# Riverside Chalet Park, Occupation Lane, Singleton, Poulton-Le-Fylde, FY6 7RA

# Ecological Appraisal

## Simply Ecology Limited

**Ref: SE/ GAAQ011/01**

**July 2020**

**For**

**Graham Anthony Associates,**
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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background Information

1.1.1 In October 2019, Simply Ecology Limited was commissioned by Graham Anthony Associates to undertake an Ecological Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment at Riverside Chalet Park, Occupation Lane, Singleton, Poulton-Le-Fylde, FY6 7RA (OS grid reference SD3763139702). See Plan 1 for Site location, Plan 2 for the Site boundary and Plan 2 for site plan.

## 1.2 Aims

1.2.1 The aims of this ecological assessment were to:

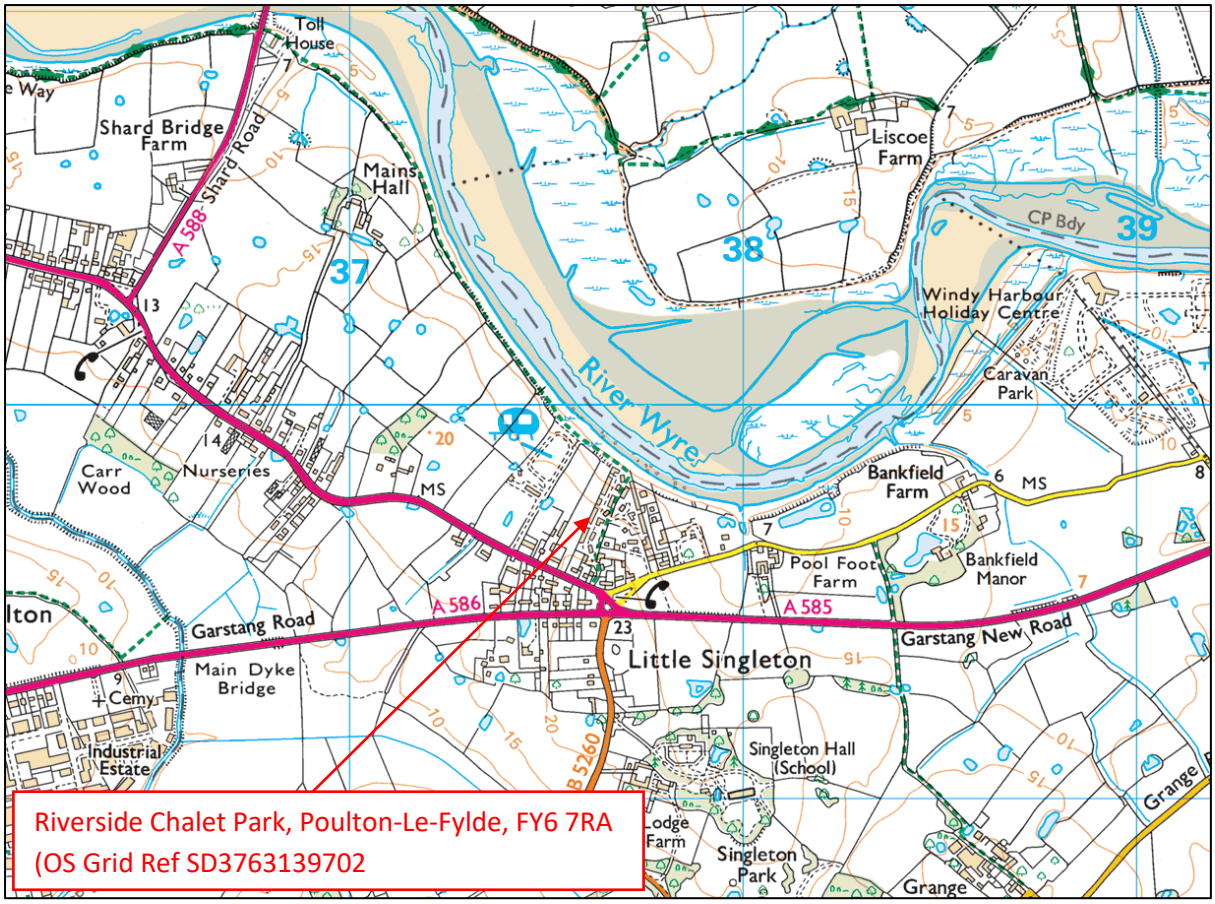
- To provide clear advice to the client, the Local Planning Authority and third parties, on the nature conservation value of the site and surrounding area.
- To confirm the presence or absence of protected species, such as badgers, bats, great crested newts, otter, etc) within the proposed development site.
- To enable the client to comply with legislation afforded to protected sites and species.
- To highlight the presence of any habitats or species of ecological importance, including Habitats and Species of Principal Importance (NERC Act, 2006).
- To identify any ecological constraints on future development.
- To establish the need for any further surveys and assessments.
- To make nature conservation recommendations.

1.2.2 To achieve this, an Ecological Appraisal of the Site and any protected species on the site was undertaken on 20th March 2020. This submission presents the results of the surveys at the site.

## 1.3 Site Description and Proposed Works

1.3.1 The Site, approximately 1.2ha, is set in a flat semi-rural countryside, in the village of Little Singleton in the Fylde; beyond the village limits, to the east and south, the landscape is dominated by open improved pasture and arable farmland, with dividing hedgerows. To the north is the River Wyre and more open farmland. To the east, the land becomes increasingly urbanised, with Blackpool and its satellite towns beyond.

1.3.2 The surveys described in this report were commissioned to inform a planning application for the removal of the extant chalets and replacement with 34 static caravan bases, the reconfiguration of the internal access road and provision of new parking spaces.




*Plan 1: Site location.*

*Plate 1: General view of the Site.*


*Plan 2: The Existing Site plan.*


*Plan 3: The Proposed Site plan*

# 2.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 For the desk study, the application site and surrounding 2km was selected to search for any existing biological information. Consultation with commercially available datasets was undertaken to identify records of animals or plants within this search area. Fylde Bird Club (FBC) supplied the relevant data.

2.1.2 In addition, an online search of the Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre (www.magic.gov.uk) was undertaken to identify the presence of nationally or internationally important sites receiving statutory protection within 1km of the application site. This search included sites designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This covers Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), all of which have legal protection.

## 2.2 Extended Phase 1 Survey

2.2.1 The Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken by Philip Wright MSc CIEEM on 20th March 2020. The survey followed the Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010) which is a standard technique for recording and mapping habitats. During the Phase 1 survey the presence or potential for presence of protected species was recorded and assessed.

2.2.2 The survey involved walking the whole site, mapping and describing different habitats (for example: woodland, grassland, scrub). Evidence of fauna and faunal habitat is also recorded (for example droppings, tracks, or habitat such as ponds for breeding amphibians). The methods used for ecological survey are in accordance with those established and generally accepted methodologies for field survey, as published by the professional body, the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

## 2.3 Invasive Alien Plants

2.3.1 During the Phase 1 habitat survey, observations of invasive alien plants listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were made. The search included species such as Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*).

## 2.4 Bat Tree Survey

2.4.1 As part of the inspection, a visual survey of all trees was carried out using 10x42 binoculars. The survey was undertaken in accordance with the standard methods described in the 'Bat Worker's Manual' (JNCC 2004) and 'Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines' (BCT 2016). The survey comprised of identifying the following features:

- Woodpecker holes with small cracks/crevices
- Cracks/crevices, ivy cover and flaking bark
- Loose or flaking bark deadwood in canopy or stem low/no ivy cover

- Medium to dense ivy cover
- Deadwood in canopy or stem
- Snagged branches
- Hollow stems or limbs
- Hole in buttresses/hollow core

2.4.2 The following signs were searched for, as these would indicate bat presence:

- Staining around a hole, caused by natural oils in the bats' fur.
- Stains beneath a hole, caused by bat urine.
- Scratch marks around a hole, caused by bat claws.
- Bat droppings beneath a hole.
- Audible squeaking from within a hole, especially on hot days or at dusk.
- Insects (especially flies) around a hole.

2.4.3 Once surveyed, each tree was categorised, using Bat Conservation Trust guidelines, according to its potential to support roosting bats into one of four categories:

1. Confirmed bat roost,
2a. High potential to support bats,
2b. Low/moderate potential to support bats, and
3. Negligible potential to support bats.

## 2.5 Water Vole Survey

2.5.1 The south bank of the river Wyre was walked by the surveyor on 20th March 2020. The survey methods only looked within 50m of the site to assess habitat, but otherwise were in accordance with those described in the Water Vole Conservation Handbook (Strachan and Moorhouse, 2006).

2.5.2 A detailed examination of the watercourses was carried out to search for evidence of water vole such as;

- Feeding signs, including feeding stations;
- Latrines and individual droppings;
- Burrows, nests and feeding lawns (areas of shortly-grazed grassland at the entrance to a burrow);
- Footprints and obvious runways in vegetation; and
- Distinctive 'plop' sound of water voles entering the water.

## 2.6 Otter Survey

2.6.1 Otter surveys were undertaken to record all field signs along the stream within the site to determine activity levels and patterns of behaviour over a predetermined area of suitable habitat. This methodology complies with the survey requirements as set out in The Highways Agency (2001).

2.6.2 Otter surveying records locations of otter activity i.e. footprints, spraints (otter droppings), feeding remains, footprints, slides (where otters pass back and forth to the water's edge), lying-up areas and holts to determine otter usage of particular stretches of a river and its tributaries. The otter survey was undertaken along a 500m stretch of the river Wyre (150m either side of the site) and consisted of survey of one bank only.

2.6.3 There are a number of different resting places used by otters. Below is a brief description of the terminology used in this report.

**Holts**

2.6.4 Otter holts are places/structures used by otters for shelter on a 'permanent' basis. Holts are covered structures, usually a hole or burrow along the river bank amongst riparian vegetation and the roost system of river side trees, or behind boulders set in to the bank. Usually a holt will also have other associated otter field signs such as footprints or an accumulation of spraint. Holts may also be connected to lying-up areas and have more than one entrance as with badger setts.

**Lying-up areas/couches**

2.6.5 Lying-up areas or couches are 'temporary' areas used by otters for resting, grooming or feeding whilst on the move. Lying-up areas usually do not form a full covered structure, rather they are partially hidden bankside shelves amongst riparian vegetation, or 'nest-like' structures amongst reeds and grasses. As with holts, lying up areas usually have other field signs to demonstrate use by otters.

**Natal Dens**

2.6.6 Natal dens are holts which are used by otters to give birth and rear their young natal dens usually have inconspicuous entrances and have little or no evidence of otter activity around the entrance. Natal dens can be located some distance from the watercourse, sometimes being set back in woodland amongst log piles, tree roots, rubble or even amongst reed beds. The banks of the ditches and watercourses within the site and a 500m radius of the site were assessed for their potential to support otter in line with methods given in Chanin (2003). Any field signs of otter activity, including footprints, spraints, lying-up sites and holts were noted. All fieldwork is carried out in accordance with current best practice guidelines with reference to Chanin (2003) and The Highways Agency (2001).

## 2.7 Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Survey

2.7.1 The field survey involved assessing the value of the ponds using a technique known as the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). The HSI was developed as a tool to aid fieldworkers to give ponds and their surrounding habitat a numerical score in terms of their suitability for great crested newts. HSI involves taking measurements and estimates of ten parameters for each

pond visited. These parameters include factors such as water quality, shading, presence of fish, amount of vegetation, all of which are known to have a role in affecting habitat suitability for newts. A mathematical formula is then applied to all 10 scores to give a final suitability score of between 0 and 1. The higher the score, the greater the pond suitability for great crested newts. The technique used was in accordance with the nationally adopted guidelines for this method, after Oldham *et al* (2000), and subsequently modified by Brady (ARG UK 2010).

## 2.8 Ecological Value and Impact Assessment

2.8.1 The evaluation of the ecological features of the site and the magnitude of the likely impacts of the proposed development upon those features follows that published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM 2019). Overall, the process adopts a geographical scale for valuing ecological features. The evaluation places the site within a hierarchy of perceived ecological importance. This hierarchy ranges from the highest value sites which have 'international' status, then down to 'national', 'regional', 'county', 'district' and 'parish' and finally through to 'local' in terms of diminishing importance (see Annex B for full description of evaluation criteria).

2.8.2 Once the site's ecological value has been rated, impacts are subsequently identified and ranked according to the comparative severity of their effects. The impact magnitude of the development is recorded with the following criteria: 'major, 'moderate, 'slight' and 'negligible. Impacts can be both positive and negative (see Annex B for full description of impact magnitude criteria).

2.8.3 Once the above two stages have been completed, it is possible to determine the significance of impact. This involves the interaction of both impact magnitude and nature conservation value and is based upon a exercising of professional judgement (as per CIEEM 2019).

## 2.9 Personnel

2.9.1 All surveys were undertaken by Philip Wright MSc CIEEM. Philip is an Ecologist with Simply Ecology Limited obtained his first degree in Biology from the University of Bath and an MSc in Ecology and Conservation from Lancaster University. He is a member of the North Lancashire Bat Group and is in his fourth season of habitat surveying. His wider experience includes conducting botanical surveying and habitat management work with the RSPB and with the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside.

2.9.2 Report verification was by Jason Reynolds MSc MCIEEM. Jason started Simply Ecology Limited in 2007. Jason is an experienced ecologist who has been continuously employed in the field of nature conservation since 1995 (24 years' experience) and has a wealth of experience in both the statutory nature conservation agencies and private consultancy. During his career has worked in Conservation Officer roles for the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, English Nature, Environment Agency, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Durham Wildlife Trust prior to setting up Simply Ecology ecological consultancy in 2007, where he is the Lead Ecologist. He has an MSc from The University of Aberdeen and his thesis investigated the relationship between habitat type and complexity and the foraging

behaviour of Pipistrelle bats. Jason holds protected species survey licences for all British bats, white-clawed crayfish and great crested newts.

## 2.10 Timing and Constraints

2.10.1 The Phase 1 survey was undertaken on 20th March 2020. Whilst this is not the most optimal time to record flora, typically key indicator species can readily be identified using vegetative material and using dead plant matter.

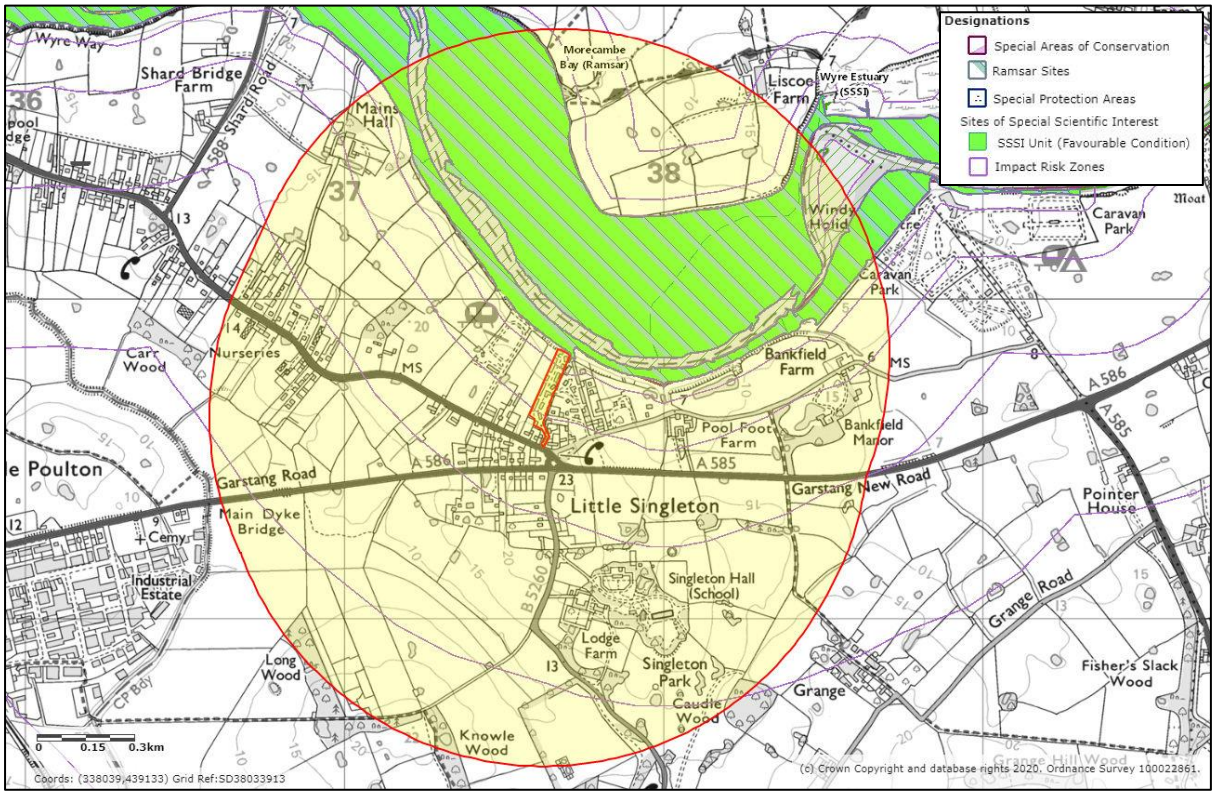
2.10.2 The otter and water vole surveys were undertaken on 20th March 2020. March is during the optimal survey period as water vole field signs such as latrines and footprints. It was possible to make a robust assessment of the suitability of the habitat for water voles. Otter survey timing is also ideal during the Spring as vegetation is not too over-grown, and sprainting behaviour makes it good to observe field signs at this time of year.

2.10.3 The GCN risk assessment was undertaken on 20th March 2020. This was a at the start of the - optimal time of year to use the formal Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) scoring system for pond sampling. A full risk assessment was still carried out and in combination with the HSI this was a useful basis to make an assessment. Access to some of the ponds was not granted but overall it was still possible to make an assessment of the site's potential to support amphibians.

# 3.0 DESK STUDY RESULTS

## 3.1 Statutory Sites

3.1.1 The search for conservation sites in the surrounding area included both nationally important sites, (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and internationally important sites (Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites). The desk study revealed there were no statutory designated nature conservation sites on the site. However, the Wyre Estuary SSSI, Morecambe Bay SPA, Ramsar and SAC sites were located immediately north of the development boundary (see Plan 4).

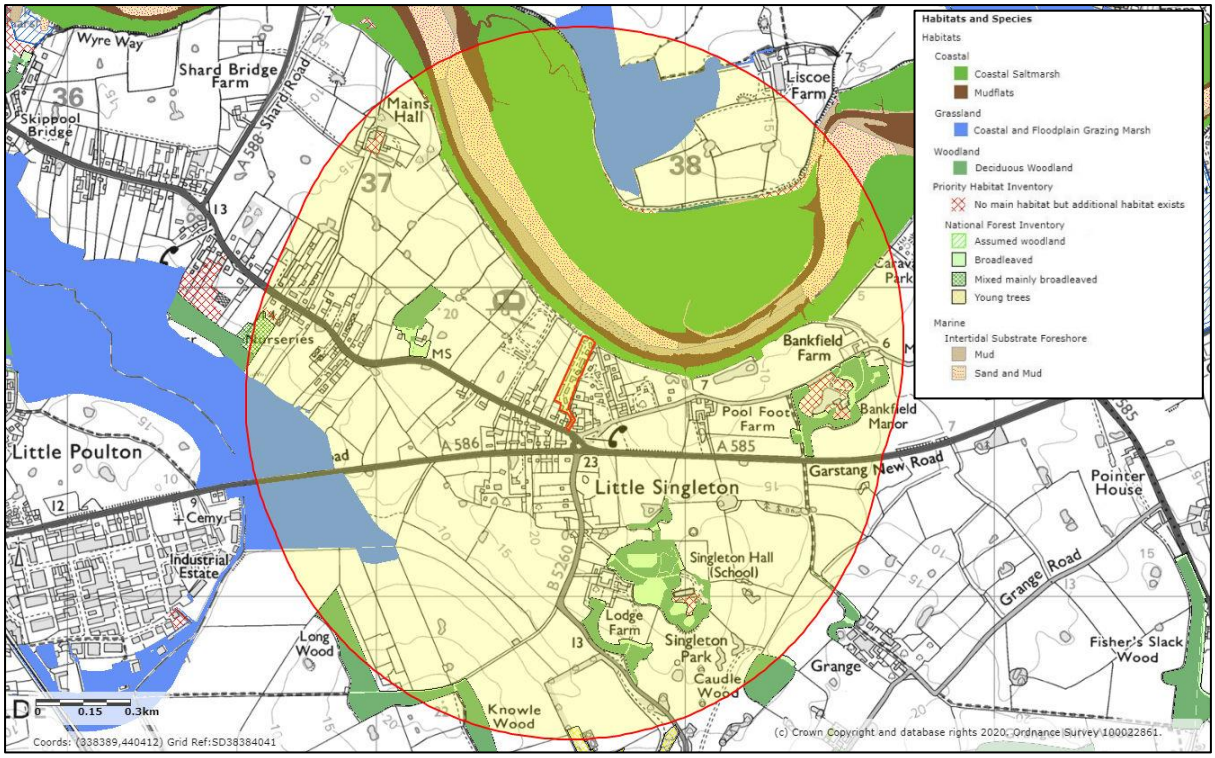



*Plan 4: Statutory designated sites within 1km of the Site.*

3.1.2 Given the proximity to the aforementioned designated sites, the potential for impacts will require further consideration.

## 3.2 Non-Statutory Sites

3.2.1 The desk study revealed that there were no Priority Habitats within the site although there were numerous Priority Habitats within 1km (see Plan 5); these included large areas of Coastal Saltmarsh and Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (see Table 1). Whilst Priority Habitats do not have the same statutory protection as designated sites, Public Authorities are bound to 'have regard' for conserving biodiversity in these Priority Habitats under Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC 2006).




*Plan 5: Priority habitats within 1kmof the Site.*

*Table 1: Priority habitats within 1km of the Site.*

| Priority Habitat | Area (ha.) |
|---|---|
| Coastal Saltmarsh | 63.37 |
| Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh | 47.86 |
| Deciduous Woodland | 16.20 |
| Mudflats | 11.00 |
| No main habitat but additional Traditional orchard | 13.13 |
| No main habitat but additional Deciduous woodland | 4.10 |

## 3.3 Protected Species

3.3.1 The presence or absence of any protected species within the site was taken into account when carrying out the detailed site-specific searches as part of the extended Phase 1 survey. In addition, any habitat which had clear potential for any protected species was also taken into account when undertaking the site survey.

## 3.4 Pre-existing data

3.4.1 Whilst no specific records of bat roosts were verified at the desk study stage, Simply Ecology has carried out numerous bat surveys in the area. Consequently, all surveys were undertaken with the understanding that any of the 10 species encountered in Lancashire could be present. These include: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius' pipistrelle, whiskered, Brandt's, Natterer's, Daubenton's, brown long-eared, noctule and Leisler's bats.

# 4.0 SURVEY RESULTS

## 4.1 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

4.1.1 The site covers approximately 1.2ha in area and comprises a chalet park with semi-improved grassland, scattered trees, planted beds and hardstanding, partly bounded by hedge. A Phase 1 Habitat Plan is included in Plan 6.

4.1.2 The following habitats were recorded at the site:

- Amenity grassland
- Hedge
- Trees
- Gardens
- Buildings
- Hardstanding

### Amenity Grassland

4.1.3 Much of the Site comprised principally of short-mown, semi-improved grassland, with a species assemblage commonly seen across typical regularly grazed swards (see Plate 1). Grass species included dominant perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) with creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), crested dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) with some cock's-foot *(Dactylis glomerata)* within the hedge at the western boundary.

*Plate 1: Much of the habitat around the chalets was species-poor amenity grassland*

4.1.4 The species diversity within the grassland was typically low with few forbs seen; here there were occasional dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), daisy (*Bellis perennis*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) with ragwort (*Senecio vulgaris*), broad leaf dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) and creeping woodsorrel (*Oxalis corniculata*).

### Hedge

4.1.5 The western boundary of the Site were mostly marked by intact, species-poor hedges (see Plate 2) dominated by privet with hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and some periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and occasional elder (*Sambucus nigra*)and dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*). The ground flora here was sparse forbs found in the adjacent grassland and included nettle (*Urtica dioica*), ivy (*Helix hedera*), cleaver (*Galium aperine*), lesser celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) and strawberry (*Fragaria* sp.).

4.1.6 Short lengths of privet or leylandii hedge were also noted on boundaries between some of the chalets.

*Plate 2: The western Site boundary was marked by a hedge of privet and hawthorn.*

### Trees

4.1.7 The northern boundary of the site had a number of semi-mature trees including sycamore (*Acer pseudoplanatus*) and horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) with several individual trees scattered across the site these included more sycamore and leylandii (See Plate 3).

*Plate 3: Scattered trees on the northern boundary seen from the riverbank.*

### Domestic gardens

4.1.8 Much of the rest of the Site were generally well maintained gardens with arrange of introduced shrubs and forbs in beds and pots (see Plate 4). These shrubs included forsythia (*Forsythia* sp.), magnolia (*magnolia* sp.), mahonia (Mahonia sp.) and fatsia (Fatsia japonica).

*Plate 4: Many of the chalets had small gardens with shrubs and forbs in pots or planted beds.*

### Buildings

4.1.9 The Site had a number of relatively small bungalows of varying ages and architectural styles (see Plate 5 and Plate 6); these had no botanical interest but some nesting bird potential.

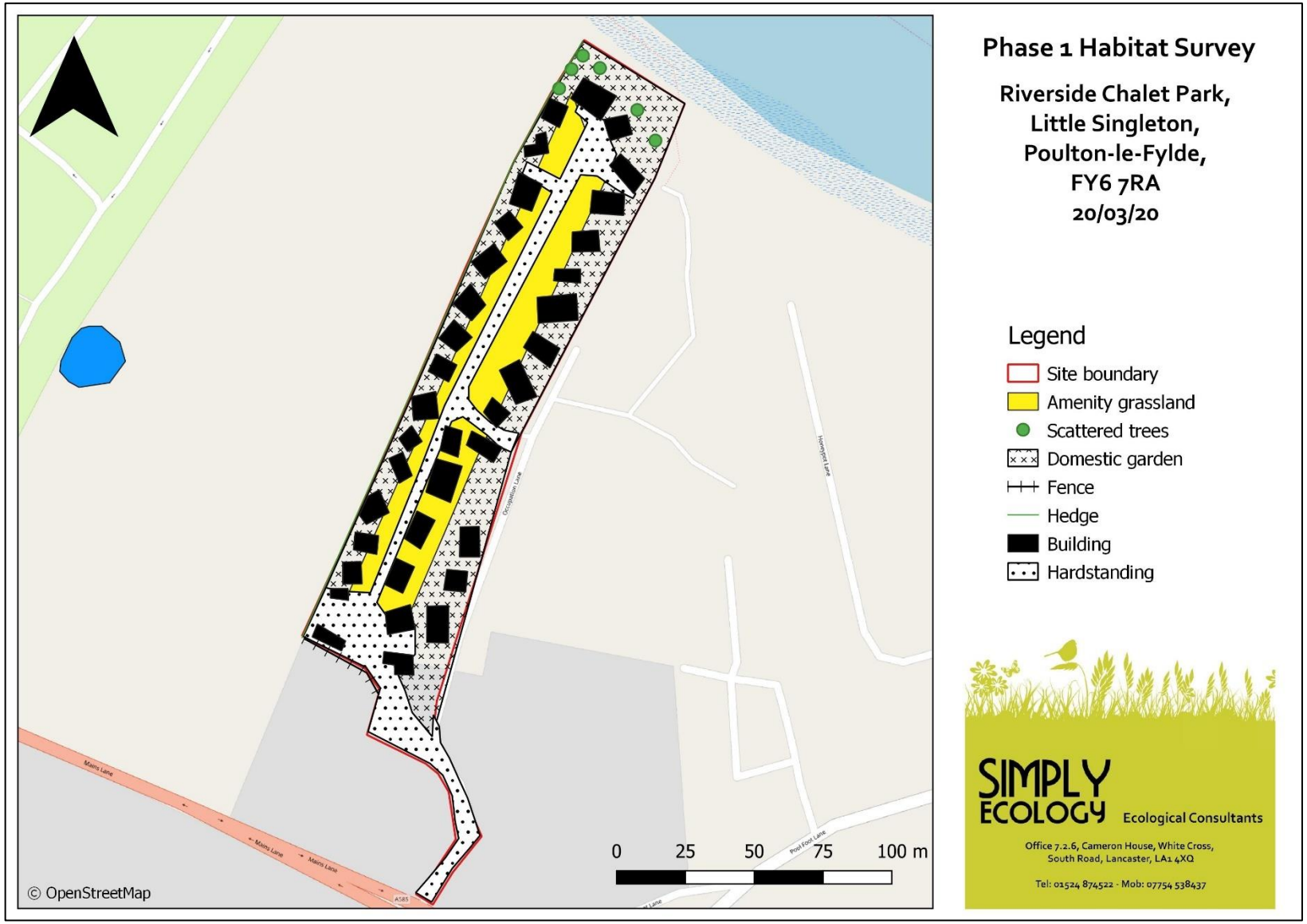
### Hardstanding and Gravel Road

4.1.10 The rest of the Site was gravel road and hardstanding; this had no ecological value.

*Plate 5: The site contained a range of bungalows with an associated gravel road and hardstanding.*

## 4.2 Invasive Alien Species

4.2.1 No invasive species were identified on site.




*Plan 6: Phase 1 habitats on the site.*

## 4.3 Protected Species

### Bat Tree and Building Inspection

4.3.1 The site a number of semi-mature trees which were subject to a ground-level inspection. These trees were found to be generally smooth or with small diameters, offering no potential for roosting bats. The trees were classed as a category 3 tree (negligible potential to support bats).

4.3.2 The heavily pollarded horse chestnut trees at the north of the site had multiple cracks and crevices offering roosting potential and heavy covering of ivy on the trees at the northeast corner of the site had a which offered further roosting potential (see Plate 6).

*Plate 6: Trees with numerous trunk features and ivy covering offered roosting potential in the trees in the northwest corner of the Site.*

### Breeding Birds

4.3.3 Numerous birds were noted during the course of the surveys including common species of common passerine within the site boundary (including wren, pigeon, starling, great tit and blackbird). Beyond the site, on the river and the opposite bank head gull were pink-footed and Canada geese and black head gull).

4.3.4 Whilst no active nests were discovered during the Phase 1 survey, it is highly likely that breeding birds would utilise the hedges and scattered trees on site during the nesting season (March to August inclusive).

### Water Voles and Otter

4.3.5 None of the site had any potential for either otters or water voles at all. In order to assess any off-site impacts on land adjoining the site, the bankside vegetation of the River Wyre was surveyed both up and downstream of the site for a distance of 150m. No field sign of otter or vole were found. The River had rather sluggish over a silty substrate. No in channel vegetation was observed and overall the habitat was judged as atypical and unsuited to water vole presence. This was because the bank profile was very flat with had no real slope or face into which burrows could be dug. Also the short bankside vegetation and the absence of macrophytes within the river meant that there was a lack of cover and foraging habitat for water voles (See Plate 7).

4.3.6 Similar searches for otter habitat failed to find any signs of potentially suitable resting sites. None of the tree roots could offer any holts habitat area. The area is well used by dog walkers, with a well worn path along the river and from the park homes (See Plate 8). Frequent prints were found in the soft river silts but these were all dog prints (See Plate 9). The silt was ideal for observing signs of mammal activity, so the absence of otter prints and abundance of dog tracks was informative.

*Plate 7: Downstream habitat was unsuitable for water vole and no holt habitat was present for otters.*

*Plate 8: The riparian habitat could support otters, but no potential holt sites were present .*

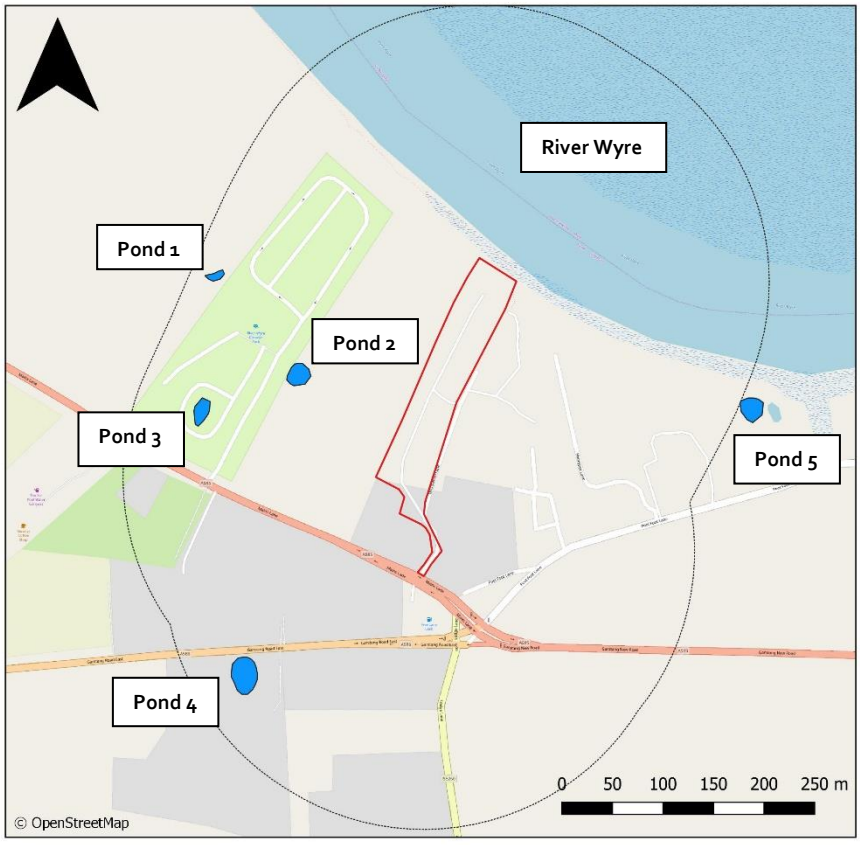
*Plate 9: The soft substrate was ideal for finding tracks, but only dog prints were present.*

# 5.0 GREAT CRESTED NEWT SURVEY RESULTS

## 5.1 Habitat assessment

5.1.1 Within the proposed development area, virtually all habitat was short sward, amenity grassland and hardstanding around the lodges. These are both sub-optimal habitats for amphibians and there were no waterbodies within the development site. The proposed development site has developed, residential land to the south and east with the River Wyre to the north.

5.1.2 Simply Ecology Limited identified 4x ponds within 250m of the site and another just beyond the 250m search area (see Plan 7). Pond 4 was scoped out as part of the Desk Study as it beyond 2 busy roads and Pond 5 was also scoped out as, although it was only just outside the 250m search area, it has significant urban development between it and the Site. Roads with high traffic volume, large rivers and built-up areas are known to be major barriers to GCN dispersal and migration.




*Plan 7: Waterbodies within 250m of the Site.*

## 5.2 Pond Assessment

5.2.1 A field assessment of suitable ponds identified within 250m of the development boundary was undertaken to record their characteristics and to draw conclusions about their potential suitability for GCN.

*Table 2: Ponds assessed for GCN suitability.*

| Pond | Description |
|---|---|
|  | Pond 1: A small woodland pond (c.80m²), 220m from Site boundary. Margins with semi-mature trees and bramble, and pond would be in full shade later in season. Few macrophytes seen.<br><br>**HSI = 0.54**<br>**Below average suitability for GCN** |
|  | Pond 2: Medium size garden pond (280m²) 175m from site boundary with macrophytes and ducks present. Well vegetated edges with shading along northern banks. Believed to have population of small fish.<br><br>**HSI = 0.68**<br>**Average suitability for GCN** |
|  | Pond 3: A large field pond (280m²), 100m west of site. This pond dries rarely, has a range of macrophytes, including bulrushes, at edges but with little edge shading.<br><br>**HSI = 0.71**<br>**Good suitability for GCN** |

*Table 3: Habitat Suitability Index calculation.*

| | Pond 1 | Pond 2 | Pond 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| SI1 - Location | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| SI2 - Pond area | 0.15 | 0.55 | 0.55 |
| SI3 - Pond drying | 0.5 | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| SI4 - Water quality | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.67 |
| SI4 - Shade | 0.2 | 1 | 1 |
| SI6 - Fowl | 1 | 0.67 | 0.67 |
| SI7 - Fish | 1 | 0.33 | 0.33 |
| SI8 - Ponds | 0.52 | 0.52 | 0.52 |
| SI9 - Terrestrial habitat | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| SI10 - Macrophytes | 0.3 | 0.55 | 0.8 |
| **HSI** | **0.52** | **0.68** | **0.71** |

*Table 4: Categorisation of HSI scores*

| HSI | Pond suitability |
|---|---|
| <0.5 | poor |
| 0.5 – 0.59 | below average |
| 0.6 – 0.69 | average |
| 0.7 – 0.79 | good |
| > 0.8 | excellent |

5.2.2 A calculation of the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) was made for Ponds 1-3 was made and they were found it to have "**below average**" "**average**" and "**good**" suitability for GCN respectively (Oldham *et al* 2000) (see Table 3 and

5.2.3 Table 4).

5.2.4 **In summary,** taking into account all of the findings from the site visit and an assessment of the surrounding area, the key points are as follows:

- The site contained no breeding ponds or other aquatic habitat.
- The majority of the development area was an area dominated by amenity grassland and hardstanding, considered to be sub-optimal for GCN
- The site has been used as a residential park home for any years, so the poor suitability of habitat for amphibians is long-standing.
- Three ponds within 250m were assessed for their suitabilty for GCN and found to have **"below average"** "**average**" and "**good**" suitability for GCN. The isolation from other ponds and the low pond density are important factors.

# 6.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## 6.1 Designated Sites

6.1.1 Although there were no statutory designated nature conservation sites on the Site it lies adjacent to the River Wyre, and consequently it lies within the Impact Risk Zones of several designated sites; the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA, SAC, Ramsar site and River Wyre SSSI. However, given the current usage of the site, it was no considered to be functionally linked land. An accompanying Habitats Regulations Assessment for the site (Simply Ecology April 2020), concluded no likely significant effect upon any of the designated sites.

## 6.2 Habitats

6.2.1 All habitats recorded within the site, including the trees and the hedges, are common and widespread and are considered of 'Site Level' value. It is anticipated that some disturbance/minor loss will arise as a result of the proposed development. This is a negative impact that could be mitigated for in the medium long term through biodiversity enhancement measures.

6.2.2 There are no Priority Habitats within the site but that there were parcels of Priority Habitat (including Coastal Saltmarsh and Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh) adjacent to the Site and within 1km. With the application of industry standard controls will ensure that there are no foreseeable impacts on these Priority Habitats.

6.2.3 **In summary,** the proposed works will result in the loss of some habitat with 'Site level' value. These will result in a short-term negative impact that should be adequately compensated for through a soft landscaping scheme. In the medium and long term there will be a positive effect arising from the new planting.

## 6.3 Protected Species

### Bats

6.3.1 Given that the trees on the northern boundary of the Site had offered some roosting potential, it was concluded that the trees and hedges may have value for foraging bats. It is anticipated that these trees will be retained, so no loss of Potential Roost Features or impacts upon foraging and linking habitats is predicted.

### Water Voles and otters

6.3.2 The site had no suitable water vole habitat within it. The River Wyre habitat adjacent to the Site was also generally unsuitable for water voles. No suitable bankside slope burrowing habitat was present and no field signs of water vole were found. The site re-development plans will not impact upon the river or riverside habitat. Consequently, there is no foreseeable likelihood of impact on water voles.

6.3.3 The site had no suitable habitat within it for otters. The adjoining River Wyre bankside offered suitable otter habitat, but no signs of the species such as holts were present. It is possible that otter could pass nearby to the site, but no long-term presence near the site is likely. It is

conceivable that any disturbance of riparian habitat could negatively impact this species, but construction does not occur during hours of darkness and the future land use of the site will be similar to existing, so no new impacts will arise. Given these factors, it was concluded that there is negligible foreseeable likelihood of impact on otter populations and no mitigation measures are required.

### Great Crested Newts

6.3.4 Taking into account all of the findings from the site visit and an assessment of the surrounding area, the key points are as follows:

- The site contained no bodies of water that were suitable for breeding GCN.
- The development area was a relatively small area predominantly of amenity grassland and hardstanding. Whilst these habitats are usually considered to be of limited value for amphibians and have been maintained like this for many years.
- An assessment of the surrounding landscape showed that there are multiple ponds in the wider landscape. GCN presence is only sporadic in the local area. Habitat severance arises due to residential and road developments.
- Some nearby ponds appeared suitable for GCN.
- Natural England advises a pragmatic approach, rather than an overly precautionary one, is adopted where impacts upon habitat is likely to be short-lived or small. The reorganisation of the site falls into this category.

6.3.5 In order to complete our assessment of the site and the surrounding habitat, the key question is 'whether any GCN could be present at this site?'.

6.3.6 No waterbodies were present, so clearly the site does not provide any suitable breeding pond habitat, although ponds are present in the wider environment. GCN presence in them is unproven. Consequently therefore it is wise to adopt a precautionary principle, and assume GCN may be present in nearby ponds. Our view is that the highly managed terrestrial habitat within the site (gardens and hardstanding), is sub-optimal for amphibians and has bene for many years. Also, the redevelopment of the site will involve removal/re-siting of mobile homes, so the scale of ground disturbance is limited and constitute re-organisation and there is no associated new land-take or loss of habitat. As such any potential for impacts upon amphibians is much reduced.

6.3.7 Taking all these factors into account, our overall conclusion is that GCN are unlikely to be present within the site and any small residual risks can be addressed through careful working practices.

# 7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1.1 In February 2020, Simply Ecology Limited was commissioned by Graham Anthony Associates to undertake an Ecological Appraisal and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (see accompanying report) of the Riverside Chalet Park, Poulton-le-Fylde FY6 7RA. It is understood that the development will involve removal of the existing chalets and replacement with static caravan bases, alterations of the internal access road and provision of new parking spaces. Recommendations in relation to nature conservation follow.

## 7.2 Designated Sites

7.2.1 The proposed development site is adjacent to designated sites, notably the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA; the primary reason for this designation are the significant numbers of over-wintering birds that use the area. The accompanying HRA (Simply Ecology March 2020) concluded that the redevelopment of the site will not, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, have an adverse effect upon the interest features of the Morecambe Bay and Duddon Estuary SPA or the tests required for the meeting of the favourable condition of the designated site. This conclusion was made as long as one mitigation measure is implemented at the site by way of a Planning Obligation.

- ***It is recommended*** that, <u>if any demolition or construction works are to be undertaken during autumn or winter</u>, that temporary acoustic and visual screen will be installed along the Eastern boundary of the development throughout the October to March period. This must be secured by way of a Planning Condition. **Reason**: This would ensure no significant impacts upon flocks of any SPA birds within the sites' Zone of Influence and will ensure no likely significant effect upon the designated site, in accordance with Regulation 63(1) of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

7.2.2 The proposed development site is also adjacent to the River Wyre SSSI. With regard to this protected site:

- ***It is recommended*** that during the construction period, pollution prevention measures should be in place to ensure that there is no surface runoff or contamination of the adjacent River Wyre SSSI. These measures should be put into practice in accordance with the Environment Agency's Pollution Prevention Guidelines (2007). Whilst these guidelines were withdrawn in 2015, they remain the best available to advise actors on appropriate and legally compliant working methods within or near to watercourses. This should be implemented by way of a Planning Condition. **Reason**: This will safeguard the nearby River Wyre from being polluted and therefore deliver compliance with the Water Resources Act 1991 and the Local Plan.

## 7.3 Habitats

7.3.1 The site had limited biodiversity interest, with the scattered trees and hedgerow offering some 'Site Level' ecological value.

- ***It is recommended*** that as many of the mature boundary trees should be retained as possible. This will retain the habitat value for wildlife and to ensure that the development

of the site will have no detrimental impact upon the site's overall biodiversity value. If any trees are to be removed should be replaced by native species at a ratio of 3 to 1 (i.e. 3 new trees to every 1 being removed). This should be implemented by way of a Planning Condition. **Reason**: This will ensure compliance with the Local Authority's statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, as reflected in the Local Plan.

- ***It is recommended*** that, during construction, any trees that are to be retained within, or adjacent to, the development, should be subject to protection measures for the duration of the works. Fencing to protect the trees and root protection zones should be installed in accordance with BS5837:2012 'Guide for Trees in Relation to Construction Recommendations'. This should be implemented by way of a Planning Condition. **Reason**: This will ensure compliance with the Local Authority's statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, as reflected in the Local Plan.

7.3.2 Although the site is dominated by habitats of limited value to wildlife at present, development proposals should seek to enhance its long-term ecological interest and provide new opportunities for protected and notable species in accordance with National Planning Policy and the 2006 NERC Act.

- ***It is recommended*** that Ecological Enhancement Measures for the site are agreed with the Local Planning Authority by way of a Planning Condition. This could be achieved through the inclusion of a selection of the following measures:
- Use native species appropriate to the local area for boundary planting,
- Enhancement of connective habitats through planting of new hedgerow and/ or treelines along the site boundary and residential curtilages,
- Prioritise use of nectar and pollen rich plants and fruit and nut producing species within formal planting schemes,
- Provide new features for roosting bats and nesting birds within buildings or through provision of boxes on retained trees,
- Creation of log/ brash piles and compost heaps along boundary (treelines, walls etc.) to provide opportunities for amphibians and invertebrates.

## 7.4 Bats

7.4.1 The ground-level bat tree inspection identified several trees within the proposed development with potential to support roosting bats. No impact upon these trees is predicted,

- ***It is advised that***, if the Plans change and felling/ pruning is necessary, works should proceed as follows:

- The trees should first be subject to appropriate further survey either in the form of a climbed inspection or night-time surveys to identify the likely presence/absence of a bat roost.
- Where felling of the trees is required to facilitate proposed development, the above surveys are carried out prior to submission of a planning application to avoid the risk of refusal due to insufficient information being available on the effects of the proposals on roosting bats.
- Where the absence of bats within trees proposed for felling cannot be confirmed following further survey, felling should follow a precautionary approach (i.e. soft-felling). Soft-felling involves the gentle lowering of potential roosting features which are then left on the ground overnight to allow any bats present to safely escape. Soft-felling can be carried out at any time of year under suitable weather conditions and should be supervised by an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist.

## 7.5 Breeding Birds

7.5.1 Although the site is highly unlikely to support a notable assemblage of birds in a local context due to its limited extent and nature of the habitats present, the site is used by small numbers of breeding birds. In view of the protection afforded to all breeding birds, their nests and eggs, development works should proceed as follows:

- ***It is recommended*** that all site clearance work should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). Where this is not possible, a suitably qualified ecologist should carry out a check to confirm the absence of nesting birds immediately prior to clearance works commencing. If a bird nest in current use is discovered, then an appropriate buffer zone around the nest should be created where clearance works can only continue after the nest is vacated. **Reason**: This will ensure that no offences are committed under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The bird-nesting season is generally regarded to extend between March and August inclusive.

## 7.6 Great Crested Newts

7.6.1 The site had very limited potential for amphibians, but HSI calculations of the wider area ponds indicated that there was potential for newts to be present in the surrounding habitats.

**5.2.1** Given the detailed consideration of the site and findings of the risk assessment it is concluded that there is no reasonably foreseeable risk that great crested newts will be present within the site. ***It is advised*** that no Natural England licence or mitigation is necessary in this instance as no impact upon any great crested newts or other amphibians is predicted. As long as the following recommendations are implemented by way of a Planning Condition, the client and Local Planning Authority are advised that no Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations derogation Licence is necessary.

- ***It is recommended*** that a working method statement is implemented by way of a Planning Condition to ensure legislative compliance to address any residual risk of great crested newts

being encountered at the site. This will ensure that all reasonable efforts have been taken and there will be no reasonably predictable likelihood that impacts will occur to the species.

- There is no hibernation habitat present on the site, so even if newts are present in the nearby ponds, none will be directly harmed. Nonetheless, any newts moving between ponds during the Spring migration could be affected by the development. Therefore it is recommended that all groundworks/excavations should be completed over-winter (November - March). Any minor excavations which remain open between March to October should have short planks of wood placed into the excavations to enable any amphibians falling into them to climb out. **Reason**: To prevent the capture of any newts entering the development footprint over-night. If newts were captured, to then move or disturb them without a Licence would constitute an offence.
- Temporary rubble or spoil heaps must be stored in 1 tonne nylon 'dumpy bags' or placed upon the raised wooden pallets. **Reason**: To ensure that no potential newt hibernation sites are created, the disturbance of which, if occupied by great crested newts, would constitute an offence.
- The main contractor should be made aware of the slight risk that great crested newts could be encountered on the site. If great crested newts are found during the course of the works, the Appointed Ecologist or Natural England must be contacted immediately and work ceased until further advice to ensure legal compliance can be given. **Reason:** This will deliver compliance with: Section 9 (1 & 4) of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Part 3 (43; 1 & 2) of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and Section 11 (109 & 118) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

# 8.0 REFERENCES

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https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/pdfs/uksi_20171012_en.pdf

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1997/1160/introduction/made

# ANNEX A: STATUTORY AND PLANNING CONTEXT

A.0.1 The client is advised that many species of British wildlife are legally protected. The following section provides a brief overview of the protection afforded to species commonly encountered during development. The Recommendations at the end of this report will advise as necessary, but it is also useful for the client to have an understanding of the legal protection as this helps to ensure that the law is complied with.

## A.1 Badgers

A.1.1 Badgers are protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA), and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. It is illegal to:

- Kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger or to attempt to do so;
- Interfere with a badger sett by damaging or destroying it;
- Obstruct access to or any entrance of a badger sett;
- Disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett

A.1.2 A badger sett is "any structure or place that displays signs indicating current use by a badger". Natural England, the Government's statutory nature conservation body, classifies a sett as active if it has been occupied within the last 12 months.

A.1.3 Operations that might cause disturbance of an active sett entrance can be carried out under licence from Natural England. If any badgers are found during the course of the survey, this will be highlighted in this report.

## A.2 Birds

A.2.1 All wild birds are protected against killing or injury under The WCA 1981 (as amended). This protection extends to bird's nests during the breeding season, which makes it an offence to damage or destroy nests or eggs. Birds that are listed on Schedule 1 of the Act receive additional protection against intentional or reckless disturbance during the breeding season. This makes it an offence to disturb these species at or near to their nesting site.

## A.3 European Protected Species (includes bats, otter, hazel dormouse, great crested newts, and others)

A.3.1 The client is advised that all bats and great crested newts are European Protected Species (EPS). These EPS are protected under European legislation that is implemented in England via The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Regulation 43). A full list of EPS is provided in Schedule 2 of the Regulations. In addition, these EPS also receive the protection of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) in respect of Section 9 (4)(b & c) and (5).

A.3.2 If both national and international legislation are taken together, the legislative protection afforded to these species makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally/ deliberately kill, disturb, injure or capture them.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any breeding site or resting place.
- Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a European Protected Species.

A.3.3 If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, derogation from the legal protection can be issued in the form of a European Protected Species licence issued by Natural England. Licences for development purposes are issued under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) and only allow what is permitted within the terms and conditions of the licence. If any EPS are found during the course of the survey, this will be highlighted in this report.

## A.4 Protected Mammals and Reptiles (includes water vole, red squirrel, reptiles and others)

A.4.1 All native reptiles and a variety of British mammals also receive protection under The WCA 1981 (as amended). Schedule 5 of The WCA lists animals that are protected. The degree of protection varies. Water voles and red squirrel are examples of species with full protection. The Act makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, take, possess, or trade in any wild animal listed in Schedule 5, and prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places.

A.4.2 All native reptiles in the UK are protected. The commoner species such as grass snake, common lizard, slow worm and adder are protected only from unlawful killing and injuring. In practice this may require a reptile protection scheme before implementing a planning permission but no specific licence is required. Sand lizard and smooth snake listed as EPS (see A3.3 above).

A.4.4 If any protected species are found during the course of the survey, this will be highlighted in this report.

## A.5 Non-native invasive species

A.5.1 A number of non-native plant species growing wild in the UK are listed on Schedule 9 of the WCA due to their invasive nature and the detrimental impact they can have on native habitats and wildlife. This legislation makes it an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any plant species which is included in Part II of Schedule 9.

A.5.2 This legislation should be considered during site clearance works which could lead to the spread of Schedule 9 listed plant species from the site if plant material is not properly handled and disposed of. Development proposals should also consider the removal of invasive species from areas of site that would otherwise remain unaffected by works in order to avoid the risk of these invasive plants spreading from the site in the future and enhance habitats within the site. This would in turn free up space for wildlife friendly planting, prioritising use of native species within planting schemes where appropriate.

## A.6 Planning Considerations

A.6.1 When considering each planning application, the presence of protected species, such as those listed above, is a material consideration which must be fully considered by the Local Authority when granting planning permission. If a licence from Natural England is required, then prior to issuing any planning consent, the local planning authority will need to be satisfied that there is no reason why such a licence would not be issued. Therefore, in reaching the planning decision the local planning authority will need to have regard to the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The three licensing tests given in the Regulations must be considered. In summary, these are that:

**1.** The development is required for the purpose of:

- Preserving public health or public safety;

- For other imperative reasons of over-riding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;
- For preventing serious damage to property.

**2.** There is no satisfactory alternative.

**3.** The proposal will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status.

A.6.2 All necessary information would need to be provided to the planning authority as part of the planning application in order to address the above tests.

A.6.3 The Natural Environment and Communities Act (NERC Act) 2006 extended the biodiversity duty set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. The Duty is set out in Section 40 of the Act, and states that:

"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity"

A.6.4 The Duty applies to all local authorities, community, parish and town councils, police, fire and health authorities and utility companies. Section 41 (S41) of this Act (the 'England Biodiversity List') also requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. This list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under section 40(1) of the Act.

A.6.5 Also, Local Authorities must follow the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to wildlife issues and development. For each development proposal considered by the Local Planning Authority the NPPF states that the authority must aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

### UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP)

A.6.6 The UK BAP, which was first published in 1994, was the UK government response to the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity. It sets priorities for nationally important 'priority species' and 'priority habitats'. Each species and habitat action plan has costed actions and targets, and is used to inform the compilation of national lists such as the Section 41 List described above.

# ANNEX B: IMPACT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

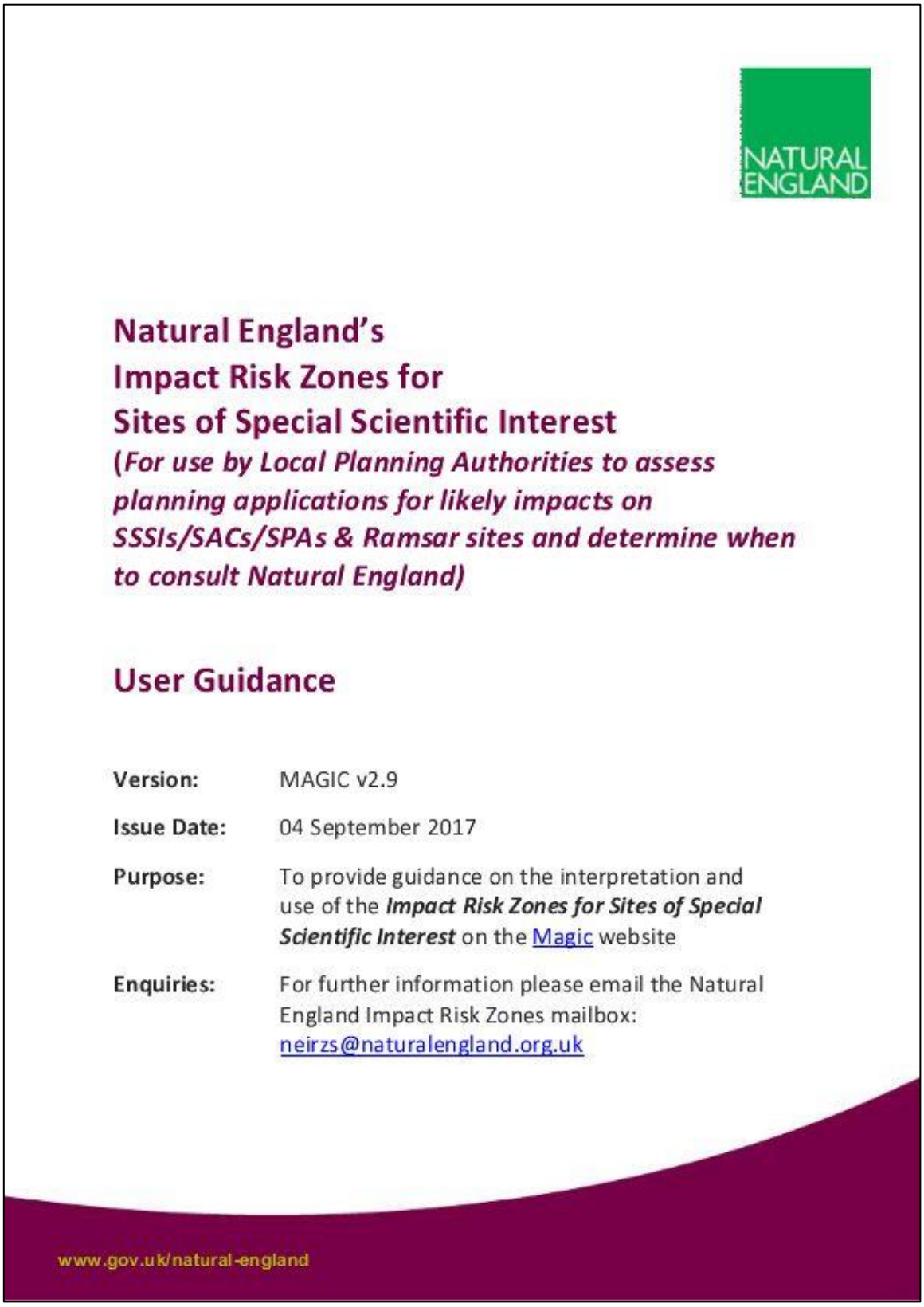
*Table 1: Valuing Ecological Features*

| Level of Value | Examples |
|---|---|
| International | An internationally designated site or candidate site (SPA, pSPA, SAC, cSAC, pSAC, Ramsar site, Biogenetic Reserve). A viable area of a habitat type listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive, or smaller areas of such habitat which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. Any regularly occurring population of an internationally important species, which is threatened or rare in the UK, i.e. it is a UK Red Data Book species or listed as occurring in 15 or fewer 10km squares in the UK (Categories 1 and 2 in the UK BAP) or of uncertain conservation status or of global conservation concern in the UK BAP. A regularly occurring, nationally significant population of any internationally important species. |
| National | A nationally designated site (SSSI, ASSI, NNR, Marine Nature Reserve) or a discrete area, which meets the published selection criteria for national designation. A viable area of a priority habitat identified in the UK BAP, or of smaller areas of such habitat which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. Any regularly occurring population of a nationally important species which is threatened or rare in the region or county (see local BAP). A regularly occurring, regionally or county significant number of a nationally important species. |
| Regional | Viable areas of key habitat identified in the Regional BAP or smaller areas of such habitat which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. Viable areas of key habitat identified as being of Regional value in the appropriate Natural Area profile. Any regularly occurring population of a nationally important species which is not threatened or rare in the region. Any regularly occurring, locally significant population of a species listed as being nationally scarce which occurs in 16-100 10km squares in the UK or in a Regional BAP or relevant Natural Area on account of its regional rarity or localisation. A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a regionally important species. |
| County | Semi-natural ancient woodland greater than 0.25ha. County/Metropolitan sites and other sites which the designating authority has determined meet the published ecological selection criteria for designation, including Local Nature Reserves selected on County/metropolitan ecological criteria. A viable area of habitat identified in the County BAP. A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a County/Metropolitan 'red data book' or BAP species, designated on account of its regional rarity or localisation. A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a County/Metropolitan important species. |
| District/Borough | Semi-natural ancient woodland smaller than 0.25ha. Areas of habitat identified in a sub- County (District/Borough) BAP or in the relevant Natural Area profile. Sites/features that are scarce within the District/Borough or which appreciably enrich the District/Borough habitat resource. A diverse and/or ecologically valuable hedgerow network. A population of a species that is listed in a District/Borough BAP, because of its rarity in the locality or in the relevant Natural Area profile because of its regional rarity or localisation. A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a District/Borough important species during a critical phase of its life cycle. |
| Site | Areas of habitat or populations/communities of species considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource within the context of the parish or neighbourhood, e.g. species-rich hedgerows. NB: Where species or habitats occur in more than one category, the highest value is applicable. |

*Table 2: Impact Magnitude*

| Impact Magnitude | Examples |
|---|---|
| Major | Loss of over 50% of a site feature, habitat or population. Adverse change to all of a site feature, habitat or population. For benefits, an impact equivalent in nature conservation terms to gain of over 50% of a site feature, habitat or population. |
| Moderate | Loss affecting 20-50% of a site feature, habitat or population. Adverse change to over 50% of a site feature, habitat or population. For benefits, an impact equivalent in nature conservation terms to a gain of 20-50% of a site feature, habitat or population. |
| Slight | Loss affecting 5-19% of a site feature, habitat or population. Adverse change to 20-50% of a site feature, habitat or population. For benefits, an impact equivalent in nature conservation terms to a gain of 5-19% of a site feature, habitat or population. |
| Negligible | Loss affecting up to 5% of a site feature, habitat or population. Adverse change to less than 20% of a site feature, habitat or population. For benefits, an impact equivalent in nature conservation terms to a gain of up to 5% of a site feature, habitat or population. |

# ANNEX C: IMPACT RISK ZONES FOR SSSIS (2017)



NATURAL ENGLAND

**Natural England's**
**Impact Risk Zones for**
**Sites of Special Scientific Interest**
***(For use by Local Planning Authorities to assess planning applications for likely impacts on SSSIs/SACs/SPAs & Ramsar sites and determine when to consult Natural England)***

**User Guidance**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Version:** | MAGIC v2.9 |
| **Issue Date:** | 04 September 2017 |
| **Purpose:** | To provide guidance on the interpretation and use of the ***Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest*** on the Magic website |
| **Enquiries:** | For further information please email the Natural England Impact Risk Zones mailbox: neirzs@naturalengland.org.uk |

www.gov.uk/natural-england

SSSI Impact Risk Zones User Guidance - MAGIC

# Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest

## Purpose of the Impact Risk Zones for SSSIs

As the government's conservation advisory body, Natural England has a number of statutory duties and general responsibilities in relation to SSSIs. These include providing advice to local planning authorities (LPAs) and developers on the potential impacts of development on SSSIs to ensure their protection and enhancement in line with the policies in the NPPF and development plans.

The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks to SSSIs posed by development proposals. They define zones around each SSSI which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts. The IRZs also cover the interest features and sensitivities of European sites, which are underpinned by the SSSI designation and "Compensation Sites", which have been secured as compensation for impacts on Natura 2000/Ramsar sites.

Local planning authorities (LPAs) have a duty to consult Natural England before granting planning permission on any development that is in or likely to affect a SSSI. The SSSI IRZs can be used by LPAs to consider whether a proposed development is likely to affect a SSSI and determine whether they will need to consult Natural England to seek advice on the nature of any potential SSSI impacts and how they might be avoided or mitigated. The IRZs do not alter or remove the requirements to consult Natural England on other natural environment impacts or other types of development proposal under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 (as amended) and other statutory requirements - see the gov.uk website for further information.

The SSSI IRZs can be used by developers, consultants and members of the public, who are preparing to submit a planning application. They will help them to consider whether a proposed development is likely to affect a SSSI and choose whether to seek pre-application advice from Natural England. This will allow any potential impacts to be taken into account within the planning application and so minimise the risk of delays at the formal planning stage. Further information on Natural England's pre-application Discretionary Advice Service (DAS) is available on the gov.uk website.

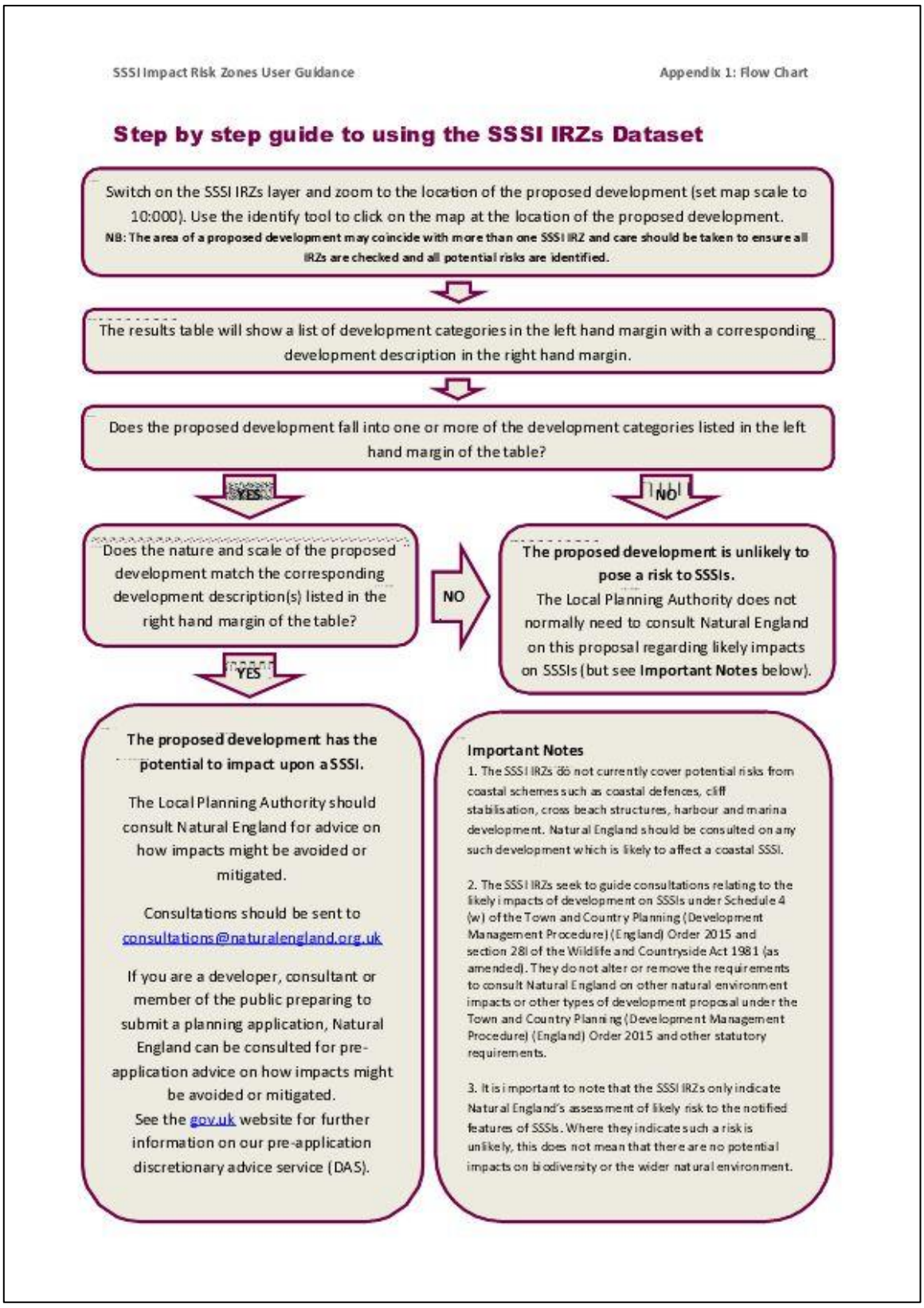
## Access to the data and further information

The SSSI IRZ Dataset can be downloaded from the Natural England Open Data Geoportal as an ESRI ArcMap Shapefile and used in combination with other spatial data in the users GIS. It is also available to view on Magic. We have set up an Impact Risk Zones workspace on Huddle, a secure online collaboration and file sharing site, to allow us to share data, news and information about the SSSI IRZs with users. Members will be notified when an update has taken place and there is a discussion area where questions can be posted and answered.

If you would like to become a member of our Huddle Workspace, or require further information and/or advice on the SSSI IRZs please email the NE Impact Risk Zones mailbox: neirzs@naturalengland.org.uk.

## Update of the SSSI Impact Risk Zone Dataset

The SSSI IRZ Dataset is updated regularly to reflect improvements in our evidence and understanding of the sensitivities and potential risks to SSSIs. Updates are undertaken every two months and users should ensure that they are always using the most up to date version of the dataset.



SSSI Impact Risk Zones User Guidance — Appendix 1: Flow Chart

## Step by step guide to using the SSSI IRZs Dataset

Switch on the SSSI IRZs layer and zoom to the location of the proposed development (set map scale to 10:000). Use the identify tool to click on the map at the location of the proposed development.

**NB: The area of a proposed development may coincide with more than one SSSI IRZ and care should be taken to ensure all IRZs are checked and all potential risks are identified.**

The results table will show a list of development categories in the left hand margin with a corresponding development description in the right hand margin.

Does the proposed development fall into one or more of the development categories listed in the left hand margin of the table?

YES

NO

Does the nature and scale of the proposed development match the corresponding development description(s) listed in the right hand margin of the table?

NO

**The proposed development is unlikely to pose a risk to SSSIs.**

The Local Planning Authority does not normally need to consult Natural England on this proposal regarding likely impacts on SSSIs (but see **Important Notes** below).

YES

**The proposed development has the potential to impact upon a SSSI.**

The Local Planning Authority should consult Natural England for advice on how impacts might be avoided or mitigated.

Consultations should be sent to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk

If you are a developer, consultant or member of the public preparing to submit a planning application, Natural England can be consulted for pre-application advice on how impacts might be avoided or mitigated.
See the gov.uk website for further information on our pre-application discretionary advice service (DAS).

**Important Notes**

1. The SSSI IRZs do not currently cover potential risks from coastal schemes such as coastal defences, cliff stabilisation, cross beach structures, harbour and marina development. Natural England should be consulted on any such development which is likely to affect a coastal SSSI.

2. The SSSI IRZs seek to guide consultations relating to the likely impacts of development on SSSIs under Schedule 4 (w) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and section 28I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They do not alter or remove the requirements to consult Natural England on other natural environment impacts or other types of development proposal under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and other statutory requirements.

3. It is important to note that the SSSI IRZs only indicate Natural England's assessment of likely risk to the notified features of SSSIs. Where they indicate such a risk is unlikely, this does not mean that there are no potential impacts on biodiversity or the wider natural environment.

# Questions and Answers

## Purpose and Use

### What are Natural England's SSSI IRZs?

The SSSI IRZs are a GIS tool/dataset. They define zones around each SSSI which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts.

### How does Natural England use the SSSI IRZs?

Natural England is a statutory consultee on development proposals that might impact on SSSIs. When a consultation is received, the SSSI IRZs are used to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks to SSSIs posed by development proposals. This allows Natural England to quickly determine which consultations are unlikely to pose risks and which require more detailed consideration.

### How can Local Planning Authorities use the SSSI IRZs?

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a duty to consult Natural England before granting planning permission on any development that is in or likely to affect a SSSI. The SSSI IRZs can be used by LPAs to consider whether a proposed development is likely to affect a SSSI and determine whether they will need to consult Natural England to seek advice on the nature of any potential SSSI impacts and how they might be avoided or mitigated. For a step-by-step guide to using the SSSI IRZs see the flow chart in Appendix 1.

### Do the SSSI IRZs reflect the interest features and sensitivities of European sites?

European sites are underpinned by the SSSI designation and their interest features and sensitivities are covered by the SSSI IRZs. Where the notified features of the European site and SSSI are different, the SSSI IRZs have been set so that they reflect both. The SSSI IRZs can therefore be used as part of a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to help determine whether there are likely to be significant effects from a particular development on the interest features of the European site. The SSSI IRZs also cover "Compensation Sites" which have been secured as compensation for impacts on Natura 2000/Ramsar sites. Each Compensation Site has been given the same IRZs as the Natura 2000/Ramsar site(s) it is providing compensation for.

### Do the IRZs alter the arrangements to consult Natural England?

The IRZs seek to guide consultations relating to the likely impacts of development on SSSIs under Schedule 4 (w) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and section 28I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They do not alter or remove the requirements to consult Natural England on other natural environment impacts or other types of development proposal under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and other statutory requirements.

For further information on when to consult Natural England on planning proposals see the gov.uk website.

All consultations should be sent to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

### How can developers, consultants and members of the public use the SSSI IRZs?

The SSSI IRZS can be used by developers, consultants and members of the public who are preparing to submit a planning application. They will help them to consider whether a proposed development is likely to affect a SSSI and choose whether to seek pre-application advice from Natural England. This will allow any potential impacts to be taken into account within the planning application and so minimise the risk of delays at the formal planning stage.

For a step-by-step guide to using the SSSI IRZs see the flow chart in Appendix 1.

Further information on Natural England's pre-application Discretionary Advice Service (DAS) is available on the gov.uk website.

### What types of development are covered by the SSSI IRZs?

Potential impacts from most types of development requiring planning permission are covered by the SSSI IRZs. One important exception is any development proposal with the potential to impact on coastal processes. The SSSI IRZs do not currently cover potential risks from coastal schemes such as coastal defences, cliff stabilisation, cross beach structures, harbour and marina development. Natural England should be consulted on any coastal scheme which is likely to affect a coastal SSSI.

### What does it mean when a development is indicated by the SSSI IRZs?

If the development descriptions in the SSSI IRZs at a chosen location match the nature and scale of a proposed development, this indicates the potential for impact and means that more detailed consideration is required. In this case, Natural England should be consulted for advice on any potential impacts on SSSIs and how these might be avoided or mitigated.

### What does it mean when a development is not indicated by the SSSI IRZs?

If the development descriptions in the SSSI IRZs at a chosen location do not match the nature and scale of a proposed development, this signifies that the development, as proposed, is unlikely to pose a significant risk to the notified features of any SSSI(s) and normally no further consultation with Natural England regarding likely effects on SSSIs is required (see *Coastal Schemes* exception above).

When using the SSSI IRZs and interpreting the information they provide, it is important to note that they only indicate Natural England's assessment of likely risk to the notified features of SSSIs. Where they indicate such a risk is unlikely, this does not mean that there are no potential impacts on biodiversity or the wider natural environment.

## Maintenance and Development

### How often is the SSSI IRZ dataset updated?

A new version of the dataset is uploaded onto Magic and the Natural England Open Data Geoportal every two months.

### Do the SSSI IRZs reflect the site specific sensitivities of each SSSI?

Yes. The SSSI IRZs for each SSSI have been drawn to reflect the specific features for which the site is notified. Natural England's local team staff have reviewed the SSSI IRZs and where necessary the IRZs have been varied to reflect locally specific site sensitivities. Ensuring that the SSSI IRZs continue to reflect our understanding of locally specific site sensitivities is an ongoing process which will depend on the input of Natural England's area teams and our local partners.

**Do the SSSI IRZs take into account local circumstances?**

Yes. Natural England's local team staff have reviewed the SSSI IRZs and where necessary the IRZs have been varied to reflect specific local circumstances such as known water quality issues or particular development pressures. Ensuring that the SSSI IRZs continue to reflect local circumstances is an ongoing process which will depend on the input of Natural England's area teams and our local partners.

**How are the SSSI IRZs kept up to date with emerging evidence and improvements of our understanding of SSSI sensitivities?**

Natural England's specialists continue to review the evidence and advise the IRZ project on changes required to ensure the IRZs reflect our current understanding of SSSI sensitivities. We also welcome input from Natural England's area teams and their local partners, and encourage them to contribute to the update and development of SSSI IRZs in their area.

**What can I do if I think the IRZs of a particular SSSI do not accurately reflect the sensitivities of the site?**

Ensuring that the SSSI IRZs continue to reflect our current understanding of specific site sensitivities is an ongoing process which will depend on the input of Natural England's specialists, area teams and our local partners. If you think the IRZs for one or more SSSIs need to be reviewed and/or updated you should either speak to the area team IRZ lead or contact the IRZ project team directly through the Impact Risk Zones mailbox: neirzs@naturalengland.org.uk.

**What can I do if I think that the potential impacts of a particular type of development type are not adequately reflected in the SSSI IRZs?**

Ensuring that the SSSI IRZs continue to reflect our current understanding of the potential risks posed to SSSIs by different types of development is an ongoing process which will depend on the input of Natural England's specialists, area teams and our local partners. If you think there is a significant risk which is not reflected in the SSSI IRZs you should contact the IRZ project team directly through the Impact Risk Zones mailbox: neirzs@naturalengland.org.uk.

## Attribute Data for SSSI Impact Risk Zones

The table below illustrates the structure of the attribute data table and sets out the development categories and descriptions used in the dataset. It also explains why Natural England is concerned about the different types of development reflected in the SSSI IRZs.

| Development Category | GIS Attribute Field Name | ***Example Description:*** the nature and scale of development proposals at the given location which have the potential to impact on an SSSI. Where a proposal meets the description consult NE for further advice. | Why is Natural England concerned about this type of development? |
|---|---|---|---|
| All Consultations | *AllConsult* | ***ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS*** - Text may be qualified to exclude householder applications or applications in existing settlements/urban areas that do not impact on greenspace, farmland or semi natural habitats or landscape features such as trees, hedged, streams, rural buildings/structures. | All developments within or in very close proximity to SSSIs present a range of risks of direct impacts. Extending further from the sites, potential impacts on Great Crested Newts (GCN), bats and birds are also reflected in this category, as they travel several kilometres from SSSIs to breed, roost, forage etc. Proposed developments outside or on the edge of existing settlements/urban areas can result in increased light pollution, loss or fragmentation of greenspace and loss or disturbance of functional habitat, all of which can affect these species. |
| Infrastructure | *Infrastruc* | ***Pipelines, pylons and overhead cables. Any transport proposal including road, rail and by water (excluding routine maintenance). Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals*** - Description may vary to include/exclude one or all of the above. | Pipelines, pylons and overhead cables can create a collision risk for birds and the footprint of the construction can affect local water supplies, which the SSSIs depend on. An increase in road traffic as a result of new or extended roads can cause local air pollution impacts and significant transport infrastructure projects can have impacts on water supply mechanisms, especially by introducing new drainage. New or extended aviation proposals can cause disturbance to birds, as well as collision with birds. Increased air traffic also has the potential for significant air pollution. |
| Wind & Solar Energy | *WindSolar* | ***Solar schemes with a footprint >0.5ha, all wind turbines*** – Description may vary to include/exclude one of the above. | Wind turbines can cause collision impacts and disturbance for birds. Solar schemes can impact on functional land outside SSSIs which birds depend on for feeding. |
| Minerals, Oil and Gas | *MinOilGas* | ***Planning applications for quarries – including new proposals, Review of Minerals Permissions (ROMP), extensions, variations to conditions etc. Oil & gas exploration/extraction.*** - Text may be qualified to exclude applications in existing settlements/urban areas that do not impact on greenspace, farmland or semi natural habitats. | These types of development often involve water abstraction, which can affect local water supplies that designated sites depend on. Waste drilling fluids that are returned to the surface may contain gases and other contaminants, which may be treated and discharged either to the ground to filter away from the site, or into a nearby watercourse. If the treated water flows towards a SSSI, it has the potential to impact on water quality sensitive features. Site activities and spoil generation can create dust or particles, which can physically smother leaves or be toxic to habitats and species on SSSIs. Flaring may give rise to local elevated levels of particulates, local ozone formation and NOx emissions. The development footprint and site activities can result in loss or fragmentation of greenspace and loss or disturbance to functional habitat, which birds depend on for feeding. Vibration from drilling can affect geological features. |
| Rural Non Residential | *RuralNonRe* | ***Any non-residential development outside of existing urban areas where net additional gross internal floorspace following development is 30m² or more.*** – Description may vary to specify different area thresholds. | Rural non-residential developments can impact on water quality, cause disturbance to birds and impact on functional land outside SSSIs, which they depend on for feeding. |
| Residential | *Residentia* | ***Any residential developments with a total net gain in residential units*** – Description may vary to specify thresholds for numbers of residential units. | New residential developments can impact water supply mechanisms, water quality and functional land outside SSSIs, which birds depend on for feeding. New houses also mean more people, which can increase disturbance to birds, and put more recreational pressure on sensitive sites. |
| Rural Residential | *RuralResid* | ***Any residential developments outside of existing settlements/urban areas with a total net gain in residential units*** - Description may vary to specify thresholds for numbers of residential units. | Rural housing developments can impact on catchments of water dependent and water quality sensitive SSSIs and on functional land outside site boundaries which SSSI birds depend on for feeding. New houses also mean more people, which can increase disturbance to birds, and put more recreational pressure on sensitive sites. |
| Air Pollution | *AirPolluti* | ***Any development that could cause AIR POLLUTION or DUST either in its construction or operation (incl: industrial/commercial processes and agricultural developments such as pig & poultry units, manure/slurry stores)*** - Description may vary to include/exclude one or all of the above. | Emissions from many different types of development can cause air pollution and/or dust affecting the habitats and species on SSSIs. Dust or particles can fall onto plants and physically smother the leaves, affecting photosynthesis, respiration, transpiration and leaf temperature. There may also be toxicity issues (caused by heavy metals particles) and potential changes in pH (particularly if the dust is alkaline (e.g. cement dust)). Lichens can be directly affected by the dust (shading, chemical effects) or by changes in bark chemistry. |
| Combustion | *Combustion* | ***All general combustion processes. Incl: energy from waste incineration, other incineration, landfill gas generation plant, pyrolysis/gasification, anaerobic digestion, sewage treatment works, other incineration/combustion*** - Description may vary to specify thresholds for energy input. | Emissions from combustion can cause air pollution affecting the habitats and species on SSSIs. More than 500m away from a SSSI, only combustion processes over a certain minimum size are likely to have an impact. A very large project and could cause air pollution on SSSIs up to 10km away. |
| Waste | *Waste* | ***Mechanical and biological waste treatment, inert landfill, non-hazardous landfill, hazardous landfill, household civic amenity recycling facilities construction, demolition and excavation waste, other waste management*** - Description may vary to specify particular type of waste proposal. | Landfill and waste treatment can cause air pollution and affect local water supplies, which designated sites depend on. Landfill sites attract large numbers of gulls which can impact on birds (Predation). An MBWT plant can generate significant amounts of ammonia. At high concentrations ammonia is toxic to vegetation; it also deposits to ecosystems and causes nitrogen enrichment and acidification of soils and freshwaters. |
| Composting | *Compost* | ***Any composting proposal. Incl: open windrow composting, in-vessel composting, anaerobic digestion, other waste management*** - Description may vary to specify thresholds for throughput in tonnes. | Emissions of ammonia from composting units can make a significant contribution to nitrogen deposition near to a sensitive site and cause severe localised impacts on semi-natural habitats as well as contributing to regional nitrogen deposition. More than 500m away from a SSSI, the amount of material composted needs to be over a certain amount to be likely to have an impact. |
| Discharges | *Discharge* | ***Any discharge of water or liquid waste that is discharged to ground (i.e. to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream (NB This does not include discharges to mains sewer which are unlikely to pose a risk at this location)*** - Description may vary to specify volume thresholds for discharges or to include discharges to main sewer. | Most foul water is removed from a development site by a mains sewer. Where this is not the case, foul water is usually treated on site and then discharged either to ground to filter away from the site, or into a nearby watercourse. If the treated water flows towards a SSSI, it has the potential to impact on water quality sensitive features. |
| Water Supply | *Water_Sply* | ***Large infrastructure such as warehousing / industry where net additional gross internal floorspace is > 1000m² or any development needing its own water supply (eg remote rural housing)*** - Description may vary to include/exclude one of the above. | Large non-residential developments can have an impact on water supply mechanisms to SSSIs and rural housing developments, especially remote ones, can need their own water supply, such as an abstraction borehole or spring, which can affect water dependent SSSIs. |
| NOTES | *NOTES* | This field will be populated where there is additional planning policy/guidance that planners/developers need to be aware of. It does not alter or remove the requirement to consult NE when other IRZs indicate consultation is necessary. | |

# APPENDIX A: SSSI CITATIONS

**County:** Lancashire **Site Name: Wyre Estuary**

**District:** Wyre, Fylde

**Status:** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.

**Local Planning Authority:** Fylde Borough Council
Wyre Borough Council

**National Grid Reference:** SD 350440 **Area:** 1,488.03 (ha) 3,675.43 (ac)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50 000** 102 **1:10 000** SD 33 NE
SD 34 NE
SD 34
NW SD
34 SE
SD 34 SW
SD 35 SW

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –** **Date of Last Revision:** –

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 27 February 1995 **Date of Last Revision:** –

**Other Information:**

1. The site forms part of 'Morecambe Bay (including Wyre-Lune)' listed in 'A Nature Conservation Review', edited by D. A. Ratcliffe (1977), Cambridge University Press.

2. The site is adjacent to the Lune Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest and incorporates Barnaby Sands Marsh and Burrows Marsh SSSIs.

3. The site is an integral part of the Morecambe Bay complex of estuaries and shore which collectively meet the criteria for inclusion within the Morecambe Bay Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention, and as a Special Protection Area under Article 4 of the European Community Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

The Wyre Estuary, lying just south of Lune Estuary is an integral part of Morecambe Bay, one of the two largest areas of intertidal estuarine flats in Britain (the other being the Wash). The whole estuarine complex is of international significance for wintering wading birds and of national significance for wintering wildfowl. The Wyre in its own right is of national importance for wintering and passage black-tailed godwit, wintering turnstone

and for wintering teal in times of hard weather. The Wyre Estuary, including those parts within Barnaby Sands Marsh and Burrows Marsh Sites of Special Scientific Interest, supports the largest area of ungrazed saltmarsh in North West England. The transitions from low to upper marsh are well developed and there are extensive transitions to freshwater swamp communities above high water mark.

The most extensive areas of saltmarsh are found on the east side of the estuary between Barnaby Sands and Staynall, on the west side north of Stannah and on the north side upstream of Shard Bridge. Much of the latter has recently developed on actively accreting mud.

The seaward edge of the saltmarsh is dominated by those species specialised to colonising bare mud and withstanding frequent tidal inundation – the glassworts *salicornia* spp., annual sea-blite *Suaeda maritima* and common saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia maritima*. Common cord-grass *Spartina anglica* is abundant on some of the marshes but appears to be declining. Higher up the marshes there are extensive areas of saltmarsh communities characterised by grazing-sensitive species. The Wyre supports the largest area in Lancashire of saltmarsh dominated by sea-purslane *Halimione portulacoides* and also the largest area of a mixed community distinctive for the presence of common sea-lavender *Limonium vulgare*, sea plantain *Plantago maritima* and sea arrowgrass *Triglochin maritima*. The nationally scarce lax-flowered sea-lavender *Limonium humile* is also present. Most of the sea-purslane dominated saltmarsh is downstream of Shard Bridge. Upstream, especially on the north side, there are extensive areas dominated by sea aster *Aster tripolium.*

On the upper saltmarsh there is a mixture of communities with species typical of a less saline influence. Saltmarsh rush *Juncus gerardi*, sea rush *Juncus maritimus*, red fescue *Festuca rubra* and spear-leaved orache *Atriplex prostrata* are all present and, locally, there is long-bracted sedge *Carex extensa*. Of particular interest are the extensive transitions to brackish or freshwater habitats on the landward side. Here swamp is the dominant community with common reed *Phragmites australis* or sea club-rush *Scirpus maritimus*. In places the landward transition is to sea couch *Elymus pycnanthus*. Other transition species present include hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and parsley water-dropwort *O. lachenalii*.

Ornithologically the Wyre Estuary is an integral part of the Morecambe Bay–Lune–Wyre system, the second most important intertidal area in Britain after the Wash for wintering and passage wading birds. The Wyre is nationally important in its own right for wintering and passage black-tailed godwit and wintering turnstone (numbers exceeding 1% of the British population). In spring and autumn the estuary regularly supports 200 black-tailed godwit and during the winter months about 100 feed and roost in the estuary. Peak numbers of turnstone feeding in the estuary have in recent years averaged at 640.

The Wyre is also known to be an important hard weather roost for teal. Large numbers of lapwing and golden plover use the estuary for roosting at low tide. Numbers of the former have in some years approached 1% of the UK population.

Movements of roosting and feeding birds within the Wyre and between this and other estuaries are complex with different parts of the estuary being important for birds at different stages of the tide. The major high tide roost in Armhill with smaller ones at Stannah, Burrows Marsh, Barnaby Sands and Knott End Skears. On spring tides birds are displaced from the smaller roosts to Armhill which, on occasions, can hold over one thousand birds. Along with black-tailed godwit, turnstone, lapwing and golden plover, other wading birds which regularly use the estuary include oystercatcher, redshank and dunlin. The oystercatchers and turnstones feed at the mouth of the estuary on the rocky skears at Rossall Point and Knott End. Golden plover and lapwing roost at low tide around the upstream of Shard Bridge, the former feeding on the Lune estuary to the north at high tide. Waders roosting on the Wyre may be using other parts of the Morecambe Bay complex at low tide.