



THE  
ENVIRONMENT  
PARTNERSHIP

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# WINGATES BOLTON VEGETATION CLEARANCE PLAN

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<b>DRAWINGS</b>
G9042.001 Phase 1 Habitat Survey Main Site
G9665.02.002A Phase 1 Habitat Survey A6 Realignment

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Vegetation Clearance Plan has been prepared by The Environment Partnership (TEP) on behalf of Harworth Group in connection with the development at Land west of Wingates Industrial Estate, Westhoughton, Bolton (hereafter referred to as 'the site').
- 1.2 A suite of baseline ecology surveys were undertaken of the site during 2017-2018 in support of the planning application with a walkover survey undertaken by TEP in October 2020 prior to the public inquiry. Updated protected species surveys for great crested newts have been undertaken in 2021.
- 1.3 Additional ecology surveys were undertaken in October 2022 in support of the revised application for the A6 realignment. Surveys were focussed on the realignment area only and included an extended Phase 1 habitat survey and ground-based assessment of trees.
- 1.4 Figure 1 shows the combined redline boundaries of the original application and the A6 realignment application within the wider landscape.
- 1.5 The site currently comprises (Drawings G9042.001 and G9665.02.002A), in order of dominance:

- Poor semi-improved grassland;
- Plantation broad-leaved woodland;
- Dense/continuous scrub;
- Unimproved acid grassland;
- Modified neutral grassland<sup>1</sup>;
- Marshy grassland;
- Continuous bracken;
- Tall ruderal herbs;
- Swamp;
- Ephemeral pool;
- Standing water;
- Spoil;
- Arable;
- Amenity grassland;
- Bare ground; and
- Hardstanding.

- 1.6 These habitats on site have the potential to support the following protected or notable species:

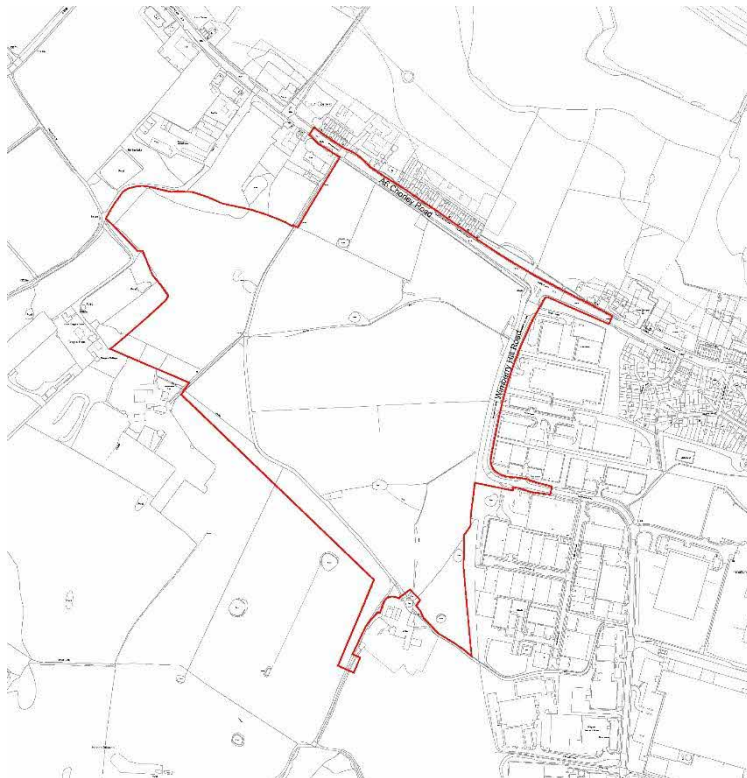
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<sup>1</sup> The neutral grassland categories detailed within the Phase 1 Habitat Survey Handbook are concentrated on grassland associated with rural situations (pastures and meadows), as such it was agreed with JNCC in 2005 (P. Gateley, pers. comm.) that neutral grassland habitats that don't easily fit within these categories, usually within urban or industrial areas, can be referred to as modified neutral grassland –

<sup>1</sup>Modified neutral grassland is not derived from agricultural grassland and the terms semi-improved and improved do not apply. Some modified neutral grassland may be species-rich but many swards are dense, coarse and species-poor. Modified neutral grassland naturally regenerates on disturbed ground and is unmanaged. It most commonly occurs in urban areas and on post-industrial land<sup>1</sup>.



Bats;  
Breeding birds;  
Brown hare;  
Great crested newts; and  
Hedgehog.



*Figure 1: Site Location (combined Main Site & A6 Realignment) in wider context.*

## **Planning and Development Context**

- 1.7 A hybrid planning application was granted by the Secretary of State following a public inquiry in June 2021 for the strategic employment development of the Site (application ref: 04766/18).
- 1.8 This planning permission has since been superseded by a new permission (ref. 16776/23, dated 17th January 2024) which amended the original scheme to exclude the Chorley Road frontage part of the site including the landscape buffer. A corresponding new permission for the Chorley Road frontage (ref. 16770/23, dated 17th January 2024) was granted to incorporate a new access, road realignment and altered landscape buffers in this area.

## **Planning Condition**

- 1.9 Hybrid planning permission was granted, subject to conditions, including Condition 24 which states:

*Prior to the commencement of any phase of works hereby permitted, a Vegetation Clearance Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall include details of:*

- i. Pre-commencement inspection of trees to be felled for bat roost potential by a licensed ecologist, with works applicable done under the supervision of an ecologist;*
  - ii. A clearance programme (including grassland, tree and scrub vegetation removal) and Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statement to protect species as detailed in ES paragraphs 7.155 to 7.159.*
  - iii. A Non-Native Species Strategy as detailed in ES paragraph 7.160.*
- The approved details shall be complied with throughout the duration of the vegetation clearance works.*

- 1.10 This condition is repeated as Condition 6 in the A6 realignment permission (ref. 16770/23) and this report has been updated to partially discharge Condition 6 (Parts i and ii).

- 1.11 This report is also submitted to discharge Condition 13 of 16770/23. Condition 13 states:

*Prior to the commencement of vegetation clearance, as referred in the ES Addendum paragraph 7.69, tree T2 (tree T31 in the AIA) shall be subject to a survey by a suitably qualified expert to identify the presence or absence of any bat habitat. The survey shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any vegetation clearance. Should a habitat be present, a Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved details shall be complied with throughout the duration of the vegetation clearance works.*

## **Scope of the report**

- 1.12 This report details the findings of the pre-commencement inspection of trees to be felled for bat roost potential, a clearance programme and working measures to avoid harm to protected and notable species which may be present on site including nesting birds, brown hare, [REDACTED] and hedgehog. The precautionary working measures and additional

protection measures will prevent negative impacts on these species. A Non-Native Species Strategy to control or eradicate invasive species is also included.

- 1.13 This document sets out a practical working strategy to be implemented during the pre-construction phase of the development, to ensure that features of ecological interest, including notable habitats, and protected or notable species, within the working area, or within influencing distance of the working area, are not compromised.
- 1.14 Great crested newts are not included for consideration within this report as the species is not listed with the identified ES paragraphs and therefore planning Condition 24. The impacts on great crested newts have been addressed and authorised by a Natural England European Protected Species (EPS) District Level Licence (DLL) which is now in place for the site (NE ref. 2022-00360-EPS-DLL).
- 1.15 The methods detailed within the plan follow best ecological working practices in respect of the habitats and species identified within the working area or within influencing distance of the working area.
- 1.16 For the purposes of this document, the “working area” is defined as ‘any area where there will be a requirement for temporary or permanent works to facilitate the construction of the development’. This includes areas required for access, temporary construction, temporary storage areas and site facilities.
- 1.17 The methods are to be followed by all site contractors at all times during the pre-construction phase of the development.
- 1.18 This document should be considered as a 'live' document which will require regular update in response to issues which may arise during each phase of works.
- 1.19 This document is intended to be strictly adhered to by the present landowner (Harworth Group) and their contractors. In the event that any protected/priority species is identified, all works in the immediate working area must cease immediately and the appointed Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) should be contacted.



## 2.0 Pre-Commencement Inspection for Bats





- 2.1 As part of the original discharge of Condition 24 a site walkover was undertaken by TEP Ecologist, Rosie Fisher (Bat License ref: CL17 Level 1- 2018-35077-CLS-CLS) on 27th August 2021.
- 2.2 This identified one additional willow tree with low bat potential to be felled amongst scrub on the south-west side of a pond (TN6) (Drawing G9042.001). A potential roost feature was present on the trunk (Figure 2). However no evidence of roosting bats was found at the time of survey with the further use of an endoscope. The low potential tree (found not to contain bats) will be section felled under the supervision of a licensed bat ecologist. If bats are found then work must cease and a license sought from Natural England.



*Figure 2: Potential roost Feature (PRF) at low potential bat tree (TN6).*

- 2.3 Two moderate and one other low potential tree, identified during the ground based inspection in 2017, were also inspected and their original assessments remain valid.
- 2.4 Updated ground based tree assessments will be required of all trees with bat potential in the southern part of the site prior to felling.
- 2.5 As part of the A6 realignment application an inspection of tree T2, identified for felling under the revised scheme, was undertaken by TEP Ecologist Annabel Walker-Evans (Bat licence ref: Level 2 2023-11625-CL18-BAT) on 19th February 2024. This assessment was carried out using the updated Bat Conservation Guidelines 2023.
- 2.6 Overall suitability of tree T2 based on the updated assessment was PRF-I, no requirement for further aerial survey.
- 2.7 The requirements for felling this tree are to provide appropriate compensation for the loss of each roosting feature (two features), a pre-commencement inspection ahead of felling and supervision of feature removal.



Tree Number / Feature Ref	Description	Photograph
T2	<p>W3W location: lively.amount.spend</p> <p>Photograph taken from southern aspect of tree, looking north.</p> <p>Tree located north of the northern field boundary fencing adjacent to Chorley Road.</p> <p>The tree is twin stemmed with the western leader subject to multiple instances damage, as described below.</p>	
T2, PRF1	<p>Large trunk split present on the western leader, from 0.5m to 2m on the southern aspect. The cavity is open and exposed to the elements with a small amount of travel upwards, presenting individual opportunistic roosting suitability.</p> <p>Suitability: PRF-I</p>	
T2, PRF2	<p>Pruning wound is present at 2m on the southwest aspect of the western leader. This feature has been fully explored and is confirmed to be superficial, providing no opportunities for roosting bats at the time of inspection.</p> <p>Suitability: Negligible</p>	
T2, PRF3	<p>Healing wound present at 3m on the southwest aspect of the western leader. The wound appears to have a small length of travel upwards into the trunk however, this could not be confirmed from ground level.</p> <p>There is potential for a low number of individual bats to be roosting within the suspected cavity and behind the healing bark.</p> <p>The feature is not suitable for a maternity colony.</p> <p>Suitability: PRF-1</p>	

## 3.0 Pre-Clearance Ecological Protection Measures

### **Pre-works measures**

- 3.1 This section details Ecological Protection Measures which must be implemented prior to construction:
- 3.2 Toolbox talks will be provided to contractors by an ECoW. Toolbox talks will explain the potential presence of protected or notable species on site (particularly bats, birds, badgers, hedgehog and brown hare), implications to these species, required work methods and locations of any exclusion zones. Protection zones for retained habitats and structures of interest will also be addressed.
- 3.3 Toolbox talks will be updated as required where any new ecological issues arise (including seasonal variations/restrictions), or where changes to working methods are required.
- 3.4 Exclusion fencing should be installed around any retained trees, woodland and hedgerows to protect them from accidental damage. Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Appropriate root protection zones are shown within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment.
- 3.5 Vegetation clearance will be undertaken outside the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive), wherever possible, to avoid harm to nesting birds. Vegetation clearance works are scheduled to be undertaken in winter months.
- 3.6 Should works be delayed and where vegetation clearance is required during the breeding bird season (starting in March), an ECoW will carry out a nesting bird check within vegetation clearance areas no more than 24 hours prior to vegetation removal. Further methods are presented in Section 3 of this document.
- 3.7 Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statements (RAMMS) will be implemented prior to and during works to avoid harm or injury to brown hares, hedgehogs or badgers. Full methods are presented in Section 4, 5 and 6.

## 4.0 Vegetation Clearance Programme and Proposals

4.1 The proposals for vegetation clearance and the potential impacts are outlined below:

### **Programme and Proposals**

4.2 Across the whole site it is estimated that losses will include 24 individual trees, 0.44ha of tree groups and approximately 590 linear metres of hedgerow.

4.3 Tree loss comprises 6 Category B trees and groups and parts of 2 further groups, 11 Category C trees and groups and parts of 2 further groups, and 2 Category U trees. This equates to 17% of existing tree cover, although this is mostly low value, young recently planted trees.

4.4 The main focus of tree clearance works will begin on the west side of Wimberry Hill Road where the tree belt will need to be removed to facilitate access for development.

4.5 No hedgerows to be lost are classified as 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations. All hedgerows to be lost are classed as 'species-poor'

4.6 Across the site, as proposals stand, it is estimated that there will be a loss the majority of the poor semi-improved grassland, arable land and 1.82ha of semi-improved neutral grassland.

### **Potential Impacts and Mitigation Plans**

4.7 There will be short term impacts on plantation woodland (identified as a group within the arboriculture survey) and on individual trees and hedgerows.

4.8 Tree losses will be compensated by replacement planting and coupled with management under a Landscape Management Plan (LMP) to ensure establishment and longevity. New planting of native hedgerows totalling 1,188m are also to be provided as part of embedded mitigation.

4.9 Vegetation clearance will have potential impacts on protected species across the site including on [REDACTED] brown hare, hedgehogs and birds. Further mitigation strategies and avoidance measures for these species are outlined in the sections below.

## 5.0 Nesting Bird RAMMS

- 5.1 Habitats within the site, including grassland, scrub, hedgerow, ponds and woodland, provide potential to support nesting birds, including ground nesting species. Twenty nine confirmed, probable or possible bird breeding species were recorded during surveys undertaken in 2018. No evidence of barn owl or other Schedule 1 birds was recorded.
- 5.2 All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or intentionally take or destroy its eggs.

### **Reasonable Avoidance Measures**

- 5.3 These measures will apply to all vegetation clearance works.
- 5.4 Where possible, all vegetation clearance will avoid the core breeding bird season, March to August inclusive; although it should be noted that bird nesting can take place outside this period.
- 5.5 If, however, clearance works are necessary during the core breeding bird season, or at any time when bird nesting is suspected, a nesting bird check of the affected area will be undertaken by an ECoW. The nesting bird check will take place no more than 24 hours prior to the clearance works. In the event that an active nest is found the ECoW will provide advice on setting up a suitable exclusion zone area around the nest until the young have fledged. The extent of the exclusion zone will depend upon the bird species concerned and its location within the development.
- 5.6 The exclusion zone should be marked using hi-vis 'Netlon' fencing or similar. No machinery or site workers should enter the exclusion zone.
- 5.7 The exclusion zone will ensure that there is no disturbance to the nest as a result of the vegetation clearance works. Works will not take place within the exclusion zone until the young have fledged, as confirmed by the ecologist. Monitoring visits will be undertaken by the ecologist of the active nest to confirm when the young have fledged. When an ECoW confirms that the nests are no longer active, the hi-vis fencing can be removed and vegetation clearance works can proceed.
- 5.8 Large and/or structurally complex areas of vegetation to be removed, such as dense scrub, will be subject to a careful inspection. If nesting bird activity cannot be established in these area, the areas will require an ecological watching brief, where an ecologist will work alongside the contractors to check and then clear vegetation in small sections. Contractors will remove small areas of vegetation using bow saws and loppers, ensuring disturbance is localised. If nests are uncovered during the vegetation clearance works, works shall cease until the ecologist has determined the status of the nest.
- 5.9 If no active bird nests are found, vegetation clearance within the affected area must take place within 24 hours of completion of the nesting bird check. This will ensure that no bird nests are built within the intervening period between the nesting bird check and vegetation removal.

## 6.0 Brown Hare RAMMS

- 6.1 Brown hare have been recorded on site. Grassland habitats within the site are suitable to support brown hare breeding and foraging and the creation of “forms”, a series of individual shallow scrapes in vegetation or earth.
- 6.2 Brown hare breed between February and September inclusive and sometimes outside of this period, in suitable weather conditions. They don't live as colonies in vast burrow systems, instead they live out in the open and create forms.
- 6.3 Leverets (young brown hare) are particularly vulnerable to construction activities as they are left alone in forms during the day and are often reluctant to move from their places of refuge.
- 6.4 As construction activities will necessitate the removal of vegetation and clearance of topsoil using machinery, there is a small risk of encountering leverets (if undertaken in the breeding season) and adult hares, which could result in the killing or injury of individuals.
- 6.5 There is also the potential for hares to be killed through becoming trapped in any excavations, piping or containers associated with the construction activities.
- 6.6 Given the status of brown hares, in terms of legislation, it is considered acceptable to undertake works under the implementation of a RAMMS.

### **Relevant Legislation**

- 6.7 Brown hare are listed as a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of \* Species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (S41);

### **Reasonable Avoidance Measures**

#### Prior to Work Commencing

- 6.8 A toolbox talk should be delivered to all contractors before clearance and commencement of construction activities. All staff on site should be made aware of the potential for presence of brown hare within the site and their status as S41 species. The tool box talk will include identification of brown hare, details of the legislative protection afforded to brown hare, details of this, and what to do in the eventuality that any brown hare are found during the clearance works or construction phase.
- 6.9 A walkover of the construction area by the ECoW should be undertaken prior to any vegetation clearance to encourage brown hare adults to move out of the area.

#### During Works

- 6.10 Excavations should be boarded or fenced at the end of each day to prevent hares becoming trapped. Where closing excavations is not possible, ramps should be provided to allow any trapped animals to escape.

- 6.11 Access into and out of the working area should be along agreed routes only. Vegetation along this route should be cut short to reduce its suitability to shelter hares. If any forms are confirmed along this route they should either be avoided or filled in to prevent re-use and reduce the risk of collisions with construction vehicles. Machinery and vehicles should not be permitted to move outside the agreed access routes and working areas.
- 6.12 In the unlikely event that contractors encounter any brown hare leverets during the construction of the site, works must cease and advice from the ECOW must be sought.
- 6.13 At the end of each day, the site should be inspected by the appointed ECOW to ensure that the above guidelines are being complied with. A log of the inspections should be kept.



## 7.0 Hedgehog RAMMS

- 7.1 There are no records of hedgehog within 2 km of the proposals. The mosaic of habitats within the development including the grasslands, woodlands, and scrub habitats, are suitable for supporting foraging hedgehog. The woodland, hedgerows and scrub habitats also provide potential hibernation habitat for hedgehog as well as connectivity with habitats around the site.
- 7.2 Vegetation clearance, the use of machinery and any future construction works could result in the injury or killing of hedgehogs, if present.
- 7.3 Given the status of hedgehogs, in terms of legislation, it is considered acceptable to undertake works under the implementation of a RAMMS.

### **Relevant Legislation**

- 7.4 Hedgehogs are considered species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (S41). Hedgehogs are also partially protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, in that they are protected from being killed, injured or taken by certain methods.

### **Reasonable Avoidance Measures**

#### Prior to Work Commencing

- 7.5 As part of the site induction process, all staff working on site should be made aware of the potential for presence of hedgehog within the site and their status as a species of principal importance during a toolbox talk delivered by an ECoW.

#### Vegetation Clearance

- 7.6 The early hibernation period (November to December inclusive) should be avoided in relation to vegetation clearance to avoid impacting hibernating hedgehogs. Hedgehogs would likely die if they are disturbed during this period.
- 7.7 Clearance of the woodland, hedgerows and scrub habitats within the construction corridor should be undertaken in stages to enable any hedgehogs that may be present to relocate to safe areas. These habitats should be cut and removed by hand, under the supervision of the ECoW, to a height of 250mm - 300mm to prevent any harm to hibernating hedgehogs. A thorough hand search should be carried out by the ECoW and any hedgehogs found will be relocated to suitable habitat proximity of the site. All vegetation should be maintained at a short length to ensure the protection of hedgehogs present.

#### During Works

- 7.8 Regular strimming works should take place to keep any retained habitats not subject to construction activities, short (50mm), which will make the area unattractive to foraging or resting hedgehogs. This should deter hedgehogs from entering the construction corridor thereby reducing the risk of harm occurring to this species.



- 7.9 Any open excavations should be fenced using heras fencing, and ramps should be placed in trenches to allow any hedgehogs that may fall in to climb back out. If this is not possible, a plank of wood placed at an angle no steeper than 40° should be left within the excavations so any hedgehogs or small mammals which fall into the trenches are able to escape.
- 7.10 Any haul roads and access tracks should be maintained. Vehicular or plant access should adhere to these access routes to prevent tracking over areas where hedgehogs could be present.
- 7.11 If an injured hedgehog is found on site, this should be taken to a nearby wildlife rescue centre or vet that accepts wild animals. Additionally if any young hedgehogs are found during the autumn, immediately prior to the hibernation period, these should also be taken to a wildlife rescue centre as it would be unlikely that these would survive the winter. The nearest wildlife rescue centres to the cable route are provided in Table 1.

*Table 1: Contact details for the nearest Wildlife Rescue Centres to the site.*

Name	Address	Telephone Number
Chorley Hedgehog Rescue	1 Cottage Fields, Chorley, PR7 3QE	07948 730855
Lancashire Hedgehog hospital	56 Churchill Drive, Little Lever, BL3 1PG	01204 709144
Wildlife Hospital Horwich	15 Vale Avenue, Horwich, BL6 5RF	01204 690018

## 8.0

8.1

8.2

8.3

### Relevant Legislation

8.4

8.5

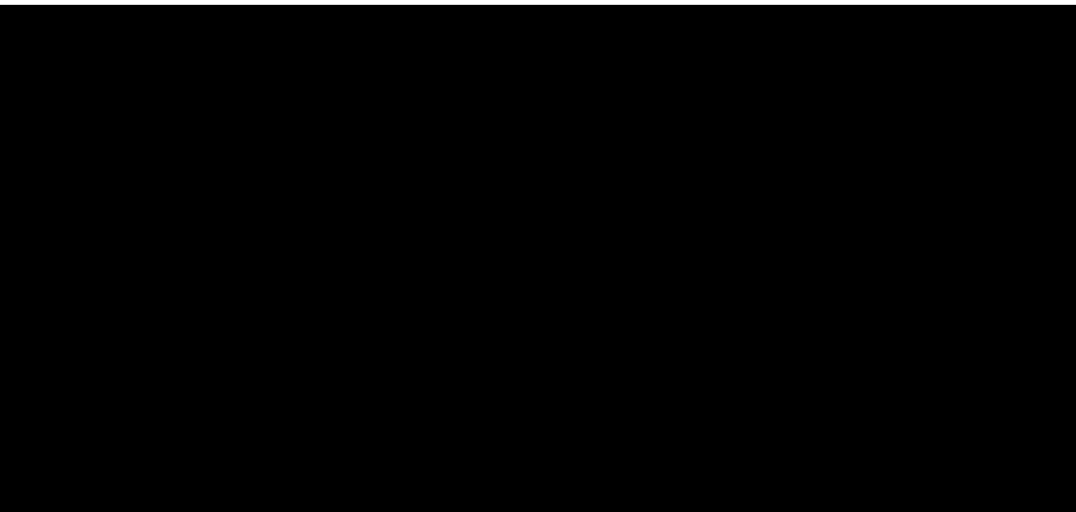
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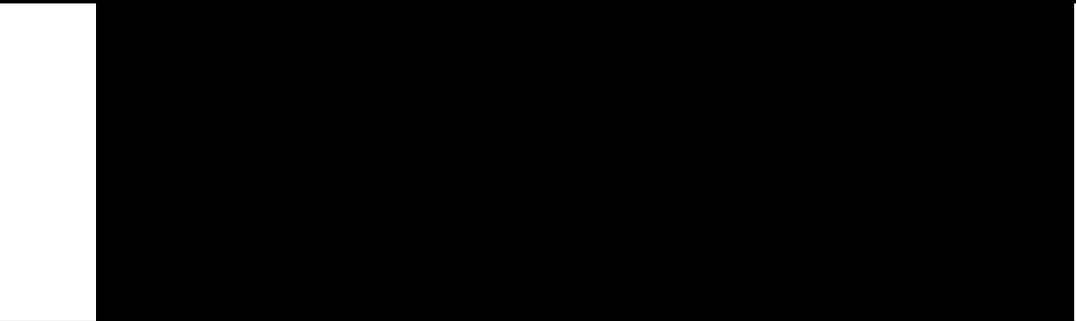
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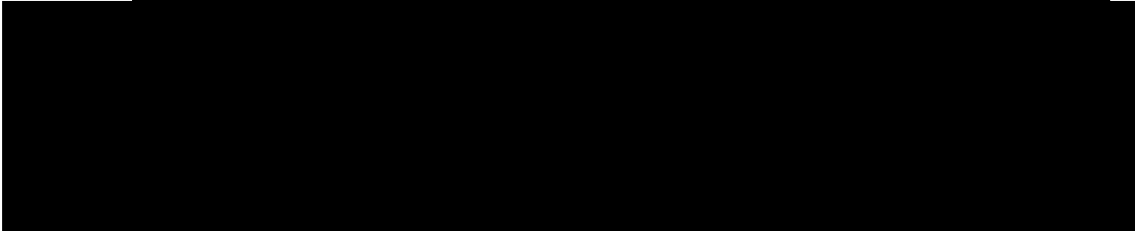
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8.11 L



8.12



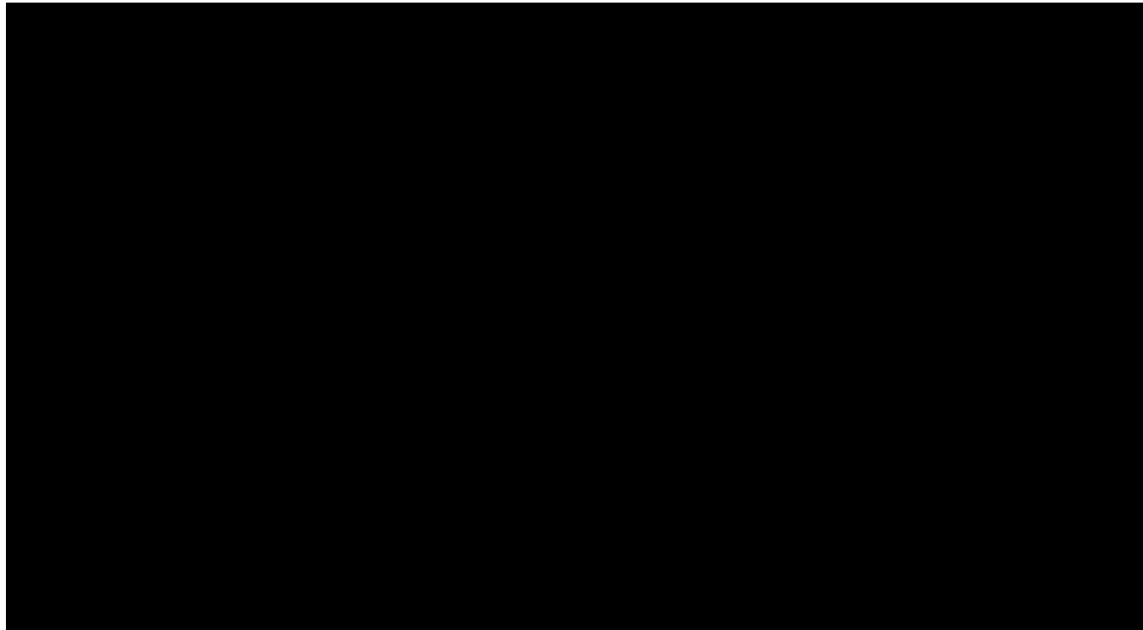
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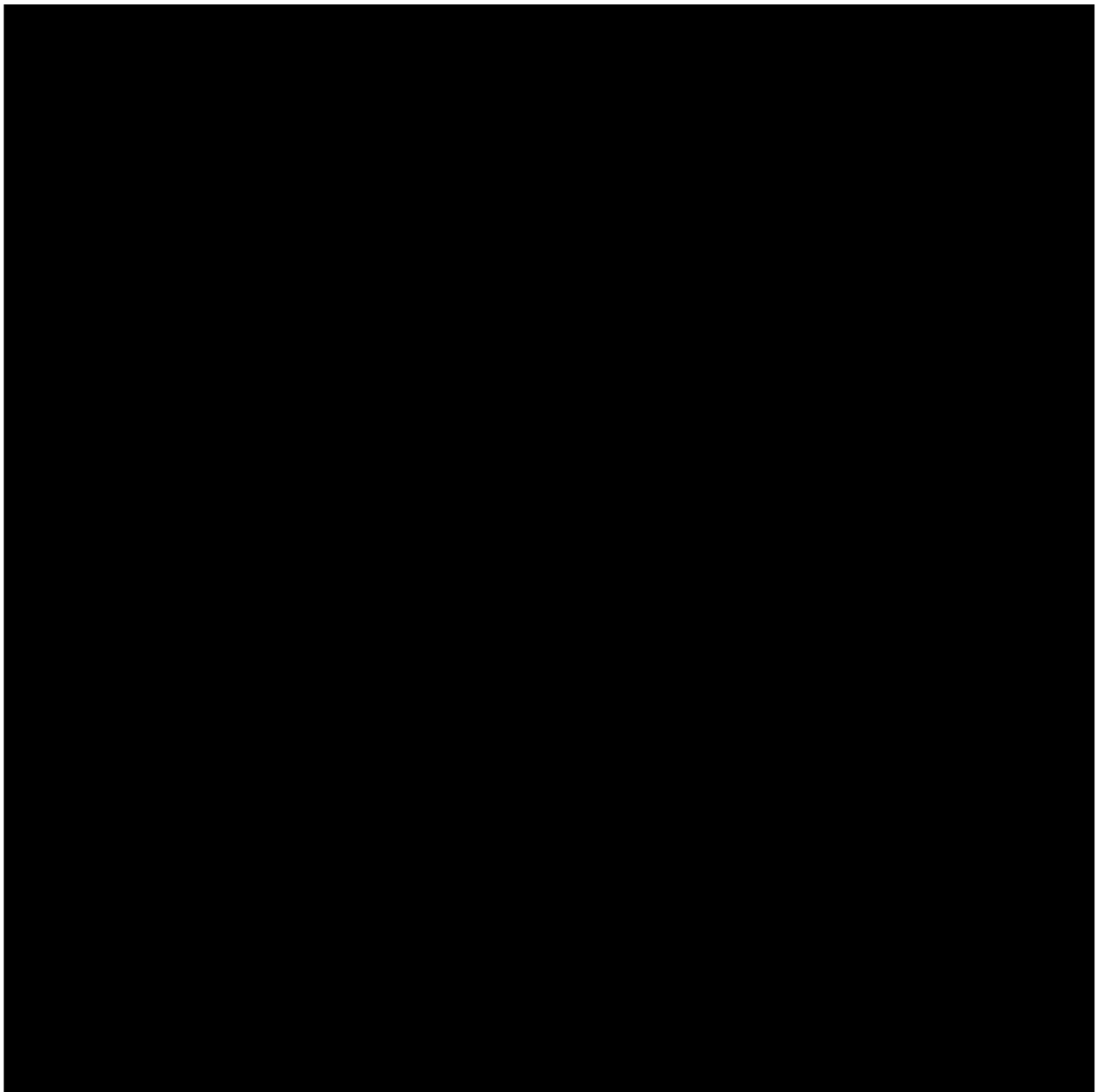
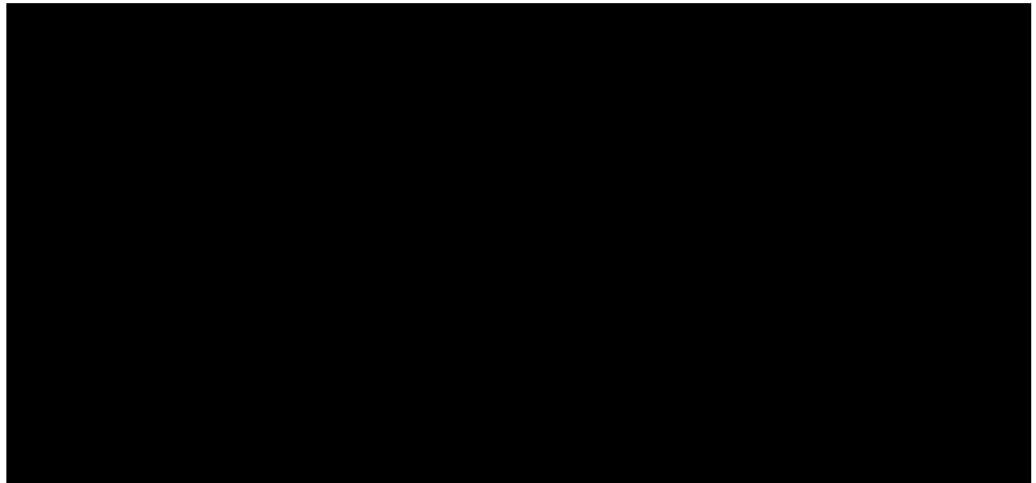


During Works

Standard Precautionary Measures to be implemented

8.14





8.21

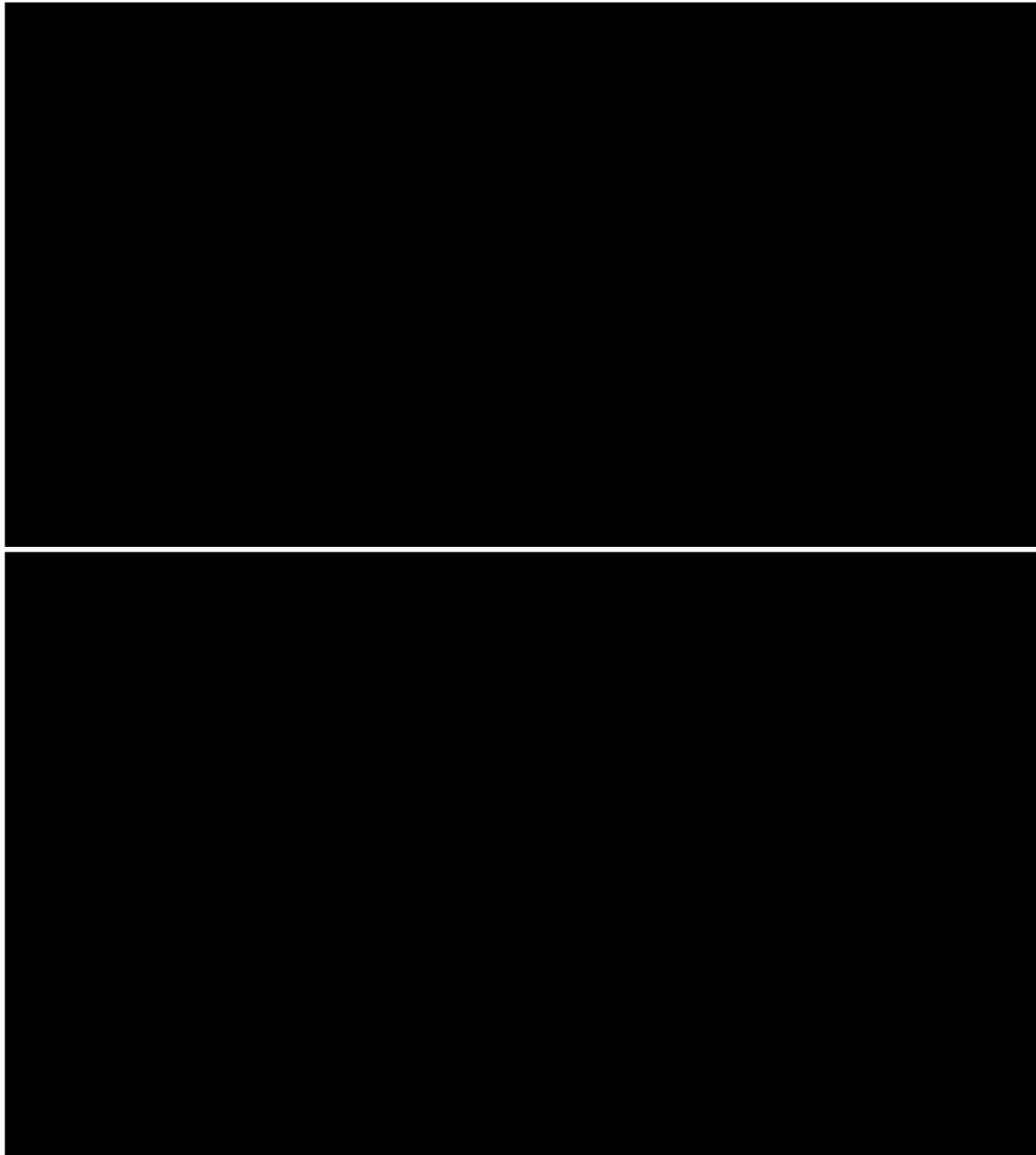
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## 9.0 Non-Native Species Strategy

- 9.1 A Phase 1 habitat survey was carried out on the 27th August 2021 by TEP. The survey identified Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* and Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster spp.* within the Site.
- 9.2 An Invasive non-native species (INNS) survey was carried out in August 2021 by Japanese Knotweed Solutions. The survey identified Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, Cotoneaster spp. and Rhododendron within the Site.
- 9.3 The locations of these INNS are shown in the Phase 1 drawing (TEP ref: G9042.001).
- 9.4 These species are listed on either Part II Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, Schedule 2 of the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 and / or listed as an Invasive Alien Species of Union concern under Regulation (EU) 1143/2014.
- 9.5 Management strategies for these non-native species are proposed and detailed in a separate Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy report (TEP ref: 9665.02.006).

## **DRAWINGS**

**G9042.001 Phase 1 Habitat Survey Main Site**  
**G9665.02.002A Phase 1 Habitat Survey A6 Realignment**

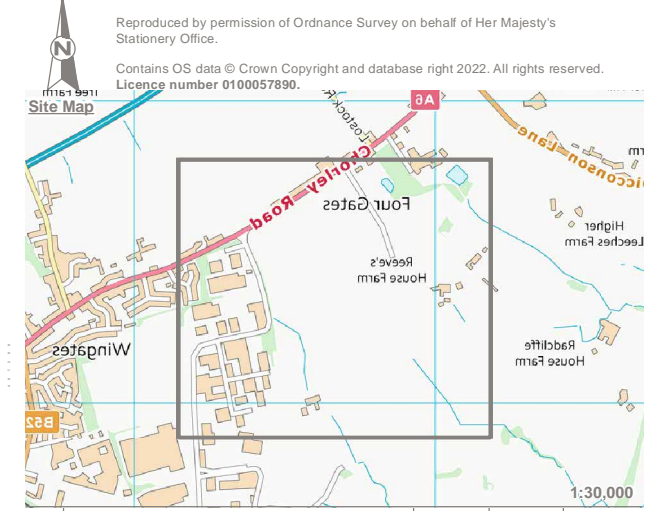




**KEY**

- Site boundary
- H Target note
- CT Cotoneaster
- HB Himalayan balsam
- JK Japanese knotweed
- RP Rhododendron
- S Scattered scrub
- ! Scattered broad-leaved tree
- ! Scattered coniferous tree
- ! Broad-leaved tree with low bat potential
- ! Broad-leaved tree with moderate bat potential
- ? Running water
- Species-poor intact hedge
- Species-poor defunct hedge
- Species-poor hedge and trees
- Fence
- Dry ditch
- Plantation broad-leaved woodland
- Dense/continuous scrub
- Unimproved acid grassland
- Semi-improved neutral grassland
- Modified neutral grassland
- Marsh/marshy grassland
- Poor semi-improved grassland
- Continuous bracken
- Tall ruderal
- Dry heath/acid grassland mosaic
- Swamp
- Ephemeral pool
- Standing water
- Spoil
- Arable
- Amenity grassland
- Building
- Bare ground
- Hardstanding

**Note:**  
The locations of habitats and habitat features are indicative. The locations of the rhododendron and western stand of cotoneaster were identified by Japanese Knotweed Solutions Ltd in August 2021.



Rev	Description	Drawn	Approved	Date

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Project  
**Wingates, Bolton**

Title  
**Phase 1 Habitat Survey**

Drawing Number  
**G9042.001**

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Scale	Date
CW	SA	AE	1:3,500 @ A3	17/02/2022



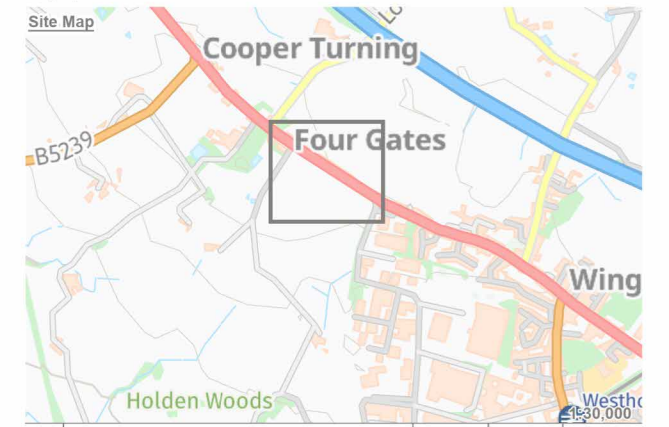


**KEY**

- Site boundary
- ⊙ Target note
- Scattered broad-leaved tree
- Broad-leaved tree with low bat suitability
- Broad-leaved tree with moderate bat suitability
- Species-poor intact hedge
- + + Species-poor hedge and trees
- + + Fence
- Dense/continuous scrub
- Modified neutral grassland
- Improved grassland
- Poor semi-improved grassland
- Tall ruderal
- Amenity grassland
- Hardstanding

**Note:**  
 The locations of habitats and habitat features are indicative.  
 The locations of the rhododendron and western stand of cotoneaster were identified by Japanese Knotweed Solutions Ltd in August 2021.

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Rev	Description	Drawn	Approved	Date
A	Site boundary update.	MK	KS	03/08/2023

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Project  
**Wingates, Westhoughton**

Title  
**Phase 1 Habitat Survey  
 Slot In/Out Boundary**

Drawing Number  
**G9665.02.002A**

Drawn	Checked	Approved	Scale	Date
AR	MK	RF	1:1,500 @ A3	03/08/2023



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