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Habitats Regulations Assessment – Screening Report  
Link Logistics Park, Ellesmere Port

Reference: 80-411-R2-2  
Date: February 2021



# **HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT - SCREENING REPORT**

Link Logistics Park  
Ellesmere Port

Prepared for:  
Firethorn Developments Ltd

Report Ref: 80-411-R2-2  
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## E3P

Taylor Road  
 Trafford Park  
 Urmston  
 Manchester  
 M41 7JQ

+ 44 (0) 161 707 9612  
<https://e3p.co.uk/>

Registered in England  
 CRN: 807255262

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>Site Address</b>	North Road Industrial Estate, North Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 1AB
<b>Coordinates</b>	E 338929, N 378705
<b>Site Area</b>	Approximately 15.5 ha
<b>Current Site Use and Adjacent Site Use</b>	The site comprised a disused area of hardstanding and bare ground, that had been colonised by scattered scrub, with a section of woodland to the west. Previously, the site of the Bridgewater Paper Mill, with the majority of the buildings and structures now demolished. Further industrial developments surrounded the site to the south and east. Adjacent to the west was Booston Wood and Rivacre Brook, with Manchester Ship Canal and the River Mersey to the north.
<b>Development Proposals</b>	Development proposals include the demolition of the remaining structures on-site and the construction of three industrial warehouses with associated car parking and infrastructure. Landscape planting across the site and an attenuation pond is proposed within the northern western area of the site.
<b>Conclusions</b>	<p>The proposed development is located within the Zone of Influence of Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.</p> <p>The site was not found to be functionally linked to the designated sites. No likely significant effects are anticipated on the SPA and Ramsar as a result of development. As such, the proposed development site has been screened out of further assessment.</p>



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P were commissioned by Firethorn Developments Ltd to produce a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)- Screening Report at Link Logistics Park, Ellesmere Port, hereafter referred to as “the site”.

Development proposals include the demolition of the remaining structures on-site and the construction of three industrial warehouses with associated car parking and infrastructure. Landscape planting across the site and an attenuation pond is proposed within the northern western area of the site.

This report has been prepared by Senior Ecologist Huw Morgan, BSc (Hons) ACIEEM who has seven years professional experience as an ecological consultant. Huw has undertaken multiple HRA screening assessments for various projects across the UK. Huw also holds a class 2 great crested newt Natural England licence, a Natural England barn owl survey class licence and has key experience with birds and plants.

### 1.2. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located at the former Bridgewater Paper Mill which has since been demolished. The site has since been left unmanaged and is currently being used by a neighbouring business to store crushed glass and other materials. The site mainly comprised hardstanding and bare ground, surrounded by industrial developments to the east and south, anticipated to have limited ecological value.

North Road lies adjacent to the southern site boundary, with the M53 approximately 110 m south of the site. Rivacre Brook is present approximately 25 m west of the site, within Booston Wood, and a disused railway line forms the northern site boundary, terminating halfway along the boundary. Manchester Ship Canal lies adjacent to the north of the site and railway line, with the River Mersey located beyond this, approximately 170 m north of the site. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the approximate site location.

FIGURE 1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION



### 1.3. SCOPE OF REPORT

The scope of this report is to present a HRA screening assessment to document and establish whether the proposed works will have 'likely significant effects' on Natura 2000 sites. New industrial developments can have 'likely significant effects' on, or affect the integrity of, designated sites and likely significant effects can result from the development itself, or in combination with other plans or projects.

In accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), all competent authorities must undertake a formal assessment of the implications of any new plans or projects that may be capable of affecting the designated interest of designated sites before deciding whether to undertake, permit or authorise such a plan or project.

The designated sites subject to screening include the following:

- ✿ Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and potential SPA (pSPAs);
- ✿ Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and candidate (cSAC) or potential (pSAC) sites; and
- ✿ Ramsar sites.

This report will identify the zone of influence (Zoi) and indicate any designated sites within the zone of influence. Any potential impacts of the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other developments, and any significant likely impacts on ecological features associated with designated sites will be stated.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. HABITAT REGULATION ASSESSMENT

An HRA process is separated into four stages, set out in the European Commission guidance “Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC” (November 2001). Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive relates to Stages 1 to 3 and Article 6(4) to Stage 4.

This report challenges Stage 1. The stages are as follows:

#### **Stage 1 – Screening**

The screening process involves consideration of the proximity of designated sites to the proposed works; the features of the designated sites, including primary reasons for selection and the Conservation Status of the qualifying interest; and the vulnerability of the designated site and conservation objectives. The process takes into consideration the nature of the proposed works, project design; and the cumulative impacts that could arise from the project in combination with other plans and projects.

#### **Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment**

The consideration of the impact on the designated sites, either independently or in combination with other developments or proposed, with respect to the site’s citation and conservation targets. Mitigation for substantial impact may also be assessed.

#### **Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions**

The examination of alternative procedures of achieving objectives of the proposed development that will avoid significant impacts on the designated sites.

#### **Stage 4 – Compensatory Measures**

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the plan should proceed.





## 2.2. DATA COLLECTION

### 2.2.1. DESK STUDY DATA

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

- ❖ MAGIC – A web-based interactive mapping system, on which geographic information regarding key environmental schemes and designations are collated, including details of statutory conservation sites. A 5 km search area was utilised, with this being deemed an appropriate distance for the zone of influence of the site.
- ❖ Local data records, including RECORD – The Biodiversity Information System for Cheshire, Halton, Warrington and Wirral, received 04th November 2020.
- ❖ Wetland Bird Survey Data for the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar from British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), received on 01st February 2021.

## 2.3. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An assessment was undertaken to identify whether the proposed works will or will not have a likely significant adverse effect on the interest features of the designated sites identified within the zone of influence. The potential impacts considered include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ❖ Reduction and/or fragmentation of species and habitat;
- ❖ Disturbance;
- ❖ Loss of individuals;
- ❖ Changes to key elements of the sites (e.g. water quality; and,
- ❖ Cumulative impacts.

## 2.4. LIMITATIONS

No limitations have been identified during the HRA assessment.



## 3. RESULTS

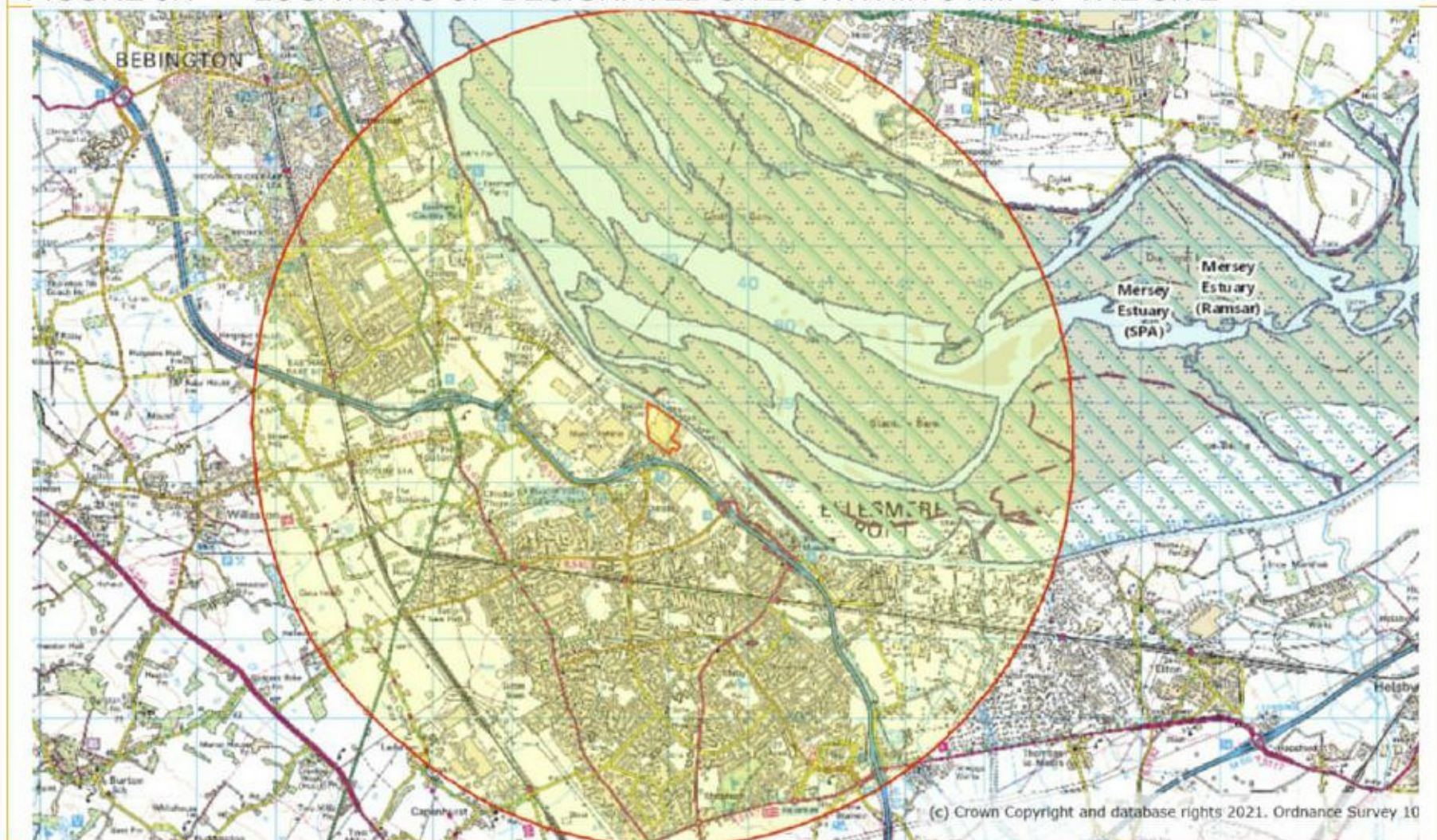
### 3.1. DATA COLLECTION

#### 3.1.1. DESK STUDY DATA

#### SITE DESIGNATIONS AND ALLOCATIONS

Consultation with MAGIC maps (consulted on 12th January 2021) identified Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar within 5 km of the site boundary. Please refer to Figure 3.1.

FIGURE 3.1 LOCATIONS OF DESIGNATED SITES WITHIN 5 KM OF THE SITE



#### LOCAL DATA RECORDS - RECORD

Consultation with RECORD identified a number of bird records within 1 km of the site. Please see Table 3.1 for bird records identified which are qualifying species of Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.



TABLE 3.1 LOCAL RECORDS OF QUALIFYING BIRD SPECIES

SPECIES	SCIENTIFIC NAME	CLOSEST RECORD
<b>Black-tailed Godwit</b>	<i>Limosa limosa islandica</i>	All records are associated with Mount Manisty Bay, located approximately 300m north-east of the site.
<b>Dunlin</b>	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	
<b>Golden Plover</b>	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	
<b>Pintail</b>	<i>Anas acuta</i>	
<b>Redshank</b>	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	
<b>Teal</b>	<i>Anas crecca</i>	
<b>Shelduck</b>	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	

### BTO WETLAND BIRD DATA

Wetland Bird Data was requested from BTO to identify the wetland bird assemblage using the Manisty Bay sector of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Refer to Figure 3.2 for the location of the Manisty Bay sector and Table 3.2 for the BTO peak winter counts of the qualifying bird species.

FIGURE 3.2 LOCATION OF MANISTY BAY SECTOR (HIGHLIGHTED IN BLUE). LOCATION OF THE SITE MARKED BY CROSS.

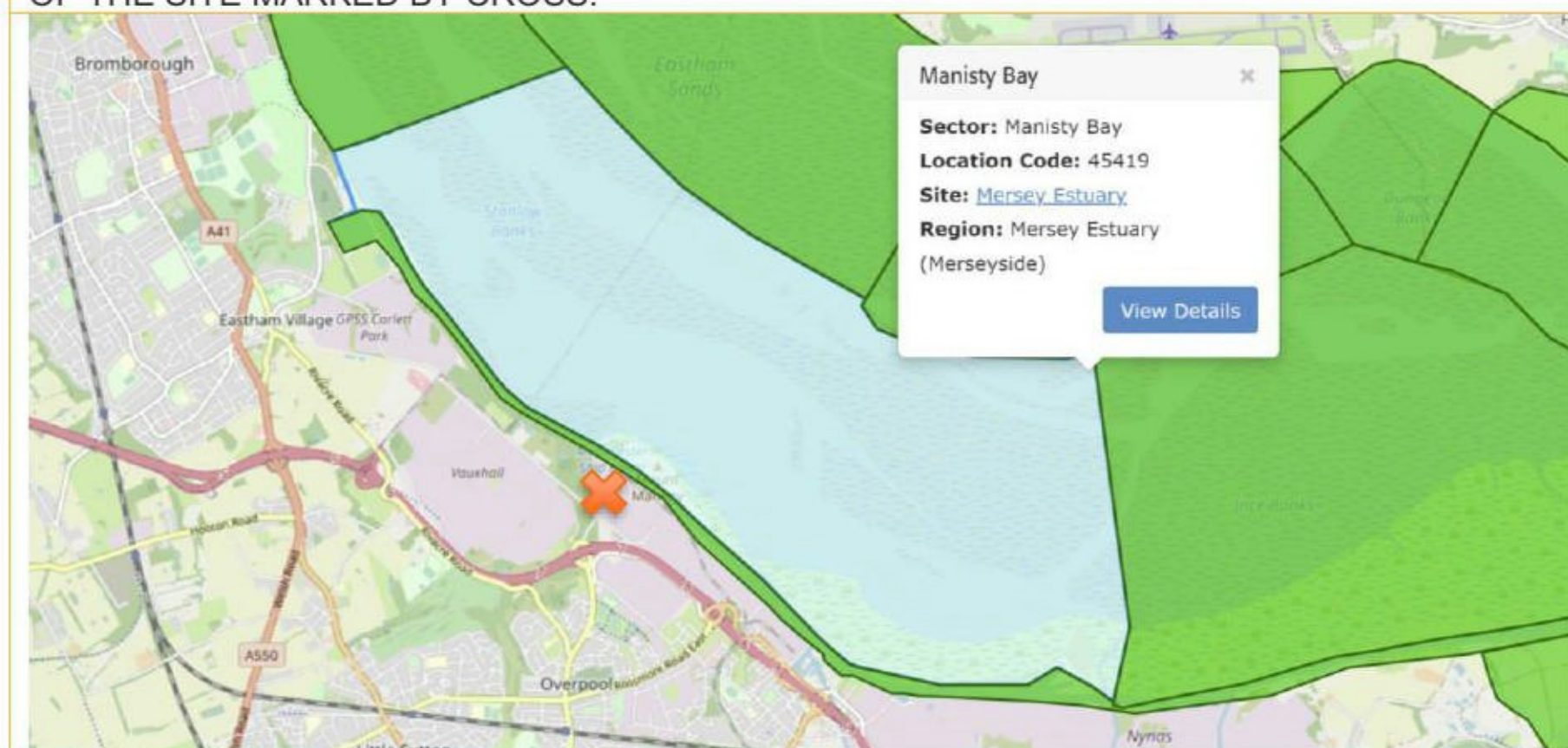


TABLE 3.2 PEAK WINTER COUNTS OF QUALIFYING BIRD SPECIES

SPECIES	PEAK COUNT WINTER 2014	PEAK COUNT WINTER 2015	PEAK COUNT WINTER 2016	PEAK COUNT WINTER 2017	PEAK COUNT WINTER 2018	PEAK COUNT WINTER 2019
<b>Black-tailed Godwit</b>	221	1769	760	275	1430	170
<b>Dunlin</b>	520	11327	30002	4080	22650	15000
<b>Golden Plover</b>	52	850	0	0	98	0
<b>Pintail</b>	53	66	55	32	72	67



<b>SPECIES</b>	<b>PEAK COUNT WINTER 2014</b>	<b>PEAK COUNT WINTER 2015</b>	<b>PEAK COUNT WINTER 2016</b>	<b>PEAK COUNT WINTER 2017</b>	<b>PEAK COUNT WINTER 2018</b>	<b>PEAK COUNT WINTER 2019</b>
<b>Redshank</b>	1694	2005	2348	2650	1930	360
<b>Shelduck</b>	411	410	735	193	617	148
<b>Teal</b>	1950	1950	1318	740	1832	560



### 3.2. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TABLE 3.3 MERSEY ESTUARY SPA AND RAMSAR ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

SPA CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✦ The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features;</li><li>✦ The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features;</li><li>✦ The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely;</li><li>✦ The population of each of the qualifying features; and,</li><li>✦ The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.</li></ul>
SPA QUALIFYING FEATURES



- ✦ Common shelduck (Non-breeding);
- ✦ Eurasian teal (Non-breeding);
- ✦ Northern pintail (Non-breeding);
- ✦ European golden plover (Non-breeding);
- ✦ Dunlin (Non-breeding);
- ✦ Black-tailed godwit (Non-breeding);
- ✦ Common redshank (Non-breeding); and,
- ✦ Waterbird assemblage.

#### RAMSAR OVERVIEW AND CRITERIA

The Mersey 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.

The following criterion have been applied to the designation of Mersey Estuary Ramsar:

- ✦ Ramsar criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance, species with peak counts in winter: 89576 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003).
- ✦ Ramsar criterion 6: Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance (same species listed in SPA qualifying features).



POTENTIAL PATHWAYS OF IMPACTS	CONSTRUCTION	USE/ OPERATIONAL/ ACTIVITY
<p><b>REDUCTION AND/OR FRAGMENTATION OF SPECIES AND HABITAT</b></p>	<p>There would be no land taken from the Mersey Estuary or adjacent land. The site is located approximately 70 m south-west from the Mersey Estuary at its nearest point and is separated from the estuary by the Manchester Ship Canal and Mount Manisty. Mount Manisty is a large man-made hillock located between the Manchester Ship Canal and the Mersey Estuary.</p> <p>There would be no fragmentation as a result of the proposed works. The main habitats present at the site comprise of hardstanding, broadleaved woodland and scrub and are habitats not used by any of the qualifying bird species.</p> <p>Overall, it is considered that the site does not support any habitat that may be used by qualifying bird species as part of a wider area of functionally linked land. Therefore, the construction works at the site would result in a <b>negligible</b> reduction and fragmentation of the habitat area used by qualifying bird species associated with the designated sites.</p>	<p>It is considered that once constructed, the operation, usage and activities associated with the development will have no impact on the habitats used by the qualifying bird species of the designated sites. Therefore, it is considered there would be a <b>negligible</b> reduction and fragmentation of the habitat area used by the qualifying bird species associated with the designated sites.</p>
<p><b>DISTURBANCE</b></p>	<p><b><u>Visual Disturbance</u></b>  The site is separated from the Mersey Estuary by the Manchester Ship Canal and Mount Manisty. Due to the size of Mount Manisty, the estuary is not visible from the site, despite its close proximity. It is considered that the presence of Mount Manisty acts as a sufficient</p>	<p><b><u>Visual Disturbance</u></b>  It is considered that Mount Manisty will act as a sufficient barrier to any visual disturbance associated with the daily operation of the development. It is also considered that Mount Manisty will act as a sufficient barrier to any light associated with the development.</p>



	<p>visual barrier to the construction works and a barrier to any lighting that may be used.</p> <p>Therefore, it is considered that there will be <b>negligible</b> disturbance of the qualifying bird species associated with the designated site and a result of visual construction works and lighting during construction.</p> <p><b>Noise Disturbance</b>  It is considered that Mount Manisty acts as a sufficient natural acoustic barrier between the site and the estuary. It is also proposed that acoustic screening will be put in place during the construction works. Noise impact assessments (BWB, 2021) indicate that noise levels on the construction side of Mount Manisty will reach a peak of 55db, whereas the estuary side of Mount Manisty will reach a peak of 40db. Research undertaken in the IECS Report (Cutts <i>et al.</i>, 2009) identified that regular construction noise under 50db had no impact on wetland birds and construction noise between 50db to 70db had a moderate impact on the birds. Therefore, it is considered that with the construction noise not considered to reach any higher than 40db on the estuary, this will result in <b>negligible</b> noise disturbance to the qualifying bird species associated with the designated sites.</p>	<p>A lighting plan has also been recommended (E3P, 2020) which ensures any lighting is directed away from areas adjacent to the site.</p> <p>Therefore, with the presence of Mount Manisty in combination with a lighting plan, it is considered that there will be <b>negligible</b> disturbance of the qualifying bird species associated with the designated sites as a result of visual and lighting during operation of the development.</p> <p><b>Noise Disturbance</b>  It is considered that during the operation of the development, the main sources of noise will be associated with lorries entering and leaving the site. However, it is not considered that the level of noise generated by the lorries will detrimentally affect the qualifying bird species of the designated sites. It is also considered that Mount Manisty will act as a sufficient natural acoustic barrier between the site and the estuary. Noise impact assessments (BWB, 2021) have indicated that noise levels on the estuary will be no higher than 35db which is well below the threshold considered to cause disturbance to the qualifying bird species of 70db. Therefore, it is considered that there will be <b>negligible</b> noise disturbance to the qualifying bird species of the designated sites during the operation of the development.</p>
<p><b>LOSS OF INDIVIDUALS</b></p>	<p>The Mersey Estuary has been designated for its importance for wintering bird populations. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that any individual qualifying bird species of the designated site would be lost as a result of the construction of the site.</p>	<p>It is considered that the habitats on-site will not be suitable for the qualifying bird species associated with the designated sites due to being largely made up of industrial buildings and hardstanding.</p>





	<p>Overall, it is considered that the construction of the site will have a <b>negligible</b> effect on the population and species density of any qualifying bird species of the designated sites.</p>	<p>It is also considered that the development is not situated in a key flight path that would result in bird strikes for any of the qualifying bird species as the bird species will use the estuary as their main flight paths. In addition to this, the buildings are proposed to be approximately 15 m high, which is substantially lower than the height of Mount Manisty of 40 m, which the birds would have to fly over to reach the buildings.</p> <p>Therefore, due to the unfavourable habitats on-site, the location of the development and the height of the buildings, it is considered that there will be a <b>negligible</b> effect on the population and species density of any qualifying bird species associated with the designated sites during the operation of the development.</p>
<p><b>CHANGES TO KEY ELEMENTS OF THE DESIGNATED SITES</b></p>	<p>The site is located adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal which feeds into the Mersey Estuary approximately 2.8 km north-west of the site, therefore there is a risk of pollution that could affect the water quality of the designated sites.</p> <p>However, it is considered with standard working practices put in place to control construction sources such as contaminated surface run-off, accidental spillage of contaminants, dust emissions and other potential pollutants, the effects to the designated sites will be minimal.</p> <p>Air quality assessments (BWB, 2021) have indicated there will be no detrimental increase in air pollution that would affect the designated site as a result of the construction works.</p>	<p>During the operation of the development, sufficient drainage systems will be in place connecting foul drainage to the mains drainage. There will also be silt traps and petrol interceptors installed around the car parks and service areas compliant with local authority and Environmental Agency regulations. These measures will prevent run-off and pollution occurring within the designated sites.</p> <p>It is considered that during operation of the site, there will be an increase in road traffic using the M53 motorway to reach the site thus increasing pollution levels. However, the air quality assessments (BWB, 2021) have indicated that the motorway is a sufficient distance away from the designated site and will have no impact as a result of an increase in nitrogen levels or other sources of pollution.</p>



	Therefore, it is considered that if the standard working practices with regards to pollution control and implemented effectively, there will be a <b>negligible</b> effect on the designated sites and the qualifying bird species associated with them.	Therefore, with these systems already in place and the distance of the motorway from the site, it is considered that there will be a <b>negligible</b> effect on the designated sites and the qualifying bird species associated with them.
<b>CUMULATIVE IMPACTS</b>	The site is situated in an industrial area surrounded largely by urban habitats. It is not considered that the proposed works at the site in-combination with similar existing developments or future developments of similar nature will have an effect on the designated sites and the qualifying bird species associated with them.	



## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Two designated sites have been identified within the Zol of the site:

- Mersey Estuary SPA
- Mersey Estuary Ramsar

Both designated sites have been designated for their important overwintering bird populations.

The assessment of all the potential pathways of impacts have concluded that the proposed development will have **no likely significant effects** on the qualifying features and conservation objectives of the relevant identified European designated sites either alone, or in-combination with other projects.



## 5. REFERENCES

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- ✿ Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC" (November 2001). Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive relates to Stages 1 to 3 and Article 6(4) to Stage 4.

**END OF REPORT**

