

The background of the middle section is a vibrant green field of grass, slightly out of focus, with a bokeh effect of light circles. The top of this section is a light blue gradient.

# MOON SELF STORAGE, HARTNOLLS BUSINESS CENTRE

## Ecological Appraisal

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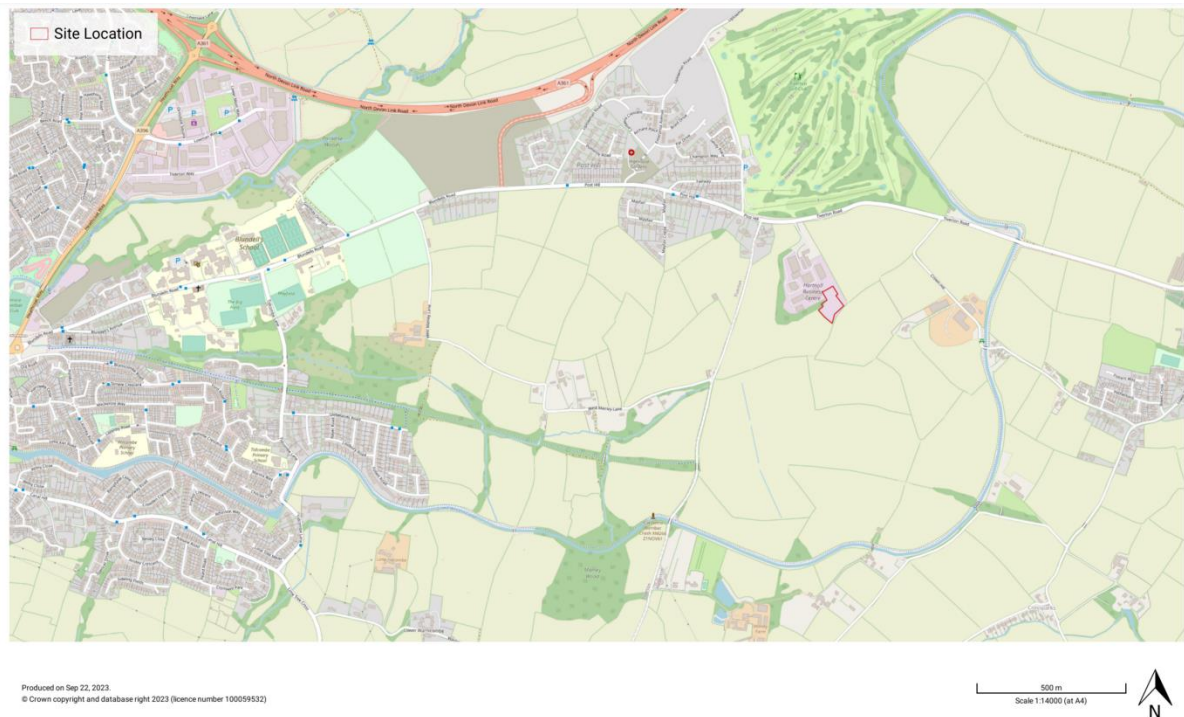
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This document provides ecological information in relation to a planning application for the continued use of a self-storage area on Hartnolls Business Centre near Tiverton (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1, "Site Location Plan"**



- 1.2. Engain has completed ecological surveys and assessments of this area in connection with a planning application for the development of the wider site (Engain report reference: eg18835). Surveys of the site included bat transect surveys and the use of static detectors, reptile surveys, breeding bird surveys, great crested newt surveys, dormouse surveys, otter and water vole surveys and habitat surveys. These surveys were carried out in 2013, and updated again in 2020. The surveys confirmed that the wider site is used by a range of birds and bat species and that dormice are present in the hedgerows. This report presents an assessment of ecological constraints associated with the self-storage area in the context of the previous surveys and an updated ecological survey of the self storage area that was completed on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023. The habitats at the self storage site and the surrounding area have not changed and the conclusions of the previous ecological surveys remain valid.

## 2. ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

### Habitats and Protected Species

- 2.1. The majority of the self-storage area consists of hardstanding, while some less frequently used areas of the site have tall ruderals and ephemeral vegetation on bare soils and aggregates (**Figure 2**).

**Figure 2, "Habitat Plan"**



- 2.2. The ruderal and ephemeral vegetation (e.g. **Figure 3**) consists of various common tall forbs and rosette-forming species including Canadian fleabane (*Conyza canadensis*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*).

Figure 3, "Ruderal vegetation"



Figure 4, "Wooded embankment"



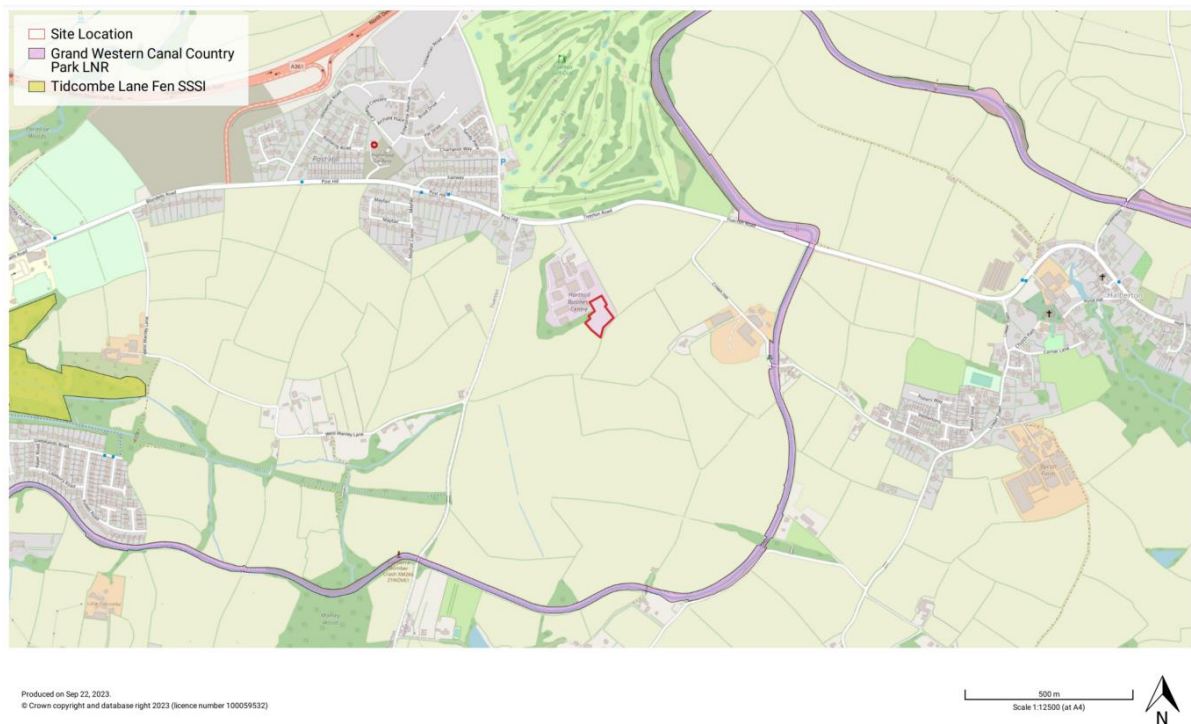
- 2.3. There is an embankment in the north-west corner of the site (**Figure 4**), which is planted with birch (*Betula pendula*) and Italian alder (*Alnus incana*). There is no shrub-layer and the field-layer is dominated by nettles (*Urtica dioica*) with brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.)
- 2.4. To the south of the site, outside of the red line boundary, is a hedge with a ditch. The hedge comprises various native woody species including hazel (*Corylus avellana*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and oak (*Quercus robur*). The ditch had very shallow water with a slow flow at the time of the survey, in a channel approximately 1m wide. To the east of the site (outside of the site boundary) is an embankment dominated by tall ruderal vegetation, with three semi-mature oak trees.
- 2.5. The hardstanding areas of the site have no ecological value and are not suitable for any protected or notable species. There were no signs of badgers using any of the land within the red line boundary or the adjacent areas.
- 2.6. The wooded embankment is good habitat for nesting birds and may be used by foraging badgers or reptiles. It has an even age-structure and little species-diversity and is not likely to be used by dormice.
- 2.7. The ruderal and ephemeral vegetation may be used occasionally by small numbers of reptiles or amphibians. Great crested newts are not present in this area, but slow-worms and grass snakes have been recorded from the surrounding area. Individuals of these species may occasionally use the site, but it is not large enough to support a self-contained population.

- 2.8. The ditch and hedge to the south of the site provide a good linear habitat feature for foraging and commuting bats, and good habitat for dormice. The hedge is also good habitat for nesting birds.
- 2.9. The three oak trees on the embankment to the east of the site do not have any potential roosting features for bats, but they are good habitat for nesting birds.

**Designated Sites**

- 2.10. The storage area is approximately 500m west of the Grand Western Canal Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), and 1.5km east of the Tidcombe Lane Fen Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – **Figure 5**.

**Figure 5, "Designated Sites"**



### 3. EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1. The well-used parts of the storage area are not suitable for any protected or notable species and the continued use of these areas would not have any ecological impacts on the site.
- 3.2. The areas of bare ground and ruderal vegetation are infrequently used for storage. If any reptiles or amphibians are present here, there is good connectivity into abundant adjacent habitat where they could find refuge if the areas are brought into use. The use of these areas for storage in future would therefore not have any significant impacts on local reptile and amphibian populations.
- 3.3. The Grand Western Canal Country Park LNR is separated from the storage site by several fields, and there is no watercourse linking the two areas.
- 3.4. Tidcombe Lane Fen SSSI is sufficiently distant and separated from the storage area that it would not be impacted by the continued use of the storage area. The ditch to the south of the site (outside of the site boundary) is separated from the site by an area of rough ground with tall ruderal and rough grassland vegetation. This ditch follows a route that leads to further field drains and water storage ponds to the south-west, but there is no continuous flow of water from the ditch and field drains into the Alsa Brook (which is a stream that flows into the SSSI).
- 3.5. The storage area was well-maintained and there was no sign that there would be any risk of runoff into the adjacent watercourse, which is also protected by the retained buffer of rough ground and ruderal vegetation. The continued use of the storage area does not therefore pose any risk of adverse impacts on the LNR or SSSI.





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