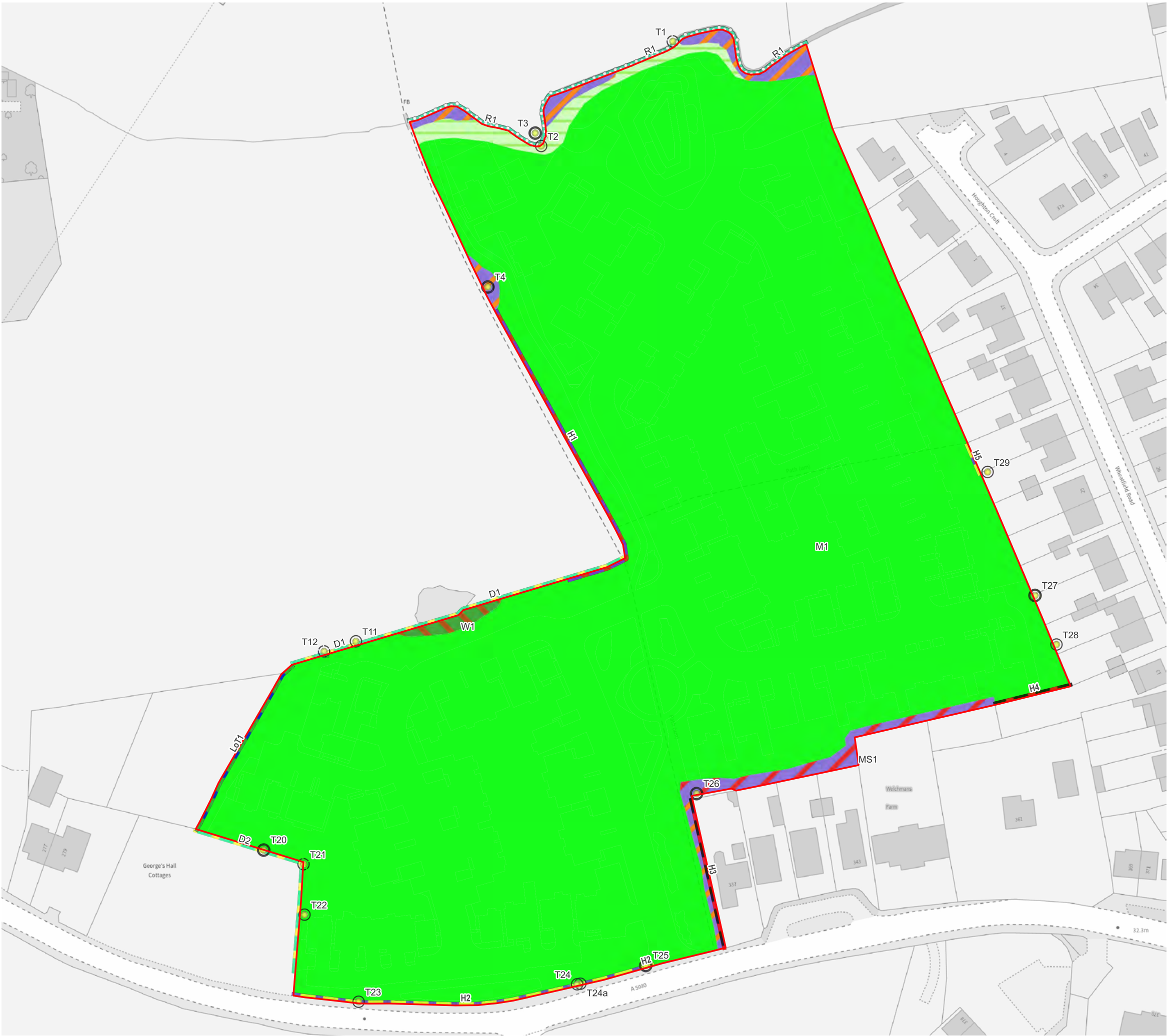
title
CONSULTATION PLAN

number
FIGURE 1

scale
1:17,397 @ A3

rev
-





- Redline Boundary
- Baseline Habitats
 - Bramble scrub
 - Mixed scrub
 - Modified grassland
 - Other neutral grassland
 - Wet woodland
- Baseline Hedgerow
 - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow
 - Line of trees - associated with bank or ditch
 - Native hedgerow
 - Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch
- Baseline Watercourse
 - Ditches
 - Other rivers and streams
- Baseline Individual Trees
 - Existing large rural tree
 - Existing medium rural tree
 - Existing small rural tree

date	09/12/25	drwn/chkd	DV / IH
client	Bellway Homes Ltd		
project	Cronton Road, Cronton		
title	BASELINE HABITAT PLAN	scale	1:1,200 @ A3
number	FIGURE 3	rev	-