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**Land at Virginia Cottage, Bennett's Lane,  
Blackpool, FY4 5BE**

**Ecological Appraisal**

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**Simply Ecology Limited**

**Ref: SE/KDGO059/01**

**September 2021**

**For**

**Keystone Design Associates Ltd,  
Development House,  
261 Church Street,  
Blackpool,  
FY1 3PB**

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## Control Sheet

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Background Information

1.1.1 In August 2021, Simply Ecology Limited was commissioned by Keystone Design and Associates Ltd to undertake an Ecological Assessment of land at Virginia Cottage, Bennett's Lane, Blackpool, FY4 5BE (OS grid reference SD 3298 3270). See Plan 1 for Site Location, Plan 2: Site Boundary and Plan 3: Site Proposals.

### 1.2 Aims

1.2.1 The aims of this ecological assessment were to:

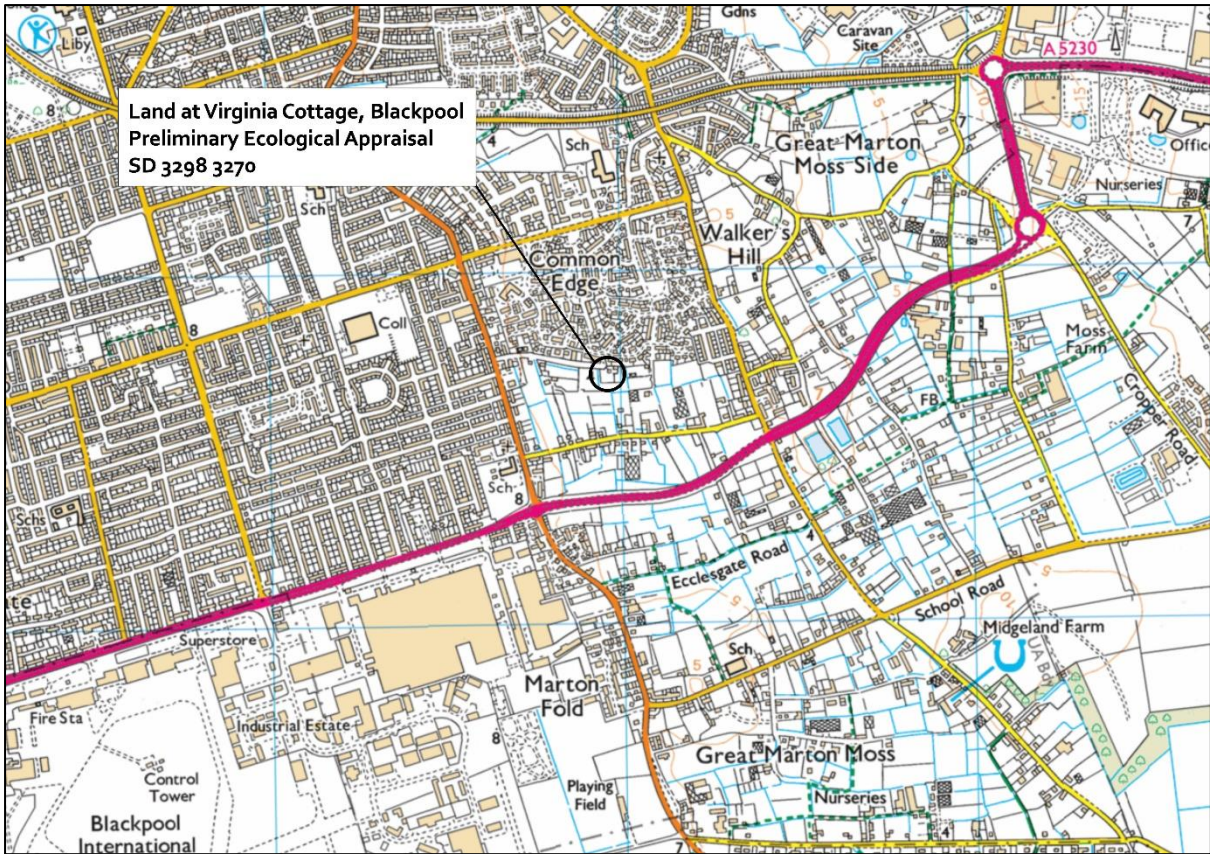
- To provide clear advice to the client, the Local Planning Authority and third parties, on the nature conservation value of the site and surrounding area.
- To confirm the presence or absence of protected species, such as badgers, bats, great crested newts, otter, etc) within the proposed development 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 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021. This submission presents the results of the surveys at the site.

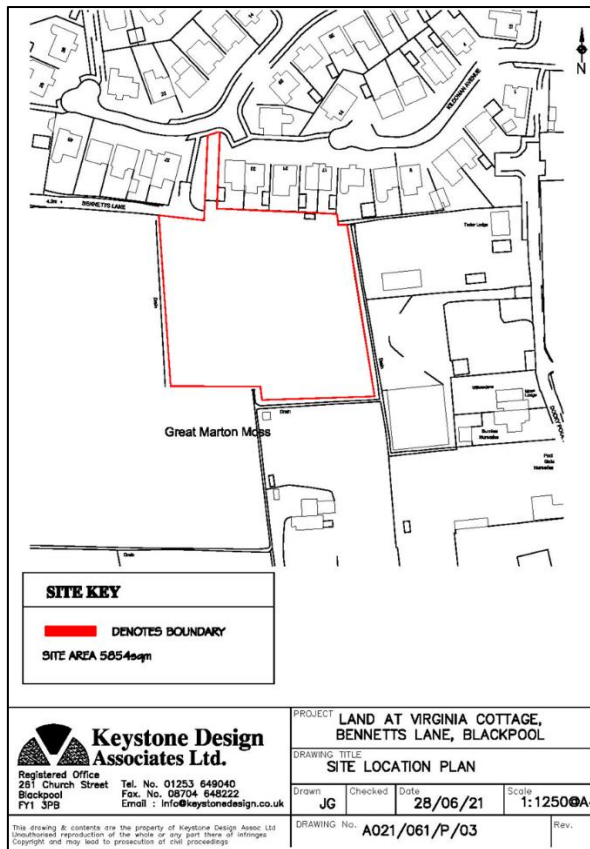
### 1.3 Site Description and Proposed Works

1.3.1 The Site, a 0.53ha overgrown plot of scattered trees and scrub, located within southern Blackpool, Lancashire. In the immediate vicinity of the site, north comprises semi-detached residential dwelling properties. To the south and west of site there were extensive areas of cleared land. The A5230 was located ~300m south of the site and around 1.5km north-east of Blackpool Airport.

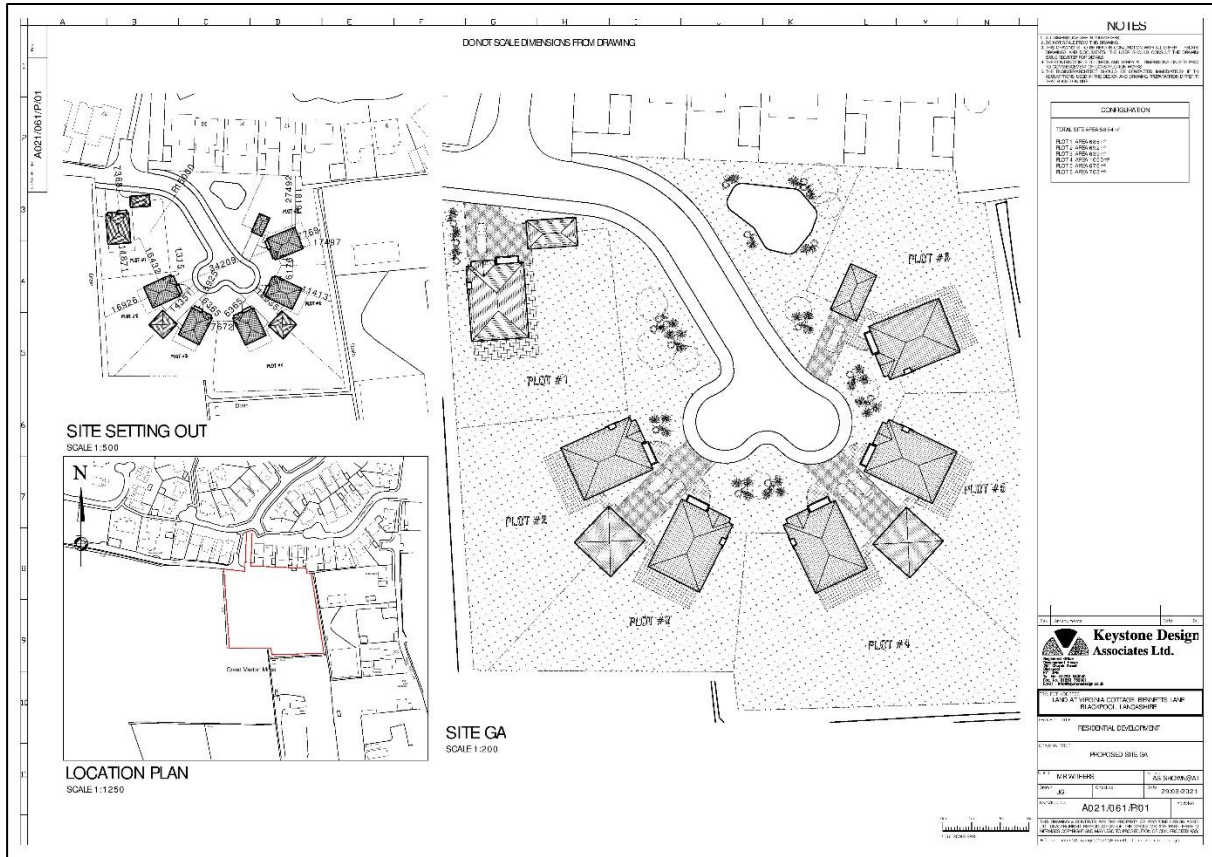
1.3.2 The surveys described in this report were commissioned to inform a planning application to develop the site with six new residential properties, with soft landscaping and vehicular access, as described on Plan 3.



Plan 1: Site Location.



Plan 2: Site Boundary.



Plan 3: Site Proposals.

## 2.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

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### 2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 An online search of the Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre ([www.magic.gov.uk](http://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 (as amended). This covers Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), all of which have legal protection.
- 2.1.2 No paid commercial desk study was required in this case due to the small scale of the development proposals. Impacts on wildlife and conservation sites were considered based on information gleaned from the Extended Phase One Habitats Survey.

### 2.2 Extended Phase 1 Survey

- 2.2.1 The Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken by Kevin Heywood BSc ACIEEM on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021. 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 Ecological Value and Impact Assessment

2.5.1 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).

2.5.2 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).

2.5.3 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 an exercising of professional judgement (as per CIEEM 2019).



## 2.6 Personnel

- 2.6.1 All surveys were undertaken by Kevin Heywood BSc CIEEM. Kevin Heywood BSc MCIEEM. Kevin Heywood BSc (Hons) ACIEEM is an Ecologist with Simply Ecology Limited. Kevin graduated with a first-class honours degree in Ecology from Lancaster University in 2015. In addition to this, he has acquired experience since 2012 working as an ecologist in a freelance capacity and since 2015 as a full-time employee for Simply Ecology Limited. During this time, he has developed numerous field skills and carried out a wide range of botanical and protected species surveys. His expertise predominantly lies with habitat mapping and undertaking protected species surveys including: bats, great crested newts, badgers, otters and reptiles. Kevin holds a protected species licence for all British bats.
- 2.6.2 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 (26 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, water vole and great crested newt. He has provided ecological advice to Cumbria County Council in relation to development control matters for the last 5 years.

## 2.7 Timing and Constraints

- 2.7.1 The Phase 1 survey was undertaken on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021. This is a fine time to record flora as many species are coming into flower. In addition, for those that are not, typically key indicator species can readily be identified using vegetative material and using dead plant matter. The timing posed no problems for the protected species assessment, and no constraints were encountered.

## 3.0 DESK STUDY RESULTS

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### 3.1 Nature Conservation Sites

- 3.1.1 The search for conservation sites in the surrounding area included both nationally important sites (e.g. 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, or within the surrounding 2km of site. The closest designated sites are: the Ribble Estuary (SSSI, SPA & Ramsar) and the Lytham St Annes (SSSI & LNR) ~2500m south west of the Site; and Marton Mere Blackpool (SSSI & LNR) some ~2500m north (see Plan 4).
- 3.1.2 Given the proximity to the nearby SSSIs, the site lies within surrounding Impact Risk Zones. However, the Site is not functionally linked to these SSSI or SAC and the size and nature of the proposed development will have no impact on them and requires no further consideration.
- 3.1.3 The search for Lancashire Biological Heritage Sites did not find any sites within 1km. The nearest site was the St Anne's Old Links Golf Course and Blackpool South Railway Line Biological Heritage Site ~2300m south west of site. The Site is not functionally linked to BHS sites in the wider surrounding area and the size and nature of the proposed development will have no impact on them. Impacts upon BHS are afforded no further consideration.

### 3.2 Priority Habitats

- 3.2.1 Just outside the site on the west, the adjacent land was classed as **Traditional Orchard** (see Plan 4). In addition to this, there were areas of **Deciduous Woodland** in the wider surrounding 1km. Just outside the eastern and southern boundaries there was a linear section of Deciduous Woodland. Using aerial imagery however, it was possible to determine that the areas of Orchard and Deciduous Woodland south-west of site had been cleared and was no longer required to be considered (see ).
- 3.2.2 Whilst Priority Habitats are not designated, they do hold NERC (2006) status. It is considered that there is potential for the proposed work to impact upon these habitats and this will require further consideration.

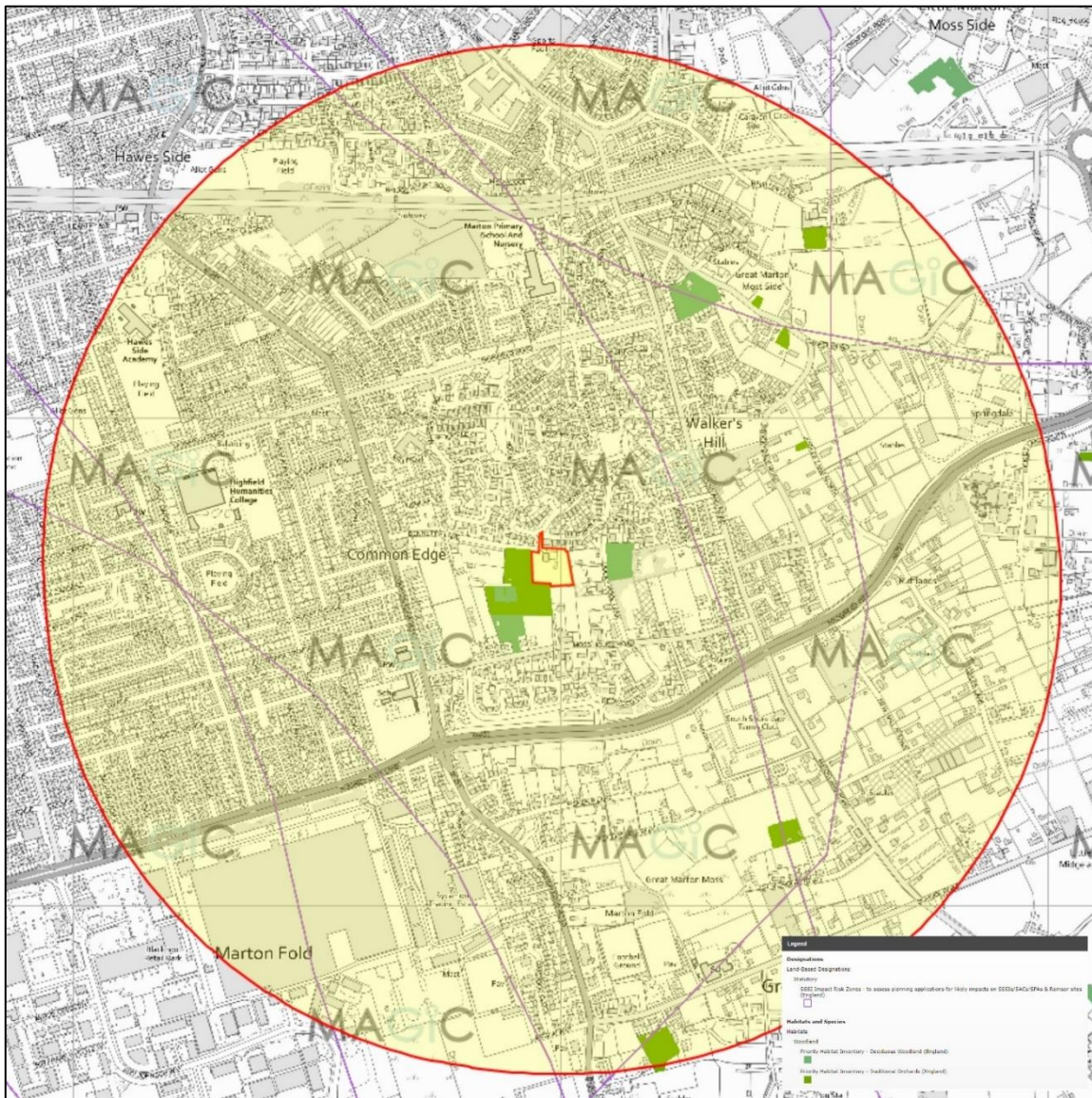
### 3.3 Protected Species

- 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 considered when undertaking the site survey.

### 3.4 Pre-existing data

- 3.4.1 Whilst no specific records of protected species were verified at the desk study stage due to the small size of the site, Simply Ecology has carried out numerous surveys in the area. Consequently, all surveys were undertaken with the understanding that any protected species including amphibians (great crested, common and palmate newt, common frog and

common toad) and mammals including badger and any of the 10 bat species commonly encountered in nearby area could be present.



Plan 4: Priority Habitats within 1km of the proposed development Site.



Plan 5: The area classed as Orchard and Deciduous Woodland west of site was now cleared (Bing Maps).

## 4.0 SURVEY RESULTS

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### 4.1 Habitat Survey

4.1.1 The site covers approximately 0.53ha in area and comprises an area of neglected land, historically derived from amenity garden space associated with a residential dwelling previously demolished. As such, habitats which were observed during the survey comprised rank habitats and early woodland regeneration. A Phase 1 Habitat Plan is included – see Plan 6. In all, the following habitats were recorded at the site:

- Rank Semi Improved Grassland
- Tall Ruderal and Underscrub
- Deciduous Woodland
- Scattered Trees
- Ephemeral
- Hardstanding
- Building

#### Rank Semi Improved Grassland

4.1.2 Parts of the site comprised neglected grassland with rank grasses and tall forbs present (see Plate 1 and Plate 2). Scattered immature trees and scrub were interspersed throughout and particularly present around the perimeter. Grasses comprised abundant to occasional: Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), common foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). Forbs present amongst the sward comprised frequent to rare: ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), common dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago major*), scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), broad leaved willowherb (*Epilobium montanum*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), prickly sow thistle (*Sonchus asper*), silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) and tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*).



Plate 1: A view of the grassland in the looking towards the eastern woodland.



Plate 2: A view of the grassland looking from the south towards the woodland regen in the centre of site.

#### **Tall Ruderal and Underscrub**

- 4.1.3 Around the perimeters of the grassland there were substantial areas of ruderal species (see Plate 3 and Plate 4) including dominant nettle beds (*Urtica dioica*) with bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), cleavers, hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), sycamore saplings (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), ivy (*Hedera helix*) and raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) also occasional. At the fringes of the grassland, (beside the trees and regenerating woodland), bramble underscrub was thick and tall offering substantial cover (Plate 5).

- 4.1.4 There is a mix of different habitat types on the site but it does not meet the threshold definitions for consideration as Open Mosaic Habitat for the purposes of habitat and impact assessment.



*Plate 3: At the edges of the grassland ruderal vegetation became more dominant (left/south).*



*Plate 4: A view of the nettle beds on the southern end of the site.*



Plate 5: Around the woodland, particularly on the east of site, bramble underscrub was particularly dominant.

#### Woodland and Scattered trees

- 4.1.5 In the heart of the site and particularly on the eastern boundary of site there were areas of dense tree and shrub regeneration (see Plate 6). This comprised predominantly immature and semi-mature specimens and included the following species: white poplar (*Populus alba*), hybrid black poplar (*Populus x canadensis*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), grey willow (*Salix cinerea*), sycamore, *Leylandii*, elder (*Sambucus nigra*), butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) and broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). Some of the trees on site had clearly been present prior to the site being neglected, including the line of hybrid black poplars on the western boundary (see Plate 7). In the dense regeneration, ground flora was very minimal comprising small specimens of wood avens and nettle (see Plate 8). Below the more mature trees this was more substantial and comprising the bramble underscrub and/or ruderal as described above.





*Plate 6: The immature regeneration woodland at the centre of the site.*



*Plate 7: The hybrid black poplar on the western boundary of the site.*



Plate 8: Ground flora in the woodland was relatively sparse.

### Ephemeral

- 4.1.6 Most areas of old hardstanding (see Plate 9) now had light vegetation coverage present, this included a thin carpet of acrocarpous mosses, and occasional species such as selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), dandelion, hop trefoil (*Trifolium campestre*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), mouse ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) and common fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*).
- 4.1.7 Although there is a mix of different habitat types on the site, it does not constitute Open Mosaic Habitat for the purposes of habitat and impact assessment.



Plate 9: Thin moss and plant coverage was present on old hardstanding.

### Hardstanding

- 4.1.8 Areas where the hardstanding was still exposed (see Plate 10), had less of a coverage of acrocarpous mosses and encroaching bramble overlying in places. As mentioned above, although there is a mix of different habitat types on the site, it does not constitute Open Mosaic Habitat for the purposes of habitat and impact assessment.



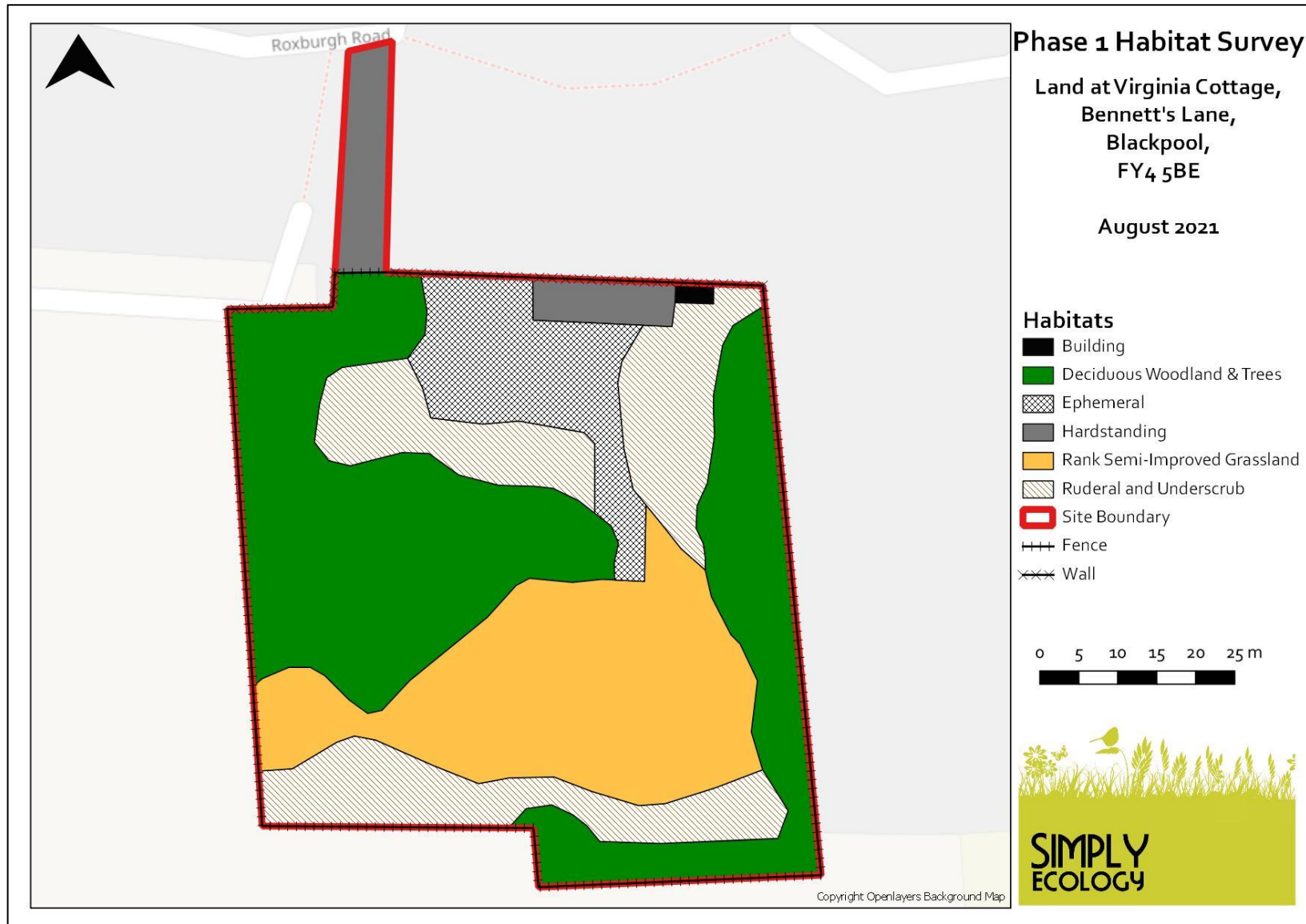
*Plate 10: Some hardstanding was exposed on site.*

### Building

- 4.1.9 In the north eastern corner one small structure remained. Bramble underscrub was growing around this but other than this, there was no intrinsic botanical interest (see Plate 11).



*Plate 11: A small building was present on the north-eastern corner of the site.*



Plan 6: Phase 1 habitats at the site.

## 4.2 Invasive Alien Species

- 4.2.1 A small patch of Himalayan balsam was located in the north-eastern corner of site (see ). No other invasive species were identified on site.

## 4.3 Bat Tree Inspection

- 4.3.1 The site contained an array of mature to immature trees (see Paragraph 4.1.5). These were thoroughly searched for any Potential Roost Features (PRFs), such as knot holes and cracks on limbs, during a ground-level tree inspection.
- 4.3.2 The mature trees on site were found to be lacking any suitable PRFs for bats (see Plate 12 and Plate 13). In addition, the vast majority of the trees on site were immature. The trunks of these trees were generally featureless and narrow with no suitable PRFs at all (see Plate 14 and Plate 15). All trees on site were considered to be a category 3 trees (i.e. negligible potential to support bats).



*Plate 12: The mature hybrid black poplars on the western boundary had no features that could represent a PRF.*



*Plate 13: Mature Leylandii on the northern boundary had no PRFs.*



*Plate 14: Much of the site was covered with immature early woodland regeneration, with small stems of no use for roosting bats.*



*Plate 15: Laurel stems were completely bare and lacking any suitable features for bats.*

#### **4.4 Breeding birds**

- 4.4.1 No formal bird survey was carried out at the site but incidental records identified typical urban fringe species which included a number of common species were identified on Site including magpie, pigeon, goldfinch and blackbird. It is likely that the site does however offer high foraging value birds given the nature of the habitat on site.



## 5.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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### 5.1 Designated Sites

- 5.1.1 Although there were no statutory designated nature conservation sites on the site, it lies or within the Impact Risk Zones of several SSSIs. These SSSIs are not functionally linked to the Site and, given the distance and the size and nature of the intervening land use, there is no reasonably foreseeable likelihood that there will be any impacts on the SSSIs.

### 5.2 Habitats

- 5.2.1 The existing woodland on site is proposed to be removed in order to accommodate the development. In addition, the ruderal, scrub and ephemeral habitats will also be removed. It is considered that the loss represents a **major** impact on habitats considered to be of **site** level value. It is anticipated that the loss could in part be compensated for through the landscape proposals in and around the proposed sites. However, it is anticipated that there will be a major adverse impact upon biodiversity at the site.
- 5.2.2 It is also noted that the proposed works will not result in the direct loss of Priority Habitats. The mix of habitats does not constitute Open Mosaic Habitat for the purposes of impact assessment.
- 5.2.3 In all, the proposals will allow for some retention of garden landscape, within which it is anticipated that there is possibility for some continued habitat. However, all things considered, the proposals as per Plan 3 will result in the major **adverse effect** at the **Site Level** and the proposals would not deliver Biodiversity Net Gain without further off-site provision.

### 5.3 Protected Species

#### Bats

- 5.3.1 Given that trees offered no roosting potential, it was concluded that the site had negligible value for roosting. Loss of these trees could have a **no impact** on roosting bats. Post-construction, any soft landscaping of the site will not offset the loss of foraging and potential for roosting in the medium to long-term that the orchard would have provided. The indicative scheme will deliver a moderate **adverse effect** upon bat foraging potential at the **Site Level**.

#### Breeding Birds

- 5.3.2 Given that the site will need to be cleared at least for the most part, the trees will no longer offer nesting suitability into the future. Loss of these trees could have major **adverse impact** on nesting birds. Post-construction, any soft landscaping of the site will not sufficiently offset the loss of foraging and nesting for birds in the medium to long-term that the site would have provided. The indicative scheme will deliver a moderate long-term **adverse effect** at the **Site Level**.

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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6.1.1 In August 2021, Simply Ecology Limited was commissioned by Keystone Design and Associates Ltd to undertake an Ecological Assessment of land at Virginia Cottage, Bennett's Lane, Blackpool, FY4 5BE (see Plan 1 and Plan 2). It is understood that the development proposal is to construct six new residential dwelling properties (see Plan 3).

### 6.2 Habitats

6.2.1 The site consisted of a moderate parcel of land, comprising neglected land with rank grassland and semi-natural regeneration deciduous woodland and scrub. The boundary comprised mature trees around the western, southern and eastern boundaries.

6.2.2 Given the proposed loss of existing grassland, ruderal, scrub and woodland on an undisturbed site, the proposals will result in an adverse impact upon habitats at the site. Many of the (mostly immature) trees will be removed and the new buildings will be introduced in their place. As such:

- ***It is recommended that measures to reduce the impact of the scheme as well as Ecological Enhancement Measures are agreed by way of a Planning Condition with the Local Planning Authority.*** This would be necessary if the site is to comply with Local and National Planning Policy. Delivering net biodiversity gains will not be possible at this site, but reducing the level of impact could be achieved through the adoption of a selection of the following measures:
- Retention of all boundary features, particularly the mature trees as these represent connective habitats and have relatively high intrinsic value,
- Use native species appropriate to the local area for boundary planting,
- Prioritise use of nectar and pollen rich plants and fruit and nut producing species within formal planting scheme,
- Provide new features for roosting bats and nesting birds within buildings or through provision of boxes on retained trees,
- Creation of log/ brush piles and compost heaps along boundary (treelines, walls etc.) to provide opportunities for amphibians and invertebrates,
- Creation of a wildlife pond somewhere within the site.
- Provision of off-site habitat compensatory measures through a legal mechanism that can have weight within the Planning system.
- ***It is recommended that as many of the existing 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 mature trees are to be removed should be replaced by native species at a ratio of 3 to 1*** (for example: 3 new trees to every 1 being removed). If this cannot be implanted on site, then it would need to take place as a part of the off-site compensatory measures. **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, as reflected in The National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan.

- ***It is recommended that*** during construction, any tree that is to be retained within 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'. It will be particularly important to ensure that the mature trees on the boundary of the site are adequately protected from any excavations or accidental damage. **Reason:** This will ensure that the trees are not accidentally damaged or destroyed and will ensure compliance with the Local Authority's statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

### 6.3 Protected Species

#### Bats

6.3.1 A ground level inspection of the trees was undertaken but no Potential Roost Features or signs of bat activity were found. It was therefore concluded that there is no reasonably foreseeable likelihood that roosting bats are present.

- ***It is advised that all works can continue with no need for any supervision by the Appointed Ecologist.*** No Natural England licence is necessary in this instance as no impact upon any bat roost is predicted. This is due to the lack of any signs of current or historical use of the building by bats. **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 and Section 15 of The National Planning Policy Framework (2018).

#### Breeding Birds

6.3.2 The site likely offers good forage for local birds due to the presence of trees and shrub habitat offering good coverage for nesting. 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.

## 7.0 REFERENCES

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Joint Nature Conservation Committee – Mitchell-Jones AJ. and McLeish AP [Eds.] (2004). *The Bat Workers Manual (3rd edition)*. Joint Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough.

National Planning Policy Framework 2021:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1005759/NPPF\\_July\\_2021.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf)

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The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/579/contents/made>

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981:

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

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1997/1160/contents/made>

## ANNEX A: STATUTORY AND PLANNING CONTEXT

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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 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 Protected Species (PS). These PS are protected under legislation in England via The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019. (Regulation 43). A full list of PS is provided in Schedule 2 of the Regulations. In addition, these PS 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 all national 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 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 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 (2020)



**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:** Download v3.3
- Issue Date:** 09 November 2020
- Purpose:** To provide guidance on the interpretation and use of the *Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest* GIS dataset available to download from the [Natural England Open Data geoportal](#)
- Enquiries:** For further information please email the Natural England Impact Risk Zones mailbox: [neirzs@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:neirzs@naturalengland.org.uk)

[www.gov.uk/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/natural-england)

SSSI Impact Risk Zones User Guidance – GIS Dataset for Download

## 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 European/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 2015 and other statutory requirements - see the [gov.uk](http://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](http://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](mailto: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.

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

Switch on the SSSI IRZs layer, zoom to the location of the proposed development and interrogate the SSSI IRZs layer at that location.

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. In some areas there is also a Note.



Does the nature and scale of the proposed development match one or more of the development descriptions listed in the right hand margin of the results table alongside a development category?



**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](mailto: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](http://gov.uk) website for further information on our pre-application discretionary advice service (DAS).



Is there a Note that contains advice relevant to the proposed development?



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

The Note provides additional advice that should be followed.



**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 on the following page).

**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 281 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 European/Ramsar sites. Each Compensation Site has been given the same IRZs as the European/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 281 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](http://gov.uk) website.

All consultations should be sent to [consultations@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto: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 or 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](http://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 there is advice in the Notes field(s)?**

A Note in the SSSI IRZs at a chosen location provides additional advice for particular development types that should be followed. It does not remove the requirement to consult Natural England where other SSSI IRZs indicate consultation is necessary.

### **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 and there is no relevant advice in the Notes fields, 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](mailto:neirzs@naturalengland.org.uk).

**What can I do if I think that the potential impacts of a particular type of development 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](mailto: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               | <b>ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS</b> - 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, hedges, 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               | <b>Pipelines, pylons and overhead cables. Any transport proposal including road, rail and by water (excluding routine maintenance). Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals</b> - 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                | <b>Solar schemes with a footprint &gt;0.5ha, all wind turbines</b> - 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                | <b>Planning applications for quarries – including new proposals, Review of Minerals Permissions (ROMP), extensions, variations to conditions etc. Oil &amp; gas exploration/extraction</b> - 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               | <b>Any non-residential development outside of existing urban areas where net additional gross internal floorspace following development is 30m<sup>2</sup> or more</b> - 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           | Residenta                | <b>Any residential developments with a total net gain in residential units</b> - 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               | <b>Any residential developments outside of existing settlements/urban areas with a total net gain in residential units</b> - 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 the 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               | <b>Any development that could cause AIR POLLUTION or DUST either in its construction or operation (incl: industrial/commercial processes and agricultural developments such as livestock &amp; poultry units, manure/slurry stores)</b> - Description may vary to include/exclude one or all of the above and to specify different area/weight thresholds. | 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               | <b>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</b> - 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                    | <b>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</b> - 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                  | <b>Any composting proposal. Incl: open windrow composting, in-vessel composting, anaerobic digestion, other waste management</b> - 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 impact 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                | <b>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</b> - 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               | <b>Large infrastructure such as warehousing / industry where net additional gross internal floorspace is &gt; 1000m<sup>2</sup> or any development needing its own water supply (eg remote rural housing)</b> - 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_1<br>NOTES_2       | These fields 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 Natural England when other SSSI IRZs indicate consultation is necessary.  |   |

## ANNEX D: NEARBY SSSI DESCRIPTIONS

|  |  |                   |
|--|--|-------------------|
| SD                                     |  | File ref: (L)     |
|  |  | 33/3              |
| <b>County:</b>                         | Lancashire   | <b>Site Name:</b> |
| <b>Marion Mere</b>                     |  | <b>Blackpool</b>  |
| <b>District:</b>                       | Blackpool  |                   |
| <b>Status:</b>                         | Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)<br>notified under Section<br>28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act,<br>1981. |                   |
| <b>Local Planning Authority:</b>       | Blackpool Borough Council  |                   |
| <b>National Grid Reference:</b>        | SD 343354  | <b>Area:</b>      |
|  | 38.5 (ha) 95.1 (ac)  |                   |
| <b>Ordnance Survey Sheet</b>           | <b>1:50 000</b> 102  | <b>1:10</b>       |
| <b>000</b>                             | SD 33 NW   |                   |
| <b>Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):</b> | 1979   |                   |
| <b>Date of Last Revision:</b>          | –  |                   |
| <b>Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):</b> | 1984   |                   |
| <b>Date of Last Revision:</b>          | –  |                   |

**Other Information:**

1. Boundary corrected to follow lake margin.

**Reasons for Notification:**

Marton Mere is a freshwater lake situated some two miles to the east of the centre of Blackpool. The Mere is believed to occupy a kettle-hole, formed during the last glaciation over 14,000 years ago, and is thus one of only two remaining water bodies in Lancashire of natural origin, the other being Hawes Water at Silverdale which is also a SSSI. The water level has, however, been subject to much alteration by man, and in 1976 the water surface was enlarged from about 15 acres to its present 44 acres, with loss of some marginal habitat. Much of the formerly extensive reedbed surrounding the Mere was submerged at this time, but many small patches of reed still exist around the lake margin along with other emergent plant species such as reed-grass, yellow flag, bur-reed, glaucous bulrush and lesser reedmace (an uncommon plant in north-west England) which together provide an attractive habitat for water birds. In spite of the high level of pressure from recreational developments on surrounding land and from its proximity to a large centre of population, the open water and fringing habitats of Marton Mere support a wide range of waterfowl and wetland birds.

The breeding community of the site is of particular note: approximately 35 different species are known to use the Mere as a breeding site, and the community is an especially rich example of its kind. Marton Mere is the most important

breeding site in Lancashire for little grebe (up to 10 pairs), and is also of county importance for its population of great crested grebe, coot (second only to Leighton Moss), mallard, pochard and shoveler. The scarcity of similar habitat in the area, and its position along a major migration route between breeding grounds in the far north and wintering grounds further south, make Marton Mere an important resting place for a wide variety of birds on passage. Over 140 species of passage migrant have been recorded with approximately 100 of annual occurrence.

The site is also attractive as a wintering ground for over 65 species of bird and is of county importance for its wintering population of coot, mallard, shoveler and tufted duck.

The muddy margins of the lake – a rare habitat in Lancashire – provide important feeding areas for a variety of waders, including ruff, redshank, greenshank, curlew and oystercatcher, while the surrounding scattered scrub and vegetated areas provide attractive nesting and feeding habitat for several small passerine bird species.

The scientific importance of the site is further enhanced by the availability of accurate, detailed ornithological records documenting the history of Marton Mere over a period of many years.

**COUNTY:** LANCASHIRE & MERSEYSIDE                      **SITE NAME:** RIBBLE ESTUARY

**DISTRICT:** FYLDE, SEFTON METROPOLITAN, SOUTH RIBBLE AND WEST LANCASHIRE

**Status:** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Includes the Ribble Marshes National Nature Reserve declared under Section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

**Local Planning Authority:** Fylde Borough Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, South Ribble Borough Council, West Lancashire Borough Council.

**National Grid Reference:** SD 375240                      **Area:** 9226.3 (ha.) 22798.2 (ac.)

**Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000:** 102, 108                      **1:25,000:** SD 21, 22, 23, 31, 32, 33, 42

**Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):** –                      **Date of Last Revision:** 1979  
1966 (Southport Sanctuary)  
1976 (Ribble Estuary)

**Date Notified (Under 1981 Act):** 1984                      **Date of Last Revision:** 1984

**Other Information:**

1. Listed as an internationally important coastal site in 'A Nature Conservation Review' ed. D A Ratcliffe (1977) Cambridge University Press.
2. 2,916 ha. of the foreshore west of the National Nature Reserve are covered by the Southport Sanctuary, a National Wildfowl Refuge made a statutory bird sanctuary by the Wild Birds (Southport Sanctuary) Order 1956 under the Protection of Birds Act 1954. By virtue of the Interpretation Act 1978 the Order remains in force.
3. 6,730.0 ha. of the SSSI are in Lancashire and 2,501.6 ha. are in Merseyside.
4. The area of the National Nature Reserve is 2302 ha.
5. The boundary of the SSSI has been modified by a number of deletions and one extension.
6. The site is adjacent to the Southport Sand Dunes and Foreshore SSSI.

**Description and Reasons for Notification:**

The Ribble Estuary is situated on the Lancashire coast west of Preston between Southport and Lytham St. Annes extending inland to Longton. It has extensive intertidal sand-silt flats with one of the largest areas of grazed greenmarsh in Britain and includes small areas of recently reclaimed saltmarsh. The estuary is of international importance for the passage and wintering waterfowl it supports, being a major link in the chain of estuaries down the west coast of Britain used by birds on migration between the breeding grounds in the far north and their wintering grounds further south. The Ribble Marshes National Nature Reserve is located in the centre of the SSSI and most of the foreshore in Sefton outside the NNR is covered by the Southport Sanctuary which provides a protected low tide roost for pinkfooted geese.

The mudflats are rich in invertebrates on which the waders and many of the wildfowl, especially shelduck, feed and the sandbanks also provide low tide roosting sites for pinkfooted geese. The saltmarshes consist mainly of saltmarsh grass/red fescue sward with a belt of cord-grass (*Spartina*) at the seaward edge. They provide roosting sites for the waders at high tide and support large numbers of wildfowl such as mallard, teal, wigeon and pink-footed geese.

The estuary supports internationally important numbers of the following waterfowl: Bewick's swan, pink-footed goose, shelduck, wigeon, oystercatcher, knot, sanderling, dunlin, black-tailed and bar-tailed godwit as well as smaller populations of lapwing, curlew, grey plover and golden plover. The total numbers of waterfowl are also of international importance. Wildfowl numbers regularly exceed the criterion of 10,000. During the period 1977–82 the peak counts of waders greatly exceeded the criterion of 20,000, being always in excess of 56,000 with a maximum of 86,000, keeping the Ribble in the top seven estuaries in Britain for waders. The breeding bird communities of the saltmarsh are also significant and include nationally important breeding populations of black-headed gull, common tern and redshank.

Enclosed by the Coastal Road is an area of reclaimed unimproved grazing marsh, an uncommon habitat in NW England. This still supports a variety of saltmarsh plants in the more brackish parts nearer the sea and along the creeks. Plants such as cord-grass, thrift, sea aster and the brackish water crowfoot (*Ranunculus baudotii*), a particularly scarce plant in NW England, occur here. These areas are important as a major high tide roost for waterfowl, especially redshank, grey plover, black-tailed godwit, dunlin, oystercatcher, Bewick's swan and wigeon. They also support a diverse breeding bird community which includes skylark, lapwing, teal, shoveler, ringed plover and snipe.