

ECOLOGICAL TECHNICAL NOTE



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Wimblebury Road,
Cannock
Job Number: 9921
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401 Faraday Street,
Birchwood Park,
Warrington
WA3 6GA

Tel: 01925 844004
Fax: 01925 844002
tep@tep.uk.com
www.tep.uk.com

Other Offices:
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Policy SH2: Land East of Wimblebury Road, Heath Hayes – Ecological Technical Note

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018 to 2040 was published for consultation on 5th February 2024 and is currently open for consultation. Policy SH2: Land East of Wimblebury Road, Heath Hayes allocates a 17.9ha area of land for residential development, subject to the provision of the Wimblebury Road Relief Road (WRRR).
- 1.2 A review of policy SH2 and relevant policies to the Wimblebury Road site within the Cannock Chase Local Plan 2018 to 2040, the Sustainability Appraisal of Policy SH2, and the HRA Report for Reg. 19 consultation has been completed.
- 1.3 TEP have completed a suite of ecological surveys in 2023 and 2024 covering the full area of land under Taylor Wimpey's ownership (Figure 1). This land incorporates all land allocated and released under Policy SH2.
- 1.4 This technical note provides a summary of the ecological baseline at the Policy SH2 site and mitigation and enhancement opportunities based on current survey information. Detailed assessment relating to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for the site will be undertaken at the planning application stage. This will be in accordance with the Local Plan policy and legislative requirements which requires a 10% net gain and allows for on and off-site solutions to come forward or a mixture of both.
- 1.5 Provided a measurable net gain is achieved, it is considered that the development of the site has the potential to have a minor positive effect in relation to SA objective 1: Biodiversity and geodiversity. This is discussed in the following sections. An informed review of the aforementioned policies and documents is also provided.

2.0 Ecological Baseline and Mitigation (Summary)

- 2.1 The following ecological surveys were undertaken by TEP in 2023 to 2024. All surveys were undertaken by appropriately experienced (and licensed where relevant) ecologists during optimal survey periods in line with best practice and relevant guidelines.
 - Phase 1 habitat/Uk Hab and Habitat Condition Assessment
 - National Vegetation Classification (NVC)

- Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) surveys – habitat suitability index assessment, eDNA, and traditional nocturnal surveys
- Badger *Meles meles* survey
- Bat surveys – ground level tree assessment and activity surveys
- Birds – breeding bird surveys and wintering bird surveys (the latter are currently ongoing)
- Otter *Lutra lutra* and water vole *Arvicola amphibius* surveys
- Reptile surveys
- Invertebrate surveys (data not yet available)

Habitats

- 2.2 Priority habitats confirmed to be present within the policy SH2 site boundary and WRRR indicative boundary include native hedgerows, a pond, and woodland. The pond will be retained, and the loss of priority woodland and hedgerows required for access and the WRRR will be kept to a reasonable minimum.
- 2.3 An area outside of the SH2 boundary and the WRRR boundary but located within the wider area under the control of the applicant supports a small area of habitat dominated by the dwarf shrub heather *Calluna vulgaris* and other heath species. This area is located to the east of the WRRR on a bank along a coal haulage road. It is in poor condition and although has a poor goodness-for-fit for the Heathland NVC communities it would still classify as the Lowland Heathland Habitat of Principal Importance due to its species composition. Considering its proximity to the nearby SSSI designated Lowland Heathland habitat, this small area should be retained from any future development and, where feasibly possible, enhanced.
- 2.4 A BNG strategy, including off-site provision, will be required to be developed to ensure a measurable net gain in habitats and biodiversity is achieved.

Fauna (Protected and Priority Species)

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

- 2.5 A small population of GCN was confirmed to be present within the onsite pond. Surveys of additional ponds within 500m of the site confirmed the presence of at least one additional small metapopulation, and a large metapopulation associated with ponds primarily within the Chasewater and Southern Coalfields Heaths SSSI.
- 2.6 As District Level Licensing¹ is not active within the Cannock Chase District a mitigation licence will need to be obtained from Natural England through which appropriate mitigation,

¹ Where operational, District Level Licensing schemes for GCN allow developers to register their site where GCN will be impacted under a scheme and make conservation payments as an alternative to

including trapping and translocation, will be agreed to prevent any harm to the favourable conservation status of GCN populations within the site.

- 2.7 Development will not require the loss of any ponds that are confirmed to support GCN, and the loss of suitable terrestrial habitat will be minimised as the development will primarily be located within existing grassland currently grazed by livestock. There are opportunities to enhance terrestrial habitats and incorporate additional wildlife ponds to enhance the site for GCN. Amphibian underpasses under the WRRR can also be incorporated to prevent isolating any metapopulations.

Badger

- 2.8 Badger setts were confirmed to be present in the wider vicinity. No active setts were present within 30m of the SH2 development site or WRRR. Habitat enhancements within the site including hedgerow creation and woodland edge planting will create new sett creation, foraging, and ranging opportunities for badger. The existing setts are serviced by extensive habitat for foraging, ranging and sett expansion offsite.

Bats

- 2.9 Trees within the woodland through which the WRRR will pass through were assessed as having suitability to support roosting bats. Further surveys of these trees will be completed in 2024 to confirm if any roosts are present. If bats are confirmed to be roosting in trees, then a Natural England mitigation licence will be required, and compensation could easily be provided via bat boxes on retained trees in the offsite woodland.
- 2.10 At least ten species were recorded commuting and foraging within the site: common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, common noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*, serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*, whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*, and natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*. Activity was dominated by common and soprano pipistrelle bats and no Annex II species were recorded.
- 2.11 Habitat enhancements including hedgerow, woodland edge planting, and water body creation which will provide opportunities for commuting and foraging bats. A bat box scheme in adjacent retained woodland would increase opportunities for roosting within the site. Street/road lighting, in line with safety guidance, will be required along the WRRR however careful design could minimise impacts through the woodland.

Birds

- 2.12 The following notable bird species were recorded within the wider site or within influencing distance of the site as breeders or probable breeders: bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, dunnock *Prunella modularis*, greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, linnets

completing traditional surveys and applying for a mitigation licence which would require trapping and translocation, and onsite mitigation.

Linaria cannabina, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, meadow pipit *Anthus pratensis*, mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus*, moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos*, starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, white throat *Sylvia communis*, willow warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*, wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, and yellow hammer *Emberiza citrinella*.

- 2.13 No Schedule 1 species were confirmed to breed within the site or within a 100m buffer. No evidence of nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* was recorded during the nocturnal surveys completed.
- 2.14 Habitat enhancements and creation will compensate for the minor losses of suitable habitat for breeding birds. A bird box scheme will enhance the site for species identified. It should be noted that identified breeding territories for the ground nesting species skylark and woodcock will not be directly impacted by the SH2 development or the WRRR and timing of works can mitigate effectively against disturbance.

Otter and Water Vole

- 2.15 The surveys did not identify any evidence of water vole present within the site or within influencing distance of the site.
- 2.16 A single otter footprint was identified at a pond not located within, or within 30m of, the development boundaries. No breeding sites or resting places were identified.

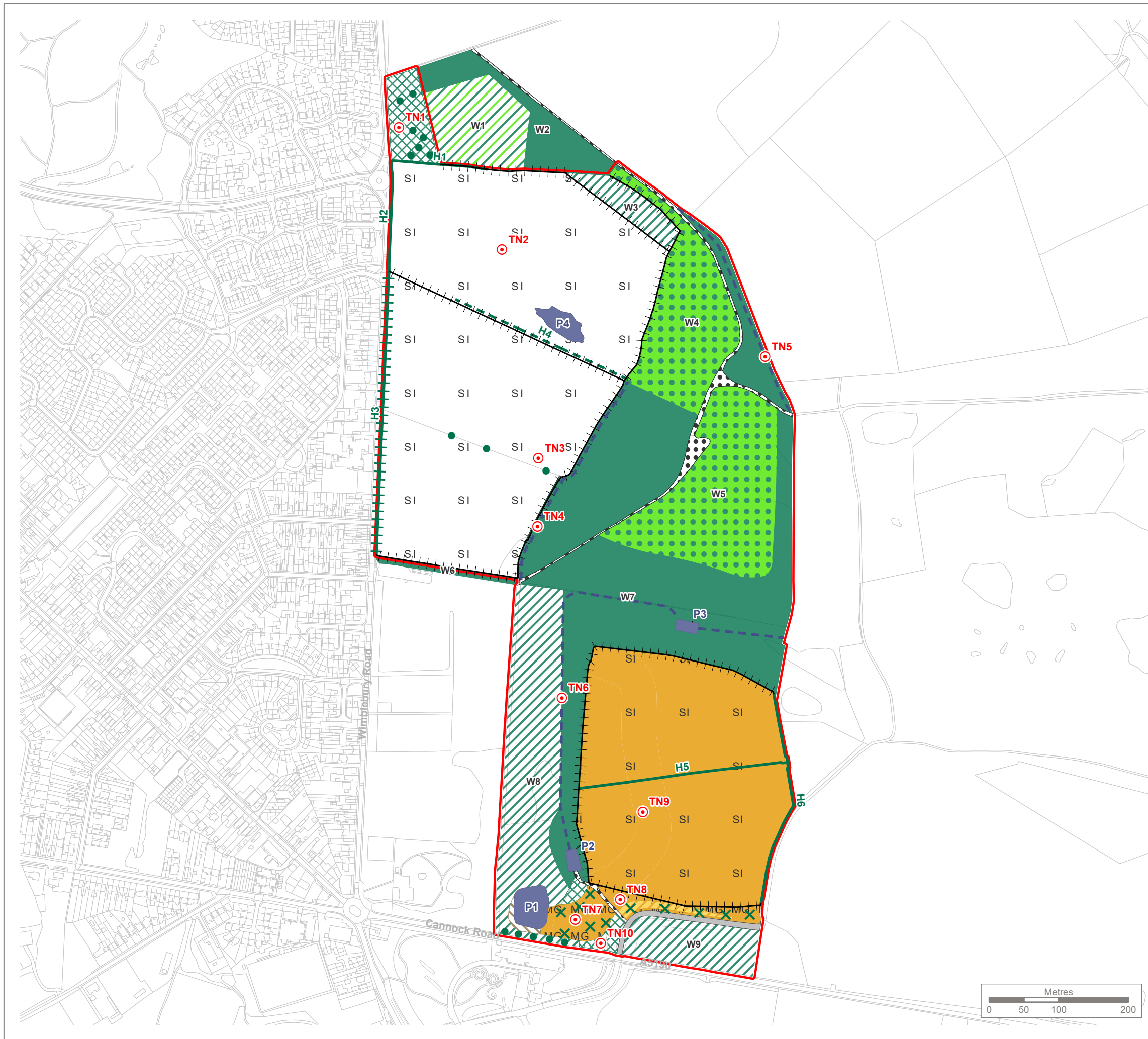
Reptiles

- 2.17 Reptile surveys covering the suitable habitat across the wider Taylor Wimpey owned land identified a small population of common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* in the east of the site (the eastern extent of the WRRR) and within the adjacent SSSI.
- 2.18 Given the low numbers of common lizard recorded on site and that extensive suitable habitat in the wider area and adjacent to the WRRR will be retained, precautionary working methods can be deployed to prevent any harm to common reptiles within the construction area and habitat enhancements including hedgerow creation and woodland edge planting can be incorporated to provide additional opportunities and compensate for loss of habitat.

3.0 Recommendations for amendments to policy SH2

- 3.1 Policy SH2 includes protection for the Chasewater and Southern Coalfields Heaths SSSI or the water quality of Cannock Extension Canal SAC and states that a planning application will be supported by a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) and a Drainage Strategy which will outline necessary mitigation measures to avoid significant adverse impacts.
- 3.2 The wording of the policy is not sufficiently clear to identify that a Habitat Regulation Assessment is only a requirement with regards to SACs. It is recommended that the wording of the policy SH2 is amended to separate the SSSI and SAC issues.

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- 3.3 Policy SH2 also does not include consideration of Cannock Chase SAC and for consistency with Policy SO7.01, and to recognise that it is the council's responsibility to undertake a HRA it is recommended that Policy SH2 is amended with regards to SAC impacts.
- 3.4 Amended or new text is shown underlined:
- 3.5 Development should have no significant adverse impact on the environmental quality of the Chasewater and Southern Coalfields Heaths SSSI, or have any significant impacts on Cannock Extension Canal SAC and Cannock Chase SAC.
- 3.6 The applicant will supply to the council (as competent authority) such information as reasonably required for the competent authority to undertake a HRA. To ensure the integrity of Cannock Chase SAC is not adversely affected by increased recreational use the applicant will supply to the council such information as reasonably required for the competent authority to undertake a HRA or make a financial contribution in accordance with the most up to date Cannock Chase SAC Partnership Mitigation Scheme.



KEY

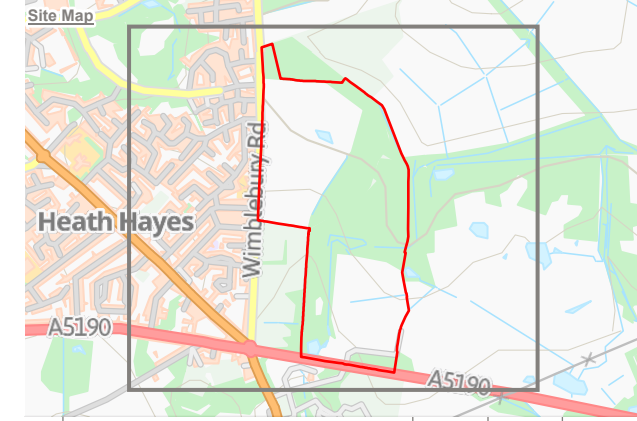
- Site boundary
- ⊙ Target note
- × Scattered scrub
- Scattered broad-leaved tree
- Species-poor intact hedge
- Species-poor defunct hedge
- ++ Species-poor hedge and trees
- ++ Fence
- Dry ditch
- Semi-natural broad-leaved woodland
- Plantation broad-leaved woodland
- Semi-natural mixed woodland
- Plantation mixed woodland
- Dense/continuous scrub
- Semi-improved neutral grassland
- Modified neutral grassland
- || Poor semi-improved grassland
- Tall ruderal
- Dry heath/acid grassland mosaic
- Standing water
- Bare ground
- Hardstanding

Note:

The locations of habitats and habitat features are indicative.



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THE ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP

401 Faraday Street, Birchwood Park, Warrington, WA3 6GA
 Tel 01925 844004 e-mail tep@tep.uk.com www.tep.uk.com

Project
Wimblebury Road, Cannock

Title
Phase 1 Habitat Survey

Drawing Number
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JK	SA	DM	1:5,459 @ A3	07/03/2024

