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Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power

Offsite Net Benefit for Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 Uniper UK Limited (the Applicant) is seeking a Development Consent Order (DCO) for the construction, operation (including maintenance) and decommissioning of a proposed low carbon Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) Generating Station fitted with Carbon Capture Plant (CCP) (the Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power (CQLCP) Abated Generating Station) and supporting infrastructure (collectively the Proposed Development).
- 1.1.2 The **Green Infrastructure Statement (EN010166/APP/6.11)** confirms that additional off-site delivery is required to account for habitat loss within the Order limits to achieve a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB). This strategy document provides details of the additional measures required to achieve NBB (via habitat creation and enhancement) for the Proposed Development on land outside of the Order limits at Gronant Fields, Prestatyn, Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (OSNGR) SJ 08413 83616 (**Figure 1**) (hereinafter referred to as the Off-Site Delivery Area). The Applicant is currently progressing negotiations with the landowner in order to secure a voluntary agreement to purchase the land.
- 1.1.3 This strategy document sets out a series of management and monitoring actions for the targeted habitat creation and enhancement measures at Gronant Fields. **Section 2** provides additional details on land ownership and ecological baseline.
- 1.1.4 This document should be read in conjunction with the following:
- **Green Infrastructure Statement (EN010166/APP/6.11)**;
 - **Chapter 11: Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecology of the Environmental Statement (ES) (EN010166/APP/6.2.11)**;
 - **Report to Inform Habitats Regulations Assessment (EN010166/APP/6.12)**; and
 - **Curlew Mitigation Strategy (EN010166/APP/6.13)**.
- 1.1.5 The measures set out in this document are secured via Requirement 18 of the **Draft DCO (EN010166/APP/3.1)**. Requirement 18 identifies that a detailed Off-Site NBB Plan must be developed in general accordance with this strategy document.

1.2 The Proposed Development

- 1.2.1 The CQLCP Abated Generating Station would comprise up to two CCGT with CCP units (and supporting infrastructure) achieving a net electrical output capacity of more than 350 megawatts (MW; referred to as MWe for electrical output) and up to a likely maximum of 1,380 MWe (with CCP operational) onto the national electricity transmission network.
- 1.2.2 Through a carbon dioxide (CO₂) pipeline, comprising existing and new elements the Proposed Development would make use of CO₂ transport and

storage networks owned and operated by Liverpool Bay CCS Limited, currently under development as part of the HyNet Carbon Dioxide Pipeline project (referred to as the HyNet CO₂ Pipeline Project), that will transport CO₂ captured from existing and new industries in North Wales and North-West England, for offshore storage. The captured CO₂ will be permanently stored in depleted offshore gas reservoirs in Liverpool Bay.

- 1.2.3 For the purposes of the electrical connection, National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (NGET), which builds and maintains the electricity transmission network in England and Wales, is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the existing 400 kV NGET Substation.
- 1.2.4 A description of the Proposed Development, including details of maximum parameters, is set out in **Chapter 4: The Proposed Development** of the **ES (EN010166/APP/6.2.4)**. At this stage in the development, the design of the Proposed Development incorporates a necessary degree of flexibility to allow for ongoing design development.

1.3 Legislative Context

- 1.3.1 Enforced by Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Ref 1) and Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 12 (Ref 2), Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) are required to deliver a NBB and uplift in ecosystem resilience from the baseline state (proportionate to the scale and nature of the development). Whilst this section provides an overview of key legislative context, further details are included in Section 2 of the **Green Infrastructure Statement (EN010166/APP/6.11)**.

National Policy Statements

- 1.3.2 The National Policy Statements (NPS) for Energy (NPS EN-1 to NPS EN-5) (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2023) provide the primary basis for decision-making for energy NSIPs by the Secretary of State.
- 1.3.3 NPS EN-1 (Ref 3) includes requirements which reflect planning policy in the devolved nations. It states in section 1.4.1 '*The Secretary of State will decide all applications for NSIPs in England and Wales, adjacent territorial waters or in the UK Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) (defined in section 84(4) of the Energy Act 2004) except any part in relation to which Scottish Ministers have functions.*'
- 1.3.4 NPS EN-1 (Ref 3) section 4.6 provides direction for NSIP promoters on environmental and biodiversity net gain.
- 1.3.5 It states '*Energy NSIP proposals, whether onshore or offshore, should seek opportunities to contribute to and enhance the natural environment by providing net gains for biodiversity, and the wider environment where possible*' (paragraph 4.6.6).
- 1.3.6 NPS EN-1 recognises the differences in approach to quantifying net gains in the devolved nations, stating the following in paragraph 4.6.9:
 - '*In Wales, applicants should consider the guidance set out in Section 6.4 of Planning Policy Wales and the relevant policies in the Wales National Marine Plan.*'

National Planning Policy

- 1.3.7 PPW 12 (Ref 2) sets out the land use planning policies of Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs) (Ref 4) Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales. PPW 12 sets out the importance of delivery of NBB and green infrastructure, aligning with Section 6 under the Environment Act (Wales) 2016 (Ref 1).

Local Planning Policy

- 1.3.8 The Denbighshire Local Development Plan is currently under review and pending updates. In the interim, the adopted local development plan (2006-2021) (Ref 5) has been used to identify opportunities for biodiversity within the local area. The following policies are relevant for NBB:

- Policy RD 1¹ Sustainable development and good standard design;
- Policy VOE 1² Key areas of importance;
- Policy VOE 2² Area of Outstanding natural beauty and area of outstanding beauty; and
- Policy VOE 5² Conservation of natural resources.

- 1.3.9 The Denbighshire supplementary planning guidance note for conservation and biodiversity enhancement (Ref 6) will be applied where applicable to habitat enhancements within the Off-Site Delivery Area.

- 1.3.10 Area Statements have been produced by Natural Resource Wales (NRW), under Section 11 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Ref 1). Seven Area Statements have been published to facilitate the implementation of the national natural resources policy (2017) (Ref 7). Each Area Statement outlines the key challenges facing localities and provides guidance on what can be done to meet those challenges and how we can better manage our natural resources. Area Statements should be used as an important source of information for planning of green infrastructure and net benefit.

- 1.3.11 The Proposed Development Site and Off-Site Delivery Area is located within the North East Wales Area Statement (Ref 7).

- 1.3.12 The five key themes highlighted within the North East Wales Area Statement (Ref 7) are as follows:

- Climate Emergency: Resilience and Adaptation;
- Develop and Improve Urban/Rural Green Infrastructure;
- Increasing Woodland Cover for Social, Environmental and Economic Benefits;
- Promoting the Resilience of Ecosystems in Maintaining and Enhancing Biodiversity; and
- Protecting Water and Soil through Farming and Sustainable Land Management.

¹ RD – Respecting Distinctiveness

² VOE – Valuing Our Environment

Area Statements

1.3.13 Green Infrastructure is mentioned throughout the themes within the North East Wales Area Statement including sustainable management of natural resources and opportunities for a resilient ecosystem. Opportunities identified within the North East Wales Area Statement (Ref 7) include but are not limited to:

- Developing resilient ecological networks;
- Improving the quality and quantity of water;
- Improving the management of existing woodlands and more widespread use of trees;
- Safeguarding and increasing carbon stores in soils and biomass;
- Maintaining, enhancing and creating riparian zones;
- Increasing urban tree canopy; and
- Improve opportunities for community growth and delivery of green infrastructure at a community level.

2. Off-Site Strategy

2.1 Off-Site Selection

- 2.1.1 To address the net loss of habitats and green infrastructure (GI) associated with the Proposed Development, off-site delivery is necessary, as such, a suitable Off-Site Delivery Area was identified to provide habitat type necessary to achieve NBB. In addition, off-site mitigation is required for the loss of suitable curlew *Numenius arquata* habitat, which is considered Functionally Linked Land (FLL)³, see **Curlew Mitigation Strategy (EN010166/APP/6.13)**.
- 2.1.2 A specific area has been selected to deliver the required Curlew mitigation and meet the NBB and GI obligations. A set of criteria has been used to identify potential sites for curlew mitigation and NBB/ GI off-site delivery. The criteria considered are as follows:
- Proximity to the Order limits;
 - Existing land use, pressures and habitats present;
 - Distance from the Dee Estuary/Aber Dyfrdwy Special Area of Conservation (SPA) and Dee Estuary/Aber Dyfrdwy SPA, Ramsar and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
 - Desk based assessment and Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEA) of each off-site location;
 - Availability for purchase and opportunity for long-term management;
 - Existing levels of use by curlew and other bird species; and
 - Land availability for the creation and enhancement of habitats in line with the habitats highlighted as net loss in Section 6.1 of the **Green Infrastructure Statement (EN010166/APP/6.11)**.
- 2.1.3 A total of five sites were subject to an optioneering process to assess which site was best suited to pass the criteria listed above.
- 2.1.4 Following this optioneering process the land at Gronant fields was selected. Whilst this land is outside of the Order limits, the Applicant is in the process of agreeing purchase of the land. The provision of the habitat creation within the Off-Site Delivery Area is secured by Requirement 18 within the **Draft DCO (EN010166/APP/3.1)**. The **Draft DCO (EN010166/APP/3.1)** requires an Off-site NBB and GI Plan to be developed and agreed with Flintshire County Council (FCC) and Denbighshire County Council (DCC) in accordance with this **Off-site NBB and GI Strategy (EN010166/APP/6.14)** prior to the implementation of any habitat creation within the Off-Site Delivery Area.

³ Functionally Linked Land (FLL) is a term often used to describe areas of land or sea occurring outside a designated site which is considered to be critical to, or necessary for, the ecological or behavioural functions in a relevant season of a qualifying feature for which a Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) or Ramsar site has been designated. These habitats are frequently used by qualifying species and supports the functionality and integrity of the designated sites for these features.

2.2 Biodiversity Baseline

Off-Site Location

- 2.2.1 The Off-Site Delivery Area (as shown in **Figure 1, Appendix A**) selected for curlew mitigation and NBB/GI compensation is located northwest of Gronant Fields, Prestatyn, NGR SJ 08413 83616 and is approximately 56.3 ha in size.
- 2.2.2 The southern boundary of the Off-Site Delivery Area is directly parallel to the A548 road, and northern boundary parallel to a railway track. Off-Site Delivery Area is bounded by the Dee Estuary and golf course to the north, caravan park to the east, a hotel and undeveloped land to the west, and further undeveloped farmland to the south.
- 2.2.3 The Off-Site Delivery Area is located within the Dee Estuary/ Aber Dyfrdwy SAC and SPA and the Dee Estuary SSSI nationally designated site. The Off-Site Delivery Area also borders a Priority Ecological Network (PEN)⁴, with opportunity to expand the PEN south of its current designation.

Ecological Baseline of the Off-Site Delivery Area

Habitats

- 2.2.4 A UKHab classification and condition assessment were undertaken of the accessible areas within the Off-Site Delivery Area on 2nd and 3rd June 2025. The following habitats were identified:
- Other non-cereal crops c1d8;
 - Other neutral grassland g3c;
 - Eutrophic standing water r1a;
 - Other rivers/streams r2b;
 - Other broadleaved woodland w1g;
 - Other native hedgerow h2a6; and,
 - Developed land; sealed surface u1b.
- 2.2.5 Condition assessments (completed using the DEFRA condition assessment sheets (Ref 8)) were used to assess the overall condition of habitat types identified within the Off-Site Delivery Area. Habitat condition scores were assigned and are presented in **Table 1**.

⁴ A Priority Ecological Network (PEN) are areas within the terrestrial environment that show areas of connectivity between protected sites and terrestrial habitat. They identify and provide frameworks to inform the location of action to build functional resilient ecological networks.

Table 1: Statutory Biodiversity Condition Assessment Scores

Habitat Ref.	Broad Habitat	Habitat Type	Score	Condition
g3c	Grassland	Other neutral grassland	2/6	Poor
c1d8	Cropland	Other non-cereal crops	NA	NA
w1g	Woodland	Other broadleaved woodland	28/39	Moderate
r1a	Lakes	Pond (woodland)	7/7	Good
r2b	Rivers and Streams	Ditch	6/8	Moderate
h2a6	Hedgerow	Other native hedgerow	6/8	Good
Good U1b	Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	NA	NA

Protected and Notable Species

- 2.2.6 No direct evidence of protected and notable species using Off-Site Delivery Area was identified during the ecological walkover survey, data search records are available for several protected and notable species within the Off-Site Delivery Area. These include:
- Bat species, and
 - Bird species (including curlew).
- 2.2.7 Habitats present the Off-Site Delivery Area are suitable for a range of protected and notable species, these include:
- Badger *Meles meles*;
 - Bat species;
 - Bird species;
 - Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, and
 - Invertebrate species.
- 2.2.8 The presence of data search records and the suitability of Off-Site Delivery Area for protected and notable species has been taken into account when developing NBB proposals for the Off-Site Delivery Area.
- 2.2.9 Further information on the ecological features present within the Off-Site Delivery Area are detailed in **Appendix B (Gronant Fields Preliminary Ecological Appraisal)**.

2.3 Proposal to Provide Net Benefit and Green Infrastructure

- 2.3.1 The Off-Site Delivery Area presents a significant opportunity for habitat enhancement and creation measures. The Off-Site Delivery Area is a total of 56.30 ha. Of this 56.30 ha, a total of 26 ha is to be used as a mitigation for the loss of FLL within the Order Limits. Proposals for this mitigation is presented in with **Curlew Mitigation Strategy (EN010166/APP/6.13)**. Certain areas identified for curlew mitigation will require habitat creation and enhancement. This creation and enhancement will deliver a net benefit for the Off-Site Delivery Area and improve ecosystem resilience significantly from its baseline state (majority pasture farmland with areas of arable cropland).
- 2.3.2 To ensure that GI requirements are also delivered, approximately 30.30 ha, is to be subject to habitat enhancement and creation measures which will deliver the NBB and GI requirement for the Proposed Development.
- 2.3.3 Habitat enhancement and creation proposals outlined within this document are subject to change following further investigation of off-site conditions, further work should be undertaken these may include, but are not limited to, surveys to understand soil characteristics (including pH) and water levels at Off-Site Delivery Area (i.e. areas prone to hold standing water). Further consultation with DCC and FCC may also be required.
- 2.3.4 In line with PPW 12 and as set out in the **Green Infrastructure Statement (EN010166/APP/6.11)** the following habitat creation ratios are required as a minimum to create an NBB for the Proposed Development:
- Trees, woodland and scrub will be replaced at a minimum 3:1 ratio;
 - Hedgerows (all hedgerows classified as important⁵ under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (Ref 9)), will be replaced at a minimum ratio of 3:1; and
 - Species-poor grassland will be enhanced to improve the baseline condition. Where possible, species-rich grassland will be created and targeted to a more desirable condition than on-site losses.

Habitat Enhancement

- 2.3.5 All retained habitats will be brought into active management with the aim of uplifting the condition of the habitats where possible.
- 2.3.6 Detailed below are high level proposals for the enhancement of grassland and woodland habitats within the Off-Site Delivery Area.

Grassland Enhancement

- 2.3.7 Baseline condition of the other neutral grassland within the Off-Site Delivery Area was recorded as “poor” condition, as it failed four of six condition

⁵ An important hedgerow, as defined by the Hedgerows Regulations 1997, is one that is over 30 years old and meets specific ecological, historical, or landscape criteria, such as marking a historic boundary or supporting notable wildlife. Such hedgerows are legally protected and cannot be removed without local authority consent.

assessment criteria. As such there is potential for an uplift to a higher condition.

2.3.8 Options for increasing species diversity across the retained other neutral grassland habitat will be considered during the preparation of the Off-Site NBB Plan. These are to include, but are not limited to, the application of green hay and overseeding.

2.3.9 This management prescription aims to increase species diversity to between 8 -10 species per m² and result in areas that are a good example of the habitat type, with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species for other neutral grassland. These indicator species include, but are not limited to:

- Common bent *Agrostis capillaris*;
- Crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*;
- Rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*;
- Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*;
- Creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*; and
- Self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*.

2.3.10 In addition to increasing species diversity, management prescriptions will be undertaken to allow for a more diverse sward height across the Off-Site Delivery Area, with at least 20% of the sward below 7 cm and 20% above 7 cm. This will create microclimates which provide opportunities for terrestrial invertebrates, birds and small mammals.

Woodland Enhancement

2.3.11 Baseline condition of the woodland habitat was recorded as “moderate” condition. The woodland habitat scored the lowest score on the following indicators:

- Number of native tree species;
 - Two or less native tree or shrub species across woodland parcel
- Vegetation and ground flora;
 - No recognisable woodland National Verification Classification (NVC) plant community at ground layer present
- Woodland vertical structure; and
 - One or less storey across all survey plots
- Veteran trees
 - No veteran trees present.

2.3.12 As it would not be possible to create veteran trees within the woodland, the low score of this woodland condition indicator is not covered further in this report.

2.3.13 Additional trees or shrub species are to be planted within the woodland. This will increase native tree cover and vertical structure. Currently the woodland is dominated by willow species *Salix* sp. as such the removal of trees within

the woodland may be required to allow for areas to plant additional tree or shrub species to increase the species diversity of the woodland.

- 2.3.14 Open areas in the woodland are to be either plug planted with woodland ground flora species or overseeded with an appropriate seed mix. The aim is to establish a recognisable woodland NVC plant community.

2.4 Habitat Creation

- 2.4.1 As detailed in Section 2.3 there are minimum planting compensation ratios for GI that must be adhered to in accordance with PPW12 (Ref 2) (trees, shrub, woodland and hedgerow). These ratios result in the following habitat creation requirements for GI delivery in the Off-Site Delivery Area:

- Woodland – 2.49 ha;
- Individual Trees – 3; and
- Scrub – 1.17 ha.

- 2.4.2 A net loss of 0.73 ha of other neutral grassland and 12.45 ha of modified grassland is currently proposed as part of the Proposed Development, with all on-site options to mitigate and compensate for the loss being exhausted. As part of the off-site delivery and curlew mitigation habitat requirements it is proposed that a large proportion of Off-Site Delivery Area be created to species rich grassland and brought into active management.

- 2.4.3 Proposed habitat enhancement and creation measures are shown on **Figure 2**. With the remainder of the Off-Site Delivery Area being used for curlew mitigation, which will involve the creation of wet grassland and other features suitable for curlew (**Curlew Mitigation Strategy (EN010166/APP/6.13)**).

Species-Rich Grassland Creation

- 2.4.4 Species-rich grassland will be targeted to improve the habitat quality, diversity and condition of the Off-Site Delivery Area.

- 2.4.5 To reach the definition of species-rich grassland the following criteria (Ref 10) must be met:

- More than 15 plant species per m²;
- More than 30% cover of wildflowers and sedges (excluding white clover *Trifolium repens*, creeping buttercup and injurious weeds); and
- Less than 10% cover of white clover and perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*.

- 2.4.6 It is yet to be determined what type of species-rich grassland is to be created within the Off-Site Delivery Area. Further consultation is required with NRW and Denbighshire County Council, with finalised input being secured through the requirement to prepare and implement the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) for the Off-Site Delivery Area.

Woodland and Scrub Creation

- 2.4.7 Woodland planting will be targeted to strengthen existing woodland and increase connectivity across the wider landscape. It is recommended that

woodland creation is located along the southern boundary creating a boundary feature from west to east.

- 2.4.8 The created woodland is to have a border of mixed scrub to allow for a softer transition between the two habitats.
- 2.4.9 Care is to be taken to ensure that the location of the proposed woodland does not impact the suitability of the Off-Site Delivery Area for curlew by reducing sight lines.
- 2.4.10 Increased woodland planting would provide suitable habitat for a range of notable and protected species. Woodland and scrub creation would also create a habitat corridor allowing for higher levels of movement across the landscape.

Individual Tree Creation

- 2.4.11 A total of 3 individual trees are required for NBB within the Off-Site Delivery Area.
- 2.4.12 Individual trees should be dispersed across the Off-Site Delivery Area and not concentrated in one individual field parcel.
- 2.4.13 A suitable mix of native species is to be used.
- 2.4.14 It is still to be determined whether the extent of woodland can be increased within the Off-Site Delivery Area to compensate for the loss of trees by the Proposed Development.

2.5 Species Specific Enhancements

- 2.5.1 Species specific enhancements are to be undertaken in the Off-Site Delivery Area. The Section below details species specific enhancements that are additional to any curlew mitigation undertaken at Off-Site Delivery Area
- 2.5.2 A total of five bird boxes will to be installed within the existing woodland on suitably mature trees. Bird boxes will be placed at a minimum height of 5 m, on the main trunk of the tree. Examples of suitable bird boxes are shown in **Table 2**. A range of bird boxes will be installed to allow for bird species with different requirements relating to nest boxes to be available.
- 2.5.3 A total of five bat boxes will be installed within the existing woodland on suitably mature trees. Bat boxes will be placed at a minimum height of 5 m, on the main trunk of the tree. Examples of suitable bat boxes are shown in **Table 3**. A range of bat boxes should be installed to account for the different roosting requirements of species.

Table 2: Example Bird Boxes

Bird Box	Target Species
1B Schwegler Nest Box (32 mm)	Great tit <i>Parus major</i> , blue tit <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i> , marsh tit <i>Poecile palustris</i> , coal tit <i>Periparus ater</i> , nuthatch <i>Sitta europaea</i> , collared flycatcher and pied flycatcher <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i> , tree sparrow

Bird Box	Target Species
	<i>Passer montanus</i> and house sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i> .
2H Schwegler Robin Box	Robin <i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone Open Nest Box	Wren <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> , robin, spotted flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i> , song thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i> and blackbird <i>Turdus merula</i> .
1N Schwegler Deep Nest Box	Wren, robin and pied wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i> .

Table 3: Example Bat Boxes

Bat Box	Target Species
Schwegler 3FN Small Bat Box	Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> and soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>
Schwegler 1FD Triple Front Panel Bat Box 55	Brown long eared <i>Plecotus auritus</i> , pipistrelle species <i>Pipistrellus</i> sp.and Myotis species
2FN Schwegler Bat Box	Noctule bat <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>

3. Management and Monitoring Plan

- 3.1.1 All habitat creation and enhancement activities aimed at delivering NBB and GI within the Off-Site Delivery Area will be subject to ongoing management and monitoring for a time deemed appropriate and proportionate. The Applicant will remain responsible for the implementation, monitoring and maintenance of off-site habitats, secured through an appropriate legal mechanism.
- 3.1.2 Preliminary creation and enhancement criteria detailed in Section 2.3 and 2.4 will be subject to further consultation between the Applicant, NRW and Denbighshire County Council. Following confirmation of the off-site delivery approach, habitat creations and enhancement as discussed will be subject to finalisation, with management and monitoring prescriptions set out in and secured as part of the full LEMP for the Off-Site Delivery Area.
- 3.1.3 The LEMP will include further detail on habitat creation and enhancement criteria for off-site habitat creation and enhancement. This will include a clear timetable for management and monitoring commitments. The frequency of habitat monitoring will be in line with best practice and agreed with based on further statutory consultation with the bodies referred to above. Once secured, the long-term management and monitoring will ensure the efficacy of habitat creation and enhancement and help to identify where management, mitigation improvements or changes are necessary, securing a long-term benefit of the Proposed Development.

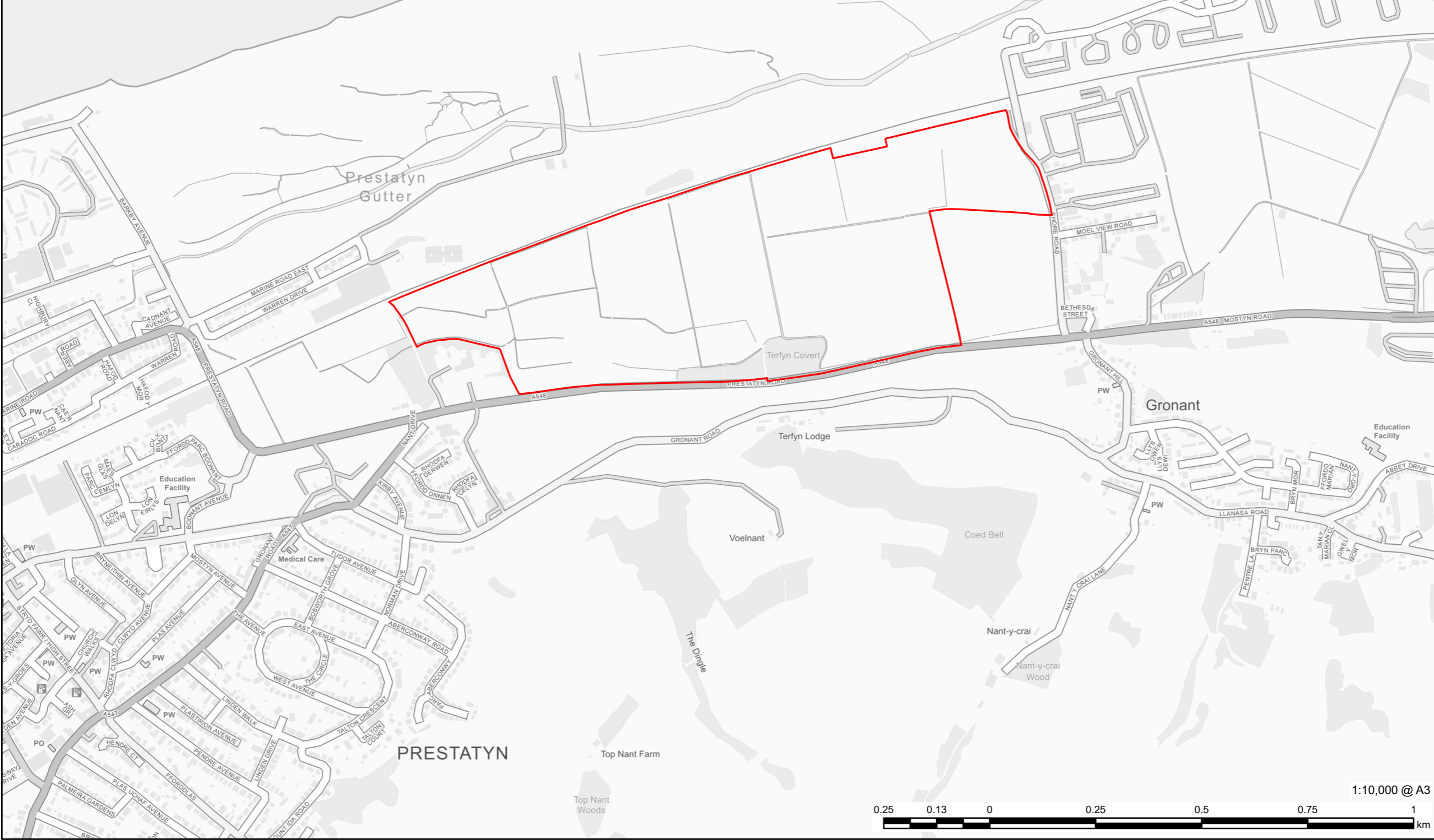
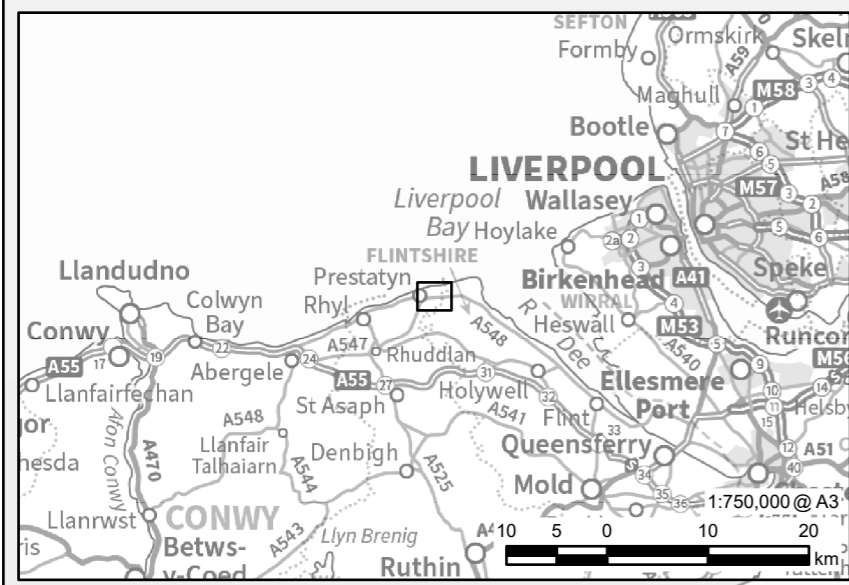
4. Conclusion

- 4.1.1 This **Off-site NBB and GI Strategy** has been prepared in line with step 4 of the stepwise approach following all on-site options for habitat mitigation and compensation being exhausted for the Proposed Development. Habitats discussed in Section 2.3 and 2.4 meet the GI planting compensation requirements of PPW12 (Ref 2), as well as providing a net benefit for all habitat types within the off-site area, complying with the Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Aspects of Ecosystem Resilience (DECCA) framework. For further detail on both the application of the stepwise approach and DECCA framework, see **Green Infrastructure Statement (EN010166/APP/6.11)**
- 4.1.2 The off-site delivery strategy contributes to addressing biodiversity challenges identified in the Flintshire and Denbighshire Local Development Plans, as well as the Northeast Wales Area Statement (Ref 7), including reversing biodiversity loss and enhancing ecological resilience.
- 4.1.3 Further consultation between the Applicant, NRW, FCC and Denbighshire County Council is ongoing to finalise the approach to off-site delivery, and the practicality of both a net benefit for biodiversity with additional curlew mitigation. Management and monitoring timescales will also be adjusted following consultation, and input into the final LEMP for the Off-Site Delivery Area, with detailed on the locations and extent of habitat creation and enhancements.

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Appendix A – Figures



PROJECT
 Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power

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 The Colmore Building
 Colmore Circus, Queensway
 Birmingham, B4 6AT
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LEGEND
 Offsite Delivery Area

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ISSUE PURPOSE
 Offsite Net Benefit for Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy

DATE
 July 2025

PROJECT NUMBER
 60717119

FIGURE TITLE
 Offsite Delivery Area

FIGURE NUMBER
 Figure 1



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LEGEND

- Offsite Delivery Area
- Indicative Off-Site Habitat and Creation Areas for NBB (Net Benefits for Biodiversity)**
- Habitat Creation
- Habitat Enhancement

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 Offsite Net Benefit for Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure Strategy

DATE
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PROJECT NUMBER
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FIGURE TITLE
 Proposed Habitat Enhancement and Creation Measures

FIGURE NUMBER
 Figure 2

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Appendix B – Gronant Fields Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Prepared for:
Uniper UK Limited

Prepared by:
AECOM Limited

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1. Executive Summary

<p>Site Details</p>	<p>Gronant Fields (hereafter referred to as the 'Site') is located between Gronant and Prestatyn, at National Grid Reference SJ 08604 83709; as shown by the red line boundary on Figure 1 in Annex A. The Site includes all land within this red line.</p> <p>The Site is approximately 56.3 ha and comprises of the following broad habitat types: grassland, cropland, woodland, hedgerow, running water, and a pond.</p> <p>The southern boundary of Site is directly parallel to the A548 road, and the northern boundary is parallel to a railway track.</p>
<p>Scheme Details</p>	<p>The Site has been identified as a potential area to deliver offsite compensation to ensure the Proposed Development results in a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) in connection with the Connah's Quay Development Consent Order (DCO) (this offsite compensation is hereafter referred to as the 'Scheme').</p> <p>The Scheme involves habitat creation and management of existing habitat to make the land suitable for Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>. This is to provide compensation for the loss of habitats present within the Connah's Quay site that are functionally linked to the Dee Estuary designated site due to the numbers of Curlew they support in winter.</p>
<p>Potential Requirements and Further Survey and Mitigation Recommendations</p>	<p>Depending on the nature of the biodiversity enhancements, the following are potential recommended requirements for further ecological surveys:</p> <p>Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA); National Vegetation Classification Survey (NVC); Bat roost assessments of woodland habitat; Nesting bird checks; Reptile presence/absence surveys; Natterjack toad <i>Epidalea calamita</i> presence/absence surveys; Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i> presence/absence surveys; Water vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> presence/absence surveys; and, Invertebrate surveys focused on dingy skipper <i>Erynnis tages</i> and wall butterfly <i>Lasiommata megera</i>.</p>

2. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAR) has been prepared by AECOM on behalf of Uniper, to assess the ecological baseline and recommendations for further survey at Gronant Fields, the location identified for delivering offsite Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) in connection with the Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power Project. All land situated within the boundary shown on Figure 1 in **Annex A** is hereafter referred to as the Site.
- 2.1.2 The assessment of ecological constraints has been undertaken with reference to current CIEMM good practice (Ref 1) and forms part of the technical information commissioned by the Applicant in connection with the Proposed Development. This PEAR has been prepared having regard to relevant wildlife legislation and planning policy, as is summarised in **Annex B** and is consistent with the requirements of British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity. Code of Practice for Planning and Development (Ref 2).
- 2.1.3 This PEAR is intended to provide advice in respect of design, site layout and / or site investigation. Further ecological surveys and / or ecological impact assessment (including detailed mitigation measures) may be required in connection with a planning application once the proposals have been finalised and any required surveys have been completed.

2.2 The Site

- 2.2.1 The Site is located just northwest of Gronant village in Denbighshire, Wales, south of the Dees Estuary at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (OSNGR) SJ 08604 83709 and is approximately 56.3 ha in size. The Site is shown by the boundary on Figure 1 in **Annex A**.
- 2.2.2 The Site mainly comprises grassland with some cultivated land, woodland, hedgerows, water filled ditches and a pond. The southern boundary of the Site is directly parallel to the A548 road, and the northern boundary is parallel to a railway track. The Site is bounded by the Dee Estuary and golf course to the north, a caravan park to the east, a hotel and undeveloped land to the west, and further undeveloped farmland to the south.

2.3 The Scheme

- 2.3.1 The Scheme involves habitat creation and management of existing habitat to make the land suitable for Curlew *Numenius arquata*. This is to provide compensation for the loss of habitats present within the Proposed Development's Order limits that are functionally linked to the Dee Estuary designated site due to the numbers of Curlew they support in winter.

2.4 Purpose of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2.4.1 This PEAR presents ecological information obtained during the following activities:

- a desk-study was undertaken in June 2025 to obtain records of designated sites, notable habitats¹ and protected and notable species² within 2 km of the Site (the area covered by the desk study is hereafter referred to as the Study Area); and
- an ecological walkover survey of accessible land within the Site (the area covered by the survey is hereafter referred to as the Survey Area) on 14 April, 2 and 3 June 2025.

2.4.2 The purpose of this PEAR is to provide a high-level ecological appraisal of the Site, specifically to:

- establish baseline conditions and determine the presence of Important Ecological Features (IEF)³ (or those that could be present), as far as is possible;
- to identify potential ecological constraints to the Scheme and make initial recommendations to avoid impacts on IEFs, where possible;
- to identify requirements for mitigation, where possible, including mitigation measures that will be required and those that may be required (depending on results of further surveys or final scheme design);
- to establish any requirements for more detailed surveys; and,
- to provide baseline context for opportunities offered by the Scheme to deliver biodiversity enhancements.

2.4.3 The methodology followed for undertaking the desk study and field surveys is detailed in **Annex C**, including any limitations to the assessment.

¹Notable habitats are those considered to be of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in Wales and are listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016; habitats listed under the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) (Flintshire County Council, 2020); hedgerows identified as being 'important' under the wildlife criteria of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, ancient woodlands and veteran trees.

²Notable species are those considered to be of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in Wales and are listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016; any species listed in an IUCN Red Data Book; and any other species listed under the Flintshire LBAP.

³ Important Ecological Features are habitats, species, ecosystems and their functions and processes that are of conservation importance and could potentially be affected by the Scheme.

3. Ecological Baseline

- 3.1.1 The following sections detail the results of the desk and field-based studies undertaken to inform this PEAR. Where necessary, recommendations for mitigation measures to protect known IEFs, or further surveys to determine the presence or likely absence of likely IEFs, are provided.
- 3.1.2 With regard to background data, 'recent' records are those no older than 10 years from the date of the desk study. Records outside of this period are historical and have only been reported where more recent records for a feature do not exist. Exceptions to this are detailed in the appropriate sections below.
- 3.1.3 If further survey work is recommended, details and timings of this survey work can be found in **Table 4**.

3.2 Desk Study

Designated Sites

Statutory Designated Sites for Nature Conservation

- 3.2.1 There are four sites with international designation for their biodiversity significance within 10 km of the Site and seven sites with a statutory designation for its biodiversity within 2 km of the Site.
- 3.2.2 The Site is located within the Dee Estuary Ramsar (Wales) internationally designated site and the Dee Estuary SSSI nationally designated site and is adjacent to the overlapping Dee Estuary Ramsar (England), Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Wales), Special Protection Area (SPA) (Wales) internationally designated sites.
- 3.2.3 **Table 1** summarises the designated sites situated within the Study Area. These are shown on Figure 2 in **Annex A**.

Table 1: Designated Sites within Study Area

Importance	Designated Site	Reason for Designation	Location of Designated Site ⁴
International	The Dee Estuary / Aber Dyfrdwy Ramsar Site (Wales and England)	Extensive intertidal mud and sand flats (20 km by 9 km) with large expanses of saltmarsh towards the head of the estuary. Habitats Directive Annex I features present include:	Within the Site

⁴Where designated sites are situated outside of the Site boundary, the distance and direction is given at the closest point of the designated site from the Site

Importance	Designated Site	Reason for Designation	Location of Designated Site ⁴
		<p>H1130 Estuaries</p> <p>H1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p> <p>H1210 Annual vegetation of drift lines</p> <p>H1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts</p> <p>H1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</p> <p>H1330 Atlantic salt meadows Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</p> <p>H2110 Embryonic shifting dunes</p> <p>H2120 Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes")</p> <p>H2130 Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")</p> <p>H2190 Humid dune slacks</p> <p>Site supports breeding colonies of Natterjack Toad <i>Epidalea calamita</i>.</p>	
International	Dee Estuary / Aber Dyfrdwy SPA (Wales and England)	The site is of major importance for waterbirds; during the winter the intertidal flats, saltmarshes and fringing habitats including coastal grazing marsh/fields, provide feeding and roosting sites for internationally important numbers of ducks and waders; in summer the site supports nationally important breeding colonies of two species of tern.	Within the Site

Importance	Designated Site	Reason for Designation	Location of Designated Site ⁴
		The site is also important during migration periods, particularly for wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain and for Sandwich terns post-breeding.	
International	Liverpool Bay / Bae Lerpwl (Wales) SPA	Qualifying features include red-throated diver <i>Gavia stellata</i> , common scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i> , and little gull <i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i> during the non-breeding season, as well as a waterbird assemblage, and foraging areas for little tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i> and common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> breeding within coastal SPAs.	2km northwest
International	Dee Estuary / Aber Dyfrdwy SAC (Wales and England)	Designated for the following Annex I habitats: Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand Atlantic salt meadows <i>Galuco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>	Directly adjacent to the northern boundary of Site
National	Dee Estuary SSSI (Wales and England)	One of the most important estuaries in Britain and amongst the most important in Europe for its populations of waders and wildfowl. The estuary is particularly important for its winterbird populations and both waders and wildfowl achieve numbers of international importance.	Within the Site
National	Gronant Dunes and	The site consists of Prestatyn Gutter, with Gronant Dunes to	Directly adjacent to

Importance	Designated Site	Reason for Designation	Location of Designated Site ⁴
	Talacre Warren SSSI (Wales)	the west, and Talacre Dunes to the east. Here, there are botanical, entomological and ornithological interests, including sand dune systems, marram grass, sand couch grass, and invertebrate assemblages within the Red Data Book.	the northern boundary of Site
National	Bryniau Clwyd a Dyffryn Dyfrdwy / Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)	Designated due to its heather moorland and rolling ridges, broadleaved woodlands and veteran, river valleys and the river dee, and limestone grasslands, cliffs and screes.	86 m south of Site

3.2.4 The Dee Estuary Ramsar, SAC, SPA and SSSI designated sites overlap with the Dee Estuary RSPB reserve.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites for Nature Conservation

3.2.5 There are two non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the Site.

3.2.6 **Table 2** summarises the designated sites situated within the Study Area. These are shown on Figure 2 in **Annex A**.

Table 2: Non-Statutory Designated Sites

Importance	Designated Site	Reason for Designation	Location of Designated Site ⁵
Local	Gronant Dunes Local Nature	Consists of habitats of principal importance, connecting habitat to the Ramsar and SPAs, and contains species of botanical,	Directly adjacent to northern

⁵Where designated sites are situated outside of the Site boundary, the distance and direction is given at the closest point of the designated site from the Site

Importance	Designated Site	Reason for Designation	Location of Designated Site ⁵
	Reserve (LNR)	ornithological, and entomological interest.	boundary of Site
Local	Big Wood Pool Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	The site hosts a priority habitat pond, wet woodland, and has known local importance for biodiversity.	935 m east

Recommendations

- 3.2.7 Proposals are to enhance the site for qualifying SPA/Ramsar site features as has been agreed with Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Various additional site surveys will be required to inform that habitat enhancements proposals.

Notable Habitats within the Study Area

- 3.2.8 Notable Habitats are considered to be those that fall within the categories of Priority Habitats Inventory (Wales), Priority Ecological Networks (PENs), Ancient Woodland Inventory, and Peatlands of Wales (see Figure 3 in **Annex A**).
- 3.2.9 The following ancient woodland sites have been identified within 50 m of the Site boundary and within the Site itself:
- One stand of Ancient semi-natural woodland within 50 m of the Site, adjacent to the western boundary. This habitat does not fall within the Site boundary, however, has connecting woodland that is parallel to the cropland on Site; and
 - The woodland within the Site boundary, to the south, is considered a replanted Ancient Woodland Site.
- 3.2.10 The closest Priority Habitat within the Study Area buffer is a traditional orchard that resides within 20m of the eastern Site boundary, at Lower Gronant. Several other habitats are present beyond the railway line and A-road, including lowland calcareous grassland, lowland fens and reedbeds, purple moorgrass *Molinia caerulea* and rush *Juncus* spp. pastures, saltmarsh, and wood-pasture and parkland.
- 3.2.11 A significant area of the north of Site is considered within the Priority Ecological Networks (PENs) for the Gronant Dunes' sand dune habitat, and the Site itself falls within the mapped area of Peatlands of Wales, and Schedule 7 Priority Habitat Coastal floodplain and grazing marsh.
- 3.2.12 The Dee estuarine area just north of Site has multiple habitats noted within the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or declining species and habitats (Agreement 2008-06) (Ref 3). These include:
- blue mussel beds;

- intertidal mudflats;
- peat and clay exposures;
- saltmarsh; and
- sublittoral mixed muddy sediments.

3.3 Field Survey

Habitats

3.3.1 Summary descriptions of the habitats within the Survey Area are provided below and shown on Figure 4 in **Annex A**. Habitat photographs are provided in **Annex D**, and condition assessments in **Annex E**. Relative abundance of plant species were recorded using the DAFOR⁶ scale, with locally, very locally and constant also used to indicate species of which were concentrated to one location or constant amongst the whole habitat area.

3.3.2 Habitats present within the Site comprise:

- c1d8 - Other non-cereal crops;
- g3c - Other neutral grassland;
- r1a - Eutrophic standing water;
- r2b - Other rivers/streams;
- w1g - Other broadleaved woodland;
- h2a6 - Other native hedgerow; and
- u1b - Developed land; sealed surface.

3.3.3 An overview of each is provided within the sections below.

C1d8 – Other non-cereal crops

3.3.4 This habitat is present to the southwest region of the Site, which is notably homogenous in profile and visibly grazed by sheep. Species present include stinging nettle *Urtica dioica*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, willowherb *Epilobium* sp., and creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*.

G3c – Other neutral grassland

3.3.5 This grassland is the dominant habitat on Site, covering the breadth of the northern reaches, and the majority of the southern areas. This habitat is intercepted with the standing water and running water habitats, which run throughout the field boundaries of the other neutral grassland.

3.3.6 Species within these grassland parcels include perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, hairy sedge *Carex hirta*, glaucous sedge *Carex flacca*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, soft-rush *Juncus effusus* and jointed rush *Juncus articulatus*.

⁶ DAFOR Scale is a scale used in botanical survey: D - Dominant 50-100%, A - Abundant 30-50%, F - Frequent 15-30%, O - Occasional 5-15%, R - Rare < 5%

rt – *Eutrophic standing water*

- 3.3.7 Within the southwest end of Site's other neutral grassland is a eutrophic, man-made pond which has crack willow *Salix fragilis* growth shading the entire waterbody. This waterbody is connected on the eastern bank by a wet ditch which joins further south to a stand of woodland (see Figure 5 in **Annex A**).

r2b – *Other rivers/streams*

- 3.3.8 Water-filled ditches were present across the span of the Site, with eight connected routes along the fields, often at the margins (see Figure 5 in **Annex A**).
- 3.3.9 These habitats were mostly dominated by common reed *Phragmites australis*, with other species residing in the ditches, such as yellow flag iris *Iris pseudacorus*, brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, greater willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, watercress *Nasturtium officinale*, water dock *Rumex hydrolapathum*, soft-rush and willow *Salix* sp.

w1g – *Other broadleaved woodland*

- 3.3.10 There are two parcels of broadleaved woodland, one smaller parcel just north-east of the Site, and another larger parcel within the southern portion of the Site.
- 3.3.11 These woodlands are very different in composition, with the northeastern woodland having species dominated by sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, with elder *Sambucus nigra*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* present throughout.
- 3.3.12 The parcel to the south is dominated by willow *Salix* sp. and has the occasional elder tree.

h2a6 – *Other native hedgerow*

- 3.3.13 The fragmented hedgerow on Site is dominated by native species, such as hawthorn, elder, and bramble, with the field margin presenting an ecotone throughout its length.

u1b – *Developed land; sealed surface*

- 3.3.14 This habitat is within the area just outside of Site, at the northeast corner. This is a tarmac track that enters a farm at the northeastern corner, bordering the northeastern woodland parcel. No plant species are noted to be present.

Recommendations for further surveys

- 3.3.15 Due to the potential presence of peat on the Site, and the lack of detail of woodland that could potentially connect to the ancient woodland below the southern boundary, a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey is recommended. This is to provide further context of the baseline habitats and their soils on Site, for advising the biodiversity enhancement plans. These should include:
- soil surveys of areas where habitat creation is proposed; and

- grassland NVC survey of fields where wet grassland enhancement for curlew is proposed.

Notable Plants

- 3.3.16 The following Schedule 8 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Ref 4) species were noted within the Study Area: bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, lily-of-the-valley *Convallaria majalis*, marsh helleborine *Epipactis palustris*, sea-holly *Eryngium maritimum*, alongside UKBAP⁷ (and not Schedule 8) species, Black Poplar *Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*. Bluebell and black poplar have also been recorded at Big Pool Wood, approximately 1.17 km to the east of Site.
- 3.3.17 No protected or notable plant species were detected during the field survey. The presence of protected or notable plant species is reasonably discounted and has therefore not been considered further in this report.

Invasive Non-Native Plant Species

- 3.3.18 No Invasive Non-Native Plant Species (INNPS) were detected during the ecology surveys.

Badger

- 3.3.19 The desk study suggests there were at least twenty-one active badger *Meles meles* setts within the neighbouring woodland approximately 200m south of Site, which were recorded in 2023. There are eleven more records of badger within the Study Area, with several being roadkill adjacent to Site; the latest being from 2022.
- 3.3.20 The Site has suitability for badger within all but the wetland habitats. Badger have the potential to use this Site to commute, forage, and create setts within the woodland and margins of fields. The habitats are of local value.

Recommendations for Further Survey

- 3.3.21 Depending on the context of the biodiversity enhancement plans, further badger surveys may be necessary.

Bats

- 3.3.22 There are twenty-four bat records within the Study Area, the nearest being within the surrounding urban habitats approximately 100 m south, where noctule *Nyctalus noctula* and pipistrelle species *Pipistrellus* spp. were present in 2022. Within the wider Study Area there are records of whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, and lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*.
- 3.3.23 The Site has suitability for bats due to the presence of hedgerow and woodland edges across the fields, providing linear features for foraging and commuting. The wetland habitats on Site also provide suitable foraging resources. These linear features connect to wider habitats that could be

⁷ UKBAP species appear on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

used by bats for foraging i.e., woodland and river adjacent to the northern and southern Site boundary.

Recommendations for Further Survey

- 3.3.24 A daytime bat walkover (DBW) survey is required to determine the value of the site for foraging and commuting bats and inform the requirement for further nocturnal surveys.
- 3.3.25 There are no suitable roosting features seen on Site, however if works are to impact the woodland, a preliminary bat roost assessment (PBRA) is recommended to assess any impacted trees for potential bat roosts and determine the requirement for further surveys.

Birds

- 3.3.26 174 species of birds were noted to have been present within the Study Area. Of this number, the majority fall on at least one of the notable bird lists⁸, and 140 are listed as features of the Dee Estuary SPA. A curlew *Numenius arquata* was noted to be within the Site boundary in 2021.
- 3.3.27 The Site has suitability for nesting birds within the woodland, grassland and reed habitats.
- 3.3.28 Two Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 'Schedule 1' species were recorded during the survey visit on 14 April 2025: Cetti's warbler (6 singing) and a barn owl (roost/potential nest site).

Recommendations for Further Survey

- 3.3.29 Where possible, works on the site should proceed where possible outside of breeding bird season. If site works are to take place between March and August inclusive then nesting bird checks by an experienced ornithologist would be required to provide advice (particularly with regard to avoiding disturbance impacts to any Schedule 1 breeding species on Site).

Reptiles

- 3.3.30 Common species of reptile refers to common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, slow worm *Anguis fragilis*, adder *Vipera berus* and grass snake *Natrix helvetica*.
- 3.3.31 Sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* are considered rare and have additional listings under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) (Ref 5) and EU Habitats Directive 2019 (HR 2019) (Ref 6).
- 3.3.32 The desk study's closest record of reptile was approximately 100 m north of Site, across the railway track. This was a common lizard in 2019. Further records of common lizards include a juvenile approximately 1.14 km east, along the railway in 2021, adjacent to the woodland east of the caravan park.

⁸ Lists include the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) 5th Edition, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 1, the NERC Act 2006 Section 41 Priority Species, and the Habitats Regulations 2019 Schedule 2 (European Protected Species).

- 3.3.33 Excluding the single juvenile on the tracks, all records of reptiles are positioned north of the railway, within the estuary habitats, including the sand banks. Here, there are thirty-three (33) records of sand lizards, and over two-hundred common lizard sightings within Gronant Dunes.
- 3.3.34 There are no records of snakes within the Study Area.
- 3.3.35 The Site has local value and suitability for reptiles due to the presence of hedgerow, a pond (suitable for grass snake), and woodland habitats with grasses along the woodland edge. These habitats provide areas for basking, hunting, and shelter. The Site is connected to a wider area of local sand lizard populations, and presence of sand lizard on Site is considered possible despite the railway track barrier.

Recommendations for Further Survey

- 3.3.36 Further reptile surveys are recommended to determine likely absence / presence on Site.

Natterjack Toad

- 3.3.37 The natterjack toad is a species protected under the HR 2019 (Ref 7), and the NERC Act. Within the UK, this natterjack has sensitive and isolated populations, which are limited to very small pockets of coastline. One small population resides at Gronant Dunes.
- 3.3.38 There are twenty-seven (27) records of natterjack toad within the Study Area, all of which focused within the estuary habitat of Gronant Dunes, north of the railway.
- 3.3.39 The desk study data characterises the Site as having coastal grazing marsh habitat (Section 7 Habitat of Principal Importance); a habitat which is characteristic of this species' habitat-type, although the field survey identified this land as other neutral grassland. Despite this the presence of natterjack toad on Site cannot be reasonably ruled out during enhancement works due to their national scarcity and proximity to the local stronghold at Gronant Dunes.

Recommendations for Further Survey

- 3.3.40 Further natterjack toad surveys are recommended to determine likely absence / presence on Site.

Great Crested Newt

- 3.3.41 There are no records of great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* within the Study Area within the last 10 years. Additionally, there are no ponds within the 250 m buffer of the Site boundary, although the surrounding habitats do provide suitable terrestrial shelter. Llywodraeth Cymru (2021) considers the nearest suitable habitat for great crested newt to be south of the A-road.
- 3.3.42 Three major barriers are present within 500 m of the Site, these being the A158 (south), railway track (north), and the Dee Estuary (north).
- 3.3.43 The Site has one pond on Site that has the potential to provide suitable habitat for great crested newt during their breeding aquatic phase. Further

habitats on Site, such as hedgerow and woodland, provide shelter during the terrestrial stage of their lifecycle.

Recommendations for Further Survey

- 3.3.44 Further great crested newt surveys are recommended to determine likely absence / presence on Site.

Otter

- 3.3.45 There are eight records of otter *Lutra lutra* within the Study Area, the majority isolated to the Prestatyn Gutter and connected wetland of the estuary. There are a few records within Big Pool Wood (the latest being from 2021), approximately 1.17 km east of Site, separated from Site by a caravan park.
- 3.3.46 The Site has limited suitability for otter, restricted to the ditches with streams, and woodland. Due to the lack of connected watercourse habitats and major barriers around Site for the species, the likelihood of their presence is considered negligible.

Recommendations for Further Survey

- 3.3.47 A working methods statement (WMS) and ecological clerk of works (ECoW) supervision by an experienced ecologist is advised on Site at the time of works to address potential species presence.

Water Vole

- 3.3.48 There are seven records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* within the Study Area, six of which being in the Gronant Dune LNR, in 2015, and one sighting in 2017 at Prestatyn Gutter. These sightings are all on the opposite side of the railway track, within the dunes and adjacent habitats to the estuary.
- 3.3.49 There are no records of water vole beyond 2017. There is, however, one record from 2021 of American mink *Neovison vison* in the neighbouring land, at Big Pool Wood. The mink is an invasive non-native species (INNS) that is a known predator and ecological threat to the species' local strongholds, having been a major contributor to the increasing declines of the national water vole population (Ref 8, and Ref 9).
- 3.3.50 The Site has suitability for water vole due to the presence of ditches with streams around the Site, and the marginal vegetation across these ditches, and wooded habitat, providing potential food resources, and shelter. The remainder of the site is mostly cropland and grassland, frequently grazed with low swards, which provides negligible suitability for the species.

Recommendations for Further Survey

- 3.3.51 If the works will impact the running and standing water habitats on site then further water vole surveys are recommended to determine likely absence / presence on Site.

Hazel Dormouse

- 3.3.52 There are no records of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* within the Study Area, and the species is not considered locally abundant across North Wales (Ref 10, Ref 11).

3.3.53 The habitats on Site provide negligible suitability for the species due to the gaps within the hedgerow and the woodland parcels being isolated from the larger wildlife corridors with similar habitats.

Recommendations for Further Survey

3.3.54 No further surveys are recommended.

Invertebrates

3.3.55 There are twenty-nine (29) species recorded within the Study Area. Notable species are summarised within the table below.

Table 3: Invertebrates within the Study Area

Common Name	Latin	HR 2019	NERC Act	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Sch 5)
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Grayling	<i>Hipparchia semele</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Wall	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Silver-studded Blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Garden Tiger	<i>Arctia caja</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Latticed Heath	<i>Chiasmia clathrata</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Small Square-spot	<i>Diarsia rubi</i>	Yes	Yes	No
White-line Dart	<i>Euxoa tritici</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Ghost Moth	<i>Hepialus humuli</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Powdered Quaker	<i>Orthosia gracilis</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Shaded Broad-bar	<i>Scotopteryx chenopodiata</i>	Yes	Yes	No

Common Name	Latin	HR 2019	NERC Act	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Sch 5)
White Ermine	<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	Yes	Yes	No
Red Twin-spot Carpet	<i>Xanthorhoe ferrugata</i>	Yes	Yes	No

3.3.56 Of the fifteen (15) notable species, none of which are recorded within the Site itself. The nearest is wall, which is recorded in the parking lot adjacent to the eastern Site boundary, in 2022. Many other records of wall are frequent in the local area, additionally with several records of latticed heath, dingy skipper, and cinnabar within 500 m of the Site.

3.3.57 The Site is considered of low suitability for most notable species recorded in the area, with only bramble and thistle being botanical species of particular interest to these species providing nectar sources for dingy skipper and wall.

Recommendations for Further Survey

3.3.58 Further surveys scoping for notable invertebrate species, focusing on wall and dingy skipper, are recommended to understand the baseline invertebrate data for possible enhancement opportunities.

Other Notable Species

3.3.59 There were other returned records of notable species⁹ within the Study Area, including hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, grey seal *Halichoerus grypus*, and common toad *Bufo bufo*.

3.3.60 The habitats on Site, namely the ditches and pond are likely suitable to support common toad populations. Hedgehog similarly would find the habitats on Site suitable, with a range of foraging area and shelter within the woodland, hedgerow, and grassland.

3.3.61 Grey seal are likely to be regular visitors of the estuary, although any possible disturbance from works on Site, within the context of biodiversity enhancement, is considered negligible. The Site is over 400 m from the estuary, with an active railway line running between the Site and the grey seal habitat.

Recommendations for Further Survey

3.3.62 Hedgehog and common toad are to be included within the WMS, and a toolbox talk is recommended to include these species prior to works.

⁹ Notable species are taken as principal species for the conservation of biodiversity listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; any species listed in an IUCN Red Data Book; and any other species listed under the LBAP that are not referred to in previous sections of the report.

3.3.63 No further surveys are recommended.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1.1 This PEAR is based on a desk study and ecological surveys undertaken on 14 April, 2 and 3 June 2025, to assess the ecological constraints to the biodiversity enhancement plans at Gronant Fields (the Site).
- 4.1.2 The following further surveys or reports are recommended, as summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of Further Survey Requirements

Feature	Recommendation	Timing
Habitats	NVC survey	NVC grassland survey is recommended between May to August, following handbook guidelines (Ref 12). Soil surveys of areas where habitat creation are proposed. Prior to planning application (if required) to inform proposals
Badgers	Walkover survey to determine presence of badger on Site.	Prior to planning application (if required), any time of year.
Bat Activity	DBW survey to assess the sites value for foraging and commuting bats and inform further nocturnal survey effort	DBW survey can be undertaken anytime of year. Further surveys if required are seasonal (April to October) The DBW survey and any follow on nocturnal surveys will need completing prior to any planning application (if required).
Bat Roosts	Preliminary bat roost assessment to determine potential for roosts on Site and inform further survey work.	PBRA survey can be undertaken anytime of year. Further surveys if required are seasonal (April to October) The PBRA survey and any follow on nocturnal surveys will need completing prior to any planning application (if required).
Birds	Bird nest checks are advised if biodiversity enhancements are to commence works	Prior to works.

Feature	Recommendation	Timing
	during breeding bird season.	
Reptiles	Further surveys required to determine presence / absence of reptiles.	Surveys can take place in good weather conditions from mid-March to mid-October (optimal: April to mid-June, September) Prior to planning application (if required) to inform proposals.
Natterjack Toad	Further surveys required to determine presence / absence of natterjack toad.	Surveys can take place in April/May Prior to planning application (if required), to inform proposals
GCN	Further surveys required to determine presence / absence of great crested newt.	eDNA surveys can take place from mid-April to end of June. Prior to planning application (if required), and during works.
Otter	WMS and ECoW supervision advised.	Prior to planning application (if required), and during works.
Water Vole	Further surveys required to determine presence / absence of water vole.	Surveys consist of two survey visits. One in the Spring and one in the Autumn. Prior to planning application (if required), and during works.
Hazel Dormouse	No further surveys required.	N/A
Invertebrates	Invertebrate scoping survey, focusing on dingy skipper and wall butterfly.	Scope to be confirmed with invertebrate specialist prior to proposal.
Other Notable Species	Further species are to be included within the WMS, including hedgehog and common toad. A toolbox talk is recommended to cover these species prior to works.	Prior to planning application (if required), and prior to works.

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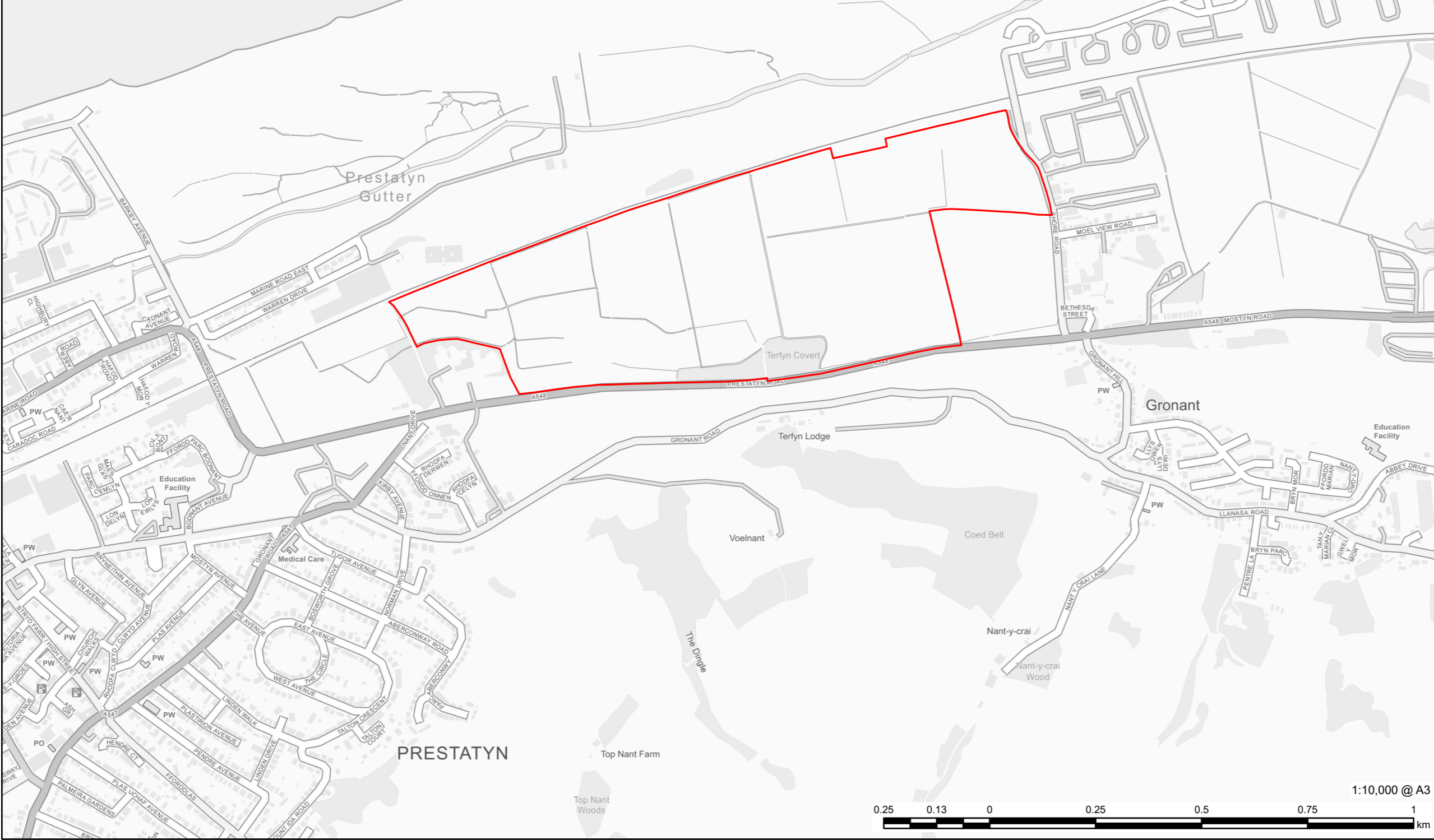
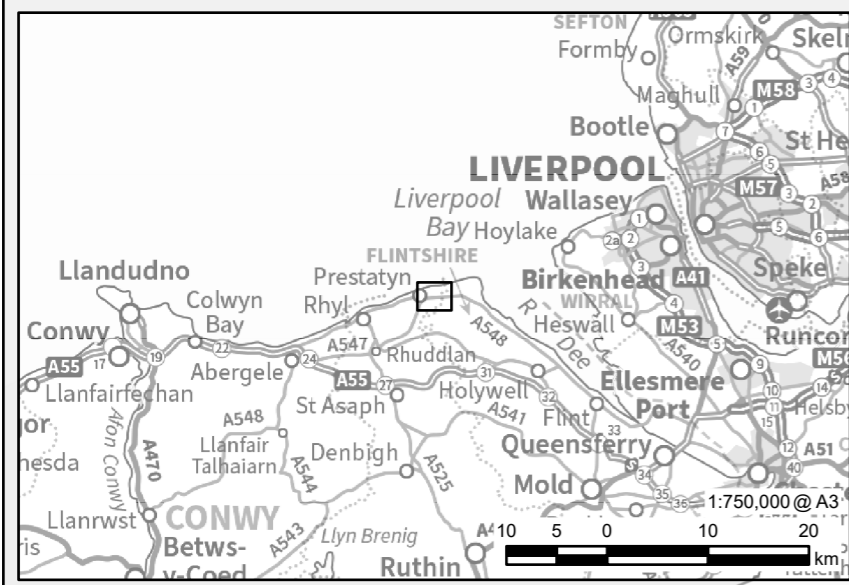
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Annex A Figures



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 Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power

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LEGEND
 [Red outline] Site Boundary

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FIGURE TITLE
 Site Location

FIGURE NUMBER
 Figure 11M-A1



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- LEGEND**
- Site Boundary
 - Buffers of the Site Boundary**
 - 2km - Extent of Locally Designated Sites
 - 10km - Extent of Nationally and Internationally Designated Sites
 - Locally Designated Sites**
 - Local Wildlife Site (LWS) - Denbighshire
 - Local Wildlife Site (LWS) - Flintshire
 - North East Wales Regionally Important Geodiversity Site (RIGS)
 - North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT) Reserve
 - Nationally and Internationally Designated Sites**
 - Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
 - Special Protection Area (SPA)
 - Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
 - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - Ramsar

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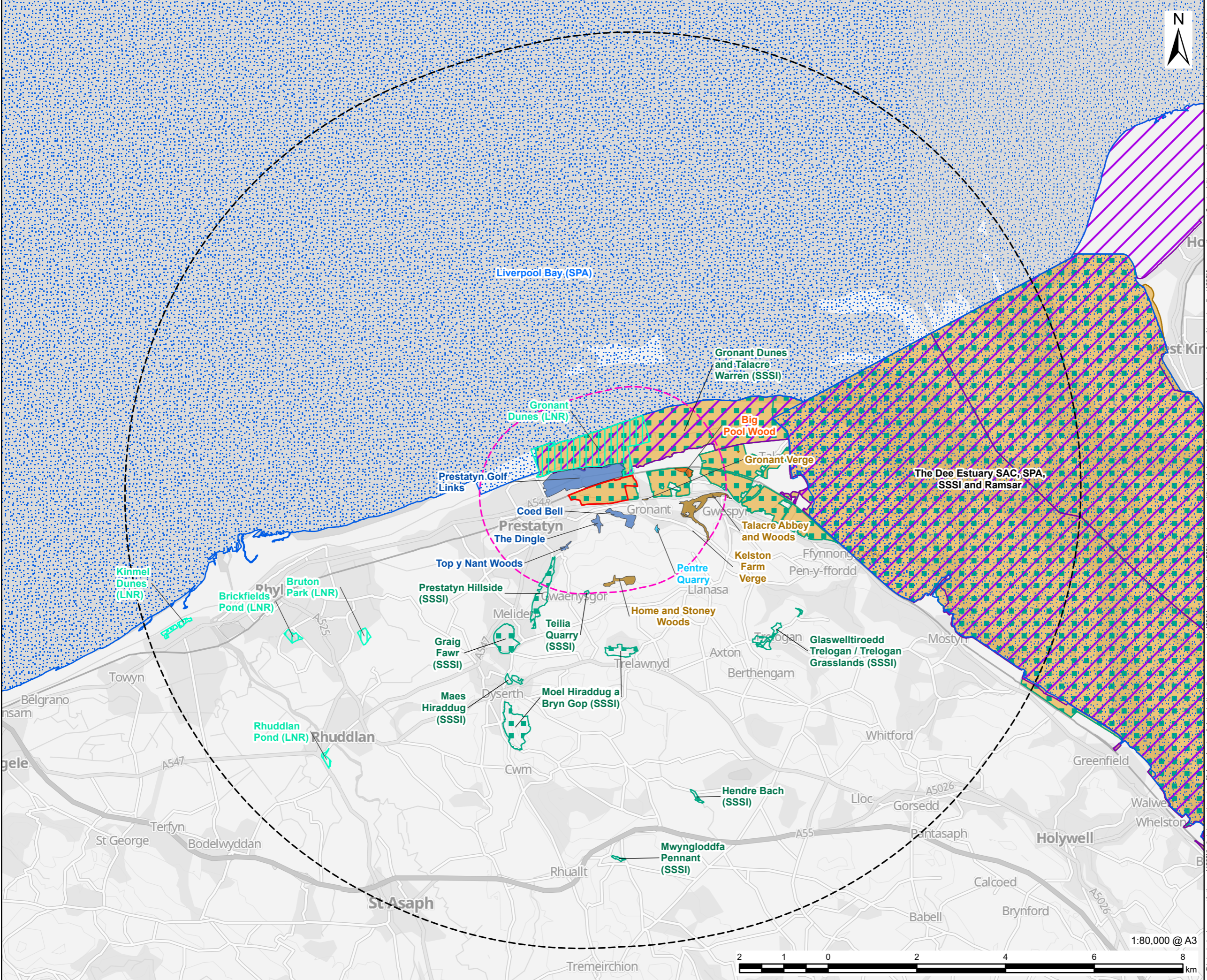
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FIGURE TITLE
Designated Sites

FIGURE NUMBER
Figure 11M-A2



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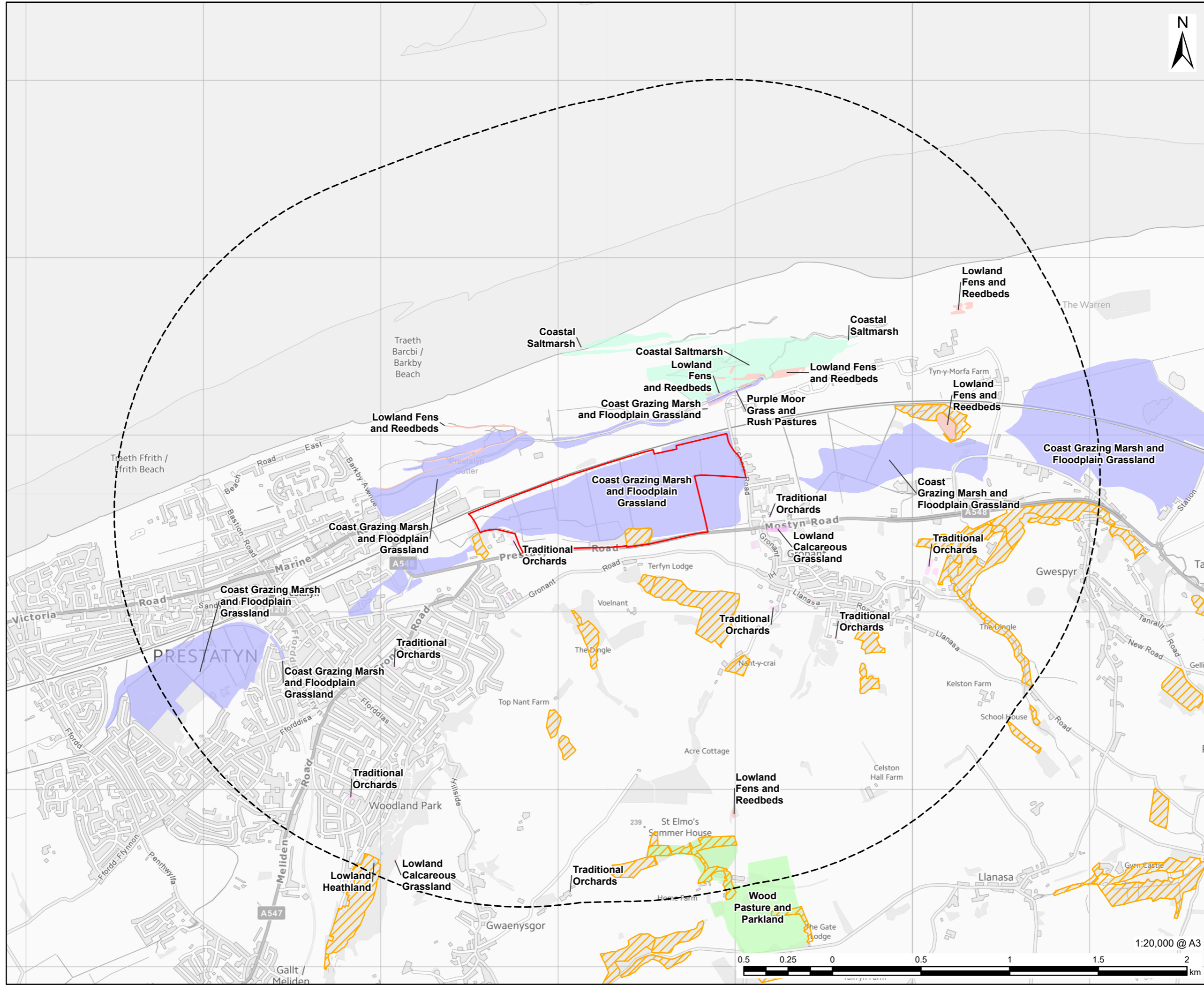


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- LEGEND**
- Site Boundary
 - 2km Buffer of the Site Boundary
 - Ancient Woodland
- Priority Habitat**
- Coastal Saltmarsh
 - Lowland Calcareous Grassland
 - Lowland Fens and Reedbeds
 - Lowland Heathland
 - Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
 - Traditional Orchards
 - Wood Pasture and Parkland
 - Coast Grazing Marsh and Floodplain Grassland



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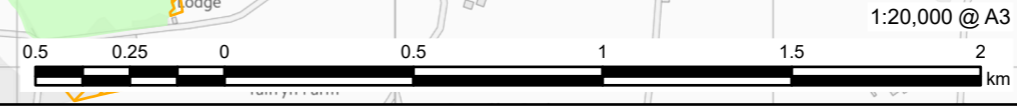
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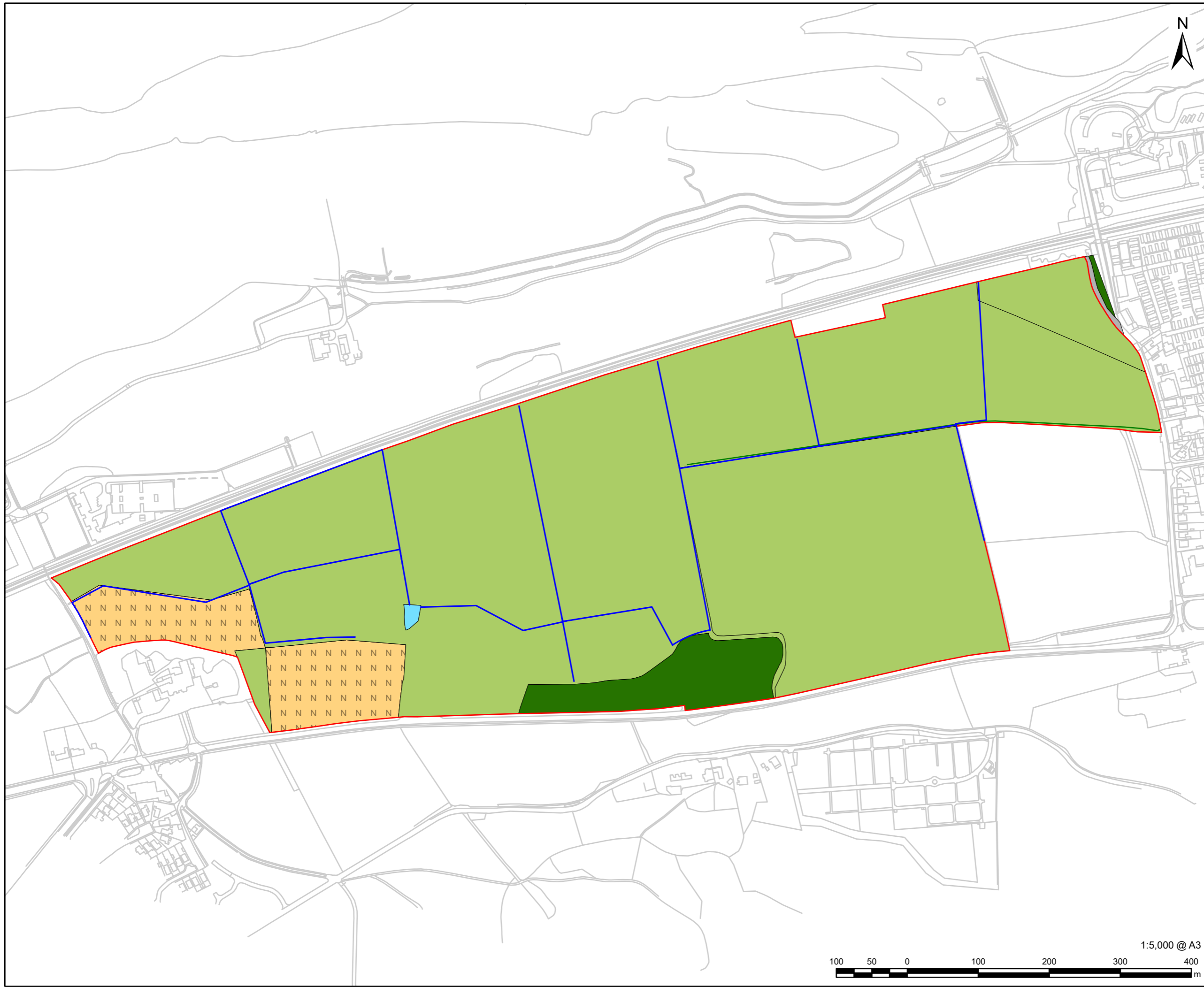
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FIGURE TITLE
Priority Habitats within 2km of the Site Boundary

FIGURE NUMBER
Figure 11M-A3





LEGEND

	Site Boundary
	h2a6 - Other Native Hedgerow
	r2b - Other Rivers and Streams
	c1d8 - Other Non-cereal Crops
	g3c - Other Neutral Grassland
	r1a - Eutrophic Standing Waters
	u1b - Developed Land; Sealed Surface
	w1g - Other Broadleaved Woodland

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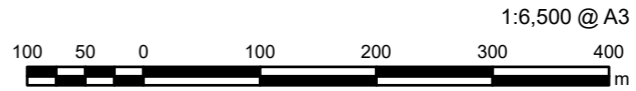
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FIGURE TITLE
 UK Habitats

FIGURE NUMBER
 Figure 11M-A4

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FIGURE TITLE
Waterbodies within 250m of the Site

FIGURE NUMBER
Figure 11M-A5

Annex B Relevant Legislation and Planning Policy

B.1. Legislation

- B.1.1. The UK is no longer a member of the European Union (EU). EU legislation as it applied to the UK on 31 December 2020 is now a part of UK domestic legislation. EU legislation which applied directly or indirectly to the UK before 11.00 p.m. on 31 December 2020 has been retained in UK law as a form of domestic legislation known as 'retained EU legislation'.
- B.1.2. The Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Welsh Ministers have made changes to parts of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (referred to as the '2017 Regulations') (Ref 13) so that they operate effectively. Most of these changes involve transferring functions from the European Commission to the appropriate authorities in Wales. All other processes or terms in the 2017 Regulations remain unchanged and existing guidance is still relevant.

B.2. Designated Sites

Special Protection Areas (SPA) / Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)

- B.2.1. These sites in the UK no longer form part of the EU's Natura 2000 ecological network. The *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019* (Ref 14) (referred to as the '2019 Regulations') have created a national site network on land and at sea, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK. The national site network includes:
- existing SACs and SPAs; and,
 - new SACs and SPAs designated under the 2019 Regulations
- B.2.2. Any references to Natura 2000 in the 2017 Regulations and in guidance now refers to the new national site network.
- B.2.3. Formal Appropriate Assessment is required to be undertaken by the competent authority before undertaking, or giving consent, permission or other authorisation for any work which are likely to have a significant effect on such a site.

Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site)

- B.2.4. Designated under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat 1971 (the Ramsar Convention) (Ref 15), in the UK, these sites are treated as having the same level of protection as SPA's and SAC's.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- B.2.5. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Ref 4), it is an offence to carry out or permit to be carried out any operations likely to damage the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These operations are listed in the SSSI notification.

- B.2.6. Owners, occupiers, public bodies and statutory undertakers must give notice and obtain the appropriate consent under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), before undertaking operations likely to damage a SSSI.

National Landscapes (formerly AONBs)

- B.2.7. National Landscapes are established by Natural Resources Wales, under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (NPAC) 1949 (Ref 16), and Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (Ref 17). Any new AONBs designated by NRW would now be under powers derived from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, making them statutory designated sites. They are protected from specific urban developments that could negatively impact the assets that are recognised as distinguished qualifying features of a National Landscape.

Local Nature Reserve

- B.2.8. A Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is a statutory designation made under National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, by principal local authorities (district, borough or unitary councils).
- B.2.9. The local authority must control the LNR land - either through ownership, a lease or an agreement with the owner.
- B.2.10. LNRs are given protection through policies in a local development plan.

Locally Designated Sites

- B.2.11. Local Wildlife Sites (Wildlife Sites for Flintshire and Wildlife Sites for Denbighshire, and North Wales Wildlife Trust Sites) are sites with 'substantive nature conservation value'. They are defined areas, identified and selected for their nature conservation value, based on important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species with a region.
- B.2.12. They are usually selected by the relevant Wildlife Trust, along with representatives of the local authority and other local wildlife conservation groups.
- B.2.13. The LWS selection panel, select all sites that meet the assigned criteria, unlike SSSIs, which for some habitats are a representative sample of sites that meet the national standard. Consequently, many sites of SSSI quality are not designated and instead are selected as LWSs. Consequently, LWSs can be amongst the best sites for biodiversity.

B.3. Protected Species

Badger

- B.3.1. Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended). This makes it an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger; or intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a badger sett or disturb a badger in its sett.
- B.3.2. It is not illegal to carry out disturbance activities near setts that are not occupied, i.e. those that do not show signs of current use.

- B.3.3. Where required, licences for development activities involving disturbance or sett interference or closure are issued by NRW. Licences for activities involving watercourse maintenance, drainage works or flood defences are issued under a separate process.
- B.3.4. NRW provide guidance on working close to badger setts and the methods that can be employed to avoid or minimise impacts to active badger setts¹⁰.
- B.3.5. Licences are normally not granted from December to June inclusive (the badger breeding season) because dependent cubs may be present within setts.

Reptiles

- B.3.6. All native reptiles are highlighted as Priority Species within Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Ref 18).

Common Species (Common Lizard, Slow Worm, Grass Snake and Adder)

- B.3.7. Common species of reptile are protected against intentional killing and injury under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). There is no requirement for a licence where development works affect common species of reptiles. Instead, where reptiles are present, they should be protected from any harm that might arise during the development works through appropriate mitigation.

Sand Lizard

- B.3.8. Sand lizard are considered rare across the UK and have additional listings under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) and EU Habitats Directive 2019 (HR 2019) (Ref 6). In the context of development, it is illegal to:
- deliberately kill sand lizards;
 - deliberately disturb them in a way that significantly affects their ability to survive, breed, or rear young, or that affects their local distribution;
 - recklessly disturb them while they are sheltering or obstructing access to their resting places;
 - damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places; and,
 - deliberately destroy their eggs.
- B.3.9. Licenses to permit otherwise illegal activities relating to sand lizard can be issued for specific purposes and by the relevant licensing authority, which in Wales is NRW. European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses (EPSMLs) are issued under the Habitats Regulations. It is an offence not to comply with the terms and conditions of an EPSML once issued.
- B.3.10. In some circumstances a license may also need to be obtained to permit mitigation for other reptile species, e.g. where trapping and translocation is required.
- B.3.11. Sand lizards are mentioned in the Flintshire Local Biodiversity Duty plan making sand lizards a local biodiversity action plan (LBAP) species within Flintshire's range of rural and urban habitats.

¹⁰ *Badgers – A Guide for Developers*. Natural Resources Wales. January 2018.

Bats / Otter / Great Crested Newt / Natterjack Toad

- B.3.12. These species, known as European Protected Species, are protected under Regulation 43 of the 2017 Regulations as amended by the 2019 Regulations. This makes it an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill an animal; deliberately disturb an animal; or damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place used by an animal.
- B.3.13. Deliberate capture or killing is taken to include “accepting the possibility” of such capture or killing. Deliberate disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely a) to impair their ability (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or (ii) in the case of animals of hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.
- B.3.14. Where development works are at risk of causing one or more of the offences listed above, a mitigation licence from Natural Resources Wales can be obtained to facilitate the works that would otherwise be illegal.
- B.3.15. These species are also protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Ref 4). This makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection or disturb an animal in such a place.
- B.3.16. Lower levels of disturbance not covered by the 2017 Regulations remain an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 although a defence is available where such actions are the incidental result of a lawful activity that could not reasonably be avoided.

Natterjack Toad

- B.3.17. Natterjack toad have additional listings under the NERC Act and HR 2019 (Ref 7). They have the same protections as sand lizard.
- B.3.18. Species mitigation and surveys must be conducted within the guidelines and attained competencies listed within the Natterjack Toad Conservation (Ref 21), and the Natterjack Toad Species Action Plan (Ref 22), and the Standing Advice Species Sheet: Natterjack toads Herpetological Conservation Trust (Ref 23).

Nesting Birds

- B.3.19. All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with some species afforded greater protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In addition to the protection from killing or taking that all birds receive, Schedule 1 birds and their young must not be disturbed at the nest.
- B.3.20. There are no licensing purposes that explicitly cover development activities affecting wild birds.

Water Vole

- B.3.21. Water voles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). There are no licensing purposes that explicitly cover development or other construction activities which could have an impact on water voles.

- B.3.22. When development work is proposed in or near an area which is either known to or likely to contain water voles, then the developer will need to implement suitable mitigation to prevent impacts to water voles. The preferred mitigation option is to leave water voles *in situ*, with the development works adopting avoidance measures through redesign of the proposals.
- B.3.23. Where impacts cannot be avoided, operations aimed at displacing water voles from a development site are now no longer covered by the “*incidental result of an otherwise lawful action*” defence in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Displacement of water voles now needs to be undertaken under a licence.
- B.3.24. In Wales, small scale (limited to continuous lengths of bank not exceeding 50 m) displacement of water voles can be carried out at certain times of the year (February to April) for the purposes of conservation under a Class Licence by a registered person. For larger scale displacements or displacements outside of this period, displacement can be undertaken under a site-specific conservation licence.
- B.3.25. Where it is considered that the best outcome for water voles is capture and translocation to a different location then this action is considered by Natural Resources Wales to be outside the scope of the defence as the intentional capture of water voles is unlikely to be considered ‘incidental’. In these circumstances there may be genuine grounds for issuing a conservation licence for the purpose of translocating the water vole population to suitable alternative habitat.

B.4. Species and Habitats of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity

- B.4.1. Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Ref 18) replaces the duty in section 42 of the NERC Act 2006. The Welsh Ministers will publish, review and revise lists of living organisms and types of habitat in Wales, which they consider are of key significance to sustain and improve biodiversity in relation to Wales.
- B.4.2. The Welsh Ministers must also take all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section and encourage others to take such steps.
- B.4.3. Part 1 of the Act, including Sections 6 and 7, came into force on May 21, 2016.

B.5. Non-native Invasive Plant Species

- B.5.1. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause these species to grow in the wild.
- B.5.2. Any contaminated soil or plant material is classified as controlled waste and should be disposed of in a suitably licensed landfill site, accompanied by appropriate Waste Transfer documentation, and must comply with section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

B.6. Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales, 2024

- B.6.1. Planning Policy Wales (Ref 19) Section 6.4 Biodiversity and Ecological Networks sets out the Welsh Government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied by Local Authorities. This Section sets out the requirements to consider biodiversity in planning decisions, including highlighting Duties 6 and 7 for biodiversity enhancements and conservation within The Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Local Planning Policy

- B.6.2. The Flintshire Local Plan (Ref 20) sets out the following local biodiversity policies:

Policy EN6: Sites of Biodiversity and Geodiversity Importance

“Development will not be permitted that would result in an adverse effect on the integrity of sites of international nature conservation importance. Proposals where adverse effects on site integrity cannot be ruled out would not be supported. Development likely to impact the special features of a Nationally Designated Site will only be granted in exceptional circumstances where appropriate compensation can be provided. Development proposals that would have a significant adverse effect on locally designated sites or site with other biodiversity and / or geological interest, including priority species, will only be permitted where:

- a. it can be demonstrated that the need for the development outweighs the biodiversity or geological importance of the site; and*
- b. it can be demonstrated that the development cannot reasonably be located elsewhere; and*
- c. any unavoidable harm is minimised by effective mitigation to ensure that there is no reduction in the overall biodiversity value of the area. Where this is not feasible compensation measures designed to create, restore and enhance biodiversity must be provided.*

Development that results in the restoration, enhancement and creation of habitats will be supported especially where this promotes the resilience of ecosystems”.

Policy EN7: Development Affecting Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

“Development proposals that will result in significant loss of, or harm to, trees, woodlands or hedgerows of biodiversity, historic, and amenity value will not be permitted. Where the impact of development affecting trees, woodlands or hedgerows is considered acceptable, development will only be permitted where:

- a. the development maximises their retention through sensitive design measures; and*
- b. where the removal of trees is considered necessary, suitable replacements shall be provided elsewhere within the site; and*

c. it results in a net benefit in biodiversity”.

Annex C Methodology

C.1 Desk Study

Background Records Search

- C.1.1 This PEAR includes a desk study to obtain background records relevant to the Site and the Scheme. The data obtained provides contextual information for the scope of field surveys, to aid the evaluation of field survey results, and to provide supplementary information where complete field survey coverage is not possible.
- C.1.2 The Study Area is dependent upon the nature, timing and scale of the Scheme, as well as the location of the Site and the surrounding landscape. These variables all contribute to what is referred to as the Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the Scheme, which is the area over which ecological features may be affected by biophysical changes because of the works and associated activities.
- C.1.3 On 25 June, Cofnod (the records centre for Flintshire) produced the following ecological data:
- Records of non-statutory designated sites within 2km km of the Site boundary;
 - Records of legally protected and notable species (fauna and flora) within 2km of the Site boundary, including Species of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
- C.1.4 The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (Ref 24) was reviewed for the following information:
- Designated sites of nature conservation importance (statutory sites only) within 2km of the Site. This was extended to 10km for internationally designated sites: Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and,
 - Notable habitats within 2km of the Site, these being areas of ancient woodland and 'Habitats of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity' included in Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Great Crested Newt Pond Search

- C.1.5 Ordnance Survey maps and the *Where's the Path* website (Ref 25) have been used to identify the presence of water bodies within 250 m of the Site boundary, in order to help establish if the land within and immediately surrounding the Site could be used by great crested newts. This species can use suitable terrestrial habitat up to 500 m from a breeding pond (Ref 26), though there is a notable decrease in great crested newt abundance beyond 250 m from a breeding pond (Ref 27). 250 m was chosen as a distance limit in the search due to the nature of the planned works (being that of biodiversity enhancement and not urban development) and the significant land barriers between the Site and the wider habitats in the local area

beyond 250 m (including the railway tracks, major A road, river, estuary, and urban development).

Field Survey

- C.1.6 The preliminary ecological assessment includes a walkover survey of the Survey Area (all land within the Site), broadly following the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) survey methodology (Ref 28). This survey method records information on habitat types and is 'extended' to record any evidence of and potential for protected or notable species to be present. Plant names recorded during the survey follow Stace (Ref 29).
- C.1.7 During the walkover survey, the following protected or notable species are considered:
- **Badger:** the survey involves searching for signs of badger activity including setts, tracks, snuffle holes and latrines, following the methodology detailed in Surveying Badgers (Ref 31) and Surveying for Badgers: Good Practice Guidelines (2018) (Ref 31);
 - **Bats:** the survey involves searching for potential roosting sites for bats within trees and structures (such as buildings, bridges or underground features such as mines) and categorising the potential of those trees or structures to support roosting bats (negligible to high, or confirmed roost), in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance (Ref 32);
 - **Otter:** the survey involves assessing the potential of watercourses and water bodies, and adjacent terrestrial habitat within the Survey Area to support otter, following Chanin's 2003 guidance (Ref 33);
 - **Water vole:** the survey involves assessing the potential of watercourses and water bodies within the Survey Area to support water vole, following The Mammal Society (Ref 34) guidance;
 - **Birds:** the survey involves assessing the potential of habitats within the Survey Area to support breeding, wintering or migrating birds, either individually notable species or assemblages of both common and rarer species;
 - **Great crested newt:** the survey involves assessing the potential of habitats within the Survey Area to support great crested newt, following English Nature (Ref 26) and Froglife (Ref 35) guidance;
 - **Reptiles:** the survey involves assessing the potential of habitats within the Survey Area to support reptiles (typically adder, grass snake, common lizard and slow worm only, though in some locations and habitat types (most notably heathland) may also include smooth snake and sand lizard), following Froglife (Ref 36) and JNCC (Ref 37) guidance;
 - **Notable species of invertebrates:** the survey involves assessing the potential of habitats within the Survey Area to support notable species of invertebrates, both terrestrial and aquatic (including white-clawed crayfish);
 - **Protected or Notable species of plants:** the survey involves recording protected or notable plant species;

- **Other notable species:** the survey involves assessing the potential of habitat within the Survey Area to support other Notable Species, such as hedgehog, brown hare, polecat or common toad;
- **Non-native invasive plant species:** the survey involves recording evidence of the presence of invasive plants listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and subject to strict legal control.

C.2 Limitations

- C.2.1. The woodland and pond were not fully accessible during the Site visit due to dense vegetation and could not be assessed in their entirety. There were no further constraints to the field work. This limitation did not significantly impact the assessment of the habitats on Site, and precautionary mitigations are noted within the relevant sections to address the lack of detail provided from field notes in the woodland and pond habitats.

Annex D Photographs

Map Reference	Photograph (s)
c1d8 Other non-cereal crops	 The image consists of two side-by-side photographs of a field. The left photograph shows a field with sparse green vegetation and a large area of bare, dark brown soil. The right photograph shows a similar field with more dense green vegetation and less bare soil. Both photographs show a line of trees in the background under a clear sky.

Map Reference

Photograph (s)

g3c Other neutral grassland



r1a Eutrophic standing water



Map Reference

Photograph (s)

r2b Other rivers/streams



Map Reference

Photograph (s)

w1g Other broadleaved woodland
(south)



w1g Other broadleaved woodland
(east)



Map Reference

Photograph (s)

h2a6 Other native hedgerow



u1b Developed land; sealed surface



Annex E

Habitat Ref.	Broad Habitat	Habitat Type	Condition Sheet Criteria													Score	Condition
			A/A1	B/A2	C/B1	D/B2	E/C1	F/C2	G/D1	H/D2	I/E1	J/E2	K	L	M		
g3c	Grassland	Other neutral grassland	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	Moderate
c1d8	Cropland	Other non-cereal crops														NA	NA
w1g	Woodland	Other broadleaved woodland <i>South parcel within Site</i>	2	3	3	1	3	3	2	3	1	1	1	2	3	28	Moderate
r1a	Lakes	Pond (woodland)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y							7	Good
r1b	Rivers and Streams	Ditch	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y						6	Moderate

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
CCGT	Connah's Quay Combined Cycle Gas Turbine
CCP	Carbon Capture Plant
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
CQLCP	Connah's Quay Low Carbon Power
DCC	Denbighshire County Council
DCO	Development Consent Order
DECCA	Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Aspects of Ecosystem Resilience
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Flood & Rural Affairs
FCC	Flintshire County Council
FLL	Functionally Linked Land
GI	Green Infrastructure
LEMP	Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
MW	megawatt
MWe	megawatts electric
NBB	Net Benefit for Biodiversity
NGET	National Grid Electricity Transmission plc
NPS	National Policy Statement
NPS EN-1	National Policy Statement for Energy
NPS EN-5	National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure
NRW	Natural Resources Wales
NSIP	Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project
NVC	National Verification Classification
OSNGR	Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
PEN	Priority Ecological Network
pH	Potential of Hydrogen
PPW	Planning Policy Wales
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Abbreviation	Term
TAN	Technical Advice Note

