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January 2018



**Kirklees Local Plan**

**Response to the Inspector's  
Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs)**

**Matter 37 – Batley & Spennings Housing Allocations: Green Belt Releases  
– General and Specific Questions relating to Merchants Field,  
Hunsworth Lane, Cleckheaton – H69**

Prepared by

I D Planning

On behalf of

Harron Homes

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## 1.0 Response to Matter 37 – Batley and Spen Housing Allocations: Green Belt Releases

**Issues – Are the proposed Green Belt Release Housing Allocations in the Batley and Spen sub-area justified, effective, developable/deliverable and consistent with National Policy.**

**H69 – Merchant Fields, Hunsworth Lane, Cleckheaton**

### Questions

**A. Is the site suitable for the proposed use? Does the plan provide clear guidance of requirements and constraints, and seek appropriate mitigation measures?**

1.1 The site is currently agricultural land bounded by residential development to the north and the south with industrial units situated on the south-western boundary. With appropriate design and mitigation the site is considered to be suitable for residential development given the proximity of existing residential development and in relation to the existing employment units and the visually self-contained nature of the site.

**C. Is the site available and deliverable in the timescale set out in the Council's Housing Trajectory?**

1.2 The site is optioned to Harron Homes who have prepared a range of technical reports to support an impending full planning application for residential development to be submitted at an appropriate stage during the Local Plan process and as the plan advances. Pre-application discussions have been undertaken with the Council to ensure the application, when submitted, is fully policy compliant and meets with the Council approval.

1.3 Subject to progression of the Local Plan, it is anticipated that a submission of the application would take place in June to July 2018 with a determination in October/November 2018.

1.4 Upon the grant of planning permission, the first units will be delivered within a 6 month period i.e. by April 2019 and the site will deliver circa 35 to 40 units per annum thereafter.

1.5 The Council's trajectory identifies the site commencing delivery 2020/21 and it is anticipated that completions can start a year early with similar rates to the Council's predictions.

1.6 There are no known constraints to developing the site and Harron Homes will confirm that the site is available, suitable and deliverable.

**D. What effect would the proposed boundary change in allocation have on the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it? Are there any exceptional circumstances that justify altering the Green Belt? If so what are they?**

1.7 In terms of the exceptional circumstances that justify altering the Green Belt, the Council require Green Belt releases in order to meet the housing requirement as there is insufficient brownfield or allocated land within the settlement boundaries to meet the housing requirement over the plan period. This is considered to warrant exceptional circumstances to allow appropriate Green Belt releases.

1.8 In terms of the effect of the boundary change in relation to H69 Merchants Field, on the purpose of including land within the Green Belt, the effects on the 5 purposes of Green Belt is considered below:-

- **“To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas”** – the release of the site at Merchants Field would not create urban sprawl as it is well contained by development on three sides these being residential to the north and south and commercial to the south-west. In terms of the eastern boundary, there is a strong defensible boundary with open Green Belt beyond and the boundary is in line with existing settlement limits and would not create sprawl.
- **“To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another”** – due to the strong defensible boundaries of the site, the open land beyond the boundary to the south which is Green Belt in conjunction with associated topography, the site would not lead to the merging of keeping with any other settlement.
- **“To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment “** – the site is contained by residential development and commercial and would not constitute encroachment into the open countryside as it is visually well contained.
- **“To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and”** – the site does not lie within a historic town.
- **“To assist in regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land”** – the development of the site is neutral on this point, it is neither derelict land nor urban land and the Council require Green Belt release as there is insufficient brownfield or other urban land to meet the housing requirement.

**H69 – Merchants Field, Hunsworth Lane, Cleckheaton**

**Questions**

- (i) **Does the plan provide sufficient detail regarding constraints and mitigation measures relating to issues such as bio-diversity, public rights of way and landscape setting? Can the north-east section of the site be developed without significant harm?**

- 1.9 The attached Ecology Report confirms that the site is principally in agricultural use and supports habitats of relatively lower value. However, there are areas of the site which do have higher ecological value which are recommended to be retained within the masterplan and this has been incorporated in the draft planning proposals being prepared for submission.
- 1.10 The report recommends additional protected species/habitat surveys and a range of mitigation measures.
- 1.11 With regard to public rights of way and landscaping, the Landscaping Visual Impact Assessment attached considers landscape and public rights of way impacts and concludes that the development has the potential to mitigate these impacts and deliver improvements to the public rights of way network. Considering the north-east section of the site can be developed without significant harm and will be read in the context of the backdrop of residential the adjoining existing developments.
- 1.12 In conclusion, there are no ecology, landscape or public right of way matters which cannot be mitigated through the development process.
- (ii) Are there phasing or other implications arising from potential mitigation to the strategic road network?**
- 1.13 The attached letter from Sanderson Associates sets out the position in relation to highways.
- 1.14 Sanderson Associates have assessed the distribution of traffic for the proposed development site and it is concluded that the development traffic will not have a material effect on the operation of the strategic road network and with the committed improvements at the Chainbar Interchange are complete. On this basis it is concluded that there are no Strategic Road Network phasing implications for the H69 allocation.

25 January 2018

**Mark Beevers  
Harron Homes  
Colton House  
Temple Point  
Bullerthorpe Lane  
Leeds  
LS15 9JL**

david.colley@sandersonassociates.co.uk  
By Email only

Our ref : 9089-003

Dear Mark

Kirklees Local Plan Examination, Stage 4 hearings, Other Site Allocations - BATLEY AND SPEN SUB-AREA (Matters 37-39), MATTERS, ISSUES AND QUESTIONS (MIQs), 3 January 2018

Sanderson Associates (Consulting Engineers) Limited have been appointed by Harron Homes to advise on the transport elements of the potential Accepted Options 1 allocation, H69 – Merchants Fields residential development on land off Kilroyd Drive / Hunsworth Lane, Cleckheaton. Sanderson Associates produced a Transport Assessment ref 9089/001/02 dated February 2016 to support the allocation.

We have been asked to provide our comments on Question (ii) with regard to the allocation which states:-

*ii) Are there phasing or other implications arising from potential mitigation to the Strategic Road Network?*

It is understood that the allocation is scheduled for implementation in the period up to 2021.

Section 4 of the document Kirklees Local Plan - Infrastructure Delivery Plan Addendum, dated November 2016, covers the transport infrastructure provision across the district including highway, rail, bus, and cycling and pedestrian requirements and indicates a list of transport infrastructure schemes in Appendix C. Figure 4.2a - Kirklees Transport Model Base 2015 Congested Junctions- North Kirklees shows a series of congested junctions in the north of the district. The nearest junction on this figure is the M606 / M62 junction 26, Chainbar Motorway Interchange.

At paragraph 2.2.4 of our Transport Assessment reference is made to a committed scheme of improvements at Chainbar which are now complete.

Reference to the Local Plan online proposals map (see Extract A below) indicates improvements at the Chainbar Interchange and also a Highways England M62 Widening scheme. Policy TS11 is relevant with regard to this aspect. No other transport proposals are shown on the A58 road corridor.

Consultation with Highways England at the scoping stage is presented in our Transport Assessment at Paragraph 1.7 and within Appendix B.

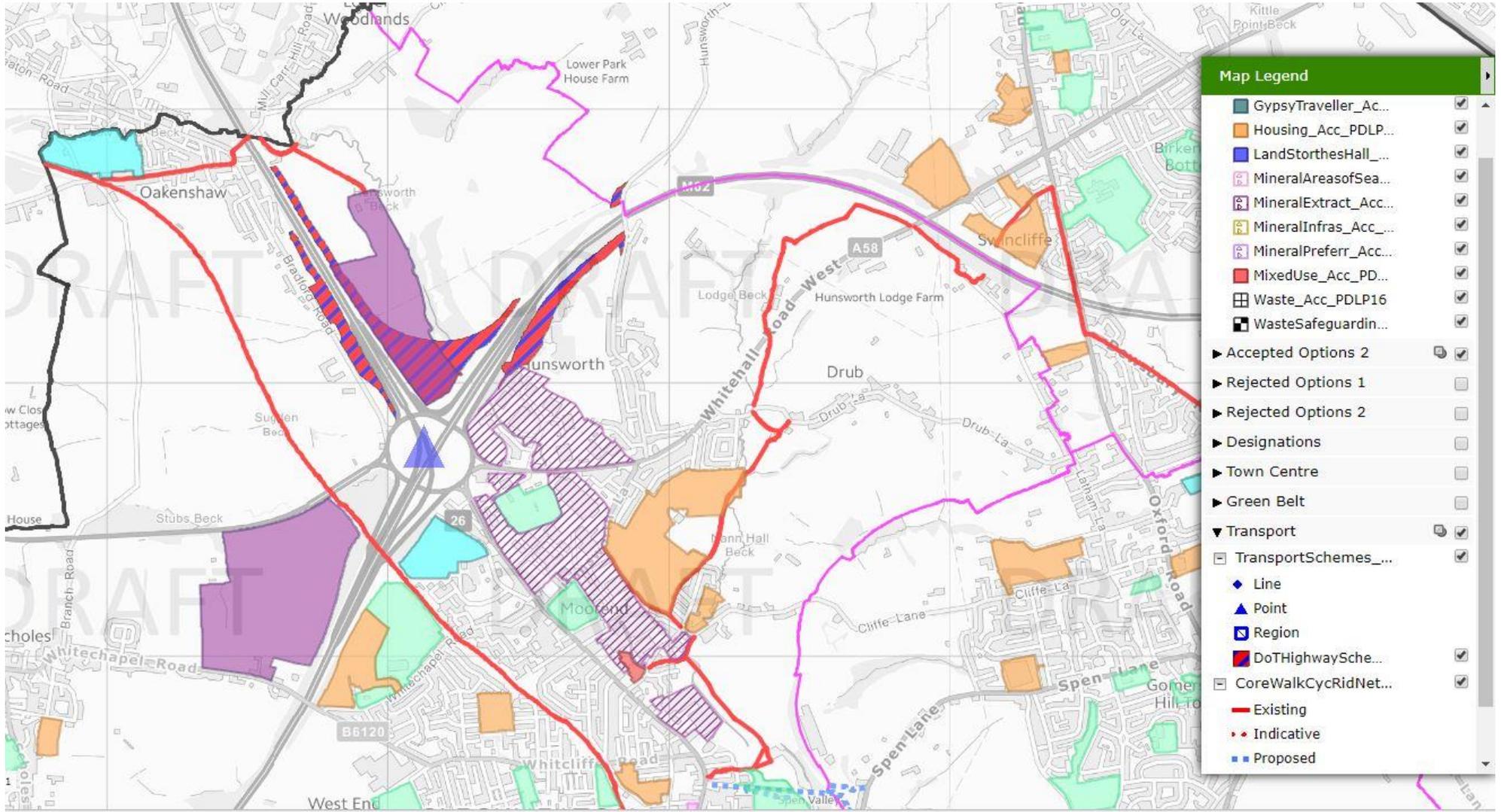
The distribution of traffic was assessed for the development and it is considered that the development traffic will not have a material effect on the operation of the strategic road network bearing in mind also that the committed improvements at the Chainbar Interchange are complete.

On this basis it is concluded that there are no Strategic Road Network phasing implications for the H69 allocation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'D.J. Colley'.

David Colley BEng MCIHT  
Associate Director



# HARRON HOMES

## **Proposed Residential Development on Land around Merchant Fields Farm Cleckheaton**

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### **Landscape and Visual Assessment**

**FDA Landscape Ltd  
Westleigh Hall  
Wakefield Road  
DENBY DALE  
West Yorkshire  
HD8 8QJ**

**Tel: 01484 861611  
Fax: 01484 861616  
Email: [info@fdalandscape.co.uk](mailto:info@fdalandscape.co.uk)**

**November 2015**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. In 2014 Kirklees Council prepared a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), for Kirklees district. Within this assessment a site known as Merchant Fields on the north-eastern edge of Cleckheaton was identified as a potential housing site, number 188. It is described as an 11.98ha site within Green Belt, with the potential for 359 houses built at a density of 30 dwellings per hectare. The site receives a 'green' judgement for suitability, availability and achievability, with a potential phasing within the next 0-5 years, and 6-10 years.
- 1.2. The SHLAA is part of the Evidence Base for the emerging Local Plan and as such has no statutory basis. However due to its potential for housing, the site is assessed in this report to determine the nature and scale of change that would be posed by the construction of housing on the landscape character and visual amenity of the site, its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape within which it lies.
- 1.3. The report also aims to inform and guide the development process, suggesting factors to mitigate any negative effects of proposed housing on landscape character and visual amenity.
- 1.4. The text should be read in conjunction with the Landscape Context drawing, (Appendix two) and the photographic views (Appendix three) at the end of this report.

### **Methodology**

- 1.5. The principles of appraisal outlined in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, (Third Edition, published by The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment), have been followed, but some of the recommended steps have been removed, condensed or adapted to suit the project and the aims of this report.
- 1.6. Where a professional judgement has been made on landscape quality, landscape sensitivity, nature and scale of impact, an explanation of the criteria used is given in Appendix one.

## 2. LOCATION

The site is located to the north of Cleckheaton, immediately to the south of the M62 and the outlying suburb of Hunsworth. The site sits on the northern flank of the valley immediately behind a large, existing commercial site composed of a large number of typical 'sheds'.



Location plan.

## 3. BASELINE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER (See Appendix 2)

### ***National Context***

- 3.1 Cleckheaton lies within National Character Area 37, the Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe. Parts of the general description of the Yorkshire Southern Pennine Fringe NCA are relevant to the study area; *'A transitional landscape dissected by steep-sided valleys, dropping from the high gritstone hills in the west to lower land in the east, and thus creating an important backdrop to the many industrial towns and villages within and beyond the NCA.'* and *'The most striking aspect of the landscape is the mingling of predominantly 'gritstone' industrial towns and villages with the strong valley forms and pastoral agriculture of the Pennine foothills.'* However, although the study area is representative of the NCA, the small scale of the landscape character within the study area means that it is too broad-brush to provide anything other than an overall context. In addition, the high density of

housing, industry roads and railways in the area tends to mask the typical landform and patterns of the NCA.

### **Local Context**

- 3.2 In July 2015 Kirklees Council undertook a Landscape Character Assessment of the district as part of the Evidence Base for the emerging Local Plan. The LCA classifies eight Landscape Character Types that are present across the district and then subdivides these into 19 Landscape Character Areas related to specific geographic locations. The Landscape Character Type of the majority of the study area is identified as 'Wooded Rural Valleys' and it lies within the 'G11-Batley Fringe Incised Valleys' Landscape Character Area. This is a character area of *'Discrete, small scale tributary valleys surrounding the towns of Batley and Cleckheaton with some significant bands of broadleaved riparian woodland'*, particularly sited along the streams and rivers. *'A varied and mixed field pattern.... with horse paddocks and equestrian enterprises close to settlements. From higher ground there are longer views to the north and east, but views are generally restricted by topography, surrounding urban development and frequent roadside trees.'* It is also described as having *'a strong urban influence, particularly in close proximity to main roads'*.
- 3.3 The northern part of the site lies in an area classed as 'Urban' and the western part of the study area is classed as Urban or 'Industrial' in the Kirklees Landscape Character Assessment. This is reflected in the character of the study area that is much more developed than the Batley Fringe Incised Valleys generally. The incised valley landform is also much weaker than the type. Thus although the LCA description provides a background to the landscape character it is not strongly relevant and an individual assessment of the site study area is most appropriate to this report.

### **The Study Area**

- 3.4 The site is located on the north-western side of the Nan Hall Beck valley. Nan Hall Beck valley runs from Birkenshaw in the north towards the larger Spen valley in the south-west. It is one of the 'incised' valleys of the Batley Fringe Incised Valley Character Areas but close to its confluence with the Spen Valley at Heckmondwike it is much more open with gently rounded, convex valley sides. The sinuous and incised form of the valley is reflected more strongly on the eastern valley side, which incorporates a series of small incised side valleys, than the western one which is flatter and more open in character.
- 3.5 The settlements of Cleckheaton and Heckmondwike stretched out along the Spen Valley form the western part of the study area. These are dense conurbations comprising older stone terraced housing, centred around old mill and other industrial buildings in the valley base. Large blocks of newer industrial units, and to a lesser extent housing, flank the older parts particularly on the eastern edges of the conurbation. To the north, the settlement of Hunsworth now forms an extension of this urban area. The urban areas extend into and fragment the remaining countryside between them.

- 3.6 The eastern side of Nan Hall valley is one of the more intact areas of fields, woodlands and farmsteads, with small villages such as Drub and Egypt contributing to the overall rural character. Beyond this area to the east lies the town of Gomersall spread across the ridge between Nan Hall valley and Smithies Beck valley to the east.
- 3.7 Roads have a strong impact on the landscape character of the area with the M62 forming a strong boundary to the north. A network of major and minor roads criss-cross the area resulting in almost continuous noise and movement.
- 3.8 Trees and woodland are also defining features of the landscape character with significant roadside trees, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small woodlands contributing to the general enclosure of the area.
- 3.9 Although there are some areas of relatively intact open space between settlements, along the extensive, ill-defined settlement edge land use has changed from pasture to horse related and other non-productive uses. Here boundaries are poorly maintained, timber fencing and hedging has been replaced by post and wire or barbed wire, there is a disjointed range of residential fencing and small pockets of semi-derelict land. These combine to create an 'urban fringe' character.

#### ***The Site***

- 3.9 The site comprises several sizeable fields around Merchant Fields Farm. The fields are divided by largely intact, but overgrown hedgerows. A double hedgerow with trees runs from the farm to the south-west indicating an older access to the farm. There are small groups of trees and scrub on the steep slopes in the northwest of the site and also on an older, smaller field on the south-eastern boundary. In addition there is a small block of mature trees next to the central farm house and associated buildings. The fields are grazed by horses to varying degrees of density, with the western fields currently grazed short whilst the less heavily grazed western fields are partially covered with thistle and establishing bramble. (A field immediately to the south-east of Merchant Fields farm is excluded from the site, although it forms part of this valley side of horse grazed fields).
- 3.10 The Nan Hall Beck runs close to the south-eastern boundary meandering across a valley base of uneven, damp grassland and woodland. A footpath along this valley, part of the Spen Valley Heritage Trail, forms the south-eastern site boundary. A footpath also forms the south-western site boundary running at the base of a steep slope from the upper parts of the site. This path runs through a linear woodland belt that widens at its northern end to a wooded roadside slope against the B6121. Beyond the western boundary are several medium to large scale industrial units.
- 3.11 Housing forms the long northern boundary and a small part of the southern boundary. The houses of Links Avenue to the north-west face the site directly, whereas the houses of Kilroyd Avenue and Mazebrook Crescent further north present their rear facades to the site, with a range of impermeable fencing and walls. In the

south-west the Brookfield Streets and Kestrel View back on to the site or are set perpendicular to it. Again there is a range of fencing forming the site boundary.

#### 4. LANDSCAPE QUALITY AND SENSITIVITY

- 4.1 The study area is a largely urban one with towns of Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike and Hunsworth coalescing and extending into the pockets of countryside dividing them from each other and from Gomersal to the east. Although the older stone buildings are defining characteristics of the landscape character, the range of newer housing shows little of the local vernacular and modern industrial buildings lack the style or character of the older mill buildings. Thus the unifying qualities of the older stone buildings are much weakened.
- 4.2 The dense road network of roads further fragments the landscape and introduces noise and movement to the whole area.
- 4.3 The condition of the landscape is variable. The extensive and ill-defined edge of settlements is often in poor condition with poorly maintained fencing and walls, pockets of fly tipping and neglect, and groupings of unkempt sheds and paddocks often associated with horses and equestrian pursuits. There is some intact farmland between settlements that is in good condition with well cared for hedges, woodlands and farm buildings, particularly on the eastern valley side towards Drub, Egypt and Gomersal. However in many parts the extensive interface between the two has a generally neglected 'urban fringe' character.
- 4.4 The positive qualities of the fields and farmland between settlements is largely overridden by the negative qualities of disparate building styles and forms, extensive and ill-defined settlement boundaries, scruffy fields on the edges of settlements, as well as the dominance of roads and traffic. The quality of the landscape is assessed as **low**.
- 4.5 The level of general visibility is important in determining landscape sensitivity. The more open a landscape the greater the sensitivity to change. Due to the landform of a series of valleys, extensive settlements and woodland, visibility generally is not high in the study area. New developments could be located in pockets of enclosure, within the folds of the landform, within or against built-up areas or woodland without affecting the landscape character, due to their low visibility.
- 4.7 The introduction of features that are not already present in an area or at a significantly different scale to those present are generally difficult to accommodate without impact on landscape character. However in the study area there is already a wide variety of land-uses, vegetation, buildings and other structures present in the landscape. Thus the landscape will not be sensitive to an increase in similar features. This is particularly the case where they are closely associated with features of a similar nature. For instance housing within the open rural areas would be disruptive, but not if within or against existing housing.

- 4.8 Balancing the higher sensitivity of the farmland around Drub and Egypt with the lower sensitivity of the more urban areas, the sensitivity of the landscape of the study area is assessed as **medium/low**.

## 5. VISIBILITY AND EFFECT ON VISUAL AMENITY

- 5.1 The effect of a development on visual amenity is a function of the sensitivity of the viewer (receptor), and the magnitude of change to the view. The sensitivity of visual receptors is described as **high, medium or low**, depending on the context, direction and extent of the view; the importance of the view; activity of the receptor, and frequency and duration of the view.

- 5.2 The magnitude of change to visual amenity arising from the proposed development at any particular viewpoint is described as **high, medium, low or negligible** based on the interpretation of a combination of parameters that include the scale of change in the view; the degree of contrast with the existing view; the distance of the viewpoint from the development; the duration and nature of the development; proportion of the field of view occupied by the development; the background to the development; the extent of other built development visible, particularly vertical elements.

### 5.3 **General**

The site is of low visibility from the built-up areas to the north west and south due to a combination of intervening buildings, landform and woodland. However being situated on a valley side there are views from the opposite, more open eastern valley side. There are some very close views from the housing on Links Avenue that faces the site and from Merchant Fields Farm itself. There will be other views from housing around the site but these will be restricted by orientation to the site and rear garden structures and vegetation. There are no views from the footpath along the south-western boundary due to woodland and landform and views from industrial units will also be restricted by woodland, landform and orientation of the buildings.

***The following views are assessed in more detail:***

### 5.4 *Views from the eastern valley side (Views 9, 10 and 11)*

On the eastern valley side most views will be from the footpath network, Cliffe Lane and from a few farmsteads. Walkers on the paths will have a **high** sensitivity to change as appreciation of views is a major part of their reason for their activity. The residential viewers will have a lower sensitivity of **medium**. The views range from middle to distant views where the site is seen below the existing housing and urban development on the opposite ridgeline. They are not frequent, potential views often being obstructed by woodland and the folding, incised landform. However the scale of the proposals will result in a high magnitude of change where more open views are obtained. In the closer, lower views the site occupies a large proportion of the view, but is also quite well screened by trees and woodland along the valley bottom (View 9). In more distant views (10 and 11), the proportion of the view occupied by the site decreases until it forms a small part of a very wide view at the highest

viewpoints (View 11). In these views the site is seen against the backdrop of development on higher land and is also partially screened by intervening woodland, particularly that along the valley bottom. The magnitude of change to these views is assessed as **medium**. The change will be generally negative due to the increase in urban elements and the loss of open fields, however this would be mitigated if the basic structure of the current field pattern and woodland blocks are retained. The new housing may also screen the somewhat intrusive housing of Links Avenue located on the ridgeline.

Combining a **medium** magnitude of change with a **high-medium** sensitivity of the receptor the effect of the proposals on views from the Links Avenue is assessed as **moderate, adverse**.

#### 5.5 *Views from Links Avenue. (Views 7 and 8)*

Close views of the site are obtained from Links Avenue. As the views are from main living areas in the house the viewers will have a **high** sensitivity to changes in the view. Currently there are long views towards the higher land to the south, with Emley Moor transmitter being visible on a clear day, over the poor quality fields in the foreground. The proposed housing would change this view completely to one of housing. It may be possible to retain some long views, but generally the proposed housing will represent a **high** magnitude of change. Whether this change is positive or negative depends to a large extent on the details of the proposals. An attractive housing landscape with a tree lined, or hedgerow or green corridor boundary will positively replace the current foreground view over poor boundaries and degraded fields. Whereas a line of high timber garden fencing along the proposals site will bring a negative change to the foreground of the view. The loss of potential distant views will be negative.

Combining a **high** magnitude of change with a **high** sensitivity of the receptor the effect of the proposals on views from the Links Avenue is assessed as **major**. A balance of loss of distant views with improvements to the foreground results means this is judged as a **neutral** effect.

#### 5.6 *Views from footpath along eastern boundary. (Views 3, 4 and 5)*

This footpath is part of the Spen Valley Heritage Trail running along the Nan Hall valley bottom. Views will be an important part of the users enjoyment of their walk, thus they will have a **high** sensitivity to change.

As the footpath forms the eastern site boundary the housing will dominate views. However some views of the natural valley bottom will remain, particularly at the northern end where the valley bottom is wider and not enclosed by existing housing. Along the southern part of the footpath change will be greatest as the views will be enclosed by the new housing to the west as well as the existing housing to the east. Although these views are partially oblique to the viewer, the scale and proximity of the proposed housing would result in a **high** magnitude of change.

As for all views, whether the change is negative or positive will depend on the details of the proposals. The current fields and boundaries are of poor quality, thus their removal and replacement with a well-designed interface between the housing and the valley bottom corridor would mitigate the negative aspects of a large scale change to housing. However, on balance the change will be **adverse** due to the change from a largely countryside view to an urban one.

Combining a **high** magnitude of change with a **high** sensitivity of the receptor the effect of the proposals on views from the eastern boundary footpath is assessed as **major, adverse**.

## 6 EFFECT ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- 6.1 The landscape character of the study area is one of mixed urban development overlying topography of sinuous and sometimes incised valleys. Urban development stretches into and fragments the intervening areas of pastoral fields, woodland and small villages. A dense road network across the area brings is a dominant feature, introducing noise and movement that further erodes the physical and perceptual qualities of the open land between settlements. Generally, amongst the disparate range of land uses, woodland and landform, new development could be accommodated without a strong effect on the landscape character, although the open pastoral area would be more sensitive. The sensitivity to change is assessed as low. (As described in section 3)
- 6.2 The scale of development will have a strong effect on landscape character, thus is highly relevant in determining the magnitude of change. The proposals will occupy a significant area, (11.98ha), of large fields currently used for horse grazing, most of which exhibit poor quality 'urban fringe' features. It is wrapped around by housing on the north and the south-east, and by industry on the south-west. These existing developments are part of smaller scale housing or industrial groupings but their relatively small scale contributes to the discordant nature of the settlement areas and has led to a long, indented interface with the open countryside. The proposals site is a relatively compact, well-defined area that would be less negative, despite its greater size. The magnitude of change is assessed as high.
- 6.3 The proposals site is located within Green Belt. A Green Belt allocation is a mechanism to maintain the open character of most of the land around and between the built-up areas, to restrict urban sprawl and prevent the coalescence of the towns and villages. The proposals will reduce the area of green belt, and thus erode the overall extent of the rural land between settlements which will have a negative effect on the landscape character. However due to its position, being wrapped around on 3 sides by urban development, it will not result in any coalescence of settlements.
- 6.4 The proposed housing could bring beneficial changes to the landscape character by the removal of scruffy, unkempt fields and the replacement of poor quality,

disparate boundaries with a better defined interface between the urban and rural areas. In addition, good design could retain and thus safeguard important landscape structural features such as hedgerows, individual trees or small tree groups, currently in danger through lack of or inappropriate management.

- 6.5 The base of the valley through which the tree-lined Nan Hall Beck meanders is a positive feature of the landscape, typical of the incised valley character of the wider area. This will remain, but will be negatively influenced by the basic proximity of the proposals. However there is scope for mitigating the urbanising effect by means of housing layout, location of open space and appropriate boundary treatment. For example avoiding rear fences along the edge of the beck and creating natural open space, overlooked by housing to extend the valley bottom features.
- 6.6 A combination of a **low** sensitivity of the landscape with a **high** magnitude of change results in a **slight/moderate** effect on the proposals on landscape character. Taking into account the negative effect conferred by the erosion of green belt and the higher quality pastoral land, with the positive effect of removal of degraded 'urban fringe' land and consolidation and improvement of the urban-green belt interface, the change is assessed on balance as **adverse**.

## 7 RECOMMENDED MITIGATION

- 7.1 The analysis concludes that the proposals will have a **slight/moderate, adverse** effect on landscape character and on visual amenity. Although the negative effect of reduction of green belt land is difficult to address, other factors could be integrated into the detailed design of the proposals to increase the positive effects of the scheme. The following are suggested as mitigation and enhancement.
- a. Retention of hedgerows, woodland and beck side trees and vegetation. This would help to break up the outline and density of the housing particularly in views from the rural and green belt land to the east.
  - b. Retain the general field structure where possible to avoid complete obliteration of the more rural landscape structure. This would also serve to contain and define the limits of the housing. The hedgerow/woodland/beck vegetation could form green corridors throughout and around the site linking the natural areas for the benefits of wildlife as well as providing recreational and visual routes through the site.
  - c. Consider the interfaces of the site with existing housing where it faces the site on Links Avenue. Development should face on to Links Avenue and be buffered by tree planting, and a hedgerow and/or shrub planting.
  - d. Along the eastern boundary the interface of the proposed housing with the becks area should be soft and broad, with a buffer area of open space or woodland between the Spen Valley Trail and the housing. Indeed this would

be an opportunity to upgrade the Trail which is currently a narrow, often muddy track between fences and the watercourse. Houses should face the beck to avoid presenting a severe fenced boundary to this area. Amenity open space could be sited along the edge of the housing here to extend the beckside area.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

Should these recommendations be implemented, the assessment of effects on landscape character and visual amenity as identified in this report could be amended in a positive direction.

The site presents an opportunity to develop a well-designed residential area, accommodating and upgrading the route of the Spen Valley Trail and utilising an area of land that is a natural extension of the existing residential landscape, currently being downgraded by urban fringe activity.

## APPENDIX ONE – METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

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### Assessment Criteria and Definitions

#### ***Landscape quality***

The value placed on a landscape is based on character, condition and aesthetic appeal. It takes into account judgements on the physical state of the landscape and its intactness, from aesthetic, conceptual, functional and ecological perspectives.

The criteria by which landscape quality has been assessed in this study are detailed below.

*Exceptional/very good.* Areas that exhibit a strong positive character with valued features that combine to give the experience of unity, richness and harmony. These are landscapes that may be considered to be of particular importance to conserve.

*Good/medium.* Areas that exhibit positive character but which may have evidence of degradation/erosion of some features. Change may be unlikely to be detrimental.

*Poor/very poor.* Areas generally negative in character with few, if any, valued features

#### ***Sensitivity of Landscape***

The sensitivity of the landscape character to changes associated with the proposed development is defined as high, medium or low based on professional interpretation of a combination of the following parameters:

- Landscape value - local, regional or national landscape statutory designations and non-statutory designated areas;
- Landscape scale, land cover, texture and form; and
- Landscape character.

**TABLE ONE. Definition of Landscape Receptor Sensitivity**

High	Areas of high value and high general visibility. Key characteristics and features which contribute significantly to the distinctiveness and character of the landscape type. Designated landscapes e.g. National Parks and landscapes assessed as having low capacity to accommodate proposed form of change.
Medium	Areas of high to medium value where there is some scope for change involving features that are already present to some extent within the landscape, and if it can be accommodated within pockets of low visibility within the landscape, for example in valleys, within an enclosing landform or woodland.
Low	Areas of medium to low value of little harmony and unity where change would go unnoticed amongst a disparate range of features or may have a positive impact in removing or replacing degraded or derelict features.as being generally tolerant of the proposed change subject to design and mitigation.

#### ***Sensitivity of Visual Receptors***

The sensitivity of visual receptors is described as high, medium or low. The sensitivity of visual receptors and views will depend on the context, direction and extent of the view; the importance of the view; activity of the receptor, and frequency and duration of the view.

**TABLE TWO Definition of Visual Receptor Sensitivity**

<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Definition of Visual receptor</b>
High	The principal views from residential buildings; beauty spots and picnic areas. Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. Users of outdoor recreational facilities including recreational footpaths, cycle routes or rights of way, whose attention would be focused on the landscape; Viewers of important landscape features with physical, cultural or historic attributes.
Medium	People engaged in outdoor sports or recreation (other than appreciation of the landscape), attractive rural lanes and 'B' roads. Secondary views from residential buildings.
Low	People at their place of work, whose attention may be focused on their work or activity rather than the wider landscape, people travelling through the landscape on A roads, train lines or other main transport routes.

### ***Magnitude of Change to Landscape Character***

The magnitude of change to Landscape Character arising from the proposed development at any particular point is described as high, medium, low or negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters as follows:

- The size of the area of ground affected by the development
- The components and characteristics of landscape character, designation or land classification types affected by the development
- The value placed on the landscape character, designation or land classification types affected by the development within the study area;
- The proportion of the landscape characters, designations or land classification types affected by the development within the study area

### ***Magnitude of Change to Visual Amenity***

The magnitude of change to Visual Amenity arising from the proposed development at any particular viewpoint is described as high, medium, low or negligible based on the interpretation of a combination of largely quantifiable parameters as follows:

- Scale of change in the view
- Degree of contrast with the existing view
- Distance of the viewpoint from the development
- Duration and nature of impact
- Angle of view in relation to main receptor activity
- Proportion of the field of view occupied by the development
- Background to the development
- Extent of other built development visible, particularly vertical elements.

**TABLE THREE Definition of Magnitude of Change for both Landscape Character and Visual Amenity.**

High	Fundamental change
Medium	Material, but not fundamental change
Low	Discernible, but non-material
Negligible	No change or non-discernible change

### ***Significance of Effects Criteria***

The potential significance of effects of the development on both landscape character and visual amenity are described as neutral, slight, moderate or major based on a combination of the magnitude of change imparted by the proposals and the sensitivity of the receptor to change. A definition of the measure of the overall effect of the proposals on landscape character is described below.

**TABLE FIVE Definition of Significance of Effects Criteria for Landscape Character**

Significance	Definition
Major adverse.	The proposals would be at considerable variance with the local landscape. They would degrade, diminish or destroy a highly valued landscape or its characteristic features or elements. They would be substantially damaging to a high quality landscape.
Moderate adverse	The proposals would be out of scale with the landscape or at odds with the local pattern and landform. They would leave an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality.
Slight adverse	The proposals would not quite fit into the landform and scale of the landscape. They would affect an area of recognised landscape character.
Neutral	The proposals would complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape. Existing landscape quality would be maintained.
Slight beneficial	The proposals have the potential to improve the landscape quality and character; they would fit in with the scale, pattern and landform of the landscape; they would enable the restoration of valued landscape features partially lost through other land uses.
Major beneficial	The proposals would have the potential to fit in very well with the landscape character; to improve the quality of the landscape through removal of damage caused by existing land uses.

A definition of the measure of the overall effect of the proposals on visual amenity is described below.

**TABLE SIX Definition of Significance of Effects Criteria for Visual Amenity**

Significance	Definition
Major adverse.	The scheme would cause a significant deterioration in the existing view. Total loss of or major alteration to key elements/ features/characteristics of the view and/or introduction of elements considered to be totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the existing view. A high proportion of the view affected.
Moderate adverse	The scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view. Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/ characteristics of the view and/or introduction of elements that may be predominant but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the existing view. A medium proportion of the view affected.
Slight adverse	The scheme would cause a barely perceptible deterioration in the existing view. Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/ features/characteristics of the view and/or introduction of elements that may be predominant but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the existing view. A small proportion of the view affected.
Neutral	No discernible deterioration or improvement in the view.
Slight beneficial	The scheme would cause a barely perceptible improvement in the existing view. Introduction of minor, but positive elements, characteristic of the positive elements in the existing view, or removal of negative ones. A small proportion of the view affected.
Moderate beneficial	The scheme would cause a noticeable improvement in the existing view. Introduction of positive elements, characteristic of the positive elements in the existing view, or removal of negative ones. A moderate proportion of the view affected.
Major beneficial	The scheme would cause a significant improvement in the existing view. Introduction of positive elements, characteristic of the positive elements in the existing view, or removal of negative ones. A high proportion of the view affected.



REFERENCE

-  Site
-  Visually significant woodland





project  
**PROPOSED HOUSING SITE,  
 MERCHANT FIELDS,  
 CLECKHEATON**

drawing title <b>LANDSCAPE CONTEXT</b>		date Nov 15		drwn by CTF		drawing no. Appendix two	
drawing scale Scale as shown @ A3							



project  
**PROPOSED HOUSING SITE,  
 MERCHANT FIELDS,  
 CLECKHEATON**

drawing title  
**KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS**

drawing scale  
 Scale as shown @ A3

date  
 Nov 15

drwn by  
 CTF

drawing no  
 Appendix three

**APPENDIX THREE –PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS**

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View 1. From B6121, roadside woodland at western corner of site.



View 2. From hillside above footpath on south-western site boundary.



View 3 From footpath on eastern boundary, south corner of site.



View 4. Looking across site towards Merchant Fields Farm from south-eastern footpath



Residential development Merchant Fields, Cleckheaton

View 5. Site from North-east corner, on public footpath



View 6 Site from nr end of Kilroy Drive



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Residential development Merchant Fields, Cleckheaton

View 7 From Links Avenue  
(Long views towards Emley Moor transmitter)



View 8 From nr southern end of Links Avenue



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Residential development Merchant Fields, Cleckheaton

View 9 From public footpath on eastern valley side, looking west.

(Site indicated in red)



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Residential development Merchant Fields, Cleckheaton

View 10 From public footpath near Lands Farm, Eygpt

(Site indicated in red)



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View 11. From Cliffe Lane, west of Gomersal.



Examples of site boundaries.





**Ecological Appraisal  
Merchant Fields Farm,  
Cleckheaton**

Report reference: R-1906-01  
May 2014

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Report Title:	Ecological Appraisal Merchant Fields Farm, Cleckheaton
Report Reference:	R-1906-01
Written by	Christopher Shaw BSc(Hons) ACIEEM Ecologist
Technical review:	Peter Brooks BSc (Hons), MA, MCIEEM, CEnv Managing Director
QA review:	Sam Kitching BSc (Hons) GradCIEEM Ecologist
Approved for issue	Peter Brooks BSc (Hons), MA, MCIEEM, CEnv Managing Director
Date	23.05.14

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Unit A, 1 Station Road, Guiseley, Leeds, LS20 8BX  
Phone: **01943 884451**  
**01943 879129**  
Email: [admin@brooks-ecological.co.uk](mailto:admin@brooks-ecological.co.uk)  
[www.brooks-ecological.co.uk](http://www.brooks-ecological.co.uk)  
Registered in England Number 5351418



## Summary Statement

Much of site has been significantly affected by agricultural activities and supports habitat types of relatively low value. However, there are areas of the site which do have higher ecological value or potential and these should be retained and designed into the masterplan.

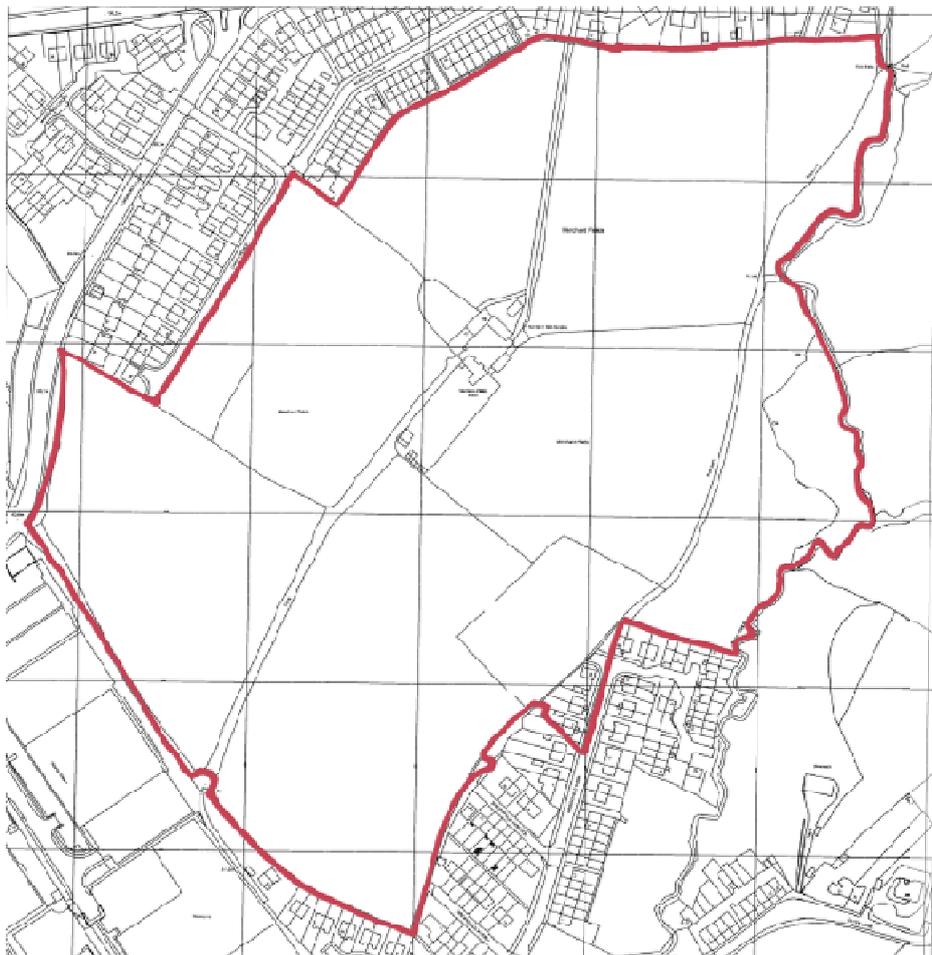
Additional protected species / habitat surveys are recommended to present a full baseline for the site and/or to ensure legal compliance.

- Detailed vegetation (semi-improved neutral grassland)
- Hedgerow
- Riparian mammal
- Bat surveys (scoping/emergence/activity)

## Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Harron Homes to carry out an Ecological Appraisal of Merchant Fields Farm, Cleckheaton, Huddersfield (SE 190 264).
2. The application site 'the site' encompasses Merchant Fields Farm and surrounding pasture fields, situated along the northern outskirts of Cleckheaton. The extent of the site can be seen in figure 1 below.

**Figure 1** Site boundary - (Red Line)



## Proposals

3. At the time of writing, no proposals plans have been provided; it is assumed that the results of this appraisal will feed into the creation of a master plan to inform an outline planning application for residential development.

## Site context

4. Aerial photographs published on commonly used websites were studied to place the site in its wider context and to look for ecological features that would not be evident on the ground during the walkover survey. This approach can be very useful in determining if a site is potentially a key part of a wider wildlife corridor or an important node of habitat in an otherwise ecologically poor landscape. It can also identify potentially important faunal habitat (in particular ponds) which could have a bearing on the ecology of the application site. Ponds may sometimes not be apparent on aerial photographs so we also refer to close detailed maps that identify all ponds issues and drains. We use Promap Street + scale maps for this purpose.
5. The site occupies a large area of farmland to the north of Cleckheaton; this is bound by residential development to the north and south, industrial units to the west and further farmland to the east. Surrounding farmland is interspersed with small woodland blocks and water courses, which together represent the highest value habitat in the local area. In the wider landscape, this adjacent farmland forms a band of 'green' land that extends approximately 1km north and 2.5km southeast; before meeting major barriers such as the M62 and built development. In addition to these major barriers, numerous minor roads and small blocks of built development intersect the green area.

### Wildlife corridors

6. The site is isolated from the wider landscape by major infrastructure (M62) and urban sprawl; however, at a closer scale the site is well connected to the band of 'green land' habitat located to the east. The strongest link comes from Nann Hall Beck, which passes from south to north along the site's eastern boundary. The beck and its associated tributaries are lined with mature broadleaf trees along most of their length, and together with the surrounding network of hedgerows, form good connectivity between the site and adjacent higher value habitats.

### Water bodies

7. No standing water bodies are located within 500m of the site.

### Statutory Designations

8. A search of the MAGIC website was undertaken. The MAGIC site is a Geographical Information System that contains all statutory (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI's]) as well as many non-statutory listed habitats (e.g. ancient woodlands and grassland inventory sites). It is a valuable tool when considering the relationship of a potential development site with nearby important habitats. In addition information

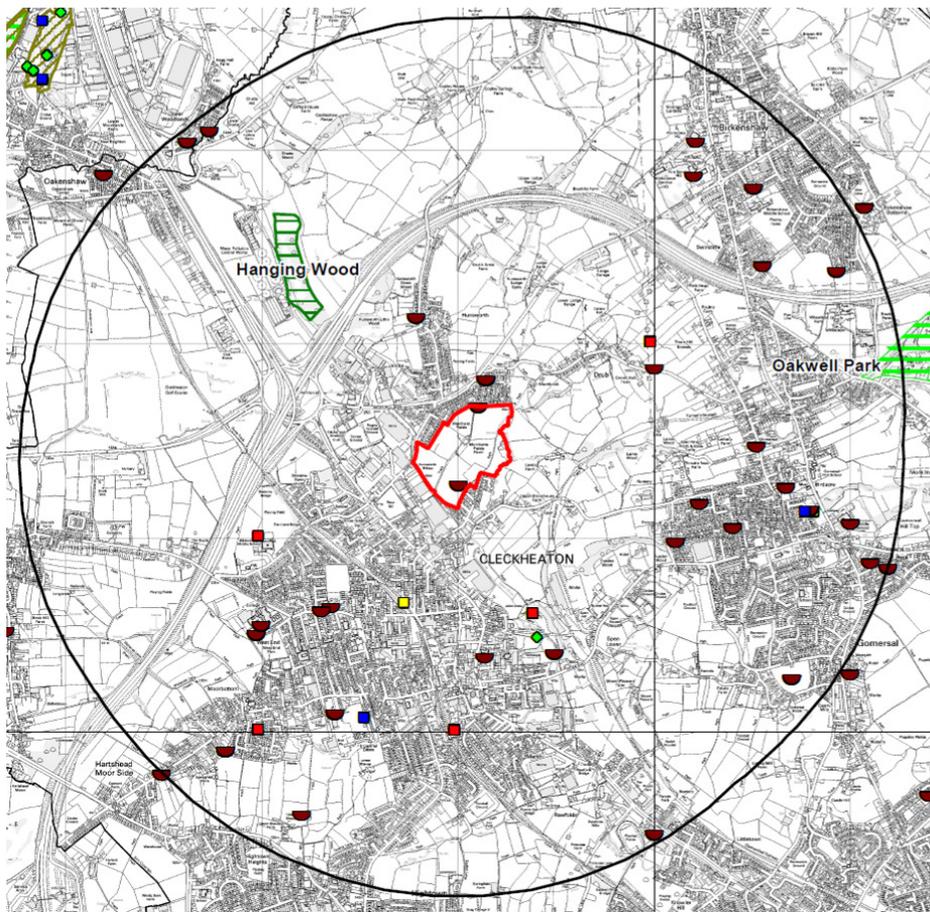
from the local record holders (WYE and NEYEDC) has been requested on locally designated sites

- 9. There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the application site.

Non-Statutory Designations

- 10. There are two locally designated sites within 2km of the site; these are Hanging Wood Kirklees - Site of Wildlife Significance (SWS) and Oakwell Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), situated approximately 800m northwest and 1.8km northeast, respectively (see figure 2 below). Both are considered to be isolated from the site, either by built development or major infrastructure. Development of the site is therefore unlikely to have any impact on these local designations.

**Figure 2:** WYE plan highlighting location of local designations in relation to the site.



## Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

### Method

11. The survey was carried out on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 and followed Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 1993). This involves walking the site, mapping and describing different habitats (for example: woodland, grassland, scrub). The survey method was "Extended" in that evidence of fauna and faunal habitat was also recorded (for example droppings, tracks or specialist habitat such as ponds for breeding amphibians). This modified approach to the Phase 1 survey is in accordance with the approach recommended by the Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment (IEA, 1995) and Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM 2012).

### Results

12. The following habitats, arranged in order of area can be described within the application site and on its boundaries, habitats are shown indicatively on plan D-1906-01 provided in appendix.
  - Neutral grassland
  - Damp / marshy grassland
  - Scrub
  - Hedgerows and trees
  - Watercourse
  - Buildings
  - Gardens

#### *Neutral Grassland*

13. This habitat occupies approximately 80% of the site and represents low intensity pasture / paddock land. The grassland is divided into seven large fields by a mix of hedgerows, dry stone walls and post & wire fencing; with one of the fields being further divided into six smaller fields by electric fencing. At the time of the site visit, three of the larger fields and all six of the smaller fields were being used to graze small numbers of horses.
14. High ground is found within the centre of the site and towards the northern boundary, with the land sloping gently away towards the east, south and west boundaries. The lowest ground is found along the eastern boundary, marked by Nann Hall Beck.

15. All of the fields support a very similar assemblage of grasses and forbs, consistent with that of poor semi-improved neutral grassland, or MG6 grassland under the National Vegetation Classification. The frequencies of these species vary slightly from field to field, but overall the most abundant grasses were found to be perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), bents (*Agrostis spp.*) and meadow grasses (*Poa spp.*), with smaller amounts of red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*); small amounts of sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) were also noted within the most easterly field.
16. Forbs make up a fairly large component of this habitat, but are restricted to a limited range of common species, which are typical of improved conditions. The most abundant is creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), with lesser amounts of meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), broad leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), dandelion (*Taraxacum agg.*), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago repens*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and common mouse ear (*Cerastium fontanum*); small amounts of field speedwell (*Veronica persica*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and bush vetch (*Vicia sepium*) were also noted within the south and east fields.



**Figure 3**

Typical view of the  
grassland fields on site.

17. As is typical of paddocks and permanent pasture, small patches of coarser grasses and unpalatable tall competitive herbs are scattered across the site. These areas are dominated by species such as false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), cocks foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and nettle (*Urtica dioica*).
18. Survey was carried out at a time of year when not all of the components of grassland would be apparent. Given the scale of this habitat occupying the site, it would be prudent to carry out a detailed vegetation survey to ensure an accurate baseline of the site's vegetation has been collected during the correct season.

### *Damp / Marshy Grassland*

19. A small fenced off section of land is found along the eastern boundary, bordering Nann Hall Beck. At the time of the site visit, the ground here was saturated with water, and from the floral assemblage noted, it is likely to remain damp for much of the year. Its position along side the beck, together with the site's topography, means that this area is likely to receive regular flooding and associated nutrient enrichment from deposited silt.
20. The dominant grass here is floating sweet grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), with lesser amounts of Yorkshire fog, perennial rye and meadow foxtail. Locally dominant patches of soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) and horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) are also noted, along with dense stand of greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and meadow sweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*).



**Figure 4**

Damp / marshy  
grassland along the  
eastern boundary

### *Scrub & Tall Competitive Herbs*

21. Small amounts of scattered hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) scrub are noted within a number of the fields, particularly those located along the south-western boundary.
22. Denser areas of scrub are found towards the northwest corner and along parts of the north and southeast boundaries. These areas have established due to a lack of management and are dominated by woody species such as bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), elder (*Sambuccus nigra*) and hawthorn (*Crataegous monogyna*) and tall competitive herbs such as nettle, greater willowherb, bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), thistles and cleavers.



**Figure 5**

Area of scrub and tall competitive herbs

### Hedgerows

23. A relatively weak network of intact and defunct field hedgerows pass through the site; most of which are species poor and unmanaged. Hawthorn makes up the main component of all of these hedgerows, with small scattered examples of elder, sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), bramble, dog rose (*Rosa canina*), elm (*Ulmus sp.*) and blackthorn. Most of the hedgerows support no distinct hedgerow understorey; instead the surrounding semi-improved neutral grassland habitat grades into a coarse grassland / tall herb community at the base of the hedgerow.



**Figure 6**

Typical unmanaged field hedgerow found within the site.

24. The best hedgerows on site are those that border an abandoned dirt track that runs through the western half of the site; starting at the southwest boundary and leading to the collection of farm building in the centre of the site. Both are positioned atop a

small bank and have been left unmanaged for many years; allowing them to reach up to 5-6m high and c.3m wide. Again, the main component is hawthorn, but this time with frequent holly, hazel (*Corylus avellana*), oak (*Quercus* sp.), field maple (*Acer campestre*), blackthorn, elder, dog rose and bramble. Bordering the track, the understorey is relatively sparse with only the occasional scattered bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), herb robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) being noted; whilst the edges bordering the pasture fields support a rough grassland and tall competitive herbs ground layer.

25. These hedgerows look to be relatively old and species rich and would most likely meet the criteria for classification as 'Important Hedgerows' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.



**Figure 7**

Looking east at the two higher value hedgerows from the disused track – the track is kept clear of vegetation by low light levels and the movement of horses / livestock.

#### Trees

26. Few trees are found on site, with those encountered being largely associated with either Nann Hall Beck, the collection of farm houses or areas of scrubby / unmanaged vegetation. Trees planted within and around the grounds of the farm buildings comprise primarily of early mature sycamore, along with lesser amounts of leylandii (*Cupressocypars × leylandii*), scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), cherry (*Prunus* sp.) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).
27. Those associated with the scrub and tall competitive herb habitats have arisen naturally due to a lack of management and consist primarily of semi to early mature examples of oak, sycamore and holly.



**Figure 8**

Line of early mature sycamore boarding the grounds of the converted farm buildings.

28. Young to fully mature broadleaf trees line Nann Hall Beck for most of its length as it passes along the sites eastern boundary. These have all arisen naturally and include a mix of grey willow (*Salix cinerea*), goat willow (*S. caprea*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), ash, grey poplar (*Populus alba*) and oak.



**Figure 9**

Willow trees growing along the eastern boundary, boarding Nann Hall Beck.

#### Watercourse

29. Situated on immediately adjacent land, Nann Hall Beck forms the sites eastern boundary. Meandering from north to south, this section of beck retains a relatively natural profile along its entire length. The channel has an average width of c.2m and depth of c.20cm, with water flowing over a bed of fine deposited silt. No submerged, emergent or marginal vegetation was noted within any section of the channel.

30. The banks are typically around 30-40cm high and vertical, but in places reach up to 50-60cm. The bank side vegetation changes across the length of the beck; to the north, the banks are covered primarily with semi-improved neutral grassland and scattered scrub, which then grades into damp / marshy grassland, tall competitive herbs and scattered broadleaf trees as the beck progresses south. To the far south, the banks are covered in dense tree cover and a woodland ground flora type habitat.
31. Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is scattered along the entire length of the beck and forms the occasional dense stand; these stands are marked on drawing D-1906-01.1.



**Figure 10**

Section of Nann Hall Beck running along the site's eastern boundary.

#### *Buildings*

32. The built structures found on site can be separated into two main groups; farm buildings (found towards the centre of the site) and modern semi-detached houses (along the southern boundary).
33. A mix of red brick and white rendered farm buildings are located within the centre of the site. The original detached farm house is located to the south of this collection of buildings, with an 'L' shaped barn located to the north. This barn has, in the recent past, been converted into a number of private houses, each with an associated garden space, car parking area and garage / shed.

**Figure 11** Views of the converted brick and render barn from the east (left) and north (right).



34. Associated with the active farm, a small collection of out-buildings, sheds and stables are located within the central south-east pasture field. These are largely of simple corrugated metal or wooden slat construction, with either flat or double pitch felt or corrugated metal roofs.



**Figure 12**

Sheds / stables within the central south-easterly pasture field.

35. The red line boundary also encompasses one detached and two semi-detached houses; all positioned along the southern boundary - off Brookfield View. These houses are of modern brick construction, with cavity walls and concrete pan tiles.



**Figure 13**

Modern brick buildings located along the southern boundary.

### *Gardens*

36. Each of the houses described above has an associated garden space. Due to access constraints, detailed inspection of each of these gardens was not possible. However, due to the man made nature of these habitats, survey from the boundary fence lines was considered sufficient to accurately assess their ecological value.
37. Each garden comprises of a central area of amenity grassland, surrounded by well managed ornamental shrub borders and small broadleaf trees.



**Figure 14**

Typical garden habitat found on site.

38. One of the gardens within the centre of the site also contains a small concrete lined fish pond. At the time of the site visit, this pond empty. We were informed by the owner that the lining of the pond had been cracked by frost during the winter and was awaiting repair. Previous to this, the pond was heavily stocked with Koi carp.



**Figure 15**

Empty fish pond

## Faunal appraisal

39. This section first looks at the types of habitat found on site or within the sphere of influence of potential development, then considers whether these could support protected , UKBAP or Local BAP (LBAP) priority species (referred to collectively as 'notable species'). A full list of LBAP priority species are provided as appendix 2.
40. Records of notable species supplied from a 2km area of search by West Yorkshire Ecology are used to inform this appraisal.

### *Amphibians*

41. No standing water bodies are present on site, or are noted within a 500m search radius. A single ornamental garden fish pond was noted within one of the gardens in the centre of the site, however, this was empty at the time of the site visit and had been since being damaged during the winter. Prior to the pond emptying, it had been stocked with koi carp. The pond is therefore currently unsuitable for breeding amphibians and even when it has been repaired and re-filled; it is unlikely to be of value to this group, especially the protected great crested newt. This is due to the presence of fish and the absence of other ponds within a 500m radius. In addition to this, there are no records of great crested newt within 2km of the application site.

### Bats

42. The local landscape presents relatively low value habitat for bats, with pastures and built development occupying most of the surrounding land. The weak network of field hedgerows, together with Nann Hall Beck and scattered woodland copses provide some foraging and commuting habitat, but local bat populations are likely to be small and comprise of common species such as pipistrelle and noctule.
43. A detailed bat roost potential survey has not been carried out on the buildings present on site; however, from the initial walkover survey at least some of the buildings (the brick and rendered farm buildings) appear to provide bat roosting potential and will require further survey if these are affected by development proposals.
44. In addition to this, a single mature oak tree has been identified as providing bat roost potential; this being a receding rot hole that extends from a hollow stem into two of the main branches. This is located towards the eastern site boundary (see D-1906-01.1) and can be seen in the below figure.

**Figure 16** Mature oak tree with bat roost potential



### *Riparian mammals*

45. Nann Hall Beck represents excellent potential water vole habitat, with bank side vegetation providing food and cover, whilst the clay loam banks provide ideal conditions for digging burrows.
46. The beck also provides habitat that could be attractive to otters, with the many mature bank side trees providing suitable locations for digging holts and the tall ruderal vegetation providing cover for couching. In addition to this, the beck provides a strong linear feature that could be used as a commuting corridor for this species, and is also likely to present foraging opportunities.

### *White-clawed crayfish*

47. Detailed crayfish surveys were carried out by Brooks Ecological on an upstream section of this beck earlier in the year (2014), in relation to a different project. Surveys were carried out during optimal conditions and time of year, and the area covered by the survey represents much higher value habitat for this species than that found next to the site; despite this, likely absence of white clawed and signal crayfish was confirmed. In addition to this, prior to starting the survey, we were informed by the Environment Agency that a major pollution event had occurred on this stretch of watercourse, at an upstream location, within the last two years.
48. Based on negative survey results in higher value habitat a short distance upstream, combined with a recent major pollution event, the risk of white clawed crayfish being found on site is considered to be very low. As such, no further survey for this species is recommended.

### *Badgers*

49. No evidence of badger activity was found on site during the walkover survey. Records returned by WYE show two distinct areas of badger activity, both over 1.5km from the site and separated by the M62. The risk of badgers being present on site is therefore considered to be low.

### *Birds*

50. The buildings, hedgerows, trees and scrub habitats are likely to support a common range of urban fringe birds during the nesting season.
51. Records show a range of common BAP species including swift, goldfinch, house martin, yellowhammer, swallow, house sparrow, tree sparrow, dunnock, starling and song thrush – all of which could find suitable breeding habitat on the site. However,

given the scale of suitable habitat present on site, significant populations of any of these species would not be expected to occur.

#### *Reptiles*

52. Generally the site presents poor habitat for this group, primarily due to a lack of suitable habitat structure. In addition to this, reptiles have never been recorded in the local area; their presence at the site can be therefore be reasonably ruled out.

#### *Other terrestrial mammals*

53. The site is likely to provide habitat for hedgehogs in terms of foraging and cover. Hedgehog is listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and is an LBAP species. Recommendations are made later in the report in regards to enhancing the site's value for hedgehogs.

## Evaluation

54. In evaluating the site the ecologist will take into account a number of factors in combination, such as;
- the baseline presented above,
  - the site's position in the local landscape,
  - its current management and
  - its size, rarity or threats to its integrity.
55. There are a number of tools available to aid this consideration, including established frameworks such as Ratcliffe Criteria or concepts such as Favourable Conservation Status. Also of help is reference to Biodiversity Action Plans in the form of the Local BAP (Appendix 2) and UK BAP to determine if the site supports any Priority habitats or presents any opportunities in this respect. The assessment of impacts considers residential development:
- Site preparation including vegetation and habitat removal
  - Direct effects on significant faunal groups or protected species
  - Effects on adjacent habitats or species such as disturbance, pollution and severance
  - Operation effects on wildlife such as noise and light disturbance

### **On site habitats**

56. The majority of the site comprises semi-improved neutral grassland, which at the time of the walkover appeared to be of relatively low ecological value, due to agricultural improvement. However, survey was carried out at a time of year when all of the components of grassland would not be apparent. Given the scale of this habitat a vegetation survey to ensure an accurate baseline of the site's vegetation has been collected during the correct season and to identify if any or pockets of the grassland could fall into the BAP category 'lowland meadows'.
57. The site supports a relatively weak network of field hedgerows, most of which are found to be species-poor and of low importance. Despite this, hedgerows are listed as priority habitats under the UK BAP and the master plan should seek to retain and enhance those present on site. Any that are lost to facilitate development should be mitigated for through replacement planting. Two hedgerows are suspected to be of greater value, appearing older and more diverse than the rest; these are marked on plan D-1906-01.1 and are likely to meet the criteria for 'Important Hedgerows' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Detailed survey is therefore recommended to confirm the status of these hedgerows.

58. Trees have an intrinsic ecological value and the master plan should seek to incorporate these into the design, especially more mature examples of native species.

#### **Off site**

59. Nann Hall Beck runs along the site's eastern boundary and although not technically within the red line boundary, the sites topography means that without proper protection, there is a high risk of the development negatively impact upon this feature. Standard protection measures should therefore be employed to guard against these potential impacts.
- Any nearby development's Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) should demonstrate how development can proceed without releasing contaminants into the watercourses, along with details on how materials will be stored and used on the site and how surface water will be settled and removed from the site.
  - A 'green buffer'  $\geq 10\text{m}$  wide would be expected by the Local Planning Authority to be created between the beck and the development. Ideally this buffer zone would be planted with a grading of habitats from grassland up to shrubs and trees. A management plan should be put in place for the river corridor and should detail amongst other things how the invasive species Himalayan balsam can be removed / controlled.

#### *Designated sites*

60. Impacts on the nearby wildlife sites would not be expected due to lack habitat connectivity.

#### **On site fauna**

##### *Bat*

61. Due to access constraints, detailed survey of each of the buildings present on site could not be carried out. It is therefore recommended that a dedicated bat roost potential survey is commissioned on all buildings that will be impacted upon by the proposals. Should this survey reveal that the buildings have a significant risk of supporting roosting bats - then further surveys may be recommended.
62. A single tree has been identified as providing bat roost potential; if this tree is scheduled for removal or significant pruning, then further survey effort is recommended. This would ideally take the form of emergence surveys carried out during the main active period of May – September.

63. Nann Hall Beck and the network of defunct and intact field hedgerows represent linear features which are likely to be attractive to low levels of foraging and commuting bats. To confirm this assessment, it would be advisable to carry out summer and autumn transects to collect an accurate baseline of how bats are using the site. This connectivity should be retained on site and standard precautions should be taken to make sure these corridors are not degraded as a result of development. Precautions would include:
- Retaining and enhancing the sites hedgerow network and the beck corridor
  - Directing all artificial lighting used during both the constructional and operational phases away from the hedgerow network and beck. This can be achieved through the use of hoods or louvers.

#### *Riparian mammals*

64. The section of Nann Hall Beck bordering the site represents good habitat for supporting both water vole and otter. As such, a dedicated riparian mammal survey is recommended to inform the required stand off distances between development and this feature. These surveys would be best undertaken between April and September, when field signs of water vole would be most abundant.

#### **General precautions**

##### *Nesting birds*

- To prevent the proposed works impacting on nesting birds any clearance of vegetation will need to be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season which is 1<sup>st</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> August inclusive. Any clearance that is required during the breeding bird season should be preceded by a nesting bird survey to ensure that the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) is not contravened through the destruction of nests and that any active nests are identified and adequately protected during the construction phase of the development.

#### **Enhancement**

65. At this stage it appears feasible that development could provide opportunities to enhance and secure the ecologically valuable habitats in the area whilst providing space for new development on less valuable agricultural elements. Plan D-1906-01.2 aims to present this situation visually and should be used to form the basis of producing an attractive master-plan for the site. It should be noted though that this picture will become more definitive in the light of recommended survey for protected species and vegetation.

66. In line with planning guidance outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) development should take account of the value of ecosystem services and enhance ecological networks.
67. Opportunities should be realised to enhance the sites connectivity; this could be achieved through improving the condition of existing hedgerows, i.e. through beating up and laying defunct hedgerows, bringing leggy sections back under management, increasing species diversity through new planting and planting standard trees. In addition to this, new linear features could be planted such as species-rich hedgerows or tree lines. Planting should utilise native species relevant to the site such as hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, oak, hazel, crab apple and field maple.
68. There is opportunity to create some areas of lowland (wildflower) meadow type habitat in open space around the development. Naturally damp conditions along the eastern boundary could also be used to create areas of wet / damp wildflower grassland, which could be incorporated into the required buffer zone. Such habitats would create an attractive backdrop to the development - it could be more cost effectively managed than traditional amenity grassland.
69. The buffer zone along the eastern boundary would also lend itself well to the creation of wildlife ponds. Designed correctly, these features could benefit local wildlife, such as amphibian, as well as provide high visual amenity for new residents. The ponds could also be linked to SUDs. Ponds could be allowed to vegetate naturally, or planted up with a range of native submerged, emergent and marginal vegetation. Suitable examples include; starwort (*Callitriche palustris*), hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*), water forge-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*), marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*).

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## Appendix 1 Local BAP - Kirklees Biodiversity Action Plan

Table 1 lists the local Species Action Plans and, with reference to the field study earlier in this report, assesses a) whether the species potentially have any degree of dependence on the site, and b) if so whether development could be likely to have a significant bearing on the objectives of the UK/LBAP.

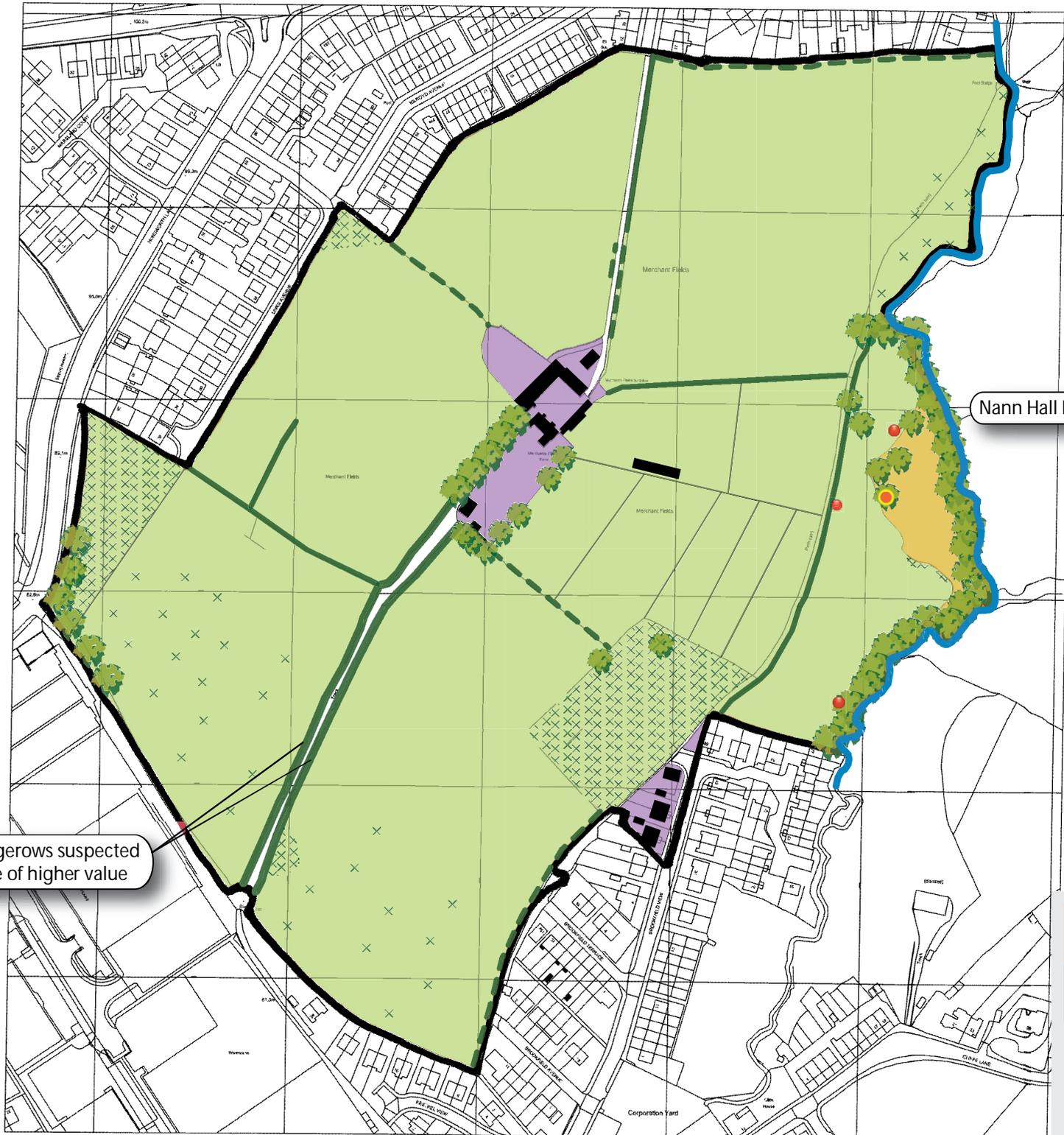
**Table 1: Species Action Plans**

Species/group	Potentially on site	Could development impact significantly on BAP objectives
Floating water plantain	No	No
Great-crested newt	No	No
Marsh helleborine	No	No
Northern wood ant	No	No
Twite	No	No
Watervole	Yes	Unlikely
White-clawed crayfish	No	No

Table 2 lists local Habitat Action Plans and assesses a) whether habitats on site could represent valuable examples of the habitat type within the spirit of the BAP and b) whether loss of the habitat would have a significant bearing on the objectives of the BAP.

**Table 2: Habitat Action Plans**

Habitat	Valuable examples present on site?	Could development impact significantly on BAP objectives
Semi-natural pasture	Unlikely	Yes
Lowland and upland meadows	No	No
Lowland dry acid grassland	No	No
Blanket bog	No	No
Upland heathland	No	No
Upland flushes	No	No
Lowland heathland	No	No
Upland oak woodland	No	No
Lowland deciduous and other woodland	No	No
Upland mixed ashwoods	No	No
Wet woodland	No	No
Arable field margins	No	No
Hedgerows	Yes	Yes
Rivers, riverine corridors and associated habitats	Yes	Yes
Reedbeds	No	No
Scrub and habitat mosaics on previously developed land	No	No



Hedgerows suspected to be of higher value

Nann Hall Beck

-  Neutral grassland
-  Marshy / damp grassland
-  Scrub
-  Trees
-  Hedgerow (Intact)
-  Hedgerow (Defunct)
-  Watercourse
-  Buildings
-  Garden
-  Tree with BRP
-  Himalayan Balsam

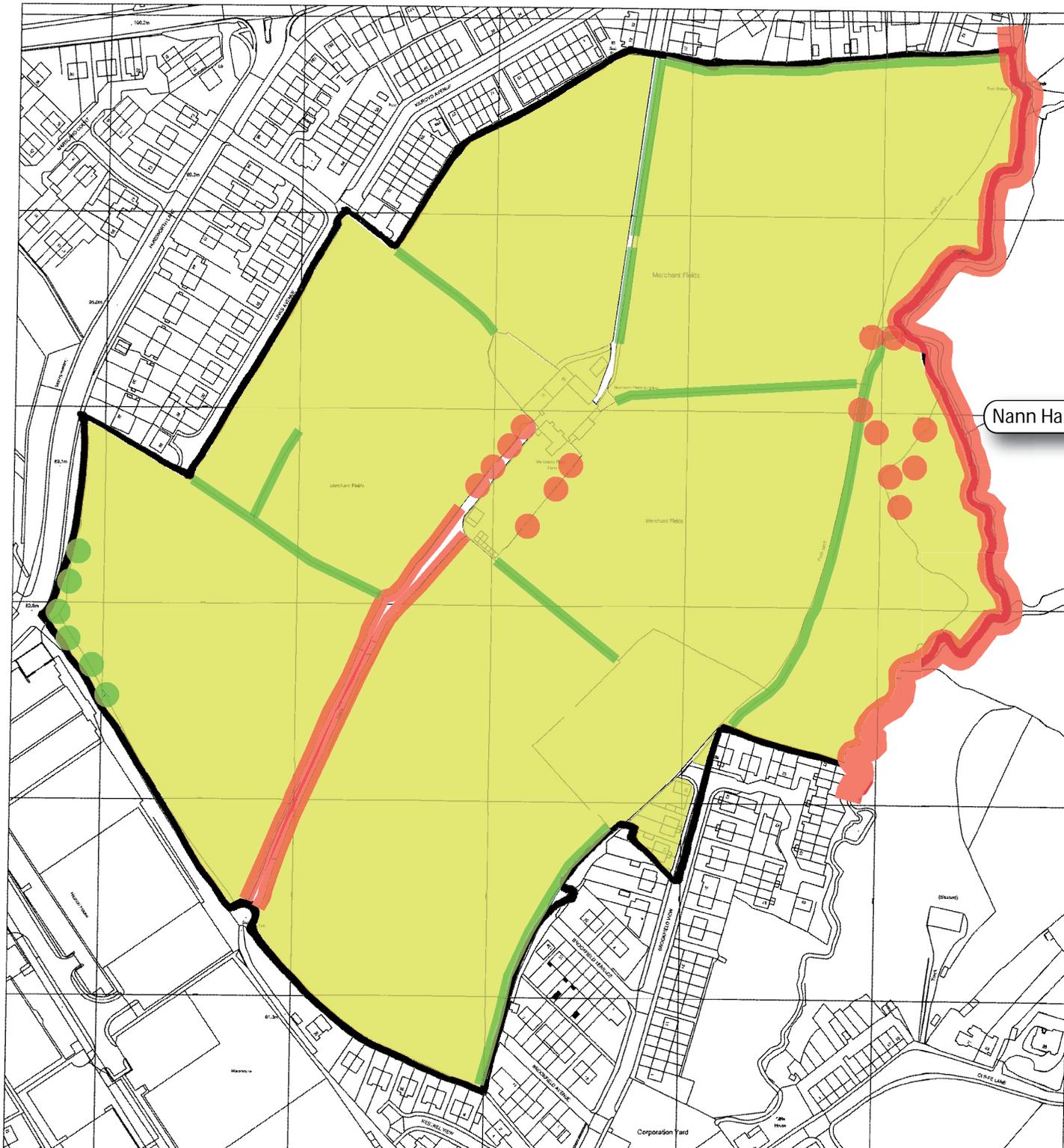


Project: Merchant Fields Farm, Cleckheaton  
Title: Ecological Features Plan

Drawing Number: D-1906-01.1  
Scale: Do not scale Date: May 2014

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Unit A, 1 Station Road  
Guisley  
Leeds  
LS20 8BX  
[www.brooks-ecological.co.uk](http://www.brooks-ecological.co.uk)  
T: 01943 884451



- 
Areas with less ecological constraints  
(notwithstanding protected species surveys)
  
- 
Areas likely to support more valuable habitats - mitigation and compensation is more likely to be required for development here.
  
- 
Areas of more valuable habitat  
These should be retained.  
  
Loss of these habitats will require comprehensive mitigation and compensation.

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Unit A, 1 Station Road  
 Guiseley  
 Leeds  
 LS20 8BX  
[www.brooks-ecological.co.uk](http://www.brooks-ecological.co.uk)

T: 01943 884451

Project: Merchant Fields Farm  
 Title: Ecological Value of Habitats Plan

Drawing Number: D-1906-01.2

Scale: Do not scale Date: May 2014

Revision: \_\_\_\_\_  
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