



An Origin Enterprises Company

Ecological Technical Note

Ecological Verification Survey at Grange Castle West, Milltown, Co. Dublin

prepared for AWN Consulting Ltd.

on behalf of Data and Power Hub Services Ltd.

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1 Introduction and Scope

- 1 Scott Cawley Ltd., were engaged by AWN Consulting acting on behalf of Data and Power Hub Services Ltd., to prepare an Ecological Technical Note to advise on the current ecological baseline conditions at the site of a consented electricity transmission development associated with the Echelon Data Centres site at Milltown, Grange Castle West, Co. Dublin, to which amendments are now proposed. The consented development consists of the provision of two no. 110kV transmission lines and a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation compound and Transformers/ MV switch room compound along with associated and ancillary works on an overall site of c. 4.6 hectares (planning ref: ACP 309773).
- 2 The purpose of this Technical Note is to provide an overview of the current ecological baseline at the site of the consented development following a multidisciplinary ecological survey covering the revised development footprint. Scott Cawley Ltd., completed an ecological walkover of the site of the proposed amendments to the consented development and its immediate surrounds. The survey was carried out according to current guidance and best practice methodologies^{1,2,3}.
- 3 The aim of this Ecological Technical Note is to identify any potential for additional impacts associated with the proposed amendments to the consented development (as described in Section 3.1) since the original EIAR⁴ for the consented development was prepared, as well as any new ecological constraints that may be associated with the current baseline.

2 Methodology

2.1 Author Statement

- 4 This Technical Note was authored by Patrick Ellison, who also carried out the ecological verification survey, and was reviewed by Caitriona Fenton and Colm Clarke of Scott Cawley Ltd.
- 5 Patrick Ellison is a Principal Ecologist with Scott Cawley and an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). He has over 10 years' experience in ecological consultancy. Patrick is experienced in the preparation of Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports, Natura Impact Statements, EclA and the preparation of Biodiversity chapters for Environmental Impact Assessment Reports for a wide range of projects including residential and public sector, renewable energy development, tech and road schemes.
- 6 Caitriona Fenton is a Senior Ecologist with Scott Cawley Ltd. She is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). She has over 11 years' experience in ecological consultancy. She has worked on the full suite of consultancy reports (AA Screening/NIS/EclA, biodiversity chapters) for both small and large projects, including road schemes, tech, pharmaceutical, residential and public sectors.
- 7 Colm Clarke is Associate Director of Terrestrial Ecology at Scott Cawley, with over 11 years' professional experience in ecological consultancy. Colm is a Full Member of CIEEM and an active contributor to industry standards through roles such as assessor on the EclA Pilot Accreditation Scheme and member of CIEEM's

¹ Collins, (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn.)

² National Roads Authority (2008). Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes

³ National Parks & Wildlife Service (2021). Guidance on the Strict Protection of Certain Animal and Plant Species under the Habitats Directive in Ireland

⁴ Marston Planning Consultancy (2021) Environmental Impact Assessment Report – Peamount Substation and Transmission Lines, Milltown. (Biodiversity Chapter prepared by Scott Cawley Ltd.)

EclA Accreditation Working Group. Colm is experienced in scoping, preparing, and reviewing Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening and Natura Impact Statement (NIS), and has prepared these reports and acted as internal reviewer (as part of Scott Cawley's quality assurance process) on a range of projects from renewable (Solar and wind energy), residential to industrial and large scale infrastructure (e.g. national road and rail projects).

2.2 Desk Study

- 8 A desk study was undertaken to collate available information on the local ecological environment. The following resources were used to inform the assessment presented in this report:
 - Online data available on protected species as held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) from www.biodiversityireland.ie (accessed 2nd June 2026)
 - Information on the surface water network and surface water quality in the area available from www.epa.ie (accessed 2nd June 2026)
 - Information on groundwater resources and groundwater quality in the area available from www.epa.ie and www.gsi.ie (accessed 2nd June 2026)
 - [Tailte Éireann mapping and aerial photography available from https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3ae19cc156bf4706a929304bf8fcc4f6](https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3ae19cc156bf4706a929304bf8fcc4f6)
 - Information on the location, nature and design of the proposed absorption chiller and dry-cooler installation supplied by the applicant's design team

2.3 Field Verification Survey

- 9 An ecological verification survey was undertaken of the proposed development and immediate surrounding area on the 31st March 2026 with reference to methodologies described in *Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping*⁵. Habitat types were classified using the *Guide to Habitats in Ireland*⁶, and any species of conservation interest were recorded. Vascular and bryophyte plant nomenclature generally follow that of *The National Vegetation Database*⁷, having regard to more recent taxonomic changes to species names after the *New Flora of the British Isles*⁸ and the *British Bryological Society's Mosses and Liverworts of Britain and Ireland: A Field Guide*⁹. Annex I habitat types, if encountered were classified after the *Interpretation manual of European Union Habitats EUR28*¹⁰ with reference to the corresponding national habitat survey reports and NPWS wildlife manuals, as applicable. Non-native invasive plant species listed on the Third Schedule of the 2011 Birds and Habitats Regulations and the European Union (Invasive alien species) Regulations 2024 (S.I. 374/2024), were also searched for.
- 10 During the verification survey, the presence/absence of protected fauna species was surveyed through the detection of field signs such as tracks, markings, feeding signs, and droppings.

⁵ Smith, G.F., O'Donoghue, P., O'Hara, K. & Delaney, E. (2011) *Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping*. The Heritage Council Church Lane, Kilkenny, Ireland.

⁶ Fossitt, J.A. (2023) *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

⁷ Weekes, L.C. & FitzPatrick, Ú. (2010) *The National Vegetation Database: Guidelines and Standards for the Collection and Storage of Vegetation Data in Ireland*. Version 1.0. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 49. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland.

⁸ Stace, C. (2019) *New Flora of the British Isles*. 4th Edition. C&M Floristics.

⁹ Atherton, I., Bosanquet, S. & Lawley, M. (2010) *Mosses and Liverworts of Britain and Ireland: A Field Guide*. Latimer Trend & Co., Plymouth.

¹⁰ CEC. (Commission of the European Communities) (2013) *Interpretation manual of European Union Habitats EUR28*. European Commission, DG Environment.

3 Description of the Consented Development

- 11 The Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) to which the proposed amendments relate, is an electricity transmission development which comprises two no. 110kV transmission lines, a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation compound and Transformers / MV switch room compound, along with associated and ancillary works, is fully permitted (planning ref: ACP 309773).
- 12 In relation to the transmission lines element of the consented development, two proposed underground single circuit 110kV transmission lines will connect the consented Peamount 110kV GIS Substation to the existing 2 no. single 110kV underground circuits within the Castlebaggot Kilmahud circuit to the east. The transmission lines as they are consented cover a distance of approximately 940m within the townlands of Milltown and Clutterland. They will pass underneath the R120, the former Nangor Road, Grifeen River and the newly realigned Baldonnel Road. The installation of these underground cables will require horizontal directional drilling (HDD) beneath the Baldonnel Road – former Nangor Road and Grifeen Road.

3.1 Description of the Proposed Amendments to the Consented Development

- 13 The proposed amendments to the consented development modifications to the permitted alignment of two 110 kV underground transmission lines, Circuit 01 Left and Circuit 02 Right, between the permitted GIS Substation, located centrally within the Dub40 site (permitted under SD20A/0058) and the proposed connection to the existing 110 kV circuits within the open field northeast of the Baldonnel Road / Old Nangor Road intersection. The proposed construction methodologies remain unchanged. The proposed alterations also included amendments to the permitted GIS Substation.
- 14 The current planning application therefore relates only to the proposed changes to the route of the transmission lines themselves and to the GIS substation.
- 15 The proposed Circuit 01 Left line largely follows the permitted alignment from the permitted GIS Substation traversing southeast through the Dub40 site access road, continuing northeast along the R120 (Peamount Road) and continuing southeast along Old Nangor Road with minor amendments to the alignment to avoid existing and proposed services within the Dub40 access road and R120 (Peamount Road). The proposed alignment then veers north of the permitted alignment and crosses under the Grifeen River and Baldonnel Road via HDD before performing a 180° 'U-bend' and rejoining the permitted alignment. Figure 1 and Figure 2 provide the proposed amended site boundary.
- 16 The proposed Circuit 02 Right amendments largely mirror the proposed changes to Circuit 01 Left, with minor amendments to the alignment along the Dub40 site access road and the R120 (Peamount Road) before veering north of the permitted alignment at and crossing under the Grifeen River and Baldonnel Road via HDD before performing a 180° 'U-bend' and rejoining the permitted alignment.
- 17 The proposed amendments are being proposed primarily due to existing and proposed services co-ordination within the Dub40 access road and the R120, with the realignment of the HDD crossing under the Grifeen River and Baldonnel Road due to the presence of deep services within Baldonnel Road that need to be avoided. While these changes result in a slight increase in the overall length of the proposed circuits, the length of HDD has decreased.
- 18 There will be no changes to the consented construction methodologies, including the HDD methodologies, as detailed within the original planning documentation as a result of the proposed amendments.
- 19 Table 1 below summarises the proposed alterations to the underground circuits, referencing both the permitted and proposed layouts.

Table 1: Permitted vs. proposed circuit lengths

Description	Description	Description
Permitted	Permitted	Permitted
Circuit 01 Left length	Circuit 01 Left length	Circuit 01 Left length
Proposed	Proposed	Proposed
946m	946m	946m
Circuit 02 Right length	Circuit 02 Right length	Circuit 02 Right length

20 The proposed amendments to the permitted GIS Substation comprise of the following:

- An overall footprint change from 48.1m x 14.88m to 43m x 15.88m
- Building height increase from 14.942m to 16.7m to match current Eirgrid requirements
- A change to the building façade to have a monotone colour for the building
- Addition of external stairs from the first floor for fire escape and Part B compliance
- Minor adjustments to doors, vents and general finish
- Updates to the general substation internal layout and details to match current Eirgrid requirements
- Adjustment of the palisade fence and footprint to match current Eirgrid requirements and inclusion of a perimeter concrete post and rail fence on 4 sides
- General updates to ducting
- Inclusion of lighting poles, interface kiosks and rural supply indicated on layouts

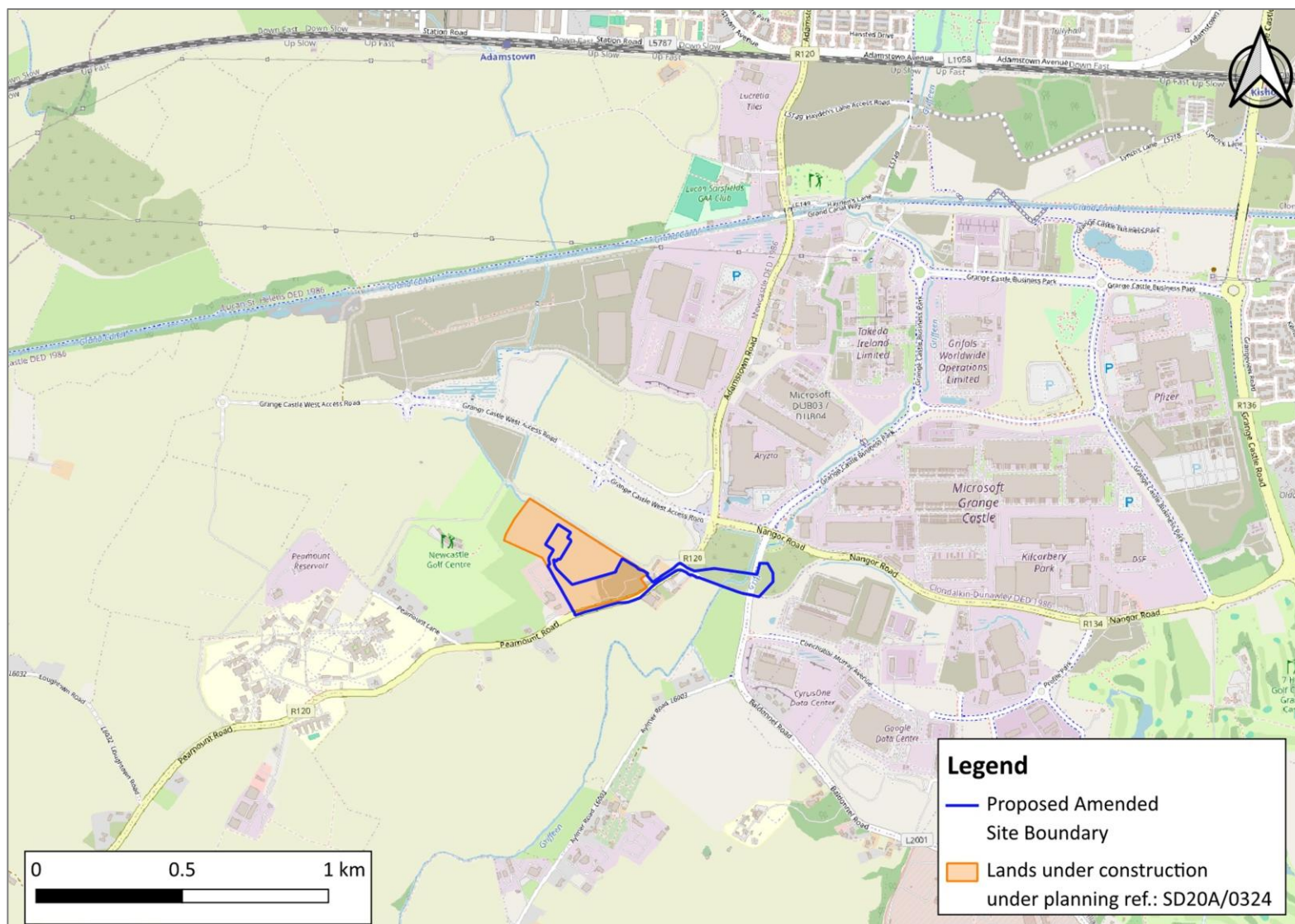


Figure 1: Location of the consented development and proposed amended site boundary

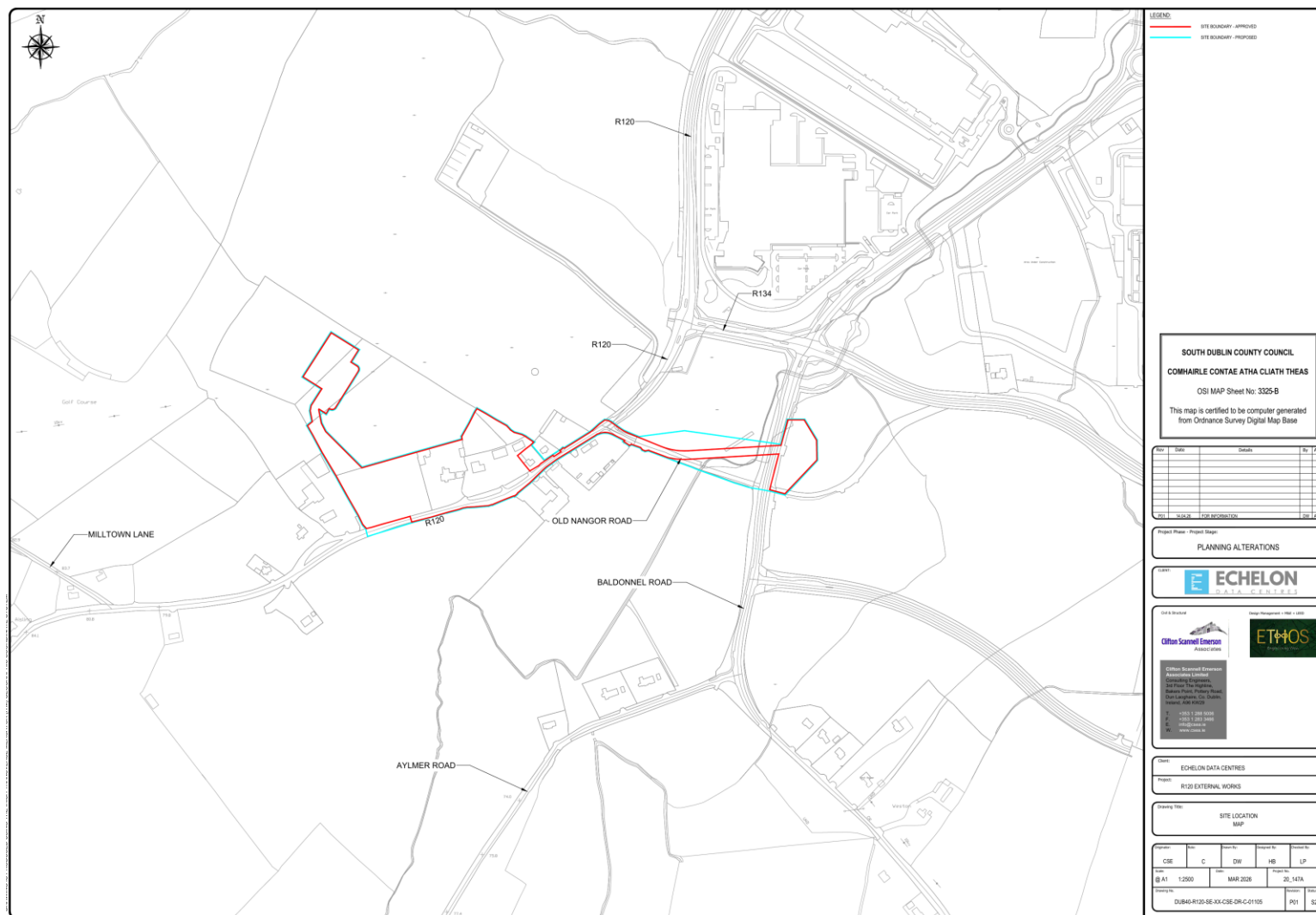


Figure 2: Site Location Map showing the boundary of the consented development and the proposed amended site boundary

4 Results

4.1 Results of Desk Study

- 21 The updated 2026 desktop study found no records of any species or habitats for which SACs listed in Appendix I were designated overlapping the subject lands or environs. NBDC records of SCI bird species (for which SPAs listed in Appendix I were designated) were returned within 2km of the site of the proposed amendments to the consented development¹¹. These species are shown in Table 2 below along with the nearest SPA for which they are SCIs for.

Table 2: BSBI records of SCI Species for SPAs within the potential Zone of Influence identified in the desktop study within a 2km radius of the site of the proposed amendments to the consented development

SCI Species	Nearest SPA	SPA Distance from Consented Development
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA [004024]	Approximately 17km east
Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>	North-west Irish Sea SPA [004236]	c. 21.3km east
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	North-West Irish Sea SPA	c. 21.3km east
Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	North Bull Island SPA [004006]	c. 19.5km east
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	North Bull Island SPA [004006]	c. 19.5km east
Great Black-backed Gull <i>Larus marinus</i>	North-West Irish Sea SPA	c. 21.3km east
Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i>	Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA	c. 15.4km south
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>	North-West Irish Sea SPA	c. 21.3km east
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA	c. 15.4km south
Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA [004024]	Approximately 17km east
Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	North Bull Island SPA [004006]	c. 19.5km east
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA [004024]	Approximately 17km east
Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA [004024]	Approximately 17km east
Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	North Bull Island SPA [004006]	c. 19.5km east

- 22 Records of invasive species were identified within the desktop study as listed in Table 3 below.

¹¹ According to NBDC online data [Home - Biodiversity Maps](#) accessed 7th April 2026 (this excludes NBDC records with a resolution greater or equal to 1km²).

Table 3: BSBI records of invasive species Identified in the desktop study within 2km of the consented development

Species	Impact
Plant	
Black Currant <i>Ribes nigrum</i>	Medium Impact Invasive
Giant Hogweed <i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	High Impact Invasive Listed on Third Schedule
Nuttall's Waterweed <i>Elodea nuttallii</i>	High Impact Invasive Listed on Third Schedule
Three-cornered Garlic <i>Allium triquetrum</i>	Medium Impact Invasive Listed on Third Schedule
Mammal	
Brown rat <i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	High Impact Invasive Listed on Third Schedule ¹²
House mouse <i>Mus musculus</i>	High Impact Invasive
Rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	Medium Impact Invasive
Sika deer <i>Cervus nippon</i>	High Impact Invasive Listed on Third Schedule
Invertebrate	
Oak processionary moth <i>Thaumetopoea processionea</i>	High Impact Invasive
Common garden snail <i>Cornu aspersum</i>	Medium Impact Invasive
Jenkins' spire snail <i>Potamopyrgus antipodarum</i>	Medium Impact Invasive
Sowerby's keeled slug <i>Tandonia sowerbyi</i>	Medium Impact Invasive
Wrinkled snail <i>Xeroplexa intersecta</i>	Medium Impact Invasive

4.2 Field Survey

4.2.1 Habitats

- 23 Habitat types within the consented development boundary are presented in Figures 3 and 4, and are described in the following sub-sections.

¹² Regulations 49 and 50 only apply to this non-native alien invasive species on offshore islands, as stated under the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2011/si/477/> [accessed 13/04/2026]

4.2.1.1 Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)

- 24 The existing roads within the site of the consented development were classified as BL3 i.e. along Peamount Road (R120), Old Nangor Road and Baldonnell Road, as well as the associated pedestrian pavements.

4.2.1.2 Amenity grassland (GA2)

- 25 Areas of amenity grassland were recorded along the roadside verges of Baldonnell Road. These areas are intensively managed and species poor. This habitat is comprised largely of grass species including Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris* was abundant and other weedy species present included White Clover *Trifolium repens* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. Bryophyte species recorded in this habitat included *Calliergonella cuspidata* and *Brachythecium rutabulum*.

4.2.1.3 Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)

- 26 GS2 type grassland was recorded along road verges as well as within the open field area on the northern side of the Old Nangor Road through which the proposed transmission lines are located.
- 27 Some evidence of livestock was noted within this area in the form of dung, however no grazing animals were present at the time of the survey, and the grass sward was becoming rank and tussocky. The sward comprised primarily grass species typical of less intensively managed grasslands, namely Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, with Red Fescue also recorded frequently. Herb species recorded included Broad-leaved Dock, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, Meadow Buttercup, Creeping Buttercup, Dandelion *Taraxacum vulgare* agg., White Clover, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*, Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* and Bush Vetch *Vicia sepium*. The bryophyte species, *Calliergonella cuspidata*, also occurred within the sward. Creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* ssp *verna* were additionally recorded in localised areas in the eastern part of the field on the western side of the River Grifeen. On the eastern side of the river, Rosebay Willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium* also occurred frequently. The area east of Baldonnell Road in the area of the consented connection into the existing grid also comprised GS2 habitat, as well as along the road verges of Peamount Road.

4.2.1.4 Spoil and bare ground (ED2)

- 28 The western lands within the site of the proposed amendments to the consented development (see Figure 1) comprise an active construction site for an associated data centre development (at the time of writing), and were classified as Spoil and bare ground ED2), see Plate 1. One building associated with the data centre development was substantially complete at the time of the survey.

4.2.1.5 Recolonising bare ground (ED3)

- 29 In areas where previously cleared / disturbed ground within the site of the consented development has been colonised by vegetation, such that this vegetation now comprises at least 50% of the ground cover, the habitat was classified as ED3. Opportunistic plant species recorded within these areas included Annual Meadow-grass, Cleavers, Dandelion, White Clover, Broadleaf Plantain *Plantago major*, Perennial Ryegrass, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and Broad-leaved Dock. This habitat also occurred along the route of a previously installed ESB underground cable through the grassland field north of Old Nangor Road, along which grass reinforcement gridding had been laid down (see Plate 7). Here the fill material was stony, and Common Birds-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* was also recorded in addition to other species described above.

4.2.1.6 Hedgerows (WL1)

- 30 Hedgerow habitat was recorded along the route of Peamount Road (R120) in places which form part of the proposed grid connection route. Hedgerows were typically dominated by hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, and/or bramble, with ivy *Hedera helix* also typically present. Hedgerows were typically bordered by Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2) or Amenity grassland (GA2) road verges.

4.2.1.7 Treelines (WL2)

- 31 A treeline was recorded within the site of the consented development along Peamount Road (R120), to the south of the junction with Old Nangor Road. This treeline comprises mature cypress species *Cupressus* sp., with white willow *Salix alba* also present. Ivy was frequently recorded growing on mature trees. Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Bramble and Hawthorn were also recorded within the treeline.
- 32 Planted trees along the eastern side of the Grifeen River were also categorised as treeline, although occurring just to the north of the site boundary. This feature included Alder as well as a number of Ash trees to the north of the consented development site, all of which were suffering from advanced stages of ash dieback.

4.2.1.8 Depositing/ lowland rivers (FW2)

- 33 The previously realigned section of the Grifeen River that traverses the site of the consented development runs below the Old Nangor Road and along the boundary of the grassland field here, in a generally north-easterly direction. At the time of verification survey, the nature of the river substrate was not apparent due to the fast flow of the river and high water levels. The river banks were near vertical in places, with the river having been subject to historic rerouting works as part of adjacent development. Vegetation recorded along the top of the river banks and margins included Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Creeping Bent grass, Soft Rush *Juncus effusus*, Meadowsweet and Hogweed.

4.2.1.9 Drainage ditches (FW4)

- 34 A small drainage ditch, approximately 1.5m wide, was identified within the consented development boundary, following the original course of the Grifeen River. The water here was stagnant and there was minimal to no flow. The feature was located within an area of dense scrub / immature woodland (WS1/ WS2).

4.2.1.10 Immature woodland (WS2)

- 35 An area of immature planted woodland was recorded on the western side of the realigned Grifeen River. This area of woodland was classified as WS2 as due to the immature nature of the majority of the trees, although some scattered older trees within the woodland were noted as being mature. Species recorded within this habitat included both immature and mature Birch spp., willow species *Salix* spp., Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, with dense Hawthorn and Bramble cover within the shrub layer. The ground flora comprised of abundant Hogweed and Ivy with Chickweed *Stellaria media*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum* and Rosebay Willowherb the most commonly recorded other species.
- 36 In addition to the above, a distinct area within the woodland comprised of planted Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Field Maple *Acer campestre*. There was no understorey present, within this area, with the ground cover comprising primarily Ivy and leaf litter with Nettle and Herb Robert also recorded frequently.

4.2.1.11 Scrub (WS1)

- 37 Scrub habitat was recorded in associated with the Grifeen River corridor. On the western side of the Grifeen River scrub habitat bordered the river and the immature woodland habitat where this occurred and generally comprised of dense Bramble, with Ivy and Hawthorn and Willow species *Salix* spp. On the eastern side of the Grifeen, the scrub habitat here was composed of ornamental dogwood species *Cornus* spp., Purple Willow *Salix purpurea* Corralberry *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus* and bramble.

4.2.2 Invasive and Protected Flora

- 38 No Third Schedule invasive species, or plant species protected under the Floral Protection Order, were recorded during the ecological verification survey.
- 39 A single occurrence of Butterfly Bush *Buddleja davidii* was recorded at the southern boundary of the site of the proposed development (see Figure 4). This is located outside of the proposed amended construction footprint. Sycamore was also recorded within immature woodland habitat. This species is naturalised in Ireland, and although considered a medium impact invasive species in some contexts¹³.

4.2.3 Birds

- 40 Birds species recorded during the ecological verification survey were Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, blackbird *Turdus merula*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*, jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*, reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* and skylark *Alauda arvensis*.

4.2.4 Bats

- 41 No trees or structures with any potential for bat roosting were recorded within the site of the proposed amendments to the consented development during the ecological verification survey, and the amended route of the transmission lines proposed will not result in impacts on any potentially suitable roosting features for bats.

4.2.5 Terrestrial Fauna

- 42 Evidence of red fox *Vulpes vulpes* was noted in the form of paths and scats during the ecological verification survey. No other evidence of terrestrial mammal species was recorded.

¹³ Kelly, J., O'Flynn, C., and Maguire, C. 2013. Risk analysis and prioritisation for invasive and non-native species in Ireland and Northern Ireland.



Plate 1: Western area of the site of the proposed amendments to the consented development viewed from the south (photograph dated 31st March 2026). At the time of writing the area comprises part of the active construction site for a separately consented data centre development at the site



Plate 2: Section of Peamount Road along the route of the transmission lines. The lands to the north of Peamount Road comprise an active construction site.



Plate 3: Junction of Peamount Road with the Old Nagor Road, on the route of the transmission lines.



Plate 4: Grassland field north of the Old Nangor Road along the route of the transmission lines.



Plate 5: Section of the redirected Grifeen River beneath which the proposed transmission lines will be instated.



Plate 6 : Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2), scrub (WS1) and Immature woodland (WS2) habitat along the route of the proposed amended route of the transmission lines



Plate 7: Recolonising bare ground (ED3) habitat along the route of a previously installed ESB underground cable through the grassland field north of Old Nangor Road, along which grass reinforcement gridding had been laid down

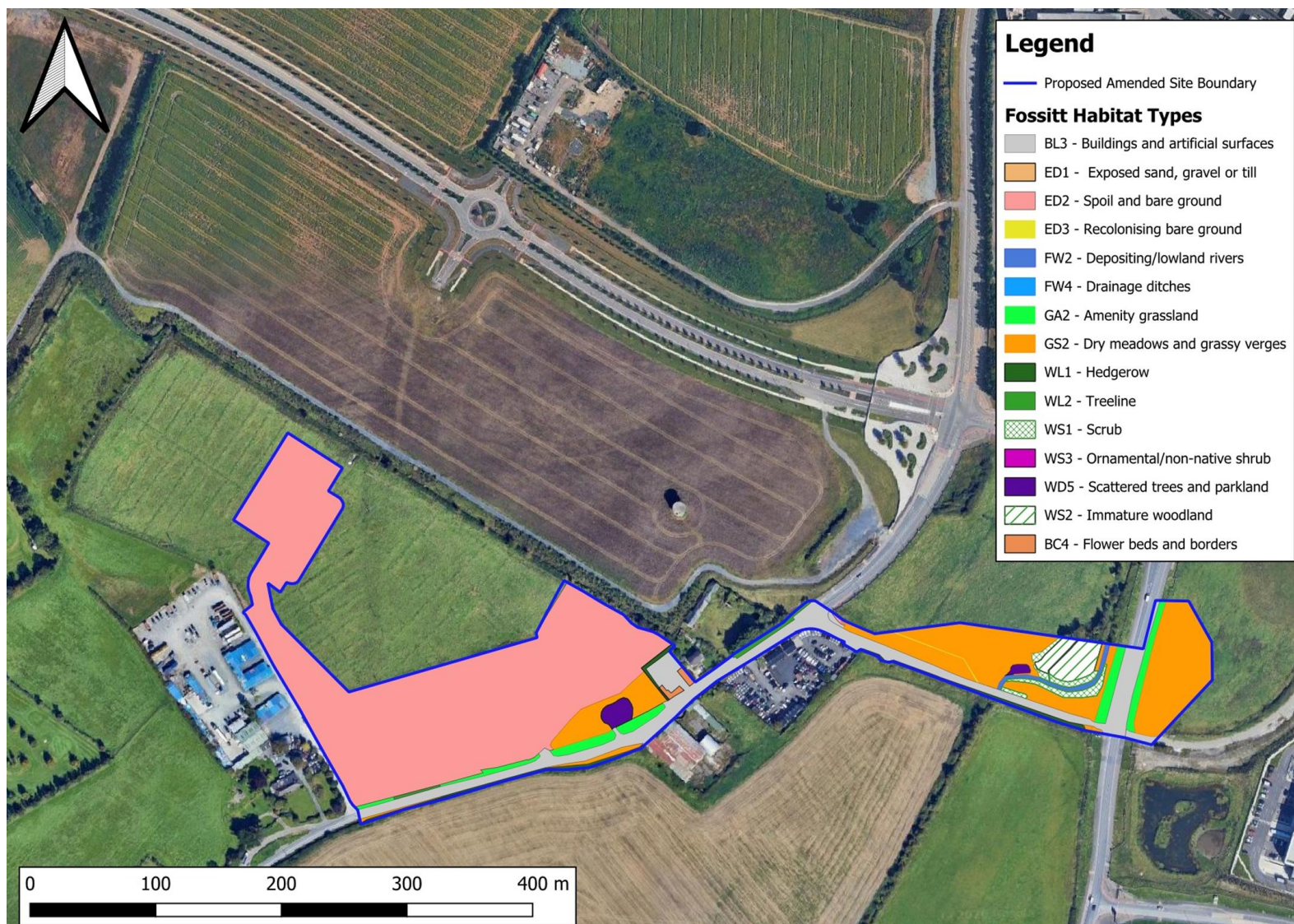


Figure 3: Habitats within the site of the proposed amendments to the consented development

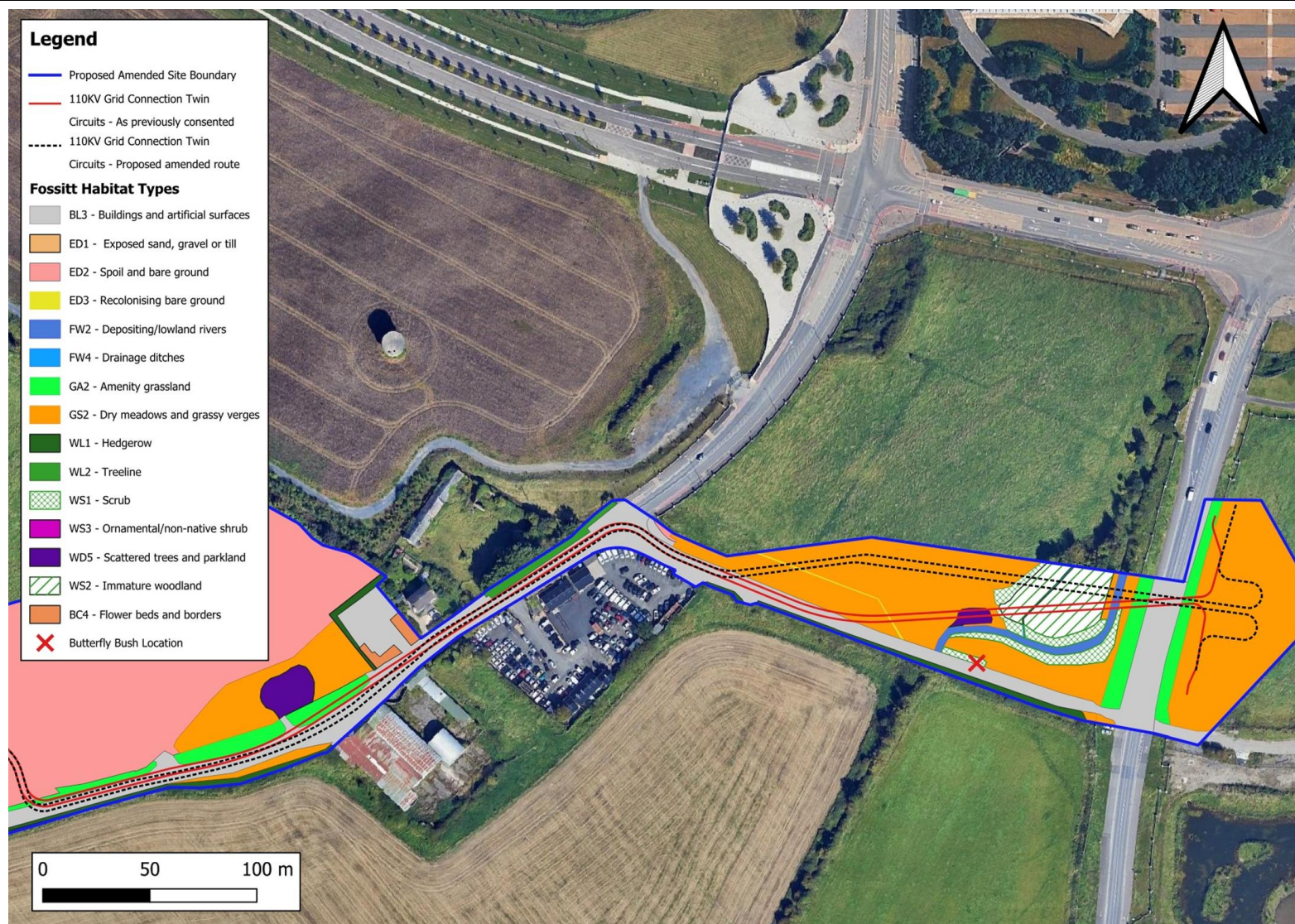


Figure 4: Habitats along the route of the transmission lines, showing the consented route (in red) and the proposed amended route (in black, dashed lines)

5 Discussion

- 43 This Technical Note provides the results of the 2026 multidisciplinary verification survey carried out to inform the proposed amendments to the consented development. The Biodiversity Chapter of the EIAR that accompanied the original planning application concluded that the consented development would not result in any significant residual impacts on the local bat or breeding bird populations. Nevertheless, due to the legal protection afforded to bats and breeding birds, mitigation measures were proposed in the EIAR to minimise the effects of site clearance, construction works and operational disturbance on these species.
- 44 There are no proposals to remove any hedgerows as part of the consented development, although two treelines and six individual trees contained within the eastern hedgerow were specified for removal in the EIAR to facilitate the now consented development. Mitigation measures were specified in the EIAR to avoid or minimise damage to trees and hedgerows to be retained within the consented development site, and will be adhered to during the construction phase. Additionally, the proposed planting of native trees, wildflower meadow and woodland understorey as part of the consented development will serve to enhance the biodiversity of the area in the medium to long-term.
- 45 The proposed amendments to the consented development will not result in any substantial changes to the residual impacts assessed within the original EIAR, as the proposed amendments constitute minor changes to the proposed GIS substation building within lands currently under construction as well as changes to the precise location, rather than extent, of vegetation to be removed along the route of the transmission lines, given that the amended route passes through similar habitats (see Figure 4). The loss of KER habitat proposed is will not differ in its nature and extent to that assessed within the original EIAR, comprising c. 2,078m² of dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2) habitat to be removed to allow for the connection of the proposed 110kV cables into the existing Castleboggot-Kilmahud circuit at the eastern end of the Proposed Development. In addition, approximately 197m of treeline (WL2) habitat will be removed along Peamount Road and will be compensated for, and ecological enhancement similarly achieved, through the planting of native trees, wildflower meadow and woodland understorey planting that is approved under the EIAR. Otherwise, the nature of the proposed below ground HDD methodology for the transmission lines will not result in any additional habitat loss.
- 46 No trees or structures with any potential for bat roosting were recorded within the site of the proposed amendments to the consented development during the ecological verification survey, and the amended route of the transmission lines proposed will not in any way meaningfully alter the assessment or the conclusions of the EIAR in relation to bats. The precautionary mitigation proposed in relation to these species in the EIAR remains valid and sufficient to ensure favourable conservation status and their lawful protection under the relevant legislation.
- 47 No evidence of otter, badger or any other protected terrestrial mammal species was recorded during the ecological verification survey.
- 48 In addition to the above, approved mitigation measures will be carried out under the EIAR to prevent any pollution to surface waters in the vicinity of the consented development site. These mitigation measures remain valid, and the proposed amended route of the transmission lines intersects with the Grifeen River in close proximity (within c. 10m) of the previously consented location (see Figure 4). No changes to the HDD methodology that will be employed to instate the lines beneath the watercourse is proposed.

6 Conclusion

- 49 Given the minor changes proposed to the consented development, the current habitats recorded on site within the footprint of the proposed amendments to the consented development and the absence of any additional ecological constraints identified during the 2026 verification survey, the ecological mitigation proposed within the EIAR for the consented development (i.e. in relation to Key Ecological Receptors (KERs) which comprise designated sites, habitat loss surface water quality, bats, breeding birds) is considered to be sufficient to ensure that the proposed amendments to the consented development would not cause any significant residual effects on any KERs at any geographic scale.

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- 50 The baseline (as verified by the ecological verification survey) was re-assessed for potential significant impacts as a result of the proposed amendments. It was found that there were no substantial changes to the baseline in terms of new key ecological receptors recorded, and the proposed amendments do not introduce any potential for new significant effects on the verified baseline. The approved mitigation measures as set out in the original EIAR remain applicable to the consented development (and to the proposed amendments). As a result, the conclusions of the original EIAR remain the same and it can be concluded that there will be no significant impacts on biodiversity as a result of the proposed amendments once the suite of mitigation measures as set out in the original EIAR are implemented.