

# Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Addendum

## Project Information & Site Context

<b>Site Name &amp; Location</b>	Balk Farm Court, Birdwell, Barnsley	<b>Grid Reference</b>	SE 3449 0219
<b>Client Name</b>	Galliford Try Construction - Environment	<b>Report Number</b>	181667-03
<b>Site Area (ha)</b>	0.31 ha	<b>Topography</b>	Generally flat, with a shallow slope at the western edge.
<b>Project Background</b>	<p>In March 2026, Galliford Try commissioned Middlemarch to update the PEA report for Balk Farm Court to be specific to the planning redline boundary.</p> <p>Middlemarch completed an initial Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a wider area in January 2025, with the results detailed in report RT-MME-181667-01. The findings of this initial appraisal remain valid for a period of 24 months following the initial survey; and thus remain in date at the time of completing this update and should be consulted alongside this report.</p> <p>This update summarises the habitats present within the smaller redline planning boundary and summarises the potential of the proposed works to impact upon local nature conservation sites, habitats and species.</p>		
<b>Summary of Proposals</b>	<p>The proposed works will comprise the installation of new, above-ground sewage infrastructure, with an associated hardstanding access track.</p>		

## Nature Conservation Sites

### UK Statutory Sites

The original Preliminary Ecological Appraisal identified the presence of two UK Statutory Sites within the search area (Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI and Worsborough Country Park LNR). The redline planning area is also located within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Dearne Valley Wetlands and the original PEA indicated that the proposed works could fall into the infrastructure or discharge categories of the IRZ; and thus could potentially pose a risk to the associated SSSI.

It is considered that the proposed works comprise an upgrade to the existing network and as such would not fall into the infrastructure category; however, this should be clarified in advance of works. If the proposed works are not considered to be an upgrade to the existing network, then LPA consultation with Natural England will be required as part of the planning process. Furthermore, if the proposed works will result in the discharge of water or liquid waste either to ground (i.e. to seep away) or to surface water, such as a beck or stream then consultation will also be required, and this should be confirmed as part of any planning application.

As concluded within the original PEA report, no adverse impacts are anticipated on Worsborough Country Park LNR and so this site continues to be scoped out.

### Non-Statutory Sites

The original Preliminary Ecological Appraisal identified the presence of four non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites within the search area and concluded that these sites would not be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed development. As the proposed works have not altered, this conclusion has not changed and so the sites continue to be scoped out.

## Habitats

The habitats present within the redline planning boundary area are summarised below and shown on Drawing C181667-01-01-RevA. Habitat Condition Data for these habitats is included within Appendix 1.

### **Hardstanding (TN2)**

The redline boundary includes a small section of hardstanding road (Balk Farm Court), which provides access to the proposed works area.

### **Vegetated Garden (TN3)**

The redline planning boundary includes a very small area of residential garden adjacent to the hardstanding road in the south.

### **Dense Scrub (TN4)**

The redline planning boundary includes a small area of dense bramble *Rubus fruticosus* scrub in the south-eastern corner, adjacent to the site access point. At the time of the original survey visit this scrub was approximately 1 metre tall and a footpath ran along its northern edge.

### **Poor Semi-Improved Grassland (TN6)**

A section of a larger semi-improved grassland field dominated much of the land within the redline planning area. This is considered likely to be grazed at times but was not being grazed at the time of the original survey visit. At the time of the initial visit the grassland had an even sward averaging approximately 10 cm in height and comprised a relatively small range of fast-growing, common species including perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, meadow-grass *Poa* sp., daisy *Bellis perennis*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, common mouse-ear ribwort plantain and broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, along with tall ruderal species including nettle *Urtica dioica* and cleavers *Galium aparine*. Occasional scattered scrub including bramble was present at the western edge, along the road boundary; and a public footpath ran along the southern edge of the field.

### **Tall Ruderal Vegetation (TN7)**

A rectangular area of tall ruderal vegetation was located in the south-western corner of the redline planning area. At the time of the original survey visit, the vegetation had a sward height of approximately 10 cm and showed evidence of past strimming. The habitat was species-poor and largely comprised abundant nettle and umbellifers, with some grasses including Yorkshire fog also recorded. Old Christmas trees had also been dumped within the area.

Ground-level manholes were present within the area and are understood to provide access to existing below-ground sewage infrastructure linked to the adjacent residential properties to the south. This existing infrastructure was leaking to the west at the time of the original survey visit.

It is considered likely that the hardstanding, dense scrub, poor semi-improved grassland and tall ruderal vegetation may be impacted to some degree by the proposed works, either through permanent loss or temporary disturbance.

### **Evaluation and Impact Assessment**

None of the habitats present within the redline planning boundary qualify as a Priority Habitat or are considered to be notable; however they do hold some ecological value and contribute to overall site biodiversity, which is recognised through the use of a biodiversity metric tool.

### **Summary of Baseline Metric Data for Redline Planning Boundary**

The table below summarises the baseline data for the habitats within the redline planning boundary:

Reference	Phase 1 Habitat Type	UK Hab Habitat Equivalent	Condition	Area(ha)	Habitat Units (BU)
TN2	Hardstanding	Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)	N/A (Condition assessment not required)	0.003	0.00
TN3	Vegetated gardens	Built-up areas and gardens (u1); Vegetated gardens (828)	N/A (Condition assessment not required)	0.0004	0.00
TN4	Dense scrub	Bramble scrub (h3d)	N/A (Condition assessment not required)	0.013	0.05
TN6	Poor semi-improved grassland	Modified grassland (g4)	Good	0.275	1.65
TN7	Tall ruderal vegetation	Modified grassland (g4); Tall forbs (16)	Poor	0.021	0.04
<b>Total</b>				<b>0.313</b>	<b>1.75</b>

## Species

The following paragraphs summarise the potential adverse impacts on species/species groups that may occur as a result of the construction and operational activities of the proposed development, in the absence of mitigation:

### Herpetofauna (Amphibians and Reptiles)

The original PEA concluded that the site contained potentially suitable habitat to support amphibians and reptiles.

Within the redline planning boundary the grassland, tall ruderal vegetation and dense scrub provide small areas of potentially suitable terrestrial foraging and shelter habitat; however the grassland is subject to grazing; and the area of tall ruderal vegetation and dense scrub are small and subject to occasional disturbance as they are situated adjacent to public footpaths, which potentially decreases their suitability for amphibians and reptiles. Nevertheless, there remains a small risk that individual or small numbers of amphibians and reptiles could utilise or pass through the habitats within the redline planning boundary and therefore be at risk of adverse impacts from the proposed works.

However, as the works are only small-scale and will mostly impact the short-grazed grassland, it is felt that any residual risks could be adequately mitigated through the use of reasonable avoidance measures and precautionary working methods for the duration of the works.

### Badgers and Other Terrestrial Mammals

No evidence of badger *Meles meles* or other terrestrial mammal activity was recorded during the original survey visit.

The habitats that make up the majority of the redline planning boundary are considered to provide sub-optimal habitat opportunities for excavation of badger setts as they are dominated by grazed grassland, tall ruderal vegetation and scrub which are subject to disturbance. However, the habitats do provide opportunities for foraging and commuting habitat for badgers, as well as small amounts of shelter, foraging and commuting habitat for a

range of other terrestrial mammals such as brown hare *Lepus europaeus* and hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, with links to further suitable habitat in the surrounding landscape.

The potential presence of these species within the planning redline boundary cannot therefore be fully discounted; however, it is felt that any residual risks to these species from the proposed works can be mitigated through the implementation of precautionary working methods for the duration of the works.

### **Bats**

The habitats within the redline boundary do not provide any potential roosting habitat for bats and also provide only limited habitat for foraging and commuting bats, with no linear commuting features present. However, as there is suitable habitat in the surrounding landscape, it is possible that bats may occasionally use the habitats within the redline boundary for foraging and commuting purposes; and could be adversely impacted, for example as a result of any increases in lighting of the area (if required).

As the works are small scale and the habitats present only have limited value for bats, it is felt that any residual risks can be mitigated through site design and the implementation of precautionary working methods for the duration of the works.

### **Birds**

The dense scrub and tall ruderal vegetation within the redline planning boundary may provide limited nesting and foraging potential for a range of common/generalist species in particular, although this habitat is subject to some disturbance due to the presence of a public footpath running adjacent to these habitats. A small number of common and more notable species were recorded on site during the original survey visit.

Site works have the potential to result in a small net loss of suitable habitat for breeding birds. In addition, there is potential for the killing or injury of nesting birds or damage/destruction of a bird's nest during the construction phase. In order to mitigate any risks to birds from the works, precautionary working methods should be implemented for the duration of the works.

### **Terrestrial Invertebrates**

The semi-natural habitats within the redline planning boundary are widespread and comprise a relatively limited range of common species. As such they are considered likely to support a range of invertebrates at their various life stages but are considered unlikely to support notable species assemblages. As the works are small-scale and abundant alternative habitat is present in the immediate surrounding landscape no long-term impacts on invertebrate populations are anticipated, particularly if measures are required to deliver a biodiversity net gain as part of the project.

### **Invasive Species**

No invasive species were recorded within the redline planning boundary area during the original survey visit; however, due to the time of year that the survey was undertaken, it is likely that any invasive plant species, if present, would be in a period of winter dormancy and thus may not be visible. The presence of further invasive species on site cannot therefore be fully discounted.

In order to minimise any risks related to the unlawful spread of invasive plant species, adequate biosecurity measures/precautionary working practices should be incorporated into the project.

### **Other species**

Other species, including dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, otter *Lutra lutra*, red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*, stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*, water vole *Arvicola amphibius* and white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*, have been scoped out of further assessment due to a lack of desk study records and absence of suitable habitats within the planning redline boundary and its immediate surroundings.

## Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on Middlemarch's current understanding of the project. If works are changed in any way these recommendations will need to be amended if appropriate.

<b>R1</b>	<p><b>Consultation with Statutory/Non-statutory Bodies:</b> If the works are confirmed to fall into the infrastructure or discharge categories of the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI, the LPA and Natural England should be consulted prior to any works commencing, to determine how works may proceed without adversely impacting this site. If the works do not fall within one of the highlighted risk categories, no further action will be required.</p>
<b>R2</b>	<p><b>Scheme Design and Biodiversity Net Gain:</b> The proposed works should be designed in accordance with the ecological mitigation hierarchy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In the first instance the proposals should be designed to avoid/minimise losses of semi-natural habitats through the works and ensure appropriate reinstatement of temporarily impacted habitats. This will help to further avoid and minimise impacts to protected and notable species.</p> <p>Where losses or impacts are unavoidable, compensation should be provided. This could include the replacement of lost habitats and/or connectivity and the creation of new habitats of ecological value, taking into account targets within the draft emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p> <p>In accordance with the principles of the Environment Act 2021 the works will need to secure an overall net gain for biodiversity. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool should be used to help guide and quantify the baseline and proposed value of the scheme. A Biodiversity Statement and Metric Assessment should be produced to inform any planning application.</p>
<b>R3</b>	<p><b>Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP):</b> A Construction Ecological Management Plan should be produced for the site setting out the safeguards and appropriate working practices that will be employed to minimise adverse effects on biodiversity and ensure compliance with UK Wildlife Legislation. The details of the CEcMP will be informed by the final site design and ongoing ecological survey works but should include as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Specific measures to protect nature conservation sites (if required),</li> <li>● Development standoffs and safeguards for all retained habitats,</li> <li>● Construction timetables to avoid sensitive periods such as nesting bird season,</li> <li>● Precautionary working methods (including any need for ecological supervision) to minimise the risks to amphibians and reptiles, bats, birds and terrestrial mammals (including badger); and</li> <li>● Adequate biosecurity measures to minimise any risks of spreading non-native, invasive species.</li> </ul> <p>The CEcMP should be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for Approval and implemented in full thereafter.</p>

## Quality Assurance

Date	Version	Author	Checked & Approved By
31/03/2026	Final	Anna Evans, MSc (Senior Ecological Consultant)	Tim Hextell MCIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant)

# Drawings

C181667-01-01-RevA – Phase 1 Habitat Map



# Appendix 1

The following tables include full habitat descriptions and summarise the condition assessment for habitats using Natural England (2023).

Area Habitat				Condition Sheet Criteria Score														Total Score	Condition Assessment	
Polygon / Line Ref.	Phase 1 Habitat Type	UK Hab Habitat Equivalent	Habitat Description	Condition Sheet Used	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M			
TN2	Hardstanding	Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)	The redline boundary includes a small section of hardstanding road (Balk Farm Court), which provides access to the proposed works area.	N/A (Condition assessment not required)															N/A	N/A
TN3	Vegetated gardens	Built-up areas and gardens (u1); Vegetated gardens (828)	The redline planning boundary includes a very small area of residential garden adjacent to the hardstanding road in the south.	N/A (Condition assessment not required)															N/A	N/A
TN4	Dense scrub	Bramble scrub h3d	The redline planning boundary includes a small area of dense bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> scrub in the south-eastern corner, adjacent to the site access point. At the time of the original survey visit this scrub was approximately 1 m- tall and a footpath ran along its northern edge.	N/A (Condition assessment not required)															N/A	N/A
TN6	Poor semi-improved grassland	Modified grassland (g4)	A section of a larger semi-improved grassland field dominated much of the land within the redline planning area. This is considered likely to be grazed at times but was not being grazed at the time of the original survey visit. At the time of the initial visit the grassland had an even sward averaging approximately 10 cm in height and comprised a relatively small range of fast-growing, common species including perennial rye grass, Yorkshire fog, cock's-foot, red fescue, meadow-grass, daisy, creeping buttercup, white clover, common mouse-ear ribwort plantain and broad-leaved dock, along with tall ruderal species including nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> and cleavers. Occasional scattered scrub including bramble was present at the western edge, along the road boundary; and a public footpath ran along the southern edge of the field.	Grassland low (5)	P	F	P	P	P	P	P							6	Good	
TN7	Tall ruderal vegetation	Modified grassland (g4); Tall forbs (16)	A rectangular area of tall ruderal vegetation was located in the south-western corner of the redline planning area. At the time of the original survey visit, the vegetation had a sward height of approximately 10 cm and showed evidence of past strimming. The habitat was species-poor and largely comprised abundant nettle and umbellifers, with some grasses including Yorkshire fog also recorded. Old Christmas trees had also been dumped within the area.  Ground-level manholes were present within the area and are understood to provide access to existing below-ground sewage infrastructure linked to the adjacent residential properties to the south. This existing infrastructure was leaking to the west at the time of the original survey visit.	Grassland low (5)	F	F	P	F	F	P	P							3	Poor (Fails essential criterion A)	

**Key:**  
P – Criteria passed  
F – Criteria failed