PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

[redacted] [redacted] Samlesbury
Land Between the [redacted] and [redacted] Buildings

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A report for

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September 2024

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION:

1.1 REASONS FOR SURVEY:

Pennine Ecological have been commissioned by Wilson Mason on behalf of [redacted] Limited, to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land between the [redacted] and [redacted] Buildings at Samlesbury Aerodrome, Lancashire.

The study is required in association with a full planning application for a proposed extension and redevelopment of the area.

The surveys were undertaken by Ian Ryding an ecologist with over 37 years' experience in a wide range of ecological survey and assessment.

1.2 SITE LOCATION:

The site is located on land on the north-east corner of the S[redacted] and S[redacted] Buildings at Samlesbury Aerodrome, Balderstone, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 7LF.

Central grid reference SD 6224 3143.

The location of the study area is shown on Map 1 in the appendix.

1.3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY:

The methodology applied is as follows.

1.3.1 Habitat Survey:

A UKHab Habitat Survey of the survey area was undertaken on the 29th August 2024. The site's habitats were fully mapped and higher vascular plant species (where present) were recorded and given abundance values according to the standard DAFOR scale where:

D = Dominant
A = Abundant
F = Frequent
O = Occasional
R = Rare

Where appropriate the above values can be prefixed by the letter L (locally) or V (very), to provide more subtle biogeographical data.

1.3.2 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment:

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the 29th August 2024 following the methodology outlined in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn)* Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2023).

The buildings were surveyed from ground level using close focusing Leica Trinovid 8x32 binoculars, and Opticron MM4 60 ED telescope, and was undertaken by an experienced preliminary assessor of bat roosts and an accredited agent on Mr Stuart Macpherson's Natural England Class 2 bat licence (2021-10079-CL18-BAT).

1.3.3 Great Crested Newt:

The great crested newt issues were evaluated though extensive data held on the site since licenced development of the site began in 2007, and subsequent surveys undertaken up until 2020.

1.3.4 Other Species:

During the survey, observations relating to the potential presence of breeding birds on site was also made.

1.3.5 Surveyor Experience:

The surveyor and author of this report, Ian Ryding, has over 37 years' experience in ecological survey and evaluation. Key skills include the following.

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey/Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and National Vegetation Classification Survey.
- Highly proficient field botanist, including some difficult plant groups.
- Mammal surveys including surveys for badger, water vole, otter, brown hare and preliminary bat roost assessment.
- Breeding and wintering bird survey.
- Expert witness delivering proof of evidence in respect of nesting birds at public inquiry in 2018 and 2020.
- Extensive experience in great crested newt (GCN) survey, evaluation, licensing and mitigation. Natural England Class Licence WML-CL08 held.
- Ecological Evaluation and Impact Assessments in association with large scale commercial development and civil engineering.

1.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS:

There were no constraints to the survey.

PART 2 SURVEY RESULTS:

2.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- The site has no statutory or non-statutory designations.
- The nearest statutory site is Red Scar and Tun Brook Woods SSSI. There are no other biological statutory sites within 4.2km.
- There are no Biological Heritage Sites (BHS) within 0.6km of the site.
- The proposals largely affect areas of hardstanding formed by concrete service yards and roads. Buildings are also potentially affected.
- Habitat-wise the site is composed of hard sealed surfaces only with a zero Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) score rating and is therefore exempt from statutory BNG under the de minimis exemption.
- The evaluation in relation to GCN has concluded that the proposal site has no significant value for terrestrial GCN, and that the possibility of GCN presence in the ponds locally is remote.
- The buildings potentially affected by the proposal are modern industrial structures designed to exclude fauna including birds and bats. Bat roost suitability is evaluated as 'none'.
- The site has no habitat features suitable for nesting birds.

2.2 DESK BASED STUDY:

Statutory Sites:

The Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre www.magic.gov.uk was referred to in respect of the biological statutory sites.

The nearest statutory site is Red Scar and Tun Brook Woods SSSI which is located 3.3km north-west of the site at its nearest point.

There are no other biological statutory sites within 4.2km.

Non-statutory Sites and Protected Species Records:

It was decided in advance that the decision to request data from Lancashire Environmental Record Network (LERN) to obtain details of any biological records relating to the site, would be based on the findings of the survey.

In this instance, it was confirmed that the site has no non-statutory designations, and the evaluation showed that the effect of the proposals did not extend beyond the boundary of the site, and that the site was of 'site value' only. Therefore, LERN data was not required.

Reference to Magic data showed that there is one EPSL record for Great Crested Newt (GCN) within 500m of the site. The licence relates to the [redacted] [redacted] site in 2009.

There is one GCN Class Survey Licence Return record 1.34km east of the site.

There are no other EPSL or survey records for GCN within 3km.

Magic data shows one granted EPSL (Bats) 1.3km (approx.) east of the site. The licence was granted in 2020.

In addition to the above, Pennine Ecological's dataset collated from the many surveys undertaken and observations made by the company since 1996 were also referred to.

Desk based studies were undertaken to establish the presence of ponds within a 250m radius of the site, as part of a scoping study relating to great crested newt (GCN)

Pennine Ecological data revealed the following information.

Biological Heritage Sites:

The nearest BHS is Huntley Wood 0.64km (approx.) west of the site.

All other BHSs are located >0.67km from the site and are located either north of the A59 or south of Preston New Road.

Protected Species:

Site survey and monitoring studies commissioned by [redacted] and undertaken on the factory site and former runway since 2007, have generated a large amount of biological data, none of which is specific to the proposed development site in its current form.

A selection of other records include the following species that have been recorded historically on the factory site, the former runways forming the Enterprise Zone, and retained land managed for ground-nesting birds by [redacted] 0.8km to the south-east of the proposal site.

The species recorded include skylark, meadow pipit, lapwing, reed bunting, snipe, redshank, little ringed-plover, oystercatcher, sedge warbler, whitethroat, buzzard, Canada goose, mallard, teal, brown hare and roe deer.

Smooth newt, palmate newt, great crested newt, common frog and common toad have been recorded off site >1km south-east of the site, and smooth newt and common toad in a pond 0.6km to the south.

2.3 HABITAT SURVEY:

2.3.1 General Description:

The site of the proposed development is composed of hardstanding that forms service yards and car parks.

The site is composed entirely of sealed hard surfaces, except for a few ruderal plants that have established in cracks.

2.3.2 Habitat Survey Target Notes:

Survey locations, Target Notes and the proposed working area locations are shown on Map 1 in the Appendix. Note: All species nomenclature follows Stace, C. (1996) 'New Flora of the British Isles' - definitive English names.

Target Note 1:

UKHabs Ref: u1b Developed land – sealed surface

An area of concrete and tarmac hardstanding including car park, service road, yards and footways that are devoid of vegetation except for a few ruderal species that have established along the joints between the concrete base of a transformer and surrounding tarmac.

Collectively the plants present amount to <5m² cover and include the following species.

Buddleia, great willowherb, creeping thistle, colt's-foot and very small grey willow saplings.

Vegetation of this type and in this location would be expected to be removed/treated as part of general site maintenance.

Site Photographs - Habitats:

Photograph 1: Typical view of hardstanding and the north-east elevation of the [redacted] Building.

Photograph 2: Typical view of hardstanding in front of the south-east elevation of the [redacted] Building.

Photograph 3: Typical view of hardstanding on the north-east elevation of the [redacted] Building.

Photograph 4: Vegetation growing from joints between the concrete base of a transformer and surrounding tarmac.

Photograph 5: General view of the site looking north.

2.4 PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT:

The preliminary bat roost survey was undertaken on the 29th August 2024 following the methodology outlined in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn)* Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2023)

The survey included a standard evaluation of the roost suitability of the buildings on the boundaries of the site.

2.4.1 Bat Legislation:

All British bats and their roosts* are afforded protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and are listed in Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/579).

When dealing with cases where a European Protected Species (EPS) (all UK bats) may be affected, a planning authority is a competent authority within the meaning of the Regulation 7 of the Regulations, that has a statutory duty as the local authority to have due regard to the provisions of the Regulations in the exercise of its functions.

Use of buildings by roosting bats:

a) Summer breeding roost (May-August)
b) Hibernation roost (October-March)
c) Transitional or temporary roost (Mainly spring/summer months)

*The term 'roost' is generically referred to as a place that bats might use at any time of the year, however it should be noted that under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019) (EU Exit) (Regulation 43 (d) the term roost is not used but refers to "*a breeding site or resting place of such an animal"* and is afforded legal protection. The roost, breeding site or resting place of bats, which ever terminology is used is legally protected whether or not bats are in occupation.

2.4.2 Survey Results:

It can be confirmed that the buildings (S[redacted] and S[redacted]) abutting the site south and eastern site boundaries and modern industrial structures designed to exclude fauna including birds and bats. Each is described below.

S[redacted]:

A modern factory building that dates from the latter part of the 20th century.

The walls have an external skin of 'Plastisol'-coated box profile sheeting with matching corner cappings.

There are windows running along the length of the south-east and north-east elevations.

The roof appears to be constructed from the same material as the walls being coated box profile, and integral profile section gutter/drainage system with no soffits or fascia boards.

The exterior walls are smooth metal panels that prevent bats from landing and there are no holes or fissures present that are suitable for roosting bats, and ingress to the building's interior is not possible.

Using BCT guidance bat roost suitability in the S[redacted] building is 'none'.

S[redacted]:

This is a modern industrial building constructed post 2009. There is an external skin of smooth, coated, pressed metal sheeting and no features that are suitable for roosting bats.

In addition there is no means of ingress to the building's interior for bats.

Using BCT guidance bat roost suitability in the S[redacted] building is 'none'.

The photographs below clearly show the modern construction type of the buildings and their lack of roost suitability.

Site Photographs Bats:

Photograph 6: S[redacted] showing the wall, windows, and underside of gutter on south-east elevation with no potential roost features (PRFs)

Photograph 7: S[redacted] – north-east corner showing walls, windows, and gutter on south-east elevation with no PRFs.

Photograph 8: S[redacted] – general view of the south-east elevation.

Photograph 9: S[redacted] showing austere modern construction with absence of PRFs.

Photograph 10: S[redacted] general view of north-east elevation with S[redacted] on the right.

2.5 GREAT CRESTED NEWT EVALUATION:

2.5.1 General Context:

There are no ponds on the proposal site, however, there is a former field pond enclosed by the factory site located approximately 110m south-west of the land affected by this proposal.

This pond has a substantial fish population which was reduced by netting and translocation for fish welfare reasons several years ago.

The pond was surveyed by Pennine Ecological in 2009 which revealed that amphibians were absent. Given its isolation from any potential amphibian population, colonisation since 2009 is considered highly unlikely.

There are no other ponds within 300m of the site, and no field ponds within 500m of the site.

The [redacted] site was cleared of a small population of GCN under licence during development and site infrastructure works between 2007 and 2009, with all amphibians moved to purpose-built receptor ponds >1km from the current proposal boundary.

The ponds and receptor area were separated from the factory site by maintained amphibian fences up until 2015.

The GCN receptor ponds have been monitored for GCN as part of the terms and conditions of the previous Natural England licence, which recorded a single male GCN on one visit only during four years monitoring between 2009 and 2012. The GCN was recorded in 2012.

Additional monitoring of the ponds in 2015 along with another off-site pond 0.6km south-west of the site applied six visits with no GCN recorded.

The receptor ponds and an adjacent pond were subject to eDNA sampling for GCN in June 2020, which showed GCN to be absent in those ponds.

After the factory site was cleared of amphibians two attenuation ponds were created approximately 311m north of the site. The ponds have permanent standing water and have populations of coarse fish.

These ponds are physically isolated from the proposal site by continuous and extensive areas of developed land including service roads, car parks and buildings.

It should be noted that the southernmost edge of the amphibian fence was retained in situ up until 2015, after which it was removed to facilitate construction of the Lancashire Enterprise Zone.

Based on the extensive trapping and site clearance of amphibians undertaken between 2007 and 2008, and the results of historical surveys up to 2020, including eDNA surveys, GCN are considered to be absent within the factory site.

2.6 EVALUATION OF OTHER FEATURES:

2.6.1 Breeding Birds:

The site is composed of areas of factory service yards and buildings. There are no trees and shrubs present and the buildings are unsuitable for birds associated with nesting in/on buildings.

Therefore it can be confirmed that the site has no nesting bird potential.

PART 3 SUMMARY EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:

3.1 SUMMARY EVALUATION OF FINDINGS:

The field survey and evaluation of the site revealed the following information.

3.1.1 Vegetation/habitats:

The proposal will directly affect large areas of tarmac car park, concrete service yards, roads and footways defined as u1b Developed land – sealed surface.

Vegetation is growing in the joints between tarmac and concrete around a transformer, which collectively amounts to <5m² cover.

No Priority Habitats are affected by the proposals.

Reference to the standard gov.uk guidance on BNG provided the following advice.

> ***Development below a de minimis threshold***
>
> *This exemption applies to development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres (e.g. 5m x 5m) of non-priority onsite habitat (such as modified grassland) or 5m for non-priority onsite linear habitats (such as native hedgerows). This exemption is designed to ensure that BNG does not apply to either very small scale development or development which does not impact habitat, through loss or degradation within the red line boundary. In practice, this will be demonstrated by a decrease in the biodiversity value, which is determined by the biodiversity metric.*

In addition,

> *It's worth remembering that existing sealed surfaces such as tarmac or buildings are assigned a zero score in the statutory biodiversity metric, meaning that these surfaces are effectively exempted from the 10% net gain requirement.*

Conclusions:

The site survey has shown that the site is composed of sealed surfaces and is assigned a *'zero score in the statutory biodiversity metric'*.

Therefore it can be concluded that the proposals are *'exempted from the 10% net gain requirement'* as they fall below the de minimis threshold.

3.1.2 Bats:

The survey has shown that the S[redacted] and S[redacted] buildings are of a construction type that is unsuitable for roosting bats and that potential roost features are absent.

Using BCT guidance survey shows that bat roost suitability in both buildings is 'none'.

Therefore there are no direct or indirect impacts on any potential roost site generated by the proposals.

3.1.3 Great Crested Newt:

There are no ponds on the proposal site, however, there is a former field pond enclosed by the factory site located approximately 110m south-west of the land affected by this proposal.

This pond has a substantial fish population which was reduced by netting and translocation for fish welfare reasons several years ago.

The pond was surveyed by Pennine Ecological in 2009 which revealed that amphibians were absent. Given its isolation from any potential amphibian population and the high fish populations, colonisation by GCN or any other amphibian species since 2009 is considered highly unlikely.

There are no other ponds within 300m of the site, and no field ponds within 500m of the site.

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following section outlines any mitigation or precautions required in respect of the survey findings.

3.2.1 Vegetation/Habitats:

The proposal will directly affect large areas of concrete service yards, roads and footways classified as Developed land – sealed surface (u1b).

The hardstanding has no biodiversity value apart from a few ruderal species that have self-seeded around a transformer on the site. The vegetation amounts to <5m² and has negligible biodiversity value and the site as a whole is assigned a zero score in the statutory biodiversity metric.

Therefore it can be concluded that the proposals are exempted from the 10% net gain requirement as they fall below the de minimis threshold, and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment is not required.

3.2.2 Bats:

The survey identified no bat roost suitability on or adjacent to the site, therefore no further surveys or precautions are required.

3.2.3 Great Crested Newt:

No impacts on GCN or its habitat are predicted, and no further surveys or precuations are recommended.

No impacts on other amphibians are predicted.

3.2.4 Birds:

The site has no value for breeding birds therefore no further surveys are required.

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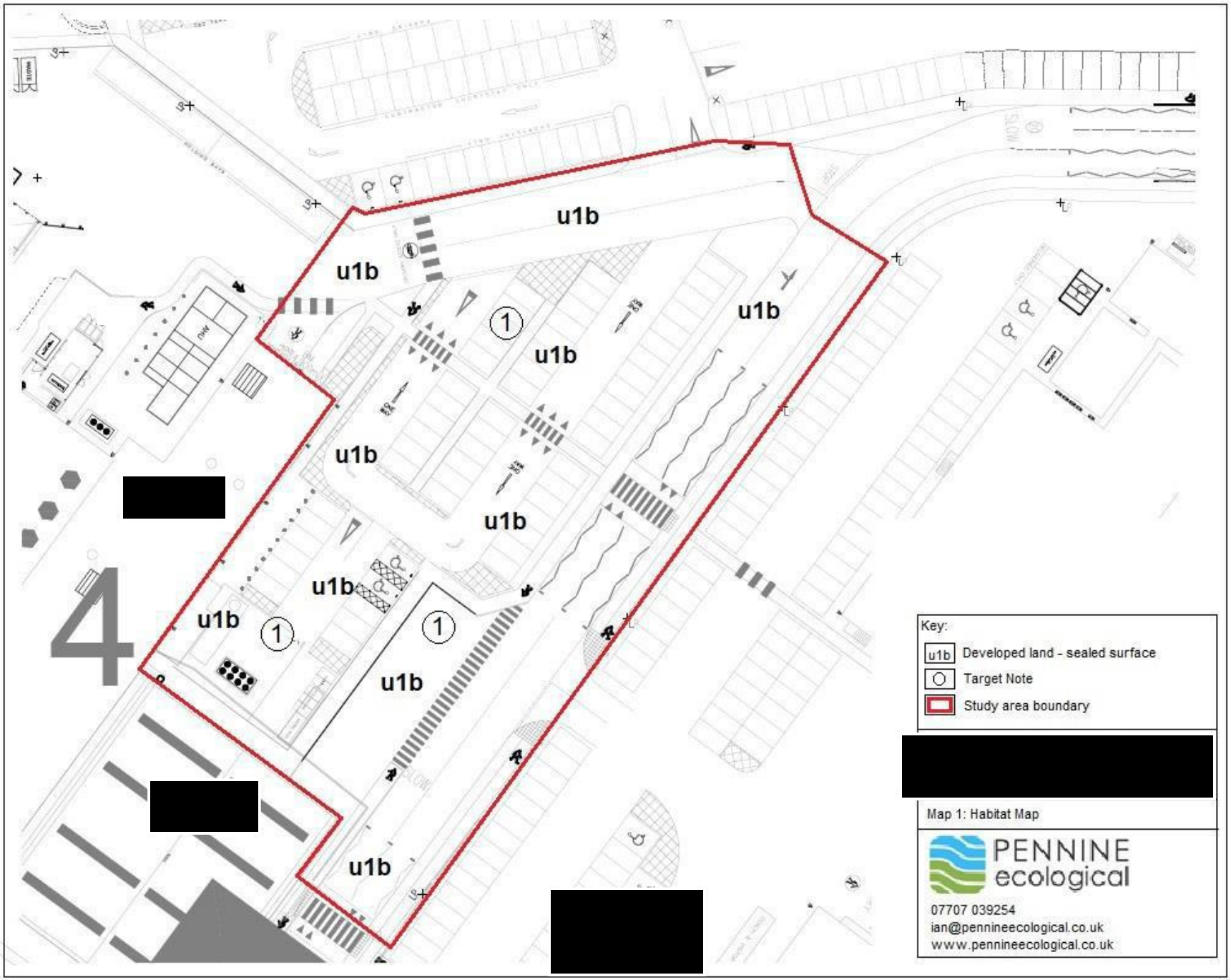
APPENDIX:

Map 1: Habitat Survey Map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Key:
u1b Developed land - sealed surface
Target Note
Study area boundary
Map 1: Habitat Map
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