

Proposed Electricity Substation and Overhead Line Works at Weston Marsh

Breeding Bird Survey Report 2024 - 2025 -
Part 1 of 3

June 2026

Confidential

Proposed Electricity Substation and Overhead Line Works at Weston Marsh

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 This Breeding Bird Survey report has been prepared by National Grid Electricity Transmission plc (National Grid).
- 1.1.2 National Grid are proposing to undertake works to construct a new electricity substation, new sections of overhead line and modification of existing overhead lines west of the Spalding Tee-Point in the Weston Marsh area, within the administrative boundary of South Holland District Council (SHDC) in Lincolnshire.

1.2 Summary of the Scheme

- 1.2.1 In totality, the Scheme consists of four components, each planned to be progressed via separate consenting routes. These are summarised in **Table 1.1**.

Table 1.1 Components of the Scheme

Works Required	Consenting Regime
Construction of the new Air Insulated Substation (AIS) – 400kV Weston Marsh Substation A, associated landscaping and environmental mitigation works, drainage, highways and other associated works.	Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) (Ref 1) Component referred to as ‘ Substation Works ’
Construction of new sections of overhead line to connect the new substation into the existing 4ZM overhead line. Removal of a section of the existing 4ZM overhead line. Other associated works.	Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (Ref 2) and deemed consent pursuant to section 90(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Component referred to as ‘ S37 4ZM Overhead Line Works ’
Construction of a new section of overhead line to connect the existing 2WS overhead line into the new substation. Removal of a section of the existing 2WS overhead line. Other associated works.	Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 and deemed consent pursuant to section 90(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Component referred to as ‘ S37 2WS Overhead Line Works ’
Reconductoring works required on the existing 4ZM overhead line. Two spans of temporary overhead lines.	The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (Ref 3) and The Overhead Lines (Exemption) (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 (Ref 4) Component referred to as ‘ Exempt Overhead Line Works ’

- 1.2.2 The Substation Works will require consent from SHDC under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 1.2.3 The S37 4ZM Overhead Line Works and S37 2WS Overhead Line Works (collectively referred to as ‘S37 Overhead Line Works’) will require consent from the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (Section 37).
- 1.2.4 The Exempt Overhead Line Works constitute permitted development under Part 15 Class B of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 and The Overhead Lines (Exemption) (England and Wales) Regulations 2009.
- 1.2.5 The Scheme Site Boundary, which consists of the land required to construct and operate the Scheme in its entirety, is illustrated on **Figure 1**. The areas of land required to construct and operate each individual component described in **Table 1.1** are also illustrated on **Figure 1**.
- 1.2.6 The Scheme in its totality is a standalone development to enable connection of the Outer Dowsing Offshore Wind Farm to the national electricity transmission system. Each component stated in **Table 1.1** above is required for the Scheme to fully function as part of the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS).

1.3 Purpose of this Report

- 1.3.1 The purpose of this report is to present the results of the breeding bird surveys undertaken and to inform the ecology baseline for the Scheme. This report has been prepared in support of the necessary consent applications required to deliver the Scheme. It has been informed by engagement between National Grid and the relevant consenting authorities.
- 1.3.2 The baseline breeding bird survey data has been collected across the Scheme Site Boundary in its entirety. However, the survey results in **Section 4** are presented in relation to each component of the Scheme as outlined in **Table 1.1**. This approach enables the relevant consenting authority to readily identify and consider only those survey results that are associated with the application before them, whilst also maintaining a clear understanding of the Scheme in its wider context.
- 1.3.3 The objectives of this report are to:
- 1) Determine the presence of bird species breeding within the Scheme Site Boundary;
 - 2) highlight any key species of value that may influence the design of the Scheme;
 - 3) provide sufficient information to inform an assessment of the potential impacts to breeding birds as a result of the Scheme and
 - 4) provide recommendations for potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities, in line with relevant nature conservation legislation and planning policy.
- 1.3.4 The assessment of potential impacts to breeding birds and mitigation (where required) are reported within the **Ecological Impact Assessment** [document number GWNC-GIL-SS50-XXXXXX-PLN-ES-000001].

2. Legislative and Policy Framework

2.1.1 Legislation and national and local planning policy relevant to the Scheme is described in the Planning, Design and Access Statement (TCPA application) and Section 37 Statement (S37 applications). Key legislation and policy specifically relevant to breeding birds is summarised in the following sections.

2.1 Status of Breeding Birds

International Level

2.1.2 Threatened bird species are listed on Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive (Directive 79/409/EEC) (Ref 17) if they are:

- 1) in danger of extinction;
- 2) vulnerable to specific changes in their habitat;
- 3) considered rare due to small populations or restricted local distribution; and
- 4) requiring particular attention because of the specific nature of habitat.

2.1.3 Some bird species are listed as features of European designated sites, notably Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. SPAs are classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) (Ref 16). The provisions of the Birds Directive are implemented and transposed to UK legislation through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (Ref 15) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Ref 18). The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 transposes EC Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora into UK national law. Ramsar sites are also afforded protection under the Ramsar Convention 1971 (Ref 19).

2.1.4 These designations are applied to areas that support nationally important numbers of birds, the conservation of which is necessary for the maintenance of the range of that species across Europe. A site may be designated as an SPA based on its importance to breeding, non-breeding, or migratory birds. In the UK, SPA designations are underpinned by national legislation which identifies them as Sites of Special Scientific Importance (SSSIs).

National Level

2.1.5 A network of nationally designated sites has been established through the designation of SSSI under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) (Ref 15). Sites are designated if they are of special interest by reason of their flora, fauna (e.g. birds), or geological or physiographical features. The protection afforded by the WCA means it is an offence to carry out or permit to be carried out any operation listed within the notification without the consent of the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (Natural England). The protection afforded to SSSIs is used to underpin the designation of areas at a European Level.

- 2.1.6 All wild birds, their nests and their eggs are protected by the WCA (Ref 15). Offences under the WCA (Part 1) include intentionally or recklessly:
- 1) killing, injuring or taking any wild bird;
 - 2) taking, damaging or destroying the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built; and
 - 3) taking or destroying the egg of any wild bird.
- 2.1.7 Birds listed in Schedule 1 of the WCA have further protection, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb parent birds while they are nesting, or their dependent young.

Species of Principal Importance

- 2.1.8 Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (Ref 20) requires the Secretary of State for England to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. These are known as Priority Habitats and Priority Species. The list has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England, as required by the NERC Act. The S41 list is used to guide decision makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

Birds of Conservation Concern

- 2.1.9 Conservation importance is ascribed to certain species by their presence on the Red List and Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern 5 (BoCC) in the UK (Ref 1). Under BoCC birds are classified into three lists as follows:
- 1) Red List: species that are globally threatened, whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years, and those whose populations have declined historically and have not exhibited any signs of recovery. Species that have experienced a population decline of >50% over 25 year / longer term;
 - 2) Amber List: species with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe, whose populations have declined moderately in recent years, including species that show a historical decline but whose populations have shown a substantial increase, species that are rare, with localised populations and those species of international importance with UK populations and species that have experienced a population decline or breeding range decline of 25% to 50% over 25 year / longer term; and,
 - 3) Green list: All regularly occurring species that do not qualify under any of the Red or Amber criteria are green listed. The Green list also includes those species listed as recovering from historical decline in the last review that have continued to recover and do not qualify under any of the other criteria.
- 2.1.10 Although the BoCC lists confer no legal status in themselves, they are useful in evaluating the importance of bird species and assemblages.

County Level

- 2.1.11 The Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) (Ref 7) is a mechanism to enable national targets to be delivered at a local level. It sets out local priorities for biodiversity conservation specific to Lincolnshire, the area in which the Scheme is located.
- 2.1.12 Relevant priority species listed in the LBAP include: farmland birds, such as grey partridge, lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), yellow wagtail, skylark, corn bunting, linnet, yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*), reed bunting, turtle dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*), curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and barn owl (*Tyto alba*); and urban birds, such as swift (*Apus apus*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and house sparrow.

2.2 Breeding Bird Ecology

- 2.2.1 In the UK, birds typically breed between March and August (inclusive). This is subject to species and regional variations, with some species commencing breeding in late February and others being able to breed through the end of the summer, until October. Other species, such as barn owl or woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*), may even nest throughout the year.
- 2.2.2 There is also a large variation in where and how species breed. Nests can be formed in scrub, woodland and hedgerows for protection, or in more exposed open areas such as heathland or grassland. Some pairs of breeding birds will defend a territory around their nest until the young have fledged; proclaiming this with singing, aggressive encounters or aerial displays, whilst others will form colonies with others of the same species. Some species such as house sparrow will commonly have multiple broods in a year.

3. Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 A desk study was undertaken in relation to this Scheme. The following components of that study are those relevant to birds. Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) provided biodiversity records data on the 24 March 2026.

Designated Sites

3.1.2 The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website was reviewed to identify international and national statutory designated sites of nature conservation importance within 20 km of the Scheme Site Boundary, and locally designated sites within 5 km. The search included Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).

3.1.3 In addition, information on non-statutory designated sites within 2 km of the Scheme Site Boundary was obtained from GLNP, including Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs).

Bird Records

3.1.4 Records of protected and notable bird species within 2 km of the Scheme Site Boundary were obtained, including species of principal importance. Species records have been curtailed to the last ten years (2016 - 2026) and if a species has not been recorded within that period, earlier records have been reviewed to provide further contextual information, where relevant.

3.2 Field Survey

Breeding Bird Surveys

3.2.1 The surveys were designed and carried out using elements of the Common Bird Census (CBC) (Ref 8) and in accordance with Bird Survey Guidelines (Ref 9) methodology. The survey transect route was decided in advance of the field survey based on knowledge of habitats derived from the initial habitat classification survey and aerial imagery. The transect routes were designed to ensure that all parts of the site were surveyed as far as practicable, incorporating all distinctive habitats throughout the site, such as arable land, riverine habitats and scrub/woodland habitat.

3.2.2 The transect routes are presented in **Figure 3**. Incidental records of breeding Schedule 1 birds were recorded and are present out to 500 m from the Scheme Site Boundary. These are presented within the results section, stating whether they reside within the Scheme Site Boundary or at a distance. In addition, records of non-priority birds have been included where observations were made within approximately 500 m of the Scheme Site Boundary, to provide further information about how bird species

are using and interacting with the habitats within 500 m of the Scheme Site Boundary.

- 3.2.3 The transect was walked at a slow, methodical pace, with occasional pauses to scan for birds around notable habitat/features. Bird species were identified by sight (using binoculars where necessary) and/or sound (e.g., bird song and calls). All birds seen or heard along the transect routes were recorded on a map (as outlined in the CBC methodology) using the standard British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) (Ref 10) codes, together with the appropriate behavioural notation and number of birds. Surveyors were careful to try to avoid repeat counting of individuals as far as reasonably possible by focusing on certain habitat features for each section of the transect route.
- 3.2.4 The same transect route was surveyed on six occasions (the recommended minimum number of visits for all terrestrial and freshwater habitats) during the peak bird breeding season between late March and July 2024, with surveys spread out evenly across this period. The transect was walked in alternative directions between visits to reduce any spatial-temporal bias in results. Survey timings and weather conditions are provided below in **Table 3.1**. The surveys were carried out in suitable weather conditions, avoiding heavy rain and strong winds and within peak song activity time for breeding birds. On five of the six occasions, the transect route was surveyed in the morning, between sunrise and mid-morning, which is recognised as the period of more consistent bird activity. Survey visit six (4th July) took place during the evening, extending beyond sunset for at least one hour, to enhance the potential to detect a full range of breeding species, as bird species vary in their detectability throughout the day. Surveys were led by experienced ornithologists, who are capable of identifying a wide range of western paleo-arctic species by sight and sound.

Table 3.1 Breeding bird surveys timings and associated weather conditions, over 2024 and 2025

Year	Visit	Date	Start time	End time	Temperature (°C)	Wind speed (Bft)*	Cloud Cover (Oktas)**	Precipitation	Visibility
2024	1	08/04/2024	06:23	09:30	3	2	6	Dry	>3 km
	2	25/04/2024	05:45	08:40	3	0	7	Light rain	>3 km
	3	16/05/2024	05:30	08:20	12	2	8	Dry	1-3 km
	4	30/05/2024	05:10	09:30	12	2	7	Dry	>3 km
	5	20/06/2024	04:59	10:05	9	2	1	Dry	1-3 km
	6	04/07/2024	19:00	23:00	18	6	4	Dry	>3 km
2025	1	25/03/2025	05:45	10:30	7-10	1-2	4-5	Dry	>3 km
	2	16/04/2025	06:30	10:30	6-8	3-5	2-6	Dry	>3 km
	3	13/05/2025	05:30	10:30	10-17	1-2	1-3	Dry	>3 km
	4	29/05/2025	19:00	22:10	14-21	1-3	2-6	Dry	>3 km
	5	17/06/2025	04:55	08:35	17-19	1	2-4	Dry	>3 km
	6	04/07/2025	05:10	09:45	13-20	2	1-2	Dry	>3 km

* The Beaufort wind scale is an empirical measure for describing wind intensity and ranges from 0-12. 0 = calm, 1 = light air, 2 = light breeze, 3 = gentle breeze, 4 = moderate breeze, 5 = fresh breeze, 6 = strong breeze, 7 = near gale, 8 = gale, 9 = strong gale, 10 = storm, 11 = violent storm and 12 = hurricane.

** Cloud cover is estimated in terms of how many eighths of the sky (oktas) are covered in cloud, ranging between 0 = sky completely clear and 8 = sky completely cloudy.

Barn Owl Surveys

- 3.2.5 Barn owl surveys at the site were undertaken to inform the ecological baseline and assess the potential presence of barn owl nests. As such, the surveys were undertaken in line with Stages 2 and/or 3 of standard guidance (Ref 11).
- 3.2.6 Features identified as of potential value to barn owls were inspected in detail to determine their Potential Nest Site (PNS) status. Each location was assigned to the following categories, based on guidance (Ref 11):
- 1) not suitable;
 - 2) occasional Roost Site - no nesting opportunity;
 - 3) active Roost Site - no nesting opportunity;
 - 4) PNS - no current evidence;
 - 5) PNS - residual limitations to survey remain; or
 - 6) occupied Breeding Site.
- 3.2.7 Surveys were completed by two surveyors (at least one an experienced ornithologist holding the appropriate licence to monitor active barn owl nests). Details of the locations, including photographs, a description, feature type, building type/tree species, barn owl field signs, and PNS status were all recorded, as well as any limitations. All surveys were completed in good weather.
- 3.2.8 The surveys focused on trees previously identified throughout the bat Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) surveys as having features potentially suitable for barn owl roosting or nesting, including mature trees with cavities, broken limbs, dense ivy cover, or other structural features capable of supporting roost sites.

3.3 Territory Analysis

- 3.3.1 The field data was mapped using ArcGIS, and territory analysis was completed to identify the approximate number of breeding pairs of each species.
- 3.3.2 Birds were considered to be breeding in line with the BTO (Ref 12) breeding evidence definitions for possible breeding, probable breeding, and confirmed breeding categories (see **Table 3.2**), with certain exceptions. This included waders and wildfowl, for which breeding status can be very difficult to judge; a conservative approach was taken to mapping territories where there was ambiguity. For yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava*), territories were mapped where only one instance of singing was recorded if birds were present on subsequent visits, due to their wide-ranging behaviour and associated difficulties in defining territories. Territories of species which are primarily nocturnal or crepuscular (whether wholly or in terms of their territorial behaviour), such as owls and grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*), were mapped where there was evidence of possible breeding (following the BTO's breeding evidence criteria), due to their low detectability. A similar approach was taken for Schedule 1 breeding species due to their sensitivity: territories were mapped where there was evidence of possible, probable or confirmed breeding. Territories were defined as points, typically based centrally within the territory as indicated by the survey data (e.g. a cluster of records of the same species singing on different dates

that were likely to relate to a particular territory), or where there was evidence to suggest proximity to a nest based on a bird’s behaviour.

3.3.3 Where breeding signs were recorded, it is assumed that a potential breeding bird ‘territory’ was present and this term is used from this point forward within this report. A territory is defined as a discrete area occupied by a breeding pair of birds, during the breeding season. However, professional judgement was used when determining whether a species was likely to be holding a potential territory within the site based on the number of signs of breeding across repeat visits, species distributions and local abundance as well as anthropogenic effects such as nesting disturbance from roads, public rights of way and other site uses.

3.3.4 Bird records, relating to individuals in potentially suitable nesting habitat, were then further sub-divided into confirmed breeding, probable breeding, possible breeding and non-breeding according to the following BTO breeding evidence definitions provided in **Table 3.2**.

Table 3.2 BTO breeding bird status classification criteria

Breeding status	Evidence criteria
Confirmed breeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distraction display or injury feigning • Used nest or eggshells found • Recently fledged young • Adults entering or leaving nest site or adult seen incubating • Adults carrying faecal sac or food for young • Nest containing eggs • Nest with young seen or heard
Probable breeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair observed in suitable nesting habitat in breeding season • Permanent territory presumed through registration of territorial behaviour (song etc.) on at least two different days at the same place or many individuals on one day • Courtship and display behaviour in or near potential breeding habitat • Visiting probable nest site • Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults, suggesting probable presence of nest or young nearby • Nesting building or excavating nest hole
Possible breeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species observed in breeding season in suitable nesting habitat • Singing male present (or breeding calls heard) in breeding season in suitable breeding habitat
Non-breeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flying over • Species observed but suspected to be still on migration • Species observed but suspected to be summering non-breeder

- 3.3.5 Whilst the criteria set out in **Table 3.2** for classifying breeding status works well for highly territorial species, or species with small territories, it is not well suited to classifying breeding status for colonial, loose territorial or non-territorial species. Therefore, professional judgement has also been used to assess the likely locations of breeding species and to determine whether a species was likely to have bred within the site based on species distributions and local abundance. The determination of the number of breeding pairs within the site is an estimation reflecting the precautionary approach adopted given multiple registrations or signs of breeding across survey visits within suitable habitat.
- 3.3.6 Territory analysis and interpretation of the survey results was undertaken using transect data intersecting the four consenting boundaries.
- 3.3.7 Territory analysis was only undertaken on priority species. The breeding status of each priority species was assessed using the criteria set out above, and the estimated breeding territories of each priority species across the site were assessed. Information for each priority species has been summarised to include the number of individuals recorded, the estimated number of breeding pairs, and the primary habitats used by these species. Non-priority species are not considered further in detail given their relative ubiquity and lack of conservation concern.
- 3.3.8 Species were identified as being priority species based on the following criteria:
- 1) Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive (Directive 79/409/EEC);
 - 2) Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;
 - 3) S41 species of the NERC Act 2006; and
 - 4) BoCC5 red and amber list.
- 3.3.9 Given the proximity of the Site to SPA and Ramsar sites, particular focus has been given to qualifying breeding features of those sites (all of which fall under the definition of ‘priority species’) within this report. These species are considered in order to inform any design changes, mitigation required and/or assessments. Qualifying species of the SPAs and Ramsar sites of interest are provided in **Table 4.1**.
- 3.3.10 Furthermore, species recorded and classified as farmland ‘generalists’ or ‘specialists’ were identified based on the latest Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) UK Biodiversity Indicators 2023 report (Ref 13). This report lists many environmental and ecological indicators, of which farmland birds are listed under C5. Recorded species that are listed as farmland generalists or specialists are detailed in **Section 4.2**.

3.4 Assumptions and Limitations

- 3.4.1 The survey methods may not detect all species evenly and it is recognised that certain cryptic species could be under-recorded. It should be noted that this breeding bird survey did not include specific searches for some species that are typically crepuscular or nocturnal, notably nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) or nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*); however, both species are considered very unlikely to breed on site given the sub-optimal habitat.
- 3.4.2 Transect routes were designed to provide representative coverage of the site’s ecological characteristics. Although the entire Site was not covered by the transect routes, the habitats within the surveyed areas were comparable to those elsewhere

on Site. On this basis, it is considered likely that the findings from the surveyed areas are broadly representative of conditions in areas across the site not directly surveyed. This limitation is therefore not considered to be significant.

- 3.4.3 As with all breeding bird surveys, it is possible that a certain degree of repeat counting of individuals occurred during the surveys, as the transect routes were complex and overlapped in some areas. However, it is considered unlikely that significant numbers of individuals were double counted as surveyors were careful to focus on certain habitat features within each section of the transect routes.
- 3.4.4 Current guidance identifies the core bird-breeding season as typically spanning late March to July, with optimal survey effort beginning in late March. Due to Site access constraints, it was not possible to undertake surveys during the late March period in 2024. However, surveys commenced in April 2024, which remains well within the recognised peak breeding season. As such, the timing of survey effort is still considered appropriate and is not considered significant.
- 3.4.5 Although both wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and woodpigeon are now recently listed as amber under BoCC5, territory analysis was not conducted for either of these species. These species were excluded from the territory mapping process due to their abundance and ubiquity across all habitats. Accordingly, this limitation is not considered significant.
- 3.4.6 The findings presented in this study represent those at the time of survey and reporting, and data collected from available sources. Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of species, such as weather conditions, migration patterns and behaviour
- 3.4.7 Nevertheless, these surveys were conducted at the optimal survey periods. Every effort has been made to ensure that the findings of the study present as accurate an interpretation as possible of the status of breeding birds within the site.

4. Results

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 The desk study identified a number of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites within the search areas. Only those sites for which birds are a feature are reported, these are illustrated on **Figure 2**. Statutory designated sites with avian features are also set out in **Table 4.1**.

Internationally and Nationally Designated Sites

- 4.1.2 The Wash SPA, situated approximately 5.6 km north east of the Scheme Site Boundary, is recognised for its wintering and breeding waterbird species, which are of international importance. The Wash Ramsar site, also about 5.6 km north east of the Scheme Site Boundary, is designated for its wintering bird features, as detailed in **Table 4.1** below.
- 4.1.3 One nationally designated site relevant to birds, The Wash SSSI, is present within 20 km of the Scheme Site Boundary. The Wash SSSI is designated in part for its aggregations of non-breeding birds, as detailed in **Table 4.1**.
- 4.1.4 One LNR with relevance to breeding birds is present within 5 km of the Scheme Site Boundary: Vernatts LNR. This LNR is a council and volunteer run nature reserve transformed from wasteland. The area now has a woodland walk with bluebells and is a small haven for wildlife.

Table 4.1 International and national statutory site with avian features within 20 km of the Scheme Site Boundary

Designated Site and description and/or evidence criteria (avian only)
The Wash SPA (~5.6 km north east of Scheme Site Boundary)
Qualifying species under Article 4.1 of Birds Directive:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bar-tailed godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> (wintering)• Bewick's swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> (wintering)• Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa islandica</i> (wintering)• Common scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i> (wintering)• Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> (breeding)• Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> (wintering)• Dark-bellied brent goose <i>Branta bernicla bernicla</i> (wintering)• Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i> (wintering)• Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> (wintering)• Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> (wintering)• Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> (wintering)• Knot <i>Calidris canutus</i> (wintering)

Designated Site and description and/or evidence criteria (avian only)

- Little tern *Sternula albifrons* (breeding)
- Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (wintering)
- Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* (wintering)
- Pintail *Anas acuta* (wintering)
- Redshank *Tringa totanus* (wintering)
- Sanderling *Calidris alba* (wintering)
- Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (wintering)
- Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (wintering)
- Wigeon *Mareca penelope* (wintering)

Under Article 4.2, The Wash qualifies as an internationally important wetland by supporting a wintering assemblage of over 20,000 waterbirds.

The Wash Ramsar (~5.6 km NE of Scheme Site Boundary)

Ramsar criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance:

Species with peak counts in winter: 292541 waterfowl (5-year peak mean 1998/99-2002/2003)

Ramsar criterion 6: species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Qualifying Species/populations:

- Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* (wintering)
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (wintering)
- Red knot *Calidris canutus islandica* (wintering)
- Sanderling *Calidris alba* (wintering)
- Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata* (wintering)
- Common redshank *Tringa totanus* (wintering)
- Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (passage)
- Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* (wintering)
- Dark-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla* (wintering)
- Common shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (wintering)
- Northern pintail *Anas acuta* (wintering)
- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica lapponica* (wintering)
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina* (wintering)

The Wash SSSI (~5.5 km NE of Scheme Site Boundary)

It is designated for the following:

- aggregations of breeding birds: common tern, little tern, redshank
 - aggregations of non-breeding birds: avocet, bar-tailed godwit, Bewick's swan, black tailed godwit, dark-bellied brent goose, common scoter, curlew, dunlin, gadwall, golden plover, goldeneye, grey plover, knot, oystercatcher, pink-footed goose, pintail, redshank, ringed plover, sanderling, shelduck, turnstone, whooper swan, and wigeon
-

Designated Site and description and/or evidence criteria (avian only)

- aggregations of non-breeding birds: variety of wintering species

Vernatts LNR (4.3 km south west of Scheme Site Boundary)

This LNR is a council and volunteer run nature reserve transformed from wasteland. The area now has a woodland walk with bluebells and is a small haven for wildlife. Wildflower meadow that in summer is dazzling with bright flowers like yellow rattle and knapweed. These attract many colourful insects including damselflies and small copper butterflies. The other half of the reserve is a mixture of wetland habitats including reedbeds, marsh and a large pond. This is home for the elusive water vole, reed warblers and buzzes with insect life.

Non-statutory Designated Sites

- 4.1.5 Non-statutory designated sites, within 2 km of the Scheme Site Boundary, and which have avian features, are noted within **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2 Non-statutory designated sites within 2 km of the Scheme Site Boundary

Site name	Distance & orientation from the Scheme Site Boundary	Description and/or evidence criteria (avian only)
Risegate Eau Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Within the Scheme Site Boundary (north)	Species recorded include: reed warbler, kingfisher, common snipe, grey heron, moorhen, green sandpiper.
Vernatt's Drain LWS	130 m west	A good range of fauna, including breeding populations of reed and sedge warblers, reed bunting and sand martin.
Moulton River LWS	2.1 km and 5.9 km north east	Species recorded include: mallard, reed bunting, sedge warbler, common snipe, little egret, swallow, skylark, linnets and the declining corn bunting.
Spalding Cemetery LWS	4.6 km south west	Site is adjacent to the Vernatt's LNR and Vernatt's Drain wildlife corridor. No birds are listed on the citation.
Surfleet Seas End Saltmarsh LWS	120 m and 1 km west	The site habitats consist of tidal saltmarsh and calcareous grassland this stretch of river is known to be valuable for birds with regular visits from waders, birds of prey, sand martins and many others.

Bird Records

- 4.1.6 GLNP returned 80 records of 30 bird species out to 2 km from the Scheme Site Boundary. The conservation status of these species are:
- 1) 26 of these records belong to 13 species categorised as Schedule 1 species (as listed on the WCA (Ref 15));

- 2) Eight species are listed as being on Annex I of the Birds Directive (Ref 17);
- 3) 11 species are categorised as S41 species of principal importance in England;
- 4) On the Red list (Birds of Conservation Concern, (Ref 1), 13 species were categorised; and
- 5) On the Amber list (BoCC) 11 species were categorised (Ref 1).

4.2 Field Survey

Overview of 2024 Breeding Bird Assemblage

- 4.2.1 Full survey results are shown in **Figure 4** and **Figure 6**. The results table in **Appendix A** collates all results, showing the species recorded from the six visits, and the likely number of breeding territories on site.
- 4.2.2 A total of 46 bird species were recorded over the course of the six surveys across April to July 2024. Of these, 12 species were considered to be breeding within the Scheme Site Boundary and all identified as priority species. These species were mallard, stock dove, [REDACTED] skylark, sedge warbler, yellow wagtail, meadow pipit, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting. [REDACTED].
- 4.2.3 No breeding qualifying features of the Wash SPA/Ramsar were recorded on site over the duration of the breeding bird surveys.
- 4.2.4 From the defined priority bird list, barn owl, skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting were the only species recorded that are listed as local conservation priorities within Lincolnshire, as identified in the Farmland Bird Species Action Plans. All of these species were considered to be breeding within the Study Area in 2024.
- 4.2.5 Furthermore, of the priority species recorded, six were classified as either farmland generalists or farmland specialists. The farmland generalists comprised yellow wagtail and reed bunting. Four additional species were classified as farmland specialists, namely stock dove, skylark, linnet and corn bunting. Grey partridge was also recorded as breeding within 500 m of the Scheme Site Boundary.
- 4.2.6 A further 14 non-breeding priority species were also recorded during the surveys, within or within 500 m of the Scheme Site Boundary, in 2024. These species comprised shelduck, grey partridge, woodpigeon, common sandpiper, black-headed gull, herring gull, lesser black-backed gull, little egret, [REDACTED], kestrel, rook, house martin and wren.
- 4.2.7 Full survey results are presented in **Appendix A**, in addition to their conservation and breeding status.

2024 Results Associated with Consenting Boundaries

Substation Works

- 4.2.8 No bird species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive or Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 were recorded within the Substation Works Site Boundary; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4.2.9 [REDACTED]

4.2.10 Four species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; skylark, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting were recorded and considered to be breeding within the Substation Works Site Boundary.

4.2.11 Three species listed on the BoCC5 red list and three on the amber list were recorded as breeding within the Substation Works boundary in 2024. Red-listed breeding species comprised skylark, linnet and corn bunting. Three amber-listed species were also considered to be breeding, namely stock dove, meadow pipit and reed bunting.

S37 Overhead Line Works

4.2.12 [REDACTED]

4.2.13 In addition, five further species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting, were also considered to be breeding within the S37 4ZM and 2WS Overhead Line Works boundary. However, yellow wagtail was confirmed not to be breeding within the area associated with the S37 2WS Overhead Line Works.

4.2.14 Four BoCC5 red-listed species were recorded breeding in 2024, comprising skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet and corn bunting. A further two amber-listed species were also considered to be breeding, including meadow pipit and reed bunting.

Exempt Overhead Line Works

4.2.15 [REDACTED]

4.2.16 In addition, three species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; yellow wagtail, linnet and corn bunting, were recorded and considered to be breeding within the Exempt Overhead Line Works Site Boundary.

4.2.17 Three BoCC5 red-listed species were confirmed to be breeding in 2024, comprising yellow wagtail, linnet and corn bunting. Three amber-listed species were also recorded as breeding, including mallard, [REDACTED] and sedge warbler.

Overview of 2025 Breeding Bird Assemblage

- 4.2.18 Full survey results are shown in **Figure 5** and **Figure 7**. The results table in **Appendix A** collates all results, showing the species recorded from the six visits, and the likely number of breeding territories on site.
- 4.2.19 A total of 54 bird species were recorded over the course of the six surveys across April to July 2025. Of these, eight species were considered to be breeding within the Scheme Site Boundary and all identified as priority species. These species were oystercatcher, [REDACTED], skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting. [REDACTED].
- 4.2.20 No breeding qualifying features of the Wash SPA/Ramsar were recorded on site over the duration of the breeding bird surveys.
- 4.2.21 From the defined priority bird list, skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting were the only species recorded that are listed as local conservation priorities within Lincolnshire, as identified in the Farmland Bird Species Action Plans. All of these species were considered to be breeding within the Study Area in 2025.
- 4.2.22 Of the priority species recorded, five were classified as either farmland generalists or farmland specialists. The farmland generalists comprised yellow wagtail and reed bunting. Three additional species were classified as farmland specialists, namely skylark, linnet and corn bunting. Grey partridge was also recorded as breeding within 500 m of the Scheme Site Boundary.
- 4.2.23 A further 20 priority species were recorded during the surveys but were not considered to be breeding within or within 500 m of the Scheme Site Boundary in 2025. These species comprised shelduck, teal, grey partridge, woodpigeon, moorhen, snipe, redshank, black-headed gull, herring gull, lesser black-backed gull, little egret, kestrel, rook, house martin, whitethroat, starling, song thrush, house sparrow, dunnock and yellowhammer.
- 4.2.24 Full survey results are presented in **Appendix A**, in addition to their conservation and breeding status.

2025 Results Associated with Consenting Boundaries

Substation Works

- 4.2.25 [REDACTED]

- 4.2.26 [REDACTED].
- 4.2.27 Five species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting, were recorded and considered to be breeding within the Substation Works Site Boundary.
- 4.2.28 The yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava flavissima* is the British breeding subspecies, for which the UK supports almost the entire global breeding population (Ref 6). Although legislative protection applies at species level, the near-endemic status and severe long-term population decline of flavissima mean that losses of breeding habitat or population may be of elevated conservation concern. Accordingly, the assessment has considered the value of breeding yellow wagtail populations with reference to the conservation importance of the flavissima subspecies, consistent with Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidance (Ref 14).
- 4.2.29 Four BoCC5 red-listed species were recorded breeding within the Substation Works Site Boundary in 2025, comprising skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet and corn bunting. A further two amber-listed species were also confirmed breeding, including oystercatcher and reed bunting.

S37 Overhead Line Works

- 4.2.30 [REDACTED].
- 4.2.31 In addition, two further species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; skylark and corn bunting, were also confirmed breeding within the S37 Overhead Line Works' boundaries.
- 4.2.32 Two BoCC5 red-listed species were recorded breeding in 2024, comprising skylark and corn bunting. No amber-listed species were recorded or confirmed to be breeding within the S37 Overhead Line Works' boundaries.

Exempt Overhead Line Works

- 4.2.33 [REDACTED].
- 4.2.34 In addition, five further species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting, were recorded and considered to be breeding within the Exempt Overhead Line Works Site Boundary.
- 4.2.35 Five additional breeding species were recorded and are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006: skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet, corn bunting and reed bunting.
- 4.2.36 Four BoCC5 red-listed species were confirmed breeding in 2024, comprising skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet and corn bunting. Two amber-listed species were also recorded breeding, including [REDACTED] and reed bunting.

Birds in Flight 2024 – 2025

- 4.2.37 Flying birds were recorded frequently throughout the surveys undertaken between April - July 2024 and March - July 2025. These observations largely related to birds commuting through the Scheme Site Boundary or utilising airspace above the River Welland and surrounding arable landscape, rather than displaying behaviour indicative of breeding within the Study Area. Regular flyovers included waterbirds moving along the riparian corridor (e.g. mute swan, tufted duck, oystercatcher), passerines traversing between hedgerows and field margins (e.g. linnets, meadow pipit), and a variety of corvid species, skylarks and woodpigeons using the wider farmland mosaic.
- 4.2.38 The range of species recorded in flight reflected typical use of the wider landscape, with notable movements concentrated along linear features such as the River Welland and the associated ditch network. Gulls (black-headed gull, herring gull, and lesser black-backed gull) were regularly seen flying over the Site, often as part of mixed flocks commuting across the Site. Raptors and owls including red kite, buzzard, kestrel, barn owl and peregrine were recorded quartering fields or passing overhead, while aerial foragers such as swallow, house martin, skylark and pied wagtail were observed feeding above open fields and farm buildings. Several species, including [REDACTED] yellow wagtail, grey partridge and corn bunting, showed frequent localised movements associated with arable habitats, although these behaviours did not typically imply breeding activity on site, beyond those territories already mapped in **Figure 4** to **Figure 7**.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1.1 The 2024 and 2025 breeding bird surveys recorded a moderately diverse assemblage reflecting the mosaic of arable farmland, hedgerows, woodland parcels and riparian habitat associated with the River Welland and adjacent drainage networks. Within the Scheme Site Boundary, open arable fields and field margins supported a suite of declining farmland specialists, including skylark, yellow wagtail, corn bunting, meadow pipit, linnet and reed bunting, with hedgerows, scrub and copses providing suitable nesting and foraging habitat for a broader assemblage of passerines.
- 5.1.2 A total of 61 species were recorded across the 2024 and 2025 field surveys. Of these, 13 priority species were confirmed breeding within the Scheme Site Boundary, including mallard, stock dove, oystercatcher, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], sedge warbler, meadow pipit and reed bunting, in addition to BoCC5 red-listed species such as skylark, yellow wagtail, linnet and corn bunting.
- 5.1.3 Land within the Scheme Site Boundary and its immediate surroundings also provided valuable foraging habitat for raptors, with [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. In addition, eleven Section 41 species were confirmed breeding across the Scheme Site Boundary, namely grey partridge, herring gull, skylark, starling, song thrush, house sparrow, yellow wagtail, linnet, reed bunting, corn bunting and yellowhammer.
- 5.1.4 Any impact from the proposed works on features of designated sites, e.g., breeding birds, should be evaluated as part of the scheme-level **Ecological Impact Assessment** (to support the planning application following appropriate guidelines). Data collected from the accompanying non-breeding bird surveys should be used in conjunction with these survey results to provide a comprehensive view of the use of the Site and surrounding habitat by notable and protected bird species.

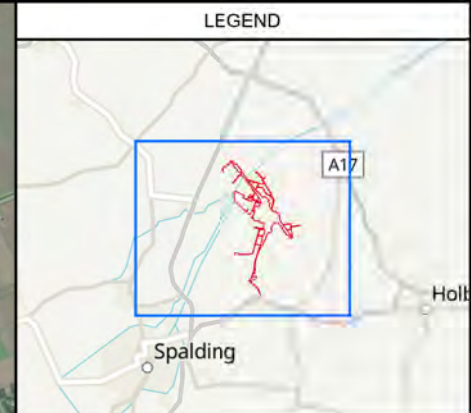
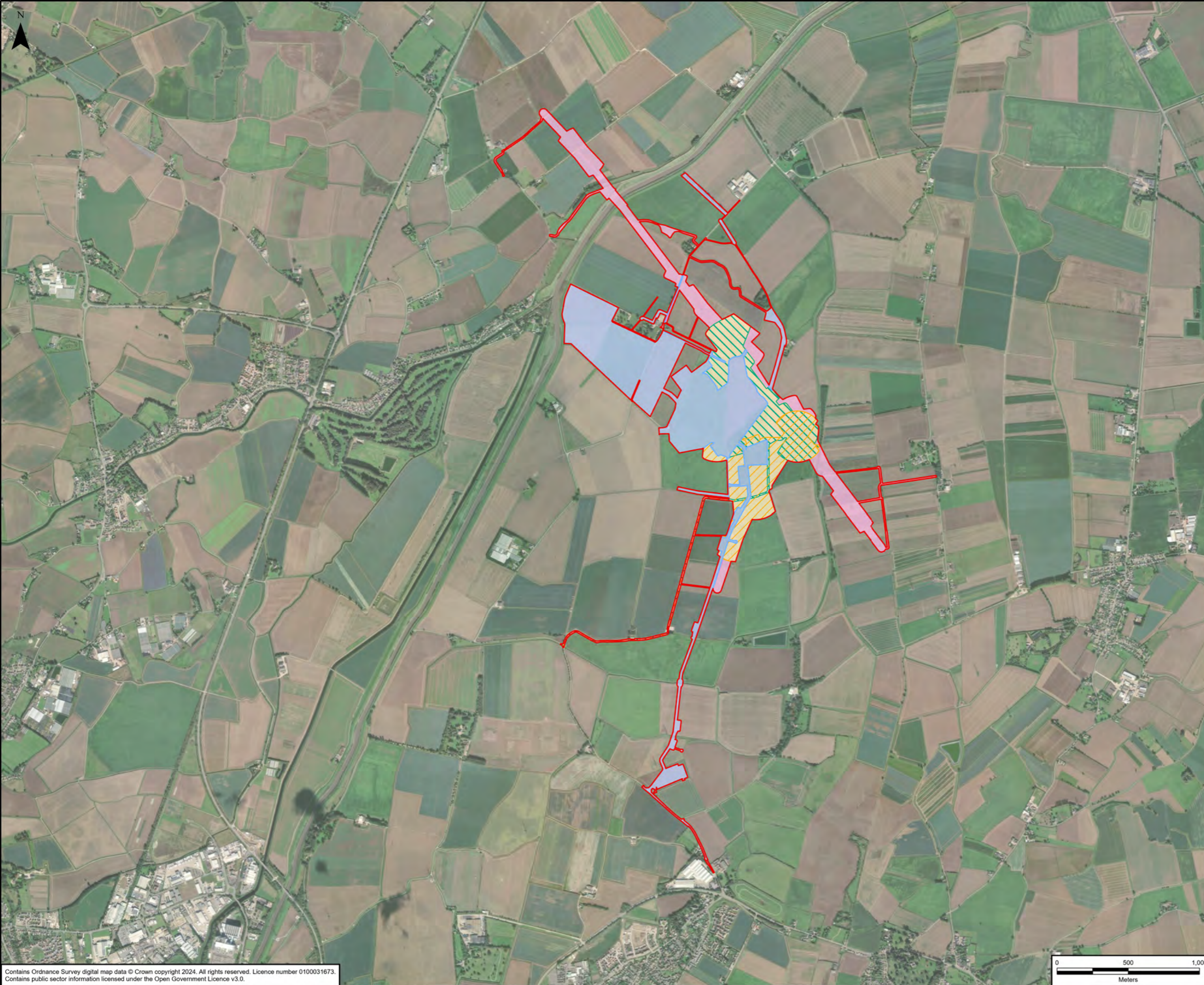
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Figures

Figure 1 Scheme Site Boundary



- Scheme Site Boundary
- Substation Works Site Boundary
- S37 4ZM/2WS Overhead Line Works Site Boundary
- Exempt Overhead Line Works Site Boundary
- S37 - 4ZM - OHL Works Site Boundary
- S37 - 2WS - OHL Works Site Boundary

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nationalgrid

Purpose: CONSENTS OVERVIEW

Scheme: PROPOSED ELECTRICITY SUBSTATION AND OVERHEAD LINE WORKS AT WESTON MARSH

Document Title: **FIGURE 1 SCHEME SITE BOUNDARY**

Creator:	Date:	Checker:	Date:	Approver:	Date:
AF	06/05/2026	AC	06/05/2026	NH	06/05/2026

Document Type:	Scale:	Format:	Sheets:	Rev:
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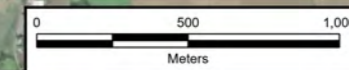
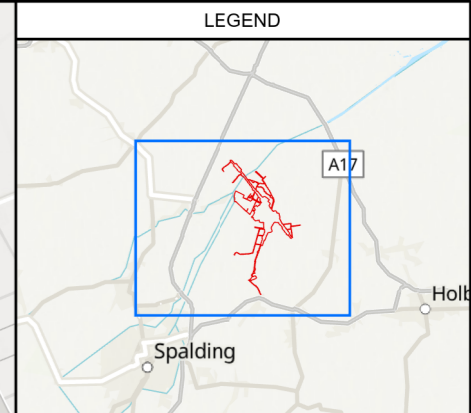
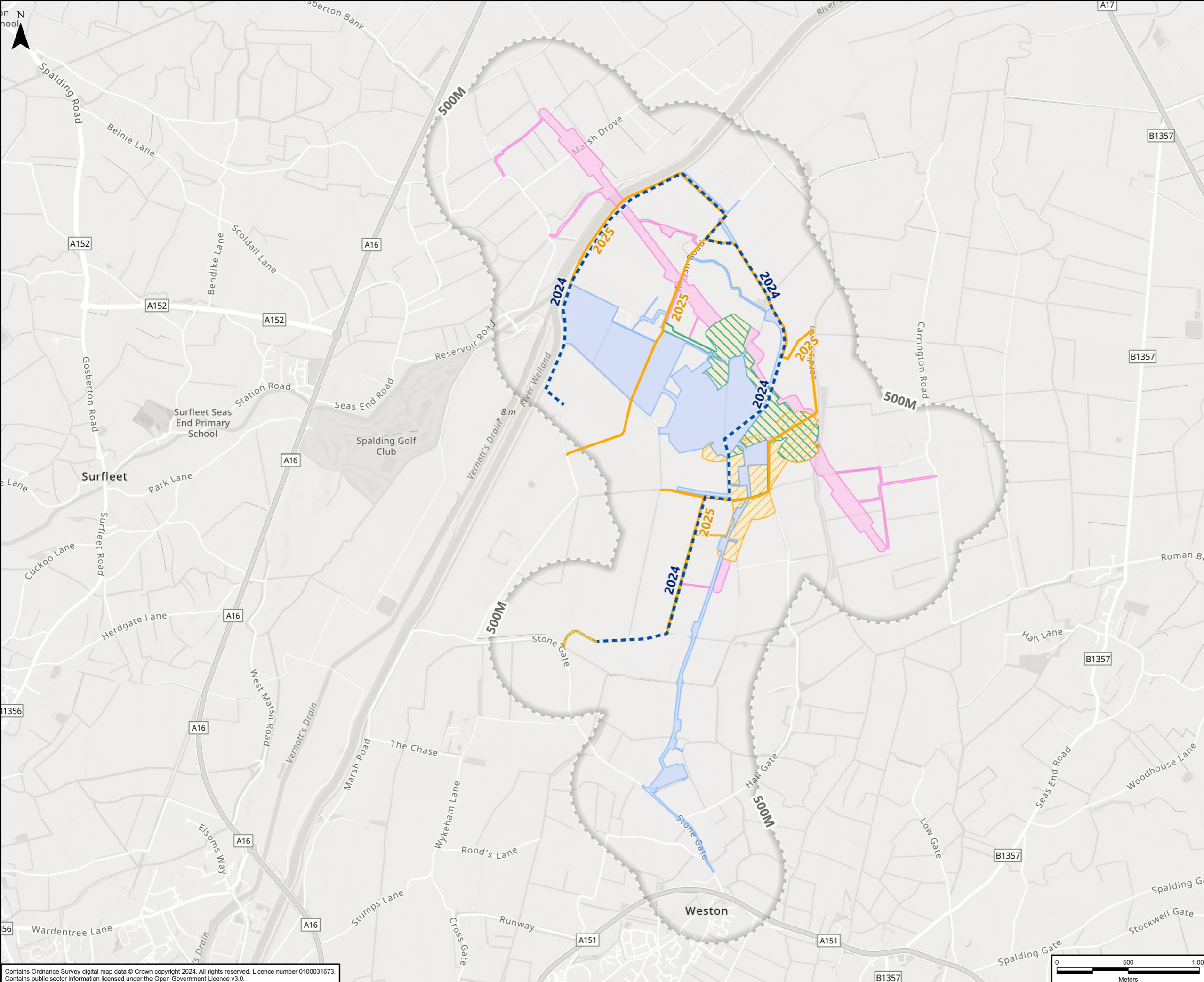


Figure 2 Statutory Designated Sites with Avian Features

Figure 3 Breeding Bird Survey Transect Routes



- Substation Works Site Boundary
- S37 4ZM/2WS Overhead Line Works Site Boundary
- Exempt Overhead Line Works Site Boundary
- S37 - 4ZM - OHL Works Site Boundary
- S37 - 2WS - OHL Works Site Boundary
- Scheme Site Boundary 500m Buffer
- Breeding Birds Transect Routes - 2025
- Breeding Birds Transect Routes - 2024

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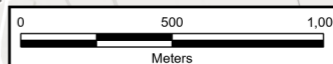
Purpose: BREEDING BIRDS SURVEY REPORT

Scheme: PROPOSED ELECTRICITY SUBSTATION AND OVERHEAD LINE WORKS AT WESTON MARSH

Document Title: FIGURE 3 BREEDING BIRD SURVEY TRANSECT ROUTES

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