# Calder Land Clearance

## Ecological Impact Assessment

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This document has 28 pages including the cover.

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## Tables

# Non-technical Summary

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|---|---|
| Report purpose | This report describes the ecological baseline and evaluates the nature conservation importance of ecological features present within the zone of influence for the Proposed Scheme. The assessment identifies impacts (both positive and negative) on important ecological features, sets out agreed avoidance and mitigation, measures and provides details on the significance of effects for each important ecological feature. |
| Proposed Scheme | The Proposed Scheme is for the demolition of four buildings and five ancillary structures within the Sellafield Nuclear Site. |
| Desk studies and field surveys | This report presents results of a desk study undertaken 10/11/2020 and ecological walkover undertaken 03/11/2020<br>No specific protected species or detailed habitat surveys have been undertaken. |
| Ecological features | The Application Site consists mostly of hardstanding and buildings with small areas of amenity grassland and generally provides poor quality habitat for wildlife. Buildings are brick built and clad with corrugated asbestos sheeting, with some gaps providing low suitability roosting habitat for bats. Buildings present within the Application Site provide suitable habitat for common species of nesting bird.<br>Sellafield Tarn Country Wildlife Site is located approximately 925 m west of the Application Site. |
| Potential impacts and effects | Demolition could result in damage/ destruction of bat roosts (if present) and cause disturbance to roosting bats. Demolition could damage active bird nests (if present) and disturbance could cause abandonment. |
| Avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures | Works to be undertaken following a precautionary method of working (PMW) with regards to bats. As a minimum this will include:<br>• Inspection of accessible areas of cladding for signs of bats prior to works;<br>• Ecologist to be present for initial cladding soft-strip and will assess need for ongoing site presence;<br>• Working hours will be restricted to between 0700 and 1800 with the main noise generating activities would be restricted to between 08.00 - 17.00 hours. Works outside these hours, with the capacity to generate noise significantly greater than normal decommissioning operations, would only be undertaken with prior agreement from the local authority.<br>• Briefing to site staff on identification of bat roosts and what to do is a bat is found;<br>• If evidence of roosting bats is found all works must cease and a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence from Natural England must be applied for and granted before works can continue.<br>Works to be undertaken outside of the core nesting bird season (1 March to 31 August) or where this is not possible a thorough check for birds' nests to be undertaken immediately prior to works. |
| Significance of residual effects | Taking into account the mitigation measures set out in this report no residual effects on protected or notable species within the Ecological Zone of Influence of the Proposed Scheme are predicted. |

## Report Validity

In the event of programme changes then updates to the surveys may be required to ensure the validity of the data, as per CIEEM guidance[1].

[1] CIEEM (2019) Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Terms of Reference

Atkins, member of the SNC-Lavalin Group, was commissioned by Sellafield Ltd to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) in connection with a Notice of Intended Demolition application for the demolition of four structures five ancillary buildings, and pipebridges(hereafter referred to as the Proposed Scheme). The application site is in the Sellafield Nuclear Site near Calder Bridge, Cumbria, as identified by the planning red line boundary shown on the Site Location Plan in Appendix A (hereafter referred to as the Application Site).

This report presents the results of the EcIA for the Proposed Scheme and considers both terrestrial and aquatic ecological receptors, which includes designated and non-designated sites for nature conservation, terrestrial and freshwater habitats, plant and animal species. The assessment has been informed by a desk study, field survey data, and consultation with relevant stakeholders and statutory bodies. This EcIA describes the ecological baseline and evaluates the nature conservation importance of ecological features present within the zone of influence for the Proposed Scheme, characterises the impacts on important ecological features, sets out agreed avoidance and mitigation measures, and assesses the significance of the residual effects of the Proposed Scheme on the important ecological features.

This EcIA has been undertaken with reference to current good practice2 and forms part of the technical information lodged with the Notice of Intended Demolition application submission (Reference number: not yet available).

## 1.2. The Application Site

The Application Site is located at Ordnance Survey national grid reference NY 03231 03588 at the Sellafield Nuclear Site in Cumbria. The Application Site currently comprises four buildings, five ancillary structures and pipe bridges, with other habitats consisting predominantly hardstanding with small areas of amenity grassland. The Application Site is set within the Sellafield Nuclear Site which is a secure facility consisting of a range of commercial and industrial buildings, roads and other infrastructure within a perimeter security fence.

The Sellafield Nuclear Site extends for approximately 1 km north, south and west of the Application Site, with land to the east consisting predominantly agricultural land. Beyond the Sellafield Nuclear site, the Irish Sea is located to the west of the Application Site with agricultural land in all other directions, and the Lake District fells approximately 7 km east. The Village of Seascale is located approximately 2km south east of the Application Site. The Application Site is shown on the Site Location Plan in Appendix A .

The Application Site is approximately 1.66 ha and comprises the commercial and industrial buildings, pipe bridges, hardstanding and some amenity grassland.

### 1.2.1. The Proposed Scheme

The Proposed Scheme involves the demolition of four buildings[3] (B1, B2, B3 and B5)), five ancillary structures(Including B4) and pipework. Structures are varied in nature consisting of workshops, large industrial buildings, office buildings and a smoking shelter.

Demolition will be done in sections, removing the cladding then the support structure before moving on to the next section. Demolition of structures will begin in 2022 and is planned to be staged, as outlined in Table 1-1 below. These dates are approximate and subject to change.

**Table 1-1 – Proposed Demolition Periods and Staging**

| Building | Demolition start | Demolition end |
|---|---|---|

[2] CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
[3] Due to the sensitivity of the Sellafield Nuclear Site building numbers are used for the purposes of this report only and do not reflect structure numbers on the Sellafield Site.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| B1 | Summer/ Autumn 2022 | Spring 2024 |
| B2 | Autumn/ winter 2022 | winter 2022 |
| B3 | Summer 2022 | Autumn/ winter 2022 |
| B4 (ancillary structure) | Summer 2022 | Summer 2022 |
| B5 | Autumn/ winter 2022 | Winter/ spring 2023 |

The Application Site red line boundary is shown on the Site Location Plan in Appendix A and the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan in Appendix C.

## 1.3. Scope of Assessment

This report presents ecological information obtained during the following:

- A desk-study undertaken on 10/11/2020; and
- A walkover survey undertaken on 03/11/2020.

Due to security concerns associated with the sensitivity of the Sellafield Nuclear Site no photographs are provided with this report.

# 2. Methodology

## 2.1. Desk Study

The geographical area for obtaining ecological data through desk studies has been determined using professional judgement. Baseline data has been gathered from a range of sources through data requests, consultation and using online resources, as outlined below. This included data gathering in relation to statutory and non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation and protected and priority species. The study areas used for the data gathering are detailed in Table 2-1. The desk study was undertaken on 10/11/2020. For species records collected, only those within 10 years of the data collection date have been considered within the assessment.

The following online resources were accessed:

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website[4]; and,
- Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory[5].

Ordnance Survey maps and the Grid Reference Finder website (https://gridreferencefinder.com/) were used to identify the presence of waterbodies within 500 m of the Application Site boundary, in order to establish if the land within and immediately surrounding the Application Site could be used as terrestrial habitat by great crested newts. This species typically uses suitable terrestrial habitat up to 500 m from a breeding pond. However, there is a notable decrease in great crested newt abundance beyond a distance of 250 m from a breeding pond[6].

Cumbria biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) were contacted to request relevant desk study data, including details of non-statutory designated sites.

**Table 2-1 - Data search areas**

| Data type | Search area – distance from Proposed Scheme boundary |
|---|---|
| Statutory designated sites for nature conservation | 1 km |
| Non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation | 1 km |
| Ancient woodland | 500 m |
| Priority habitats (including veteran trees) and species | 500 m (extended to 2 km for bats) |

## 2.2. Planning Policy Review

A review of national and local planning policy relevant to the Proposed Scheme was undertaken as part of the data gathering. The following policy documents were subject to review:

- Department for Communities and Local Development (2019) National Planning Policy Framework; and
- Copeland Borough Council (2013) Copeland Local Plan 2013 – 2028.

A summary of relevant planning policy is provided in Appendix A**.**

[4] https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx
[5] https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/
[6] Natural England (2004) An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value of different habitats for the great crested newt (ENRR576). http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/134002.

## 2.3. Ecological Field Surveys

The geographical area for undertaking ecological field surveys has been determined using the current survey guidance, professional judgement and the zones of influence, which have been determined based on the nature of the impacts arising from the Proposed Scheme.

### 2.3.1. Surveyor Competencies

All the surveys were led by surveyors who have been assessed[7] to be at least of capable experience following the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) competency framework[8].

### 2.3.2. Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

An ecological walkover survey of areas within and adjacent to the Application Site, including land up to 50 m from the Application Site boundary where access was allowed (the Survey Area), was undertaken on 03/11/2020 broadly following the extended Phase 1 habitat survey methodology[9]. All land within and adjacent to the Application Site including land up to 50 m from the Application Site boundary (the Survey Area) was surveyed according to CIEEM guidance[5]. Plant names recorded in this survey follow Stace (2010).

The walkover survey recorded information on the habitats within the Survey Area and also included a search for evidence of the presence of, and the potential of each habitat to support, priority and protected species as recommended by CIEEM[10]. The species element of the extended Phase 1 habitat survey recorded evidence within the Application Site and land up to 50 m from the Site boundary only.

This survey method comprised the following:

- Mapping habitats present according to the JNCC Phase 1 habitat survey methodology6, with target notes (TN) used to record specific details on the plant species composition of the habitats, current management and condition. TNs were also used to record features of ecological importance e.g. veteran trees;
- Assessing the potential of terrestrial and aquatic habitats to support amphibians. Aquatic habitat was assessed for its suitability to support great crested newts using the Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment;
- Assessing the suitability of habitats for nesting and wintering birds;
- Assessing the suitability of habitats for reptiles; and
- Assessing the suitability of habitats for priority invertebrates.

In addition to the above, specific searches were made to the following:

- Potential roosting sites for bats within trees and structures e.g. identification of suitable cracks and crevices (survey undertaken from ground only). The assessment of potential suitability of the trees and structures for roosting sites for bats were categorised based on good practice guidance11
- Signs of badger activity including setts, tracks, snuffle holes and latrines; and
- Evidence of the presence of the following invasive species was recorded where seen:
  - Evidence of muntjac deer and grey squirrel as animal species listed on the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019; and
  - Evidence of the presence of the following invasive species: Japanese knotweed, giant knotweed, hybrid knotweed, giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, rhododendron, New Zealand pigmy weed, Virginia creeper, variegated yellow archangel, and cotoneaster. These are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and subject to strict legal control.

[7] Assessment undertaken by Atkins ecological technical leadership team in accordance with CIEEM competency criteria.
[8] https://www.cieem.net/competency-framework.
[9] Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010) Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit.
[10] Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Second Edition.
[11] Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

### 2.3.3. Survey Limitations

This section identifies any limitations to the surveys or assessment and provides an explanation as to the effect of these on the assessment.

No internal access was possible to building B2 due to concerns about radioactive materials. A full inspection of the outside of the structure was made and this is deemed to be sufficient to inform this EcIA.

The list of invasive plant species included on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is extensive and these plants are found in a range of different habitats, including aquatic habitats. The extended Phase 1 habitat survey checked for the presence of Japanese knotweed, giant knotweed, hybrid knotweed, giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, rhododendron, New Zealand pigmyweed, Virginia creeper, variegated yellow archangel, and cotoneaster species.

Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of year, migration patterns and behaviour. The ecological surveys undertaken to support this EcIA have not therefore produced a complete list of plants and animals and the absence of evidence of any particular species should not be taken as conclusive proof that the species is not present or that it will not be present in the future. The above limitation/s has been addressed through taking the precautionary approach within the assessment.

The desk study reviewed the Woodland Trust Trusts Veteran Trees inventory, this provides records of veteran trees, but is not an exhaustive list and other veteran trees may be present in the area. The walkover survey aimed to identify such features and as such this is not considered a constraint.

It is not possible to provide any photographs of the Application Site or potential ecological features (as target noted) due to security concerns associated with the sensitivity of the Sellafield Nuclear Site. This does not present a limitation to the assessment of potential ecological impacts but may affect the accuracy and understanding of information communicated by the report.

## 2.4. Nature Conservation Importance

A number of criteria have become accepted as a means of assessing the nature conservation importance of a defined area of land which are set out in A Nature Conservation Review[12] and include diversity, rarity and naturalness.

The nature conservation importance or potential importance of an ecological feature is determined within the following geographic context:

- International (e.g. Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites);
- National (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest);
- Regional (e.g. Environment Agency regional biodiversity indicators, important features in Natural England Natural Areas);
- Metropolitan, County, Vice-County or Other Local Authority-wide Area (e.g. Local Nature Reserves, County Wildlife Sites);
- Local (undesignated ecological features e.g. old hedges, woodlands, ponds);
- The Application Site and its immediate environs (e.g. small pond, marshy grassland); and
- Negligible (e.g. areas of hardstanding and amenity grassland).

The following documents have been reviewed to assist in the determination of importance:

- Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership (2001) The Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan.

Features that have been identified to be of less than local importance are not considered to be important ecological features and as such have not been considered within the impact assessment. Where mitigation is required for these features for legal reasons this is detailed in Section 4.

[12] Ratcliffe, D. (1977) A Nature Conservation Review. Cambridge University Press.

## 2.5. Impact Assessment

The assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Scheme takes into account both on-site impacts and those that may occur to adjacent and more distant ecological features.

The zone of influence is an area within which ecological features may be subject to biophysical changes as a result of the Proposed Scheme. Throughout the EcIA process the zone of influence was regularly reviewed. The zone of influence for the impact assessment is typically the same as the field survey area, as the likely impacts of the Proposed Scheme were considered when establishing the field survey areas. However, this was reviewed during the impact assessment, based on further understanding of the Proposed Scheme impacts and on the results of the desk study, field surveys and consultation. Any changes to the zone of influence are explained in Section 4.

Where impacts have been identified, details are provided within the assessment to characterise these in terms or their extent and magnitude, duration, frequency and timing, and reversibility. Both positive and negative impacts are discussed. Impacts were also characterised in terms of how they occur, i.e. direct, indirect secondary or cumulative. Impacts can be permanent or temporary and can include:

- Direct loss and degradation of wildlife habitats;
- Fragmentation and isolation of habitats;
- Mortality and injury to species;
- Disturbance to species from noise, light or other visual stimuli;
- Changes to key habitat features; and
- Changes to the local hydrology, water quality and/or air quality.
- For designated sites, effects are considered significant when a project and associated activities is likely to either undermine or support the conservation objectives or condition of the site(s) and its features of interest.

For ecosystems, effects are considered significant when a project and associated activities is likely to result in a change in ecosystem structure and function.

Consideration is given to whether:

- Any processes or key characteristics will be removed or changed;
- There will be an effect on the nature, extent, structure and function of component habitats;
- There is an effect on the average population size and viability of component species; and
- Functions and processes acting outside the formal boundary of a designated site has also been considered, particularly where a site falls within a wider ecosystem e.g. wetland sites.

Some ecosystems can tolerate a degree of minor changes, such as localised or temporary disturbance or changes in physical conditions, without such changes harming their function or importance. For this EcIA, ecological effects have been considered in the light of any information available about the capacity of ecosystems to accommodate change. Significant effects have been determined as being either negative or positive.

The conservation importance of undesignated habitats and species within a defined geographical area (International to Local) has been used in this assessment to determine whether the effects of the proposals are likely to be significant:

- For habitats, conservation status is determined by the sum of the influences acting on the habitat that may affect its extent, structure and functions as well as its distribution and its typical species within a given geographical area; and,
- For species, conservation status is determined by the sum of influences acting on the species concerned that may affect its abundance and distribution within a given geographical area.

When assessing potential effects on conservation importance, the known or likely background trends and variations in status have been taken into account. The level of ecological resilience or likely level of ecological conditions, that would allow the population of a species or area of habitat to continue to exist at a given level or continue to increase along an existing trend or reduce a decreasing trend, has been estimated where appropriate to do so.

The avoidance and mitigation measures described within the EcIA have been taken into account in the assessment of the significance of effects. These mitigation measures include those required to achieve the minimum standard of established good practice together with additional measures to further reduce any negative impacts of the Proposed Scheme. The mitigation measures include those required to reduce or avoid the risk of committing legal offences.

If the Proposed Scheme changes or the agreed mitigation cannot be implemented, the effects will need to be reassessed and further surveys may be required. In this event, the conclusion of this EcIA may no longer be valid.

## 2.6. Mitigation Hierarchy

The principles of the mitigation hierarchy[13/14] have been adopted and used when considering impacts and subsequent effects on important ecological features within the zone of influence.

The principles of the mitigation hierarchy are that in order of preference impacts on biodiversity should be subject to:

- Avoidance;
- Mitigation;
- Compensation; and
- Enhancement.

[13] Department for Communities and Local Development (2018) National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 118. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

[14] CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester. See Paragraph 1.19.

# 3. Baseline Conditions and Importance

This section provides details of the ecological baseline relevant to the Proposed Scheme recorded during the desk study and field surveys undertaken to inform this EcIA.

## 3.1. Statutory and non-Statutory Designated Sites

No statutory designated sites for nature conservation are located within 1 km of the Application Site.

CBDC returned one County Wildlife Site (CWS) within 1 km of the Application Site. Sellafield Tarn CWS is located approximately 925 m west of the Application Site. Due to the distance between the Application Site and the CWS, and the lack of any hydrological or other potential impact pathways, Sellafield Tarn CWS has been scoped out of further assessment.

## 3.2. Irreplaceable Habitats

No ancient woodlands or veteran trees were identified within 500 m of the Application Site and therefore irreplaceable habitats have been scoped out of further assessment.

## 3.3. Habitats

The Application Site currently consists of mostly hardstanding and buildings with small areas of amenity grassland. It is set within the industrial environment of Sellafield Nuclear Site.

Table 3-1 provides a summary description of each habitat, identifies those habitats which are listed on Annex 1[15] and/or listed as priority habitats[16], and provides a nature conservation importance for each habitat. The table also provides details of the area of each habitat within the Application Site and the proportion of the Application Sites this makes up. Habitats are mapped on the extended Phase 1 habitat survey plan (Appendix C) with specific features highlighted by target notes (TN) on the figure. TN descriptions are provided in Appendix C.

**Table 3-1 – Habitat types within 500 m[17] of the Application Site**

| Habitat type | Location of Habitat18 | Area of Habitat/ Distance of Linear Feature[19] | | Annex 1 habitat Yes/ No | Priority habitat Yes/ No | Importance level | Rationale for valuation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | $m^2$ | % of Site | | | | |
| Buildings | Within Application Site | 7327 | 44% | No | No | Negligible | Buildings themselves offer negligible value for wildlife. Any features suitable for nesting birds or roosting bats within buildings have been valued separately. |
| Hardstanding | Within Application Site | 7967 | 48% | No | No | Negligible | Provides nearly no value for wildlife. |

[15] https://sac.jncc.gov.uk/habitat/
[16] https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-bap-priority-habitats/
[17] This is the zone of influence for habitats.
[18] Where habitats are situated outside of the Application Site boundary, the distance and direction is given to the closest point that the habitat from is the Application Site.
[19] The area of habitat is only provided for those habitats that fall within the Application Site.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Amenity Grassland | Within Application Site | 986 | 6% | No | No | Negligible | Regularly mown managed grassland with little value to wildlife. |
| Ephemeral/ short perennial | Within Application Site | 321 | 2% | No | No | Negligible | Badly managed grassland with much bare ground providing little value to wildlife. |
| Dense scrub | 20 m east | N/A | N/A | No | No | Application Site | Provides some limited opportunities for common species including nesting birds and invertebrates . |
| Bare ground | 20 m east | N/A | N/A | No | No | Negligible | Provides nearly no value for wildlife. |
| Running water (River Calder) | 80 m west | N/A | N/A | No | Yes | Local | Heavily canalised through the Application Site but may provide habitat connectivity at a landscape scale to a range of species |
| Deciduous woodland (three parcels) | Closest located 305 m east | N/A | N/A | No | Yes | Local | Listed on priority habitat inventory. Provides opportunities for a range of species. |

Due to the distance from the Application Site and lack of any impact pathways it is not anticipated that the three parcels of deciduous woodland priority habitat will be impacted by the proposed scheme and they have been scoped out of further assessment.

The River Calder is located 80 m from the Application Site and as such there will be no direct impacts to this receptor. Indirect impacts could include pollution due to dust generated by demolition, however following Institute of Air Quality Management guidance[20] at this distance the River Calder is of low sensitivity to dust impacts and therefore impacts are not anticipated on this feature and it has been scoped out of further assessment.

Habitats within the application site, consisting of buildings, hardstanding, amenity grassland and ephemeral/ short perennial vegetation, have all been valued as negligible nature conservation importance and are therefore not considered important ecological features.

Scrub habitats outside of the Application Site, consisting mostly bramble, are common and of nature conservation importance at the Application Site level only. In addition, it is not anticipated they will be impacted as a result of the Scheme and have therefore been scoped out of further assessment.

## 3.4. Protected and Priority Species

This section provides a summary of the results of the desk study and extended Phase 1 habitat survey, along with the nature conservation importance for each species or species group..

### 3.4.1. Badgers

No recent records of badger within 500 m of the Application Site were returned by CBDC.

[20] Holman et al (2014). *IAQM Guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction*, Institute of Air Quality Management, London. www.iaqm/wpcontent /uploads/guidance/dust_assessment.pdf

No evidence of badger was identified during the extended Phase 1 habitat survey. Habitats within the Application Site comprises buildings, hardstanding, ephemeral vegetation and amenity grassland and offer little suitability for badger sett construction or as foraging habitat. A bank of scrub was located approximately 20 m east of the Application Site that may offer suitable habitat for sett construction; however, given the lack of suitable habitat in the surrounding area, and the absence of any evidence during the field survey it is considered that badger are absent from the survey area and have been scoped out of further assessment

### 3.4.2. Amphibians

CBDC returned no recent records of amphibians within 500 m of the Application Site.

No ponds are located within 500 m of the Application Site. Two drains have been identified from Ordnance Survey mapping within 500 m of the Application Site, located approximately 150m west and 240 m south of the Application Site The Application Site itself offers no suitable aquatic or terrestrial habitat for amphibians and due to the presence of the River Calder approximately 80 m west of the Application Site and the industrial Sellafield Nuclear Site to the north and south, there is no connectivity to other suitable habitat. Due to the lack of suitable habitats present within the Application Site, and lack of connectivity to other areas of more suitable habitat Great crested newt are unlikely to use the Application Site,

It is therefore considered likely that amphibians are absent from the survey area and have been scoped out of further assessment.

### 3.4.3. Bats

CBDC returned 23 recent records of bats within 2 km of the Application Site, the closest of which was a common pipistrelle roost, located approximately 225 m north of the Application Site.

Habitats within and immediately adjacent to the Application Site consist mostly of hardstanding, buildings and amenity grassland all of which provide limited foraging resource for bats, nor do they contribute to landscape scale connectivity providing commuting routes. It is therefore considered that the site is unsuitable for foraging and commuting bats and therefore they have been scoped out of further assessment.

Two of the structures on the Application Site (B1 and B3 as shown on the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan in Appendix C) are brick build with corrugated asbestos sheet cladding. These buildings had flat roofs covering a sheet roofing membrane. Gaps present between the cladding and the brickwork provided some limited roosting opportunity for bats. Taking into account the poor quality foraging habitat in the Sellafield Nuclear Site and the noisy industrial surrounds, the gaps under the cladding have been assessed as being of low suitability for roosting bats.

Following best practice guidance[21], professional judgement has been used to determine a proportional approach in this situation. It was determined that due to the limitations associated with access to a restricted nuclear site, need for accompaniment, and the disproportionate survey effort that would be required to undertake presence/ likely absence surveys on the large buildings present, no further bat surveys should been undertaken.

It is considered that if present, roosts are likely to be of small numbers of common species and of low conservation importance (e.g. transitional or day roosts). The potential roost sites within the buildings lack the thermal stability required to provide suitable conditions for roosts of a higher conservation status. Under the precautionary approach taken under this assessment and assuming only small numbers of common species of bats could be present, roosting bats within the Application Site are valued as being of nature conservation importance at the Local level[22].

### 3.4.4. Birds

CBDC returned no recent records of birds within 500 m of the Application Site.

The rooftops of the buildings on site offer suitable nesting habitat for common species of breeding birds. Pigeon feathers were found inside Turbine Hall A, which is due to be demolished as part of the Proposed

[21] Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
[22] Wray, S., Wells, D., Long, E. & Mitchel-Jones, T. (2010) *Valuing Bats in Ecological Impact Assessment*. InPractice. Issue.70.

Scheme. In addition, the scrub habitats located outside of the Application Site offer suitable habitat for nest building.

It is considered that the breeding bird assemblage within the Survey Area is made up of common and widespread species and is, therefore, of nature conservation importance at the Application Site level only and is therefore not considered an important ecological feature.

### 3.4.5. Invertebrates

CBDC returned no recent records of notable invertebrates within 500 m of the Application Site.

It is considered that the invertebrate assemblage within the Survey Area, associated mostly with amenity grassland and scrub habitats in proximity to the Application Site, is made up of common and widespread species and is, therefore, of nature conservation importance at the Application Site level only and is therefore not considered an important ecological feature.

### 3.4.6. Reptiles

CBDC returned no recent records of reptiles within 500 m of the Application Site.

The scrub bank, located approximately 20 m east of the Application Site, offers suitable terrestrial habitat for reptile foraging and refuge with areas of hardstanding and bare ground nearby offering basking opportunities. However, this scrub habitat only covers a small area and is isolated from other suitable habitat and is, therefore, unlikely to sustain a reptile population on its own. Due to the location of the Application Site within the Sellafield Nuclear Site there is little connectivity to other areas of suitable habitat in the wider area. It is considered that reptiles, if present, are likely to utilise areas of more suitable habitat to the east of the Application Site and are considered likely to be absent from the Survey Area.

## 3.5. Summary of Features of Nature Conservation Importance

Table 3-2 below provides a summary of the features of nature conservation importance which are considered within the impact assessment. The table also provides details of the zone of influence for the features.

The following features that have been valued at less than local are not considered to be important ecological features and as such are not discussed further within this report:

- Habitats including:
- Buildings;
- Hardstanding;
- Amenity grassland;
- Ephemeral/ short perennial;
- Dense scrub; and
- Bare ground.

The breeding bird assemblage has been valued at less than local and is not considered to be important ecological features and as such as not discussed within the impact assessment. However, due to legal considerations, mitigation is required, which is detailed in Section 4.

In addition, the following features have also been scoped out of the impact assessment, the rational for which is discussed in the relevant sections above.

- Statutory and non-statutory designated sites;
- Priority habitats;
- Irreplaceable habitats;
- Badger;
- Amphibians; and
- Invertebrate assemblage;
- Reptiles.

**Table 3-2 - Determination of importance of ecological features and details of their zone of influence**

| Ecological Feature | Summary of baseline | Maximum zone of influence[23] | Importance level | Rationale for valuation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Roosting bats | Two structures with low suitability to support roosting bats (buildings B1 and B3 – refer to Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan in Appendix C). Under the precautionary approach it is assumed common species of bats are present in low numbers and if used, will be used as transitional/ day roosts. | 50 m<br><br>Disturbance impacts are unlikely to be significant beyond this distance. | Local | Valued following Wray et al (2010) [24].<br><br>The structure is likely to support only low number of common species and to be a roost of low conservation importance. |

## 3.6. Non-native Invasive Plant Species

No evidence of non-native invasive species was recorded within the Application Site.

[23] The zone of influence may be different for the construction and operational phases. The maximum zone of influence is given here. Where there are differences between the construction and operational zones of influence these are discussed within the impact assessment.

[24] Wray, S., Wells, D., Long, E. & Mitchel-Jones, T. (2010) *Valuing Bats in Ecological Impact Assessment*. InPractice. Issue.70.

# 4. Mitigation Measures

This section details the mitigation measures which will be implemented during the demolition works to reduce ecological impacts. In developing the mitigation, the mitigation hierarchy has been followed, looking to avoid, minimise or restore in the first instance.

Features that have been valued at less than local are not considered to be important ecological features and as such have not been considered within the impact assessment. However, if mitigation is required for these features for legal reasons it is detailed within this section.

## 4.1. Mitigation Measures

The following measures will be implemented during the demolition works for the Proposed Scheme:

- Works to be undertaken following a Precautionary Method of Working (PMW) with regards to bats. The PMW will be written and implemented by a suitably qualified ecologist. As a minimum this will include:
  - Inspection of accessible areas of cladding for signs of bats prior to works;
  - Ecologist to be present for initial cladding soft-strip and will assess need for ongoing site presence;
  - Working hours will be restricted to between 0700 and 1800 with the main noise generating activities would be restricted to between 08.00 - 17.00 hours. Works outside these hours, with the capacity to generate noise significantly greater than normal decommissioning operations, would only be undertaken with prior agreement from the local authority.
  - Briefing to site staff on identification of bat roosts and what to do is a bat is found;
  - If evidence of roosting bats is found all works must cease and a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence from Natural England must be applied for and granted before works can continue.
- Where possible, demolition of structures should be undertaken outside the core bird nesting season (1 March to 31 August, though it should be noted that variation in dates is possible, for example from geographical variations in climate, or due to a particularly mild winter) to avoid damage or destruction of occupied nests or harm to breeding birds. If this cannot be achieved, works within the core bird nesting season will require an inspection of buildings/ structures to be cleared for breeding birds and their occupied nests by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24 hours prior to any works being undertaken. If any nesting birds are identified during the survey, they will be left in situ for their entire nesting period and alternative approaches to the work proposed. This may include leaving an exclusion zone around the nests to avoid disturbance.

# 5. Impact Assessment

This section characterises the impacts and the subsequent effects (both positive and negative) of the Proposed Scheme on the important ecological features within the zone of influence and assesses the significance of the residual effects (both positive and negative) based on the mitigation measures detailed in Section 4. The following potential impacts have been identified.

## 5.1. Demolition Impacts

- Loss of roosting habitat for bats;
- Disturbance including noise and vibration to bats; and
- Loss of nesting habitat for breeding birds.

Based on the impacts identified above, the zones of influence detailed in Section 4 remain unchanged.

## 5.2. Residual Effects

A summary of the impact assessment, the proposed mitigation, and the residual effects during demolition is provided below.

If the design changes or the agreed mitigation cannot be implemented the effects will need to be reassessed and further surveys may be required. In this event, the conclusion of this EcIA may no longer be valid.

## 5.3. Demolition

#### 5.3.1.1. Roosting Bats

Buildings B1 and B3 (refer to Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan, Appendix C), which are due to be demolished as part of the Proposed Scheme, have low potential to support roosting bats. In line with best practice guidance, due to limitations associated with site access and the disproportionate survey effort required to undertake emergence/ re-entry surveys on these large buildings professional judgement has been used and no further survey has been undertaken. If roosts are present the Proposed Scheme will result in a loss of roosting habitat and disturbance to bats roosting within these features.

As the presence of roosting bats cannot be ruled out, works will be undertaken following a PMW with regards to bats authored and implemented by a suitable qualified ecologist. As outlined in Section 4 Mitigation Measures above. This will detail a low impact approach to the works that will minimise the risk to bats, should they be present. This method has been proposed as the presence of bats roosting within the Application Site is considered unlikely, but cannot be ruled out entirely.

Following the specific mitigation measures that will be outlined in a PMW, it is considered that the destruction of bat roosts or disturbance to roosting bats is reasonably unlikely to occur and the Proposed Scheme will not result in any significant adverse impacts to roosting bats.

#### 5.3.1.2. Breeding Birds

All buildings to be demolished as part of the Proposed Scheme have potential to be used by common species of nesting birds, and feathers within building B1 indicate that birds occasionally access this structure, although no evidence of nests was observed.

In addition to the mitigation measures to be implemented (e.g. demolition to be undertaken outside of core nesting bird season where possible), site staff will be briefed on the identification of active birds' nests and who to contact in the event one is found. Following these mitigation measures it is not anticipated that there will be any residual impacts on breeding birds as a result of the Proposed Scheme.

# 6. Conclusion

The Proposed Scheme includes the demolition of four buildings and five ancillary structures located within the Sellafield Nuclear Site.

This EcIA is based on a desk study undertaken 10/11/2020 and ecological walkover undertaken on 03/11/2020. Asbestos cladding on buildings due to be demolished as part of the Proposed Scheme were considered to have low suitability to support roosting bats. No further survey has been undertaken on these features. Buildings on site also have suitability to provide nesting habitat for common species of bird.

In the absence of mitigation, demolition of the structures could cause loss of or damage to bat roosts (if present) and/ or disturb roosting bats (if present). To avoid impacts to roosting bats a PMW will be in place for the duration of works.

Demolition could also destroy active birds' nests (if present) within the structures. Works will be undertaken outside of the core nesting bird season, or where this is not possible a check for birds nests will be made no more than 24 hours prior to demolition

Impacts from the Proposed Scheme will not result in any significant negative residual effects that undermine the conservation objectives or condition of designated sites and their features of interest or protected or notable species.

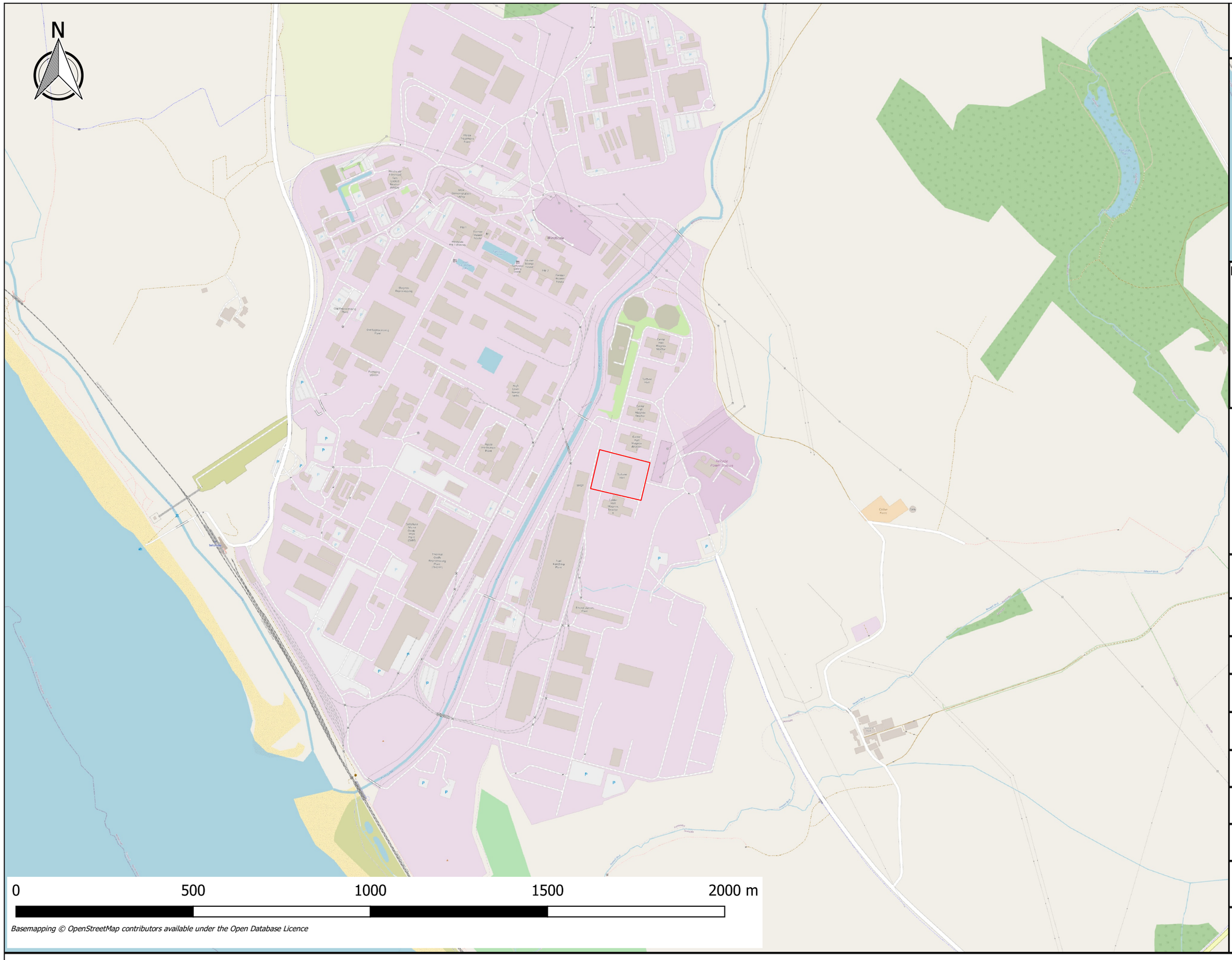
### Report Validity

In the event of programme changes then updates to the surveys may be required to ensure the validity of the data, as per CIEEM guidance[25].

[25] CIEEM (2019) Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys

# Appendix A. Site Location Plan

## A.1. Site Location Plan

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Notes:

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Chadwick House
Birchwood Park
Warrington
England
WA3 6AE

Project: Calder Land Clearance

Client: Sellafield Ltd

Title: Site Location Plan

Drawing number: Figure 1

Original scale: 1:10000

IDS Number: 5197094-301-0025

Icepac Number: RP/CLC/PROJ/00013

Page: 1/1

| Drawn: | Checked: | Reviewed: | Approved: |
|---|---|---|---|
| JS | PW | AW | SB |
| Date: Nov 2020 | Date: Nov 2020 | Date: Nov 2020 | Date: Nov 2020 |

Legend

Red line boundary

# Appendix B. Planning Policy Summary

## B.1. National Planning Policy Framework, 2019

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied by Local Authorities within their Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in February 2019.

Chapter 15 of the NPPF 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' sets out the requirements to consider biodiversity in planning decisions.

The paragraphs within Chapter 15 relevant to the Scheme, the key information from which is detailed below:

Para 170: Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Para 171: Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework[26]; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

Para 172: Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads[27]. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning permission should be refused for major development[28] other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

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[26] Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a high quality

[27] English National Parks and the Broads: UK Government Vision and Circular 2010 provides further guidance and information about their statutory purposes, management and other matters.

[28] For the purposes of paragraphs 172 and 173, whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined.

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

Para 173. Within areas defined as Heritage Coast (and that do not already fall within one of the designated areas mentioned in paragraph 172), planning policies and decisions should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.

### B.1.1.1. Habitats and biodiversity

Para 174. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity[29]; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation[30]; and
b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Para 175. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
b) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons[31] and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
c) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Para 176. The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites[32]; and
c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

Para 177. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or

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[29] Circular 06/2005 provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.
[30] Where areas that are part of the Nature Recovery Network are identified in plans, it may be appropriate to specify the types of development that may be suitable within them.
[31] For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat.
[32] Potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation and proposed Ramsar sites are sites on which Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for designation as a Special Protection Area, candidate Special Area of Conservation or Ramsar site.

in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

## B.2. Copeland Local Plan 2013 – 2028

The Copeland Local Plan 2013 – 2028 was published In 2013. Chapter 7 of the Copeland Local Plan 'Environmental Protection and Enhancement' sets out the policies relating biodiversity.

Relevant policies to the Proposed Scheme are detailed below:

**Policy DM25 – Protecting Nature Conservation Sites, Habitats and Species**

All development proposals should:

- Protect the biodiversity value of land and buildings
- Minimise fragmentation of habitats
- Maximise opportunities for conservation, restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats and creation of habitats for species listed in UK and Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plans. Special consideration should also be given to those European habitats that lie outside the boundaries of European designated sites

Development proposals that would cause a direct or indirect adverse effect on locally recognised sites of biodiversity and geodiversity importance, including County Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites or protected species will not be permitted unless:

- The benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impacts on the features of the site and the wider network of natural habitats, and;
- Prevention, mitigation and/or compensation measures are provided. An appropriate long-term management plan will be sought and arrangements to provide adequate funding will be made in accordance with a formal planning agreement or obligation

Where compensatory habitat is created, it should be of equal or greater size than the area lost as a result of the development

Development proposals where the principal objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity or geodiversity interests will be supported in principle

Where there is evidence to suspect the presence of protected species any planning application should be accompanied by a survey assessing their presence and, if present, the proposal must be sensitive to, and make provision for, their needs

All development proposals must take into account any likely significant effects on the internationally important sites both within the Borough and within a 20km radius of the Borough boundary as well as those that are hydrologically linked to the development plan area

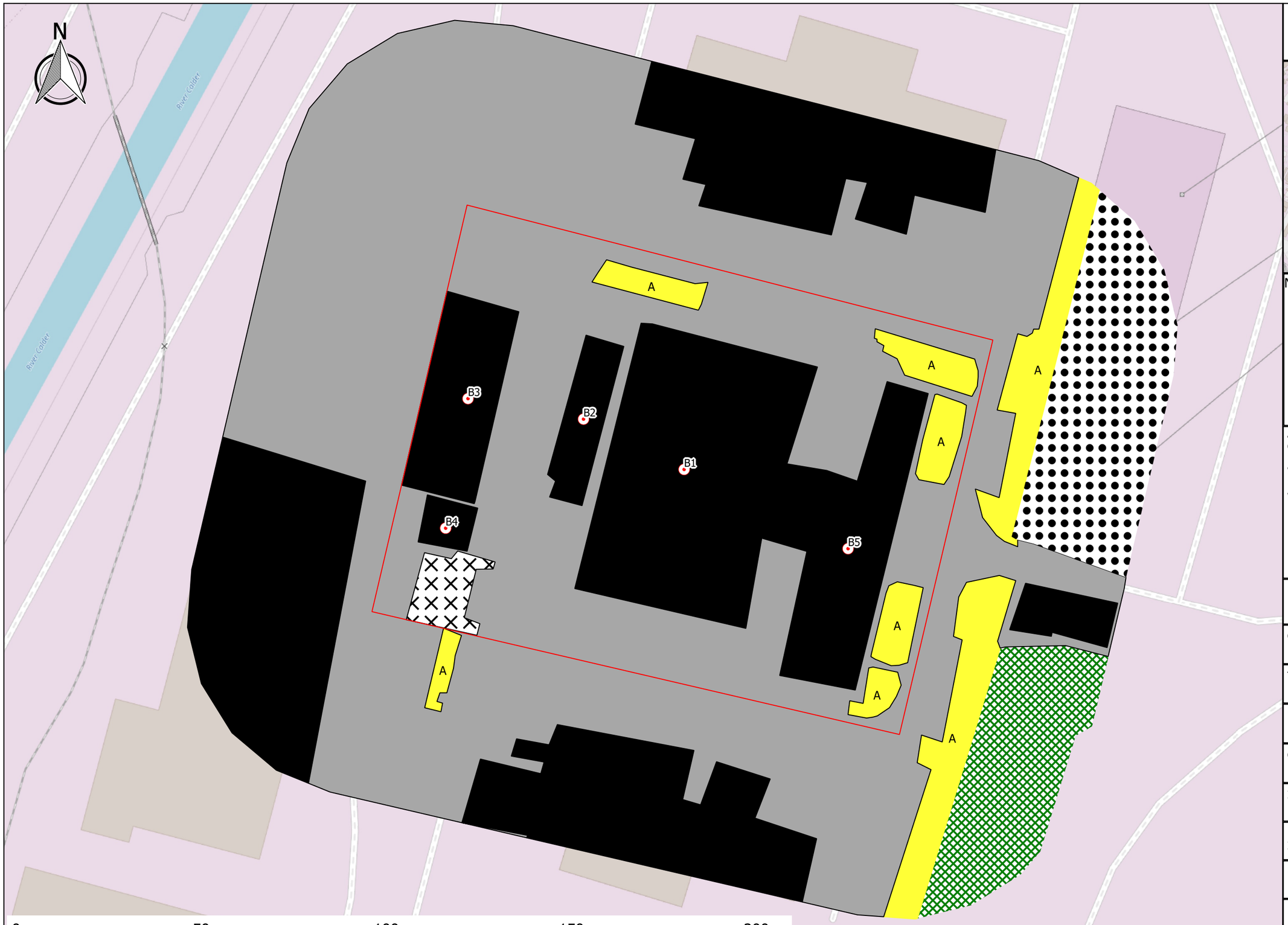
**Policy ENV3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

The Council will contribute to the implementation of the UK and Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan within the plan area by seeking to:

- Improve the condition of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites
- Ensure that development incorporates measures to protect and enhance any biodiversity interest
- Enhance, extend and restore priority habitats and look for opportunities to create new habitat
- Protect and strengthen populations of priority or other protected species
- Boost the biodiversity value of existing wildlife corridors and create new corridors, and stepping stones that connect them, to develop a functional Ecological Network
- Restrict access and usage where appropriate and necessary in order to conserve an area's biodiversity value

# Appendix C. Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan and Building Descriptions

## C.1. Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan

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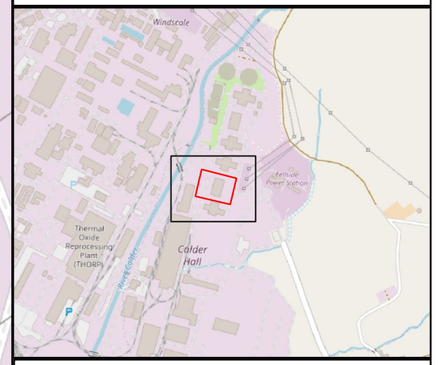


Notes:

Atkins Limited ©
Chadwick House
Birchwood Park
Warrington
England
WA3 6AE

Project: Calder Land Clearance

Client: Sellafield Ltd

Title: Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan

Drawing number: Figure 2

Original scale: 1:1000

IDS Number: 5197094-301-0025

Icepac Number: RP/CLC/PROJ/00013

Page: 1/1

| Drawn: | Checked: | Reviewed: | Approved: |
|---|---|---|---|
| JS | PW | AW | SB |
| Date: Nov 2020 | Date: Nov 2020 | Date: Nov 2020 | Date: Nov 2020 |

Legend

Red line boundary | A2.1 - Scrub - dense | A J1.2 - Cultivated/disturbed land - amenity grassland | J1.3 - Cultivated/disturbed land - ephemeral/short perennial | J3.6 - Buildings | J4 - Bare ground | Hardstanding | Building reference

## C.2. Building Descriptions

**Table C-1 – Building Descriptions**

| Building Reference | Description |
|---|---|
| B1 | Large brick build building with flat roof and asbestos cladding.<br>Gaps between the cladding and the brick build structure may provide limited opportunities for bat roosting and have been classed as low bat roosting potential<br>Feathers found within this building indicating ingress by birds who may nest within the structure or on flat roofs. |
| B2 | Corrugated sheet construction workshop with flat roof which may provide some low quality nesting habitat for nesting birds. No potential for other protected or notable species. |
| B3 | Brick built workshop with very gently sloped flat roof and asbestos cladding. Gaps between the cladding and the brick build structure may provide limited opportunities for bat roosting and have been classed as low bat roosting potential |
| B4 | Corrugated sheet construction workshop with sloped roof which may. No potential to support protected or notable species. |
| B5 | Office block of brick build with flat roof. No potential to support protected or notable species. |