

Cambridge City Council

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Histon and Milton Road Improvements Scheme





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Histon and Milton Road Improvements Scheme

WSP

4th Floor 6 Devonshire Square London EC2M 4YE

Phone: +44 20 7337 1700

Fax: +44 20 7337 1701

WSP.com



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Prepared by	Paul Joyce			
Signature				
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 The Histon and Milton Road schemes (hereafter referred to as 'the schemes') are intended to improve Cambridge's transport links. They support the Greater Cambridge Partnership's transport vision of implementing transport improvements, which is a significant part of a wider public transport strategy. In addition, they aim to support delivery of proposed housing and employment growth at Cambridge's Northern Fringe, Ely, Cambridge Science Park, Northstowe and Waterbeach (collectively around 27,000 new homes and 9,800 new jobs between 2011 and 2031).
- 1.1.2 The schemes aim to provide improved infrastructure for buses, to improve service reliability and journey times and encourage greater patronage. They also aim to significantly enhance the quality and safety of cycling and walking facilities whilst enhancing the quality of the streetscape, public realm areas and the environment. The project covers the length of Histon Road from the A14 to Huntington Road, and Milton Road from the A14 interchange south to (but not including) the gyratory junction at Mitcham's Corner. The schemes are shown on Figure 1.
- 1.1.3 In strategic terms the schemes have a strong case for early delivery. The planned developments at Northstowe (up to 10,000 homes), Waterbeach (up to 10,500 homes) and Ely (2,000+ homes) all have the potential to increase bus service provision on routes into the north of Cambridge. Milton Road in particular is expected to experience the greatest growth in bus patronage and to cater for more of the additional bus trips generated by these major development sites. The influence of Cambridge North station is also likely to be greater on Milton Road.
- 1.1.4 Histon and Milton Road are key radial routes into Cambridge and are identified as increasingly important public transport corridors as part of the Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire (TSCSC) and Long-Term Transport Strategy (LTTS). Both roads suffers from congestion at peak times and bus reliability is poor.
- 1.1.5 The need for intervention has therefore been identified due to the likely impact of increased travel demand by 2031 and the desire to encourage a shift to more sustainable modes of transport. The schemes should also help to reduce the current number of cycle accidents on Milton Road.
- 1.1.6 The schemes have the following key objectives:
 - Comprehensive priority for buses in both directions wherever practicable;
 - Safer and more convenient routes for cycling and walking, segregated where practical and possible;
 - Enhance the environment, streetscape and air quality;
 - Additional capacity for sustainable trips to employment/education sites:
 - Increased bus patronage and new services; and
 - Maintain or reduce general traffic levels.

1.2 APPRAISAL AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the appraisal was to identify important ecological features that could be affected by the schemes. To achieve this, the following objectives were set:



- Consult records of statutory and non-statutory designated sites, ecologically important sites, habitats and species;
- Map habitats, and identify those that are ecologically important, and/or have legal protection;
- Assess the suitability of each habitat type to support important and/or legally protected species; and,
- Determine whether invasive non-native species are present.

The results of the desk study and field surveys were used to assess likely impacts of the schemes upon the surrounding habitats and protected species. Recommendations have been made regarding measures to protect these during and following construction of the proposed schemes.



2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 OVERVIEW

This appraisal has been prepared with reference to current good practice guidance publish by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management¹ and Joint Nature Conservation Committee². The appraisal comprises a desk study, followed by a field survey, and is based on the following data sources:

- The Multi-agency Geographic Information for the countryside (MAGIC) service;
- Ecological records from Cambridge and Peterborough Biological Records Centre (CPBRC);
- Online photographic resources, including aerial photography (Bing Aerials) and Google Streetview; and
- Data collected during by ecologists during the field surveys.

2.2 DESK STUDY

The desk study was undertaken to review existing ecological baseline information in the public domain and to obtain information held by relevant third parties. Freely downloadable datasets (available from Natural England) were consulted for information, within 2km of the schemes, regarding the presence of statutory designated habitats³, Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI)⁴, woodlands listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory⁵, Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)) and internationally designated Ramsar sites. In addition, open source Ordnance Survey mapping was used to identify water bodies within 500m of the schemes.

To provide detailed ecological records to support the appraisal, the following information was requested from Cambridge and Peterborough Biological Records Centre within 2km of the scheme:

- Records of legally protected and notable species, including bats and birds;
- Records of non-statutory sites (such as locally designated wildlife sites not on national databases); and
- Records of invasive non-native species.

¹ CIEEM (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

² Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit. JNCC, Peterborough.

³ Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR).

⁴ HPI align in the most part with UKBAP habitats. Inventories of UKBAP habitat have been prepared by a variety of organisations and at a national (Natural England priority habitat inventory) and local scale (e.g. by local records centres). Through their listing they become a Material Consideration in the planning process through the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act).

⁵ The ancient woodland inventory in England lists areas over two hectares in size which have been continuously wooded since at least 1600.



2.3 FIELD SURVEY

The field survey was undertaken on the 18th September 2018 in warm and dry weather conditions, using the public footways as both schemes are located along public roads. Land in private ownership within the boundaries of the schemes was not included within the survey. The survey was carried out by Paul Joyce, an Associate level ecologist with WSP who has 10 years of experience in conducting ecological appraisal work, and is a full member of CIEEM. Habitats were identified and mapped using standard Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010)².

The schemes are dominated by roads and sub-urban development, but where patches of habitat were identified they were described and mapped following the standard Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). Phase 1 habitat survey is a standard technique for classifying and mapping British habitats. The dominant plant species are recorded and habitats are classified according to their vegetation types. Where appropriate consideration was given to whether habitats qualify, or could qualify, as a Habitat of Principal Importance following habitat descriptions published by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC, 2008).

2.4 LIMITATIONS

There was full access to pavements along Histon and Milton Road where works will take place. Sufficient information was obtained to provide a description of the proposed scheme's main ecological features, and therefore there were no significant limitations to the appraisal.



3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES

5.1.1 STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES

The desk study identified two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and four Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within 2 km of the proposed scheme (Table 2). Their locations are shown in Figure 1.

Table 1 - Statutory designated sites

Site Name	Size (ha)	Distance (m)	Description
Histon Road SSSI	0.58	Adjacent to Site	Designated for its <i>geological</i> and not its <i>biological</i> importance: "A key Pleistocene stratigraphic site. At this locality fluviatile silts and marls, with gravel seams, comprising the third terrace level of the River Cam have yielded good sequences of pollen and nonmarine Mollusca [fossils]."
Traveller's Rest Pit SSSI	2.25	1.3km west	Designated for its <i>geological</i> and not its <i>biological</i> importance: "This site provides a unique exposure in fossiliferous cold stage gravels, sands and silts of a high-level terrace (Observatory Gravels)."
Bramblefields LNR	2.08	600m south- east	An area of grassland, scrub and a pond offering wildlife and greenspace within a residential area.
Coldham's Common LNR	49.28	1.5km south- east	This site has areas of unimproved grassland, which have anthills of yellow meadow ants. There is also scrub and woodland. Flora include spiny rest harrow, upright brome and bee orchid.
Logan's Meadow LNR	1.11	900m south- east	Woodland and scrub adjacent to the River Cam close to Cambridge city centre.
Sheep's Green and Coe Fen LNR	16.87	1.5km south	Former seasonally flooded grazing marsh within the River Cam floodplain with veteran willow trees and riparian habitats. Water voles are present on the site.

Both SSSIs are designated for their geological features, not for ecological features, and thus have not been considered further. The LNRs are located more than 600m from the proposed scheme. Construction works, which are restricted to the existing road network, will not interfere with the natural processes and designated features of these sites. Figure 2 shows their location in relation to the Histon and Milton Road schemes.

5.1.2 NON-STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES

The desk study identified two types of non-statutory designated site, 'County Wildlife Sites' and 'City Wildlife Sites'. Both receive no statutory protection but have been identified as important by local wildlife groups. County Wildlife Sites are listed in Table 2 and City Wildlife Sites in Table 3.



Table 2 - County Wildlife Sites

Site Name	Description
Adams Road Sanctuary	The site qualifies because it supports an important assemblage of invertebrates.
Coe Fen	Supports more than 20 mature pollard willows.
Coldham's Common	Locally frequent numbers of at least 8 neutral grassland indicator species, 3 strong; habitat mosaic >10ha supporting three habitats (semi-improved grassland, woodland, scrub).
Coton Path Hedgerow	Supports populations of two Nationally Scarce vascular plant species.
Hedgerows East of M11	Supports populations of Nationally Scarce vascular plant species and a vascular plant species which is rare in the county.
River Cam	Is a major river (together with adjacent semi-natural habitat) that has not been grossly modified by canalisation and poor water quality. Additionally, it has areas with concentrations of mature pollard willows.
Sheep's Green	Supports a population of a vascular plant rare in Cambridgeshire; and because it supports at least 20 mature pollard willows.

Table 3 - City Wildlife Sites

Site Name	Description
Ascension Parish Burial Ground	Supports two or more strong neutral grassland indicator species in frequent numbers.
Barnwell Junction Disused Railway	Hedgerow at least 100m in length and 2m in width at widest point with 4 or more woody species, with calcareous and neutral grassland also present.
Barnwell Junction Pastures	Neutral grassland with two or more strong neutral grassland indicator species in frequent numbers.
Barnwell Pit	Calcareous grassland with six or more calcareous grassland indicator species in frequent numbers.
Bin Brook	Supports breeding populations of a mammal species (water vole) protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Also qualifies for its group of at least 5 mature pollard willows in association with other seminatural habitat.
Bird Sanctuary, Conduit Head	Supports S6 Greater Pond Sedge swamp, S7 Lesser Pond Sedge swamp and 0.5-1ha woodland with 5 or more woodland plants and 10% or more mature woodland. Also supports great crested newts.
Coldham's Brook	Chalk stream together with adjacent semi-natural habitat that has not been grossly modified through canalisation and/or poor water quality.



Site Name	Description
Ditton Meadows	Lies within the flood plain of the River Cam. Central drain qualifies as species rich linear water body and also for NVC S6 Greater Pond-sedge swamp. Coldham's Brook qualifies as unmodified chalk stream.
Drain at Garret Hostel Lane	Unmodified drain joining River Cam. Also supports mammal species protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
Hobson's Conduit North	Chalk stream together with adjacent semi-natural habitat that has not been grossly modified through canalisation and/or poor water quality.
King's Hedges Hedgerow	Supports hedgerow at least 100m in length and 2m in width at its widest point with four or more woody species, and with at least part of the hedge allowed to flower and fruit.
Little St Mary's Churchyard	Supports a nationally scarce species of non-vascular plant (Rhynchostegiella curviseta).
Logan's Meadow LNR	Qualifies as an area of undeveloped floodplain directly associated with the River Cam County Wildlife Site.
Meadow and Ditch Opposite King's College	Area of undeveloped floodplain directly associated with the River Cam County Wildlife Site.
Midsummer Common	Area of undeveloped floodplain directly associated with the River Cam County Wildlife Site.
Mill Road Cemetery	Grassland that supports five or more neutral grassland indicator species and six or more calcareous grassland indicator species in frequent numbers.
Milton Road Hedgerows	Site qualifies for its potential value as it just misses criteria for hedgerows and is likely to meet them in the future.
St Andrew's, Chesterton	Qualifies for its potential value as it supports grassland with five or more neutral grassland indicator species but not in sufficient numbers to qualify.
Stourbridge Common	Area of undeveloped floodplain directly associated with the River Cam County Wildlife Site.
Trinity Meadow	Supports grassland with two or more strong neutral grassland indicator species and four or more strong calcareous grassland indicator species in frequent numbers.

None of the County of City Wildlife Sites are adjacent to the schemes boundaries. The closest is Ascension Parish Burial Ground, ~650m west of Histon Road, but separated from it by suburban and commercial development, as are all other County and City Wildlife Sites. The proposed works



will not interfere with the natural processes and features of these sites, and thus they are not a constraint to development.

5.1.3 HABITATS OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION (HPI)

Three Habitats of Principal Importance were identified by the desk study:

- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. One habitat patch located ~1.3km to the north-east of Milton Road.
- Deciduous woodland. One habitat patch located ~650m to the south of Histon Road.
- Traditional Orchard. Two habitat patches both adjacent to one another, located ~1.8km to the north of Histon Road.

Locations of habitat patches are shown on Figure 2. All are located some distance from the schemes and works will not interfere with their natural processes and features. Thus, they are not considered a constraint to development of either scheme.

5.2 SPECIES RECORDS

The desk study identified eight granted European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences, two for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* and six for bats, within 2km of the proposed scheme (Table 4).

Table 4 - EPS licences for bats within 2km of the proposed schemes

Licence Number	Date	Species	Distance from
2014-926-EPS-MIT and EPSM2013-5734	11/07/2013 – 31/08/2031	Great crested newt	1.7km west
EPSM2010-2402	18/10/2010 – 30/09/2011	Bat; common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle	1.4km east
EPSM2010-2444	26/10/2010 - 25/10/2012	Bat; common pipistrelle, whiskered bat and Brandt's bat	1.2km west
EPSM2011-3699	01/02/2012 – 30/09/2013	Bat; soprano pipistrelle	650m south
EPSM2012-4691 and 2014-775-EPS-MIT	16/05/2013 – 31/03/2015	Bat; common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown longeared and noctule	2km north-east
2016-24626-EPS-MIT	01/09/2016 - 31/08/2021	Bat; common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared	1.7km south

Cambridge and Peterborough Biological Records Centre returned records for the following species within 2km of the proposed schemes:

- Amphibians (common toad Bufo bufo, common frog Rana temporaria, great crested newt);
- Reptiles (common lizard Zootoca vivipara, slow worm Anguis fragilis, grass snake Natrix natrix);
- Water vole Arvicola amphibius;



- Badger Meles meles;
- Bats (soprano pipistrelle Pipistrellus pygmaeus, common pipistrelle Pipistrellus pipistrellus, serotine Eptesicus serotinus, noctule Nyctalus noctule, brown long-eared bat Plecotus auritus, Nathusius's pipistrelle Pipistrellus nathusii)
- Other mammals (hedgehog Erinaceus europaeus, brown hare Lepus europaeus and otter Lutra lutra);
- Fish (brown trout Salmo trutta);
- 80 species of bird;
- 143 species of insect; and
- 38 species of flowering plant.

5.3 FIELD STUDY

Habitats identified during the field survey are listed in Table 4 and mapped in Figure 3. Photographs of both the Histon and Milton Road sites are presented in Appendix B. Trees of different species (cherry tree *Prunus sp.*, lime tree *Tilia x europaea*, London plane *Platanus x acerifolia*, common oak *Quercus robur*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, European *a*sh *Fraxinus excelsior* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*) were recorded along the roadsides within the schemes.

Table 5 – Phase 1 habitats and their descriptions

Habitat Type	JNCC code	Description
Hardstanding and roadside verges	N/A	Representing Histon and Milton Road. Heavily managed roadside verges are present with ornamental trees, but the dominant land use it tarmac roadway and footway. Only negligible importance for wildlife can be ascribed to these areas.
Suburban development	N/A	Houses and their gardens are the dominant land use adjacent to Histon and Milton Road. There is some commercial development in the form of shops and office parks as well. All have well-managed ornamental open spaces with amenity grassland lawns, shrub planting and trees.
Allotments	N/A	There are two large allotments, one adjacent to Histon Road and one set back from Milton Road. They are mosaics of cultivated patches, pathways, amenity grassland and small buildings.
Parkland with Scattered Trees	A3.1	Histon recreation ground and Histon Road Cemetery are mosaics of grassland and trees. The latter site has bird boxes and a relaxed grassland management regime which is favourable to wildlife that can thrive in suburban areas such as garden birds.
Deciduous Woodland/Dense Scrub/Semi-improved grassland	A1.1.1	These habitats are associated with Impington Farm at the north end of the Histon Road scheme. They represent semi-natural habitats which could support wildlife, including protected species, although do not have significant intrinsic importance.
Improved grassland / arable	B4 / J1.1	Cultivated land also associated with Impington Farm of negligible importance to wildlife.



Habitat Type	JNCC code	Description
Tall ruderals	C3.1	There is a large patch of disturbed land adjacent to Histon Road at its northern end which has been colonised by tall ruderal vegetation.

5.4 SPECIES

5.4.1 GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

Great crested newts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). One EPS licence has been granted for great crested newts 1.7km from the schemes, but there are no ponds with connections to suitable terrestrial habitat found within 500m (garden ponds are present but these exist within a landscape dominated by suburban development, which is unsuitable for breeding great crested newts). Great crested newts are not a constraint to development and no further surveys work or mitigation is recommended.

5.4.2 REPTILES

Records of reptiles (slow-worm, common lizard and grass snake) exist within 2km of the proposed scheme. Reptiles such as species mentioned above are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) by their listing under Schedule 5. However, the roadside verges on both schemes offer no habitat for reptiles, with the only suitable habitats in their vicinity being allotments adjacent to the scheme, and broadleaved woodland, tall ruderal and species-poor semi-improved grassland habitat adjacent to the north of the Histon Road scheme (at Impington Farm). As none of these habitats will be affected by works, reptiles are not a constraint to development and no further survey work or mitigation is recommended.

5.4.3 BADGERS

Records of badger exist within 2km of the proposed scheme. Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badger Act 1992. The schemes are restricted to Histon and Milton Road within suburban Cambridge, and the few vegetated within the schemes are not suitable for badger for breeding or foraging. Badgers are not a constraint to development and no further survey work or mitigation is recommended.

5.4.4 BATS

All UK bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). CPBRC hold 277 records of 7 species of bat (brown long-eared bat, soprano and common pipistrelles, serotine, noctule, Nathusius' pipistrelle, Daubenton's bat) within 2km of the proposed scheme. Roosts were recorded within 2km of the proposed scheme but none was recorded within or adjacent to the works boundary, and no structures which could be used by roosting bats will be affected by works. Although roadside trees will be removed as part of the scheme, none were suitable to support roosting bats as they are well maintained without splits, cracks, hazard beams, woodpecker holes or coverings of ivy.

No significant foraging and commuting habitat was recorded within or surrounding the proposed scheme which is an urban area. No surveys for bats are recommended. However, to minimise risk



of disturbance of bats that could be present it is recommended that works should not be undertaken at night.

5.4.5 BIRDS

All wild birds in the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Numerous records of birds exist within 2km of the scheme. Trees present within the proposed scheme boundaries are suitable to provide nesting habitats for common breeding birds. In order to prevent breeding birds posing a constraint to the works, removal of trees should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). If tree removal is unavoidable during March - August, the trees should be checked for the presence of nests by an appropriately skilled ecologist prior to removal. If active nests are found, it may be necessary to delay work, typically within 10m of the nest, until the young have fledged.

There were no habitats or features within the proposed schemes boundaries suitable for supporting breeding birds listed on Schedule 1 Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 including barn owl *Tyto alba* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*.

5.4.6 OTHER SPECIES

Records of Species of Principal Importance to Nature Conservation and other notable species were returned by CPBRC within 2km of Histon and Milton Road. Mammal records including hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, brown hare *Lepus europaeus*, otter *Lutra lutra* and water vole *Arvicola amphibius*, but habitat within and adjacent to both schemes is unsuitable for these species and they therefore do not present a constraint to development. Amphibians were represented by common frog *Rana temporaria* and common toad *Bufo bufo*, neither of which receives strict legal protected (although common toad is an SPI and therefore a material consideration nor likely to occur on the roadsides of Histon and Milton Road, and thus are not considered a constraint to development.

Although records of flowering plants, insects and other notable species was received none are likely to occur on the roadsides of Histon and Milton Road, and thus are not considered a constraint to development.

5.5 INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

No invasive species were identified during the survey. Most of the habitat within the scheme boundary is hard standing or roadside verges. The scheme is surrounded by houses and maintained private gardens, the verges are well maintained, and it is unlikely that invasive species are within the scheme boundary or in its the close vicinity. Invasive plant species are not a constraint to development and no further survey work or mitigation is recommended.

5.6 SUMMARY OF ECOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

No significant ecological constraints have been identified during the appraisal due to the suburban nature of the sites and their role as busy thoroughfares for motorised traffic and pedestrians alike, although trees and bushes could support breeding birds even in such a context. The following recommendations have therefore been made:

- No species-specific survey will be undertaken for the scheme.
- To prevent breeding birds being a constraint to the works, removal of all vegetation should be carried out outside of the breeding season (March to August). Where removal is to take place within the nesting bird season a suitably experienced ecologist should complete a pre-removal

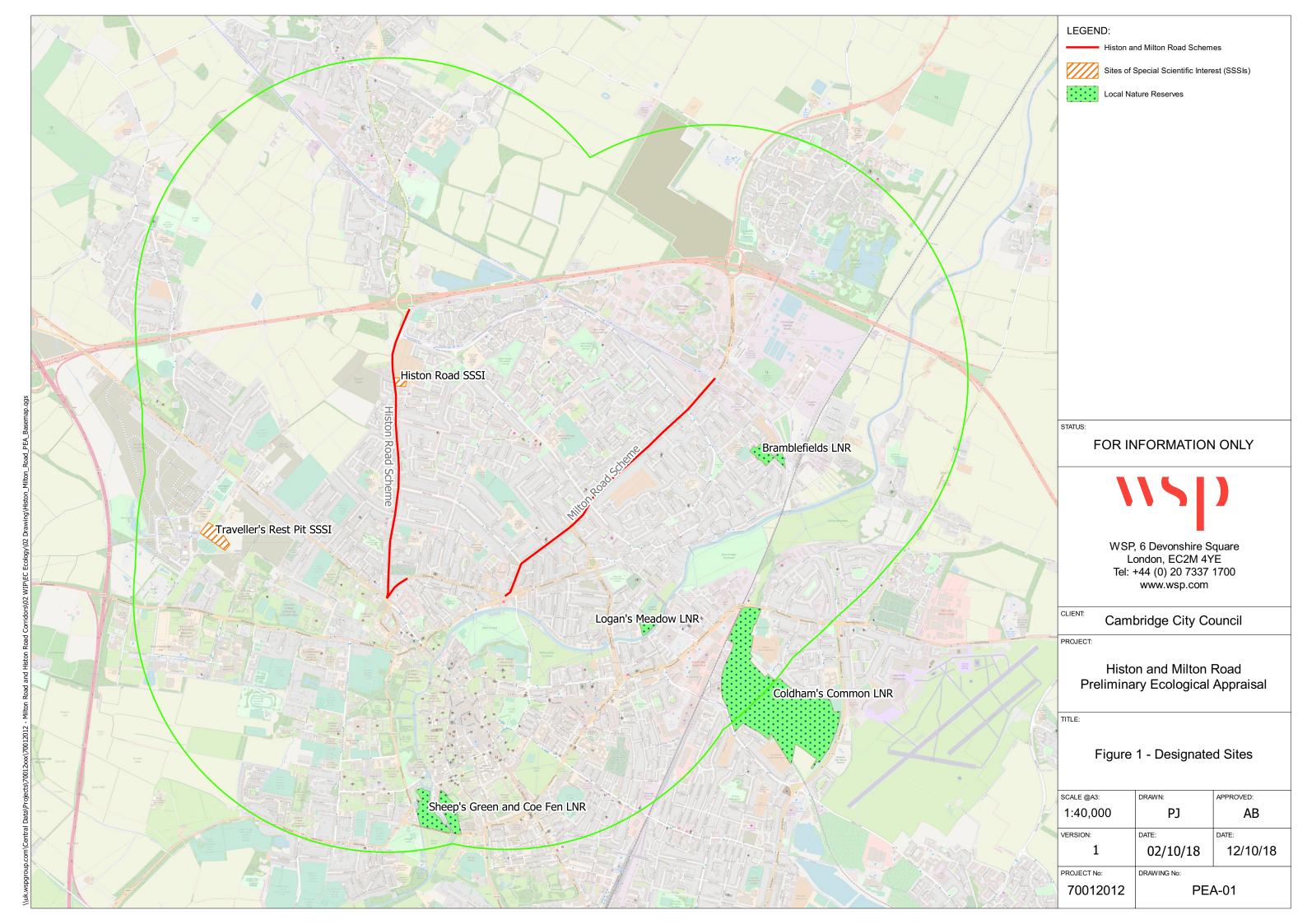


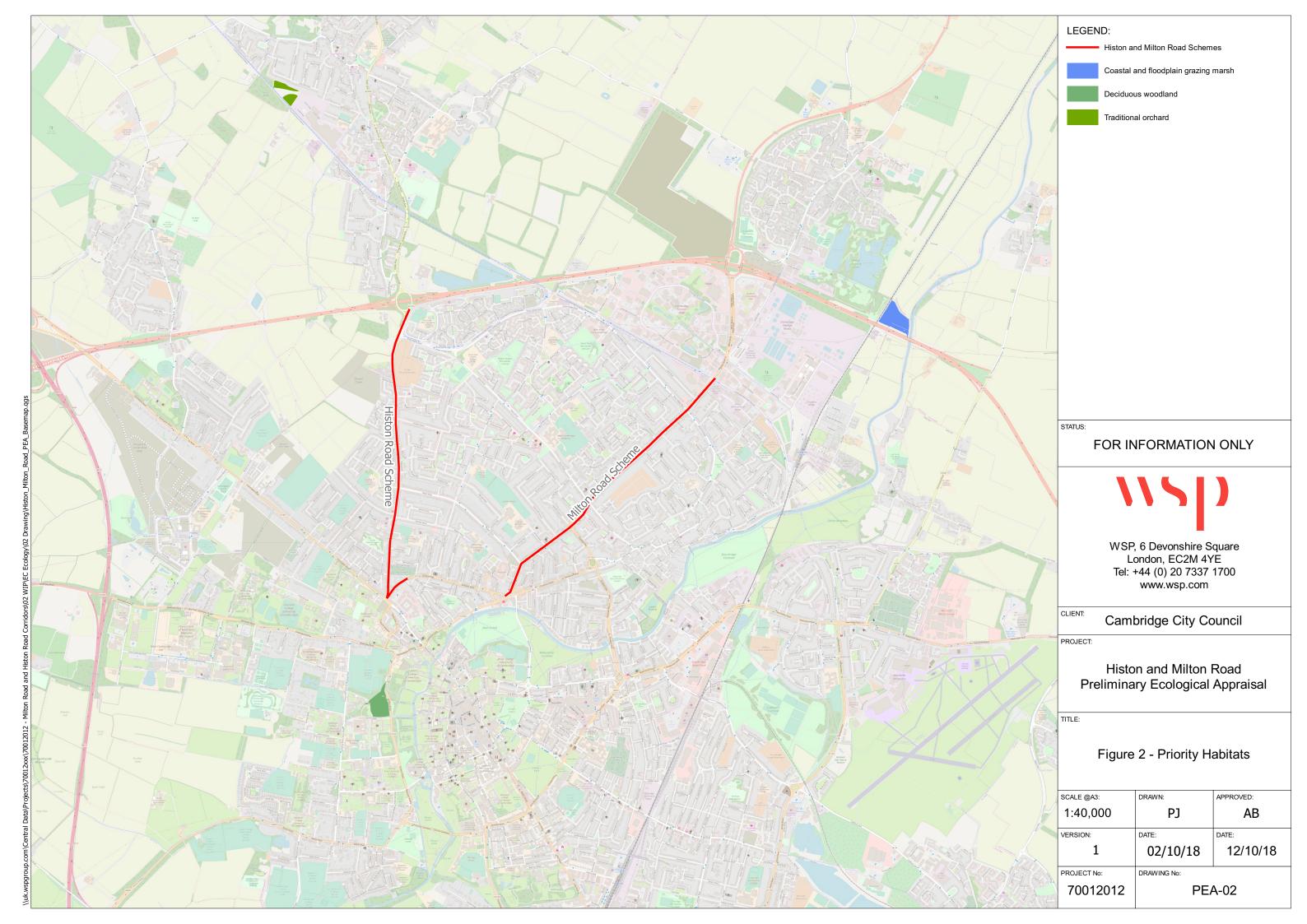
check for nesting birds. If active nests are found, it may be necessary to delay work, typically within 10m of the nest, until the young have fledged.

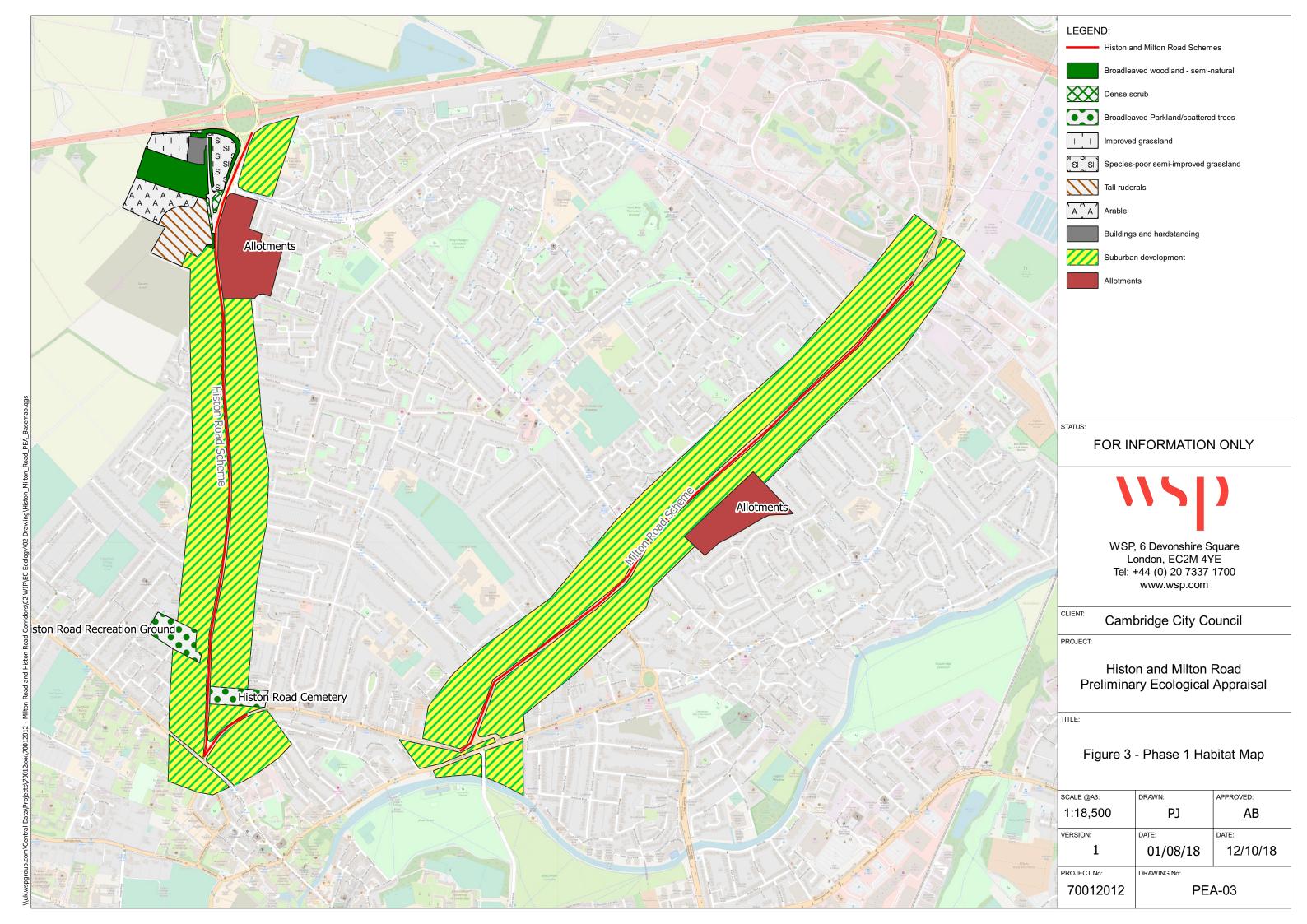
Appendix A

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FIGURES







Appendix B

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PHOTOGRAPHS





Photo 1 - Typical habitat along Histon Road. Closely mown roadside verges and ornamental trees, along with hardstanding footpaths.



Photo 2 – Northern section of Histon Road. Larger trees with a more relaxed management regime overhang but habitats are broadly the same; close cropped verges and hard standing footpaths.



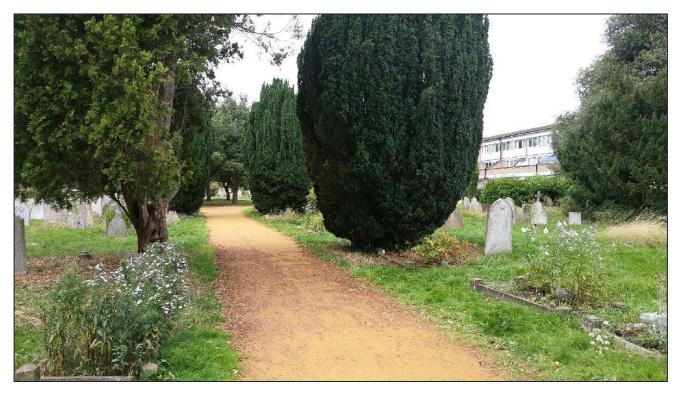


Photo 3 – Histon Road Cemetery. Rough grassland and scattered trees offer habitat for wildlife, but the scheme will not affect them as it is confined to Histon Road itself.



Photo 4 – Tall ruderal habitat adjacent to the northern end of Histon Road. These areas offer the most opportunities for wildlife in the survey area, but as they are part of an adjacent farm and outside the works area, they will not be affected.





Photo 5 – Typical habitat along Milton Road. Managed verges and ornamental trees.



Photo 6 – Milton Road showing heavy disturbance. Both Histon and Milton Road are busy thoroughfares in and out of Cambridge city centre and heavily disturbed by traffic and pedestrians. In places there is very little roadside verge, and few roadside trees.



4th Floor 6 Devonshire Square London EC2M 4YE

wsp.com