



Phase 3 Fox Wood Garden Village/Halsnead

Response to MEAS Comments - Technical Note

Prepared For: Taylor Wimpey

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Version 1.0

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Version	Date	Modified by	Check/ Approved by	Reason	Status
1.0	Aug 26	EH	DM	First issue	Live

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2026, a Biodiversity ES Chapter was submitted by The Environment Partnership (TEP) to support a hybrid application for residential development on 'the site', known as 'Halsnead Garden Village - Phase 3 Land To The South Of Halsnead Park And To The North Of The M62 Knowsley L35 1QR' (Planning ref: 26/00166/HYB), as part of the wider Environmental Statement (ES) (Document Ref: **P24-1099**). This document should be read in conjunction with the Biodiversity ES Chapter of this document (**Chapter 7**).
- 1.2 In July 2026, a response was received from Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS), and this document covers the response with regards to Arboriculture and Ecology comments. It was discussed that '*conclusions regarding Ancient Woodland, Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and breeding bird assessment are not acceptable due to significant limitations*' and this document aims to provide further detail and justification for the impact assessment conclusions regarding these factors.
- 1.3 BNG, although Ecology related, is not discussed within this Technical Note and will be dealt with separately.

2.0 Ancient Woodland

Context and Comments received

- 2.1 The site is adjacent to Old Wood North and Big Water Wood that have been identified within the Ancient Woodland Inventory for England in North Merseyside.
- 2.2 Ancient Woodland, Ancient Trees and Veteran Trees are irreplaceable habitats and a material planning consideration for Local Planning Authorities. NPPF, paragraph 193 advises Local Planning Authorities to refuse planning permission that would result in the loss or deterioration of Ancient Woodland, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. Government Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees applies.
- 2.3 Comments state that: *"The development will have an effect on these Ancient Woodlands. Therefore, the applicant should provide a statement which demonstrates the wholly exceptional circumstances which exist in this case, along with a compensation strategy informed by Protected Species and appropriate botanical survey. This information is required prior to determination".*
- 2.4 *"Potential impacts to Ancient Woodland and ancient and veteran trees, include but are not limited to the following:*
- *Direct loss of habitat;*
 - *Recreational pressure and disturbance e.g. trampling, dog walking/fouling, anti-social behaviour;*
 - *Soil compaction and root damage from trampling or vehicle/scrambler bike use;*
 - *Construction and operational phase lighting;*
 - *Fly-tipping and littering;*
 - *Invasive non-native species and problem species;*
 - *Surface water drainage and groundwater hydrology;*
 - *Construction phase impacts e.g. dust emissions, noise and visual disturbance;*
 - *Increase in predation e.g. domestic cats."*

TEP Response

- 2.5 The comments regarding wholly exceptional circumstances and compensation in relation to the adjacent ancient woodland are noted. However, the application and

masterplan for the site has been developed on the basis that loss or deterioration of the ancient woodland would not occur.

- 2.6 The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Ecological Assessment conclude that the proposed development has been designed to avoid direct and indirect adverse effects on the adjacent irreplaceable habitat. Built development is located outside the recognised minimum 15 m precautionary buffer for direct damage, with the nearest building positioned more than 25 m from the woodland edge. The proposed drainage outfall is similarly located outside the buffer and does not require works within the ancient woodland.
- 2.7 The only elements of the proposals located within the precautionary buffer are short sections of active travel route. The technical assessments conclude that these are unlikely to result in any measurable effect on the condition of the woodland due to their limited scale and the nature of the existing environment.
- 2.8 The connection into Old Wood to the west is intended to connect with the established access network rather than create a new recreational destination, and the submitted assessments conclude that it would not materially increase recreational pressure on the ancient woodland. Should the Local Planning Authority consider additional construction detail necessary, this can be secured by condition through the submission of an Arboricultural Method Statement. Given the limited extent of the works, there is no reason to conclude that they cannot be undertaken without loss or deterioration of the woodland resource.
- 2.9 Similarly, the active travel route in the north-western corner adjacent to Big Water Wood would not result in adverse effects on the woodland as it occupies an area already influenced by existing hard surfacing, including a car park, and does not introduce a new impact pathway.
- 2.10 Accordingly, the applicant does not consider it necessary or appropriate to advance a case based on wholly exceptional circumstances. The proposal has instead been designed to avoid loss or deterioration of the adjacent ancient woodland, consistent with national planning policy and Natural England Standing Advice. The submitted technical evidence concludes that there are no identified adverse effects on the adjacent irreplaceable habitat.

3.0 Local Wildlife Sites

Context and Comments received

- 3.1 The proposals are also adjacent and within 1km of 13 Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). The following LWSs are within 500m:
- Old Wood North LWS - adjacent;
 - Big Water and Big Water Wood, Halsnead LWS – adjacent;
 - Old Wood South LWS – 120m south;
 - Strettles Bog LWS – 370m west;
 - Woodland, Sandfield Park LWS – 480m north;
 - Lickers Lane Wood LWS – 500m north.
- 3.2 The parameter plan shows active travel links into Old Wood North and Big Water and Big Water Wood, Halsnead which are LWSs and Ancient Woodland. Further, the landscape masterplan (*Taylor Wimpey, 19.12.25, 1474-TWNW Halsnead Phase 3 2026-01-21-PL-01rP3*) shows a proposed/potential SUDs outfall connection into Big Water. Detail of this surface water outfall is shown on the main drainage layout (*Betts Hydro, Rev. D, 21.01.26, TAY132 101 rev D Main Drainage Layout*).
- 3.3 Comments state that: *"the proposals will likely have a direct and indirect adverse effect on the features for which the sites have been designated (e.g. through outfall and active travel links) which have not been fully assessed through the Ecological Impact Assessment.*
- 3.4 *Whilst I understand that full details of design are not available at outline stage, I advise the applicant updates their impact assessment of LWSs and Ancient Woodland to consider construction and operational phase effects:*
- *Big Water and Big Water Wood, Halsnead LWS is designated for its woodland as well as wetland habitat features (swamp and standing/running water). Several plant species are also designation features including English bluebell, northern dock as well as locally rare arrow-head, yellow marsh cress and greater duckweed. Water vole are also mentioned on the citation but are unconfirmed;*
 - *Old Wood North LWS is a mature broadleaf woodland set in a clough valley with rock outcrops and a former quarry with English bluebell present. A brook flows through the woodland into Old Wood South. Thin-spiked wood sedge which is locally scarce has been recently confirmed;*

- *Impact of the surface water outfall i.e. from pipeline/headwall construction and operational phase hydrological impacts from surface water run-off into the lake and woodland. Cumulative effects with other surface water connections into the lake and woodland should be considered and informed by a construction method statement. I advise headwall design/operational details should be provided;*
- *Impact of construction and operation of the 'active travel links' i.e. footpath construction methods and materials, vehicle access, number of trees (and their root systems) affected, whether they are veteran trees or hold value for bats and breeding birds. Cumulative effects with other footpaths into the woodland should be considered and informed by a construction method statement;*
- *Impact assessment should be informed by protected species survey (e.g. bats and breeding birds) and botanical survey including of marginal/aquatic vegetation within Big Water."*

TEP Response

Surface Water Outfall - Big Water LWS

- 3.5 With regards to surface water outfall impacts, the Drainage Chapter of the ES (Ref: **P24-1099**) will address the potential hydrological impacts associated with the proposed surface water outfall, including impacts arising during the construction and operational phases. The assessment will consider surface water run-off to the lake and woodland, including potential cumulative effects with other surface water connections. The proposed headwall design, drainage infrastructure and relevant operational details will be provided as part of the drainage design information and will inform the assessment.
- 3.6 The proposed outfall will be designed to manage the quantity and quality of surface water discharge such that there is no adverse change to the hydrological regime or water quality of the receiving waterbody. The design will incorporate appropriate flow attenuation and water quality treatment measures, as required, to ensure that the discharge does not adversely affect the wetland habitats or the ecological features for which the LWS is designated, including species such as arrow-head, yellow marsh-cress, greater duckweed and water vole.
- 3.7 The construction of the outfall and associated headwall will also be undertaken in accordance with an appropriate construction method statement and construction environmental management plan (CEMP), with measures implemented to control sediment, pollution and other potential construction-related effects. Tree losses to facilitate construction will be minimised, and the detailed headwall and outfall

design and operational parameters will be provided within the drainage design information.

- 3.8 On this basis, and subject to the detailed drainage design and implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, **no significant adverse effects** on the Big Water LWS or its qualifying ecological features are anticipated as a result of the proposed surface water outfall.
- 3.9 In addition, to further ensure no significant adverse effects on the LWS, the applicant would accept a planning condition to suggest that, prior to the commencement of the proposed outfall works, a survey will be undertaken within the footprint of the works and adjacent areas, including targeted checks for notable or rare plant species and water vole within the Big Water LWS working area. The findings of the survey will inform the detailed design and construction methodology for the outfall and associated headwall, and any requirements for further mitigation or translocation, where required.
- 3.10 An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed to oversee the relevant works and ensure that appropriate ecological protection measures are implemented. Where surveys identify notable or rare plant species that could be affected by the works, appropriate measures will be implemented to avoid impacts where practicable. Where avoidance is not possible, suitable mitigation, including the translocation of plants to an appropriate receptor location, will be undertaken where required and in accordance with relevant best practice.

Active Travel Links - Old Wood North and Big Water Wood LWS

- 3.11 The woodland areas that make up Old Wood North and Big Water Wood Local Wildlife Sites are already publicly accessible, with a car park servicing Big Water and Big Water Wood LWS which links to the Old Wood North. There is an established network of woodland paths present also. The proposed active travel links are intended to connect the development to the existing path network and wider area and are therefore anticipated to require only limited works within the woodland to link the footpaths on the boundary of the site, with minimal additional impacts on the woodland and LWS.
- 3.12 No impacts to trees with identified veteran characteristics or suitable bat roosting features are anticipated as a result of the proposed active travel links. Both the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Ecological Impact Assessment assessed the trees within and directly adjacent to the site for veterans and bat roosting potential and confirmed none are present, with the exception of the two bat suitable trees which are to be retained on the site boundary, discussed further below.

- 3.13 However, it is acknowledged that the removal of any trees associated with the proposed links would result in a reduction in available nesting bird habitat. As set out within the Biodiversity Chapter of the ES, nesting bird checks will be undertaken by an appropriately qualified Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) prior to any vegetation clearance, with appropriate measures implemented where active nests are identified.
- 3.14 Given the existing public access and established woodland path network, and the limited nature of the proposed connections, significant cumulative effects with the existing footpaths are not anticipated. Construction activities will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant ecological mitigation measures set out within the ES and anticipated operational impacts will be mitigated for as per the measures set out in the ES Chapter also.

4.0 Breeding Birds

Context and Comments received

- 4.1 A breeding bird habitat assessment was undertaken during the Phase 1 Habitat Survey. Due to the disturbance caused by ongoing development adjacent to the site, the size of the site, the lack of open habitats due to colonisation by young scrub and retention of boundary hedgerow and trees lines, a full breeding bird survey was not undertaken. Chapter 7 of the ES chapter acknowledges habitat within the site is suitable and grassland/ruderal habitat provides some, albeit limited, suitability for ground nesting birds.
- 4.2 Comments state that: *"Within the EIA scoping advice, we advised that breeding bird survey was required as part of Ecological Impact Assessment and that loss of breeding bird habitat should be appropriately mitigated."*
- 4.3 *Whilst the site is somewhat landlocked and there will be a level of disturbance on the eastern portion of the site, I do not accept that the site is too small as it is 8.70ha. Further, the 2km data search did return 62 records of grey partridge, 25 lapwing, 25 skylark, 32 yellowhammer, 20 linnet, 39 reed bunting, 103 song thrush, 21 tree sparrow and 170 records of starling. Whilst some of these records may be historic or offsite, the desktop study highlights the importance of farmland within the area for these Priority Species and c.8ha of unmanaged suitable grassland habitat will be lost which has potential for ground nesting birds."*
- 4.4 *A bird box plan has been provided however this cannot be accepted at this time as it does not provide appropriate mitigation/compensation for ground nesting birds. I advise that breeding bird survey is required prior to determination. Survey should follow best practice guidelines. Any deviation from these guidelines should be fully justified."*

TEP Response

- 4.5 Following receipt of comments from MEAS, TEP undertook a breeding bird survey at the site on 10th August 2026.

Methodology

- 4.6 The breeding bird survey was carried out applying methods based on the standard Breeding Bird Survey and Common Bird Census methods developed by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) (Gilbert et al. 1998).
- 4.7 Bird species and activity patterns were recorded and mapped using standard BTO symbology.

- 4.8 Bird species within the 100m surrounding the site boundary were also recorded during the survey, as a proportion of the bird's foraging or nesting habitat is likely to be within the site.

Limitations

- 4.9 It is acknowledged that the survey was undertaken outside of the optimum breeding bird survey season (March-July), and that a single visit to the site is not in line with best practice guidance. However, visits in August are useful to pick up family groups of birds to confirm breeding and can also record migrant breeders which arrive later in the season. It has been assessed that in combination with the original breeding bird assessment of the site, the results give a good representation of the value of the site for breeding birds.

Results

- 4.10 The following species were recorded within or within 100m of the site during the survey visit:

Species	Count
Blackbird	5
Blackcap	1
Bullfinch (S41, BAm)	1
Blue tit	25
Carrion crow	4
Chiffchaff	6
Collared dove	2
Coot	2
Coal tit	2
Dunnock (S41, BAm)	5
Goldcrest	7
Goldfinch	4
Greenfinch (BRd)	2
Great spotted woodpecker	1
Great tit	6
Long-tailed tit	12
Mallard (BAm)	3
Magpie	7
Moorhen (BAm)	2
Nuthatch	4
Grey partridge (S41, BRd)	2
Robin	19

Species	Count
Stock dove (BAm)	3
Swallow	2
Song thrush (S41, BAm)	1
Whitethroat (BAm)	5
Woodpigeon (BAm)	30
Wren (BAm)	21
Willow warbler (S41, BAm)	2

S41 = Section 41; BRd = BoCC Red List; BAm = BoCC Amber List;

- 4.11 Although late in the season it was confirmed that the following species were breeding or there was evidence they had bred this year (i.e. a family with fledglings/young were recorded) within or within 100m of the site:

- Blue tit
- Chiffchaff
- Coot
- Dunnock
- Grey Partridge
- Long tailed tit
- Mallard
- Willow warbler

- 4.12 The breeding bird survey results are shown in Drawing 1, appended to this report. The results show that a large proportion of the bird activity recorded within and within 100m of the site is associated within the woodland adjacent to the site in the west. The majority of activity associated with the site itself was foraging birds, mostly within the tall ruderal/young scattered scrub in the south of the site, which does not provide suitable nesting habitat for the majority of these species.

Discussion of Impacts

- 4.13 The woodland in the east of the site is to be buffered by the development within a minimum 15m standoff from the woodland edge. All trees on the site boundary are to be retained in the west and south also.
- 4.14 The site slopes down towards the motorway in the south, and consists of tall ruderal habitat in the south and grassland in the north. It is surrounded by development to the north and east. The grassland on site does have some limited suitability for ground nesting birds, as is evidenced by the presence of grey partridge in the north of the site. However, it is a narrow strip of grassland, located adjacent to residential

park to the north and is disturbed frequently by dog walkers, all of which heavily limits its suitability for lapwing and skylark.

- 4.15 In addition, the tall ruderal in the south of the site is highly unlikely to support ground nesters such as skylark or lapwing, due to the density of the ruderal shrub including thistle, nettle and willowherbs and the scattered young birch and willow present which limit openness. This does, however, provide suitability for some breeding birds, such as grey partridge, mallard, willow warbler and wren. It also provides foraging habitat for birds, providing good insect resource as well as shelter for species such as grey partridge.
- 4.16 In summary, although there are suitable habitats present on site, they are limited and the adjacent woodland and lake provide better foraging and breeding habitats for birds. There are unlikely to be significant numbers of notable bird species present, and it is suggested that further surveys would not be required, and the species recorded during 1 visit are likely to be a good representation of the birds present on site throughout the year. In addition, regarding grey partridge, it is highly unlikely that more than 1 pair would be present breeding in a site of this size.
- 4.17 As per the discussion within the ES chapter, following the survey, it is anticipated that there will be **no significant adverse** effects on breeding birds. Breeding bird mitigation, in the way of bird nesting boxes and habitat, and impacts during development will be mitigated for in accordance with the relevant ecological mitigation measures set out within the ES. Any anticipated operational impacts will be mitigated for as per the measures set out in the ES Chapter also.
- 4.18 However, as a result of the survey, it is accepted that provision for ground nesting bird species should be provided within the landscape masterplan. Other neutral grassland is proposed in the south of the site and if managed correctly could provide habitat for species such as grey partridge to breed. The habitat management plan will be amended in order to allow for correct management of this grassland, to take into account ground nesting birds characteristic of taller grassland, for species such as grey partridge, in order to mitigate for the loss of suitable habitat.
- 4.19 Similar to recommendations of the ES Chapter surrounding the LWS, appropriate signage can also be provided, where appropriate, to explain the ecological purpose of the management regime to local residents and site users, and to deter any disturbance, for example by local dog walkers, in those areas set out for ground nesting birds.

5.0 Roosting Bats

Context and Comments received

- 5.1 No buildings are present on site. Woodland in the northwest corner of the site was found to include two trees categorised as 'PRF-M' as shown on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey map. Chapter 7 (Table 7.7) refers to 2 trees with potential – T1 and T3 (pedunculate oak).
- 5.2 Comments state that: *"It is not clear whether these trees with bat roost suitability are to be retained. This should be confirmed by the applicant prior to determination to inform whether further survey is required."*

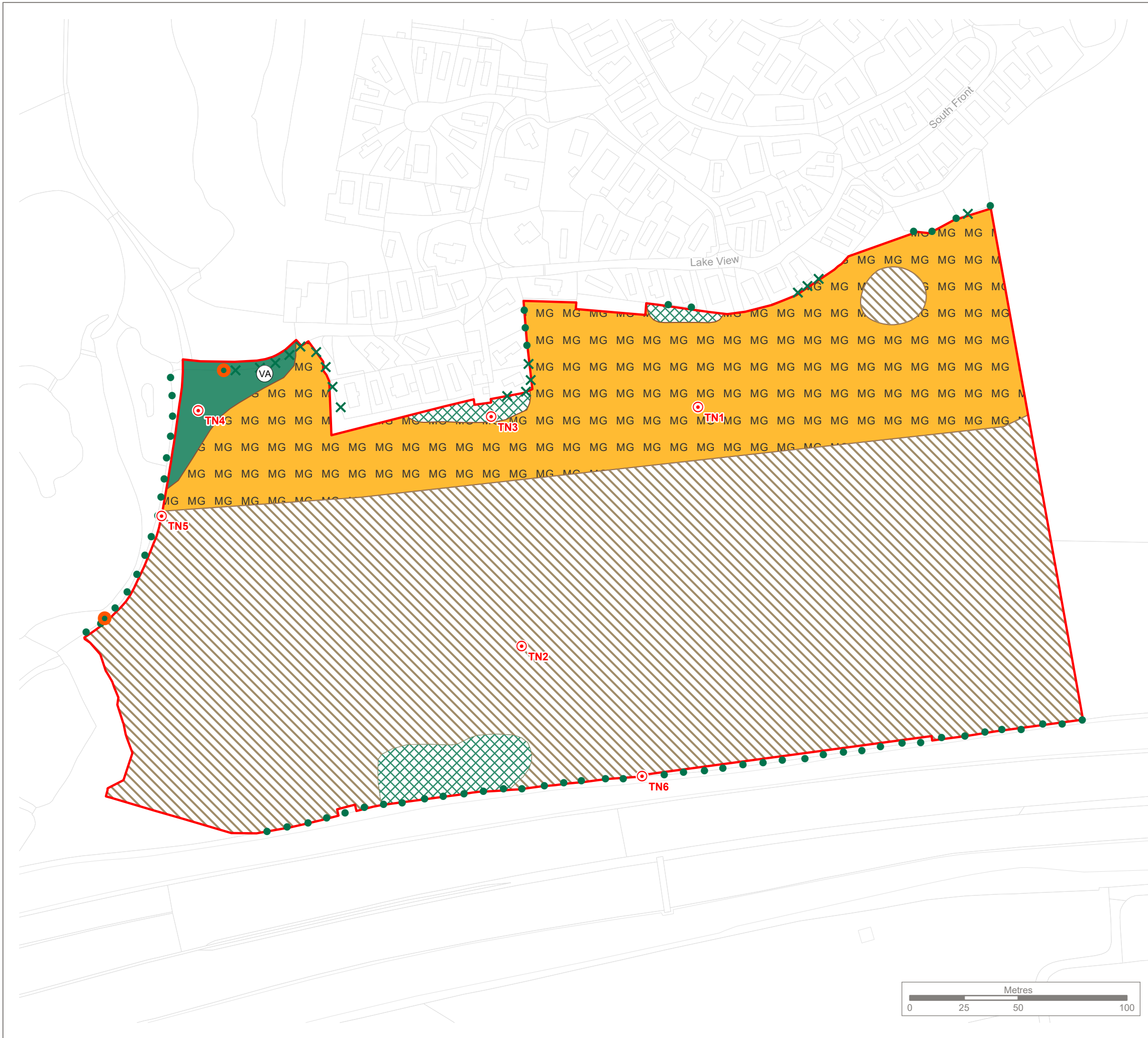
TEP Response

- 5.3 Both trees identified as having moderate potential roost features (PRF-M), as shown on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey map (appended to this document for further clarity, Drawing 2), are to be retained as part of the development proposals. As the trees will be retained and are not anticipated to be directly affected by the proposed works, no further bat roost assessment is considered necessary.

Drawings

Drawing 1: Breeding Bird Survey Results (10.08.26) (Ref: G10586.08)

Drawing 2: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map (Ref: G10586.004A)



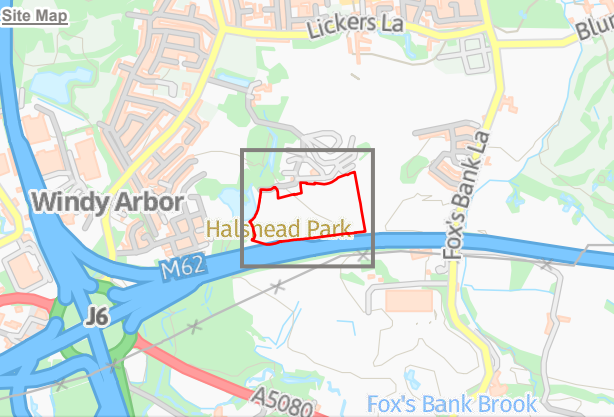
KEY

- Site boundary
- Target note
- Variegated Yellow Archangel
- Scattered scrub
- Scattered broad-leaved tree
- PRF-M: Tree with potential roost feature suitable for multiple bats
- Semi-natural broad-leaved woodland
- Dense/continuous scrub
- Modified neutral grassland
- Tall ruderal

Note:
The locations of habitats and habitat features are indicative.



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A	Site boundary change	MW	EH	30/01/2026
Rev	Description	Drawn	Approved	Date



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Project
Halsnead Phase 3

Title
Figure 7.1 Phase 1 Habitat Survey - Phase 3

Drawing Number
G10586.004A

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Scale	Date
ET	OH	EH	1:1,750 @ A3	02/02/2026



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