

# Chapter 3: Application Site and Surrounding Area

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# 3 Application Site and Surrounding Context

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the application site location, existing land uses and features. It also provides an overview of the wider area to place it in the context of its surrounding environment. Greater detail on the existing baseline environment is provided in the baseline conditions sections contained within the technical chapters of this volume of the ES (chapters 7 to 12), as well as in ES Volumes III and IV.

## 3.2 Site Location & Surrounding Context

The application site is located in the Borough of Wrexham, in north Wales, within the administrative boundary of Wrexham County Borough Council (CBC). It is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SJ 38557 51096 and is situated approximately 4.6 km east of the centre of Wrexham and 2.8 km west of the border with England. The location of the application site is shown in **Figure 3.2.1**.

The application site is located immediately north of Bryn Lane and Wrexham Industrial Estate. Wrexham Industrial Estate is the UK's second-largest industrial estate comprising an area of over 500 hectares (ha) and is recognised as both a regionally and nationally important employment area. As discussed in Chapter 1 *Introduction*, the application site is proposed as an employment allocation under Policy SP11 of the emerging LDP, as allocation reference KSS3 'Land to the north of Bryn Lane, Wrexham Industrial Estate'. Wrexham CBC has decided not to adopt the plan at this stage, however it remains a material consideration with significant weight, as it has been found sound by a Planning Inspector.

The application site is bound to the north by Francis' Lane, to the east by existing field boundaries and a public right of way, to the south by Bryn Lane, and to the west by Hugmore Lane and Industrial Estate Road. The area beyond the application site to the north and east primarily consists of agricultural land comprised of arable fields separated by hedgerows with intermittent trees. The area beyond the application site to the south and west comprises buildings associated with Wrexham Industrial Estate.

There are a number of residential dwellings in the surrounding area, the closest of which are located along Hugmore Road, adjacent to the western boundary of the application site.

## 3.3 Historical Use of the Application Site

The application site is located within the parish of Gresford and includes the historic boundary between the townships of Holt and Ridley. Available historic mapping, including mid-19th century maps, show that in the late post-medieval period, the application site and much of the surrounding area was agricultural fields comprising a mix of meadow, arable, and pasture use. The field system shown on this historic mapping is still marked out by hedgerows which remain extant within and delineating the application site. By 1992, two residential buildings had been developed on-site, which remain today (Honeysuckle Cottage and Little Acorns).

## 3.4 Recent Planning History

A recent search of Wrexham CBC's online planning register has been undertaken and no planning applications relevant to the application site have been identified.

## 3.5 Current Application Site Use and Features

### 3.5.1 Overview of the Current Site Use

The application site is 37.21 ha in size and predominantly comprises arable land, separated into eight fields by a mix of intact and defunct hedgerows lined with intermittent trees.

There are two residential properties (Honeysuckle Cottage and Little Acorns) located within the application site. Honeysuckle Cottage is located adjacent to the northern site boundary. It is accessed from Francis Lane and is owned by the Applicant. Little Acorns is located close to the southern site boundary and is accessed from Bryn Lane. Little Acorns includes a residential building and barn structures, which are currently in use and also in the Applicant's ownership.

The application site also includes the Industrial Estate Road / Bryn Lane / Ash Road North / Abenbury Way roundabout in the south-western corner, as well as parts of the highway along Bryn Lane where access points to the application site are proposed (see Chapter 4 *Proposed Development*).

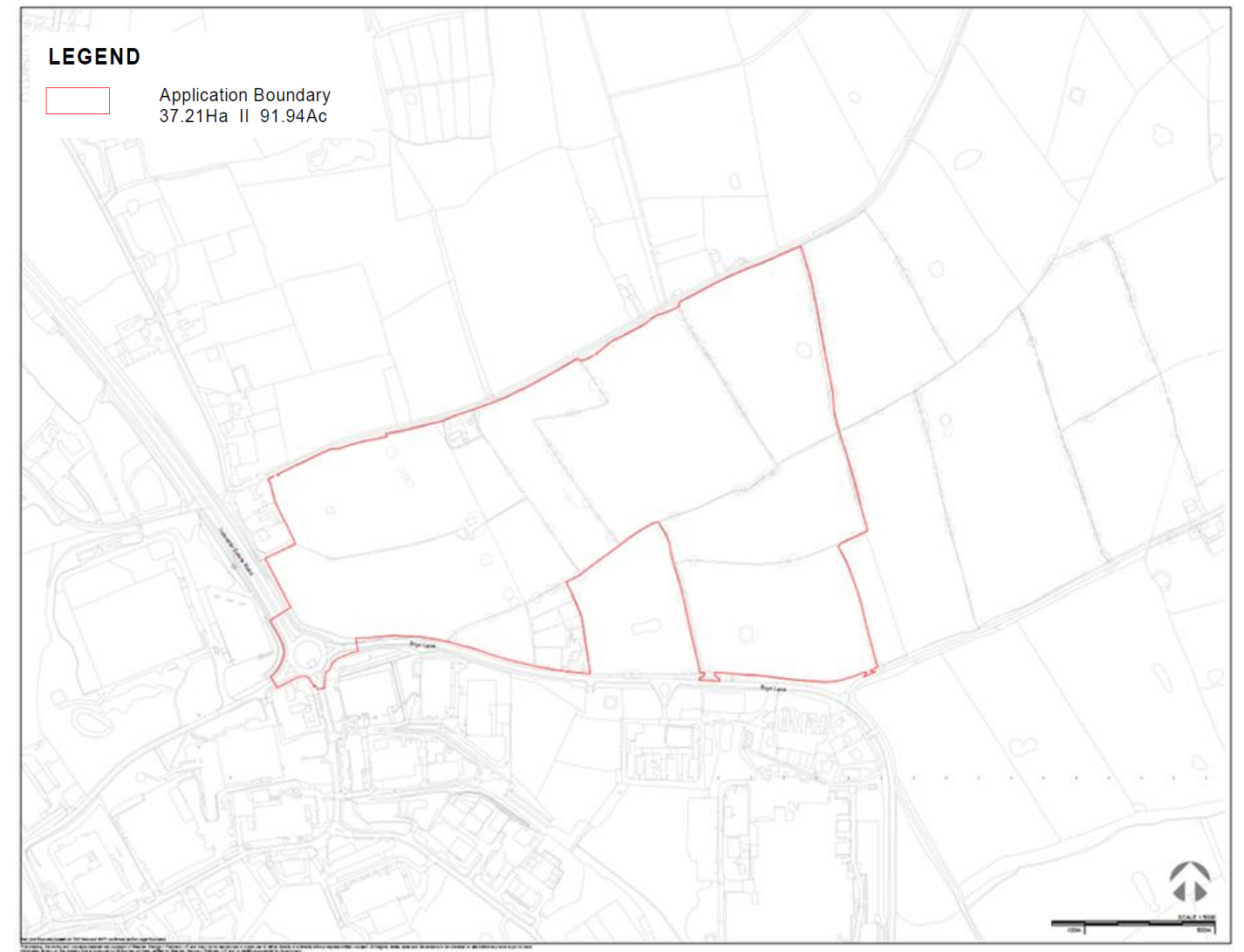


Figure 3.2.1  
Site Location Plan

## 3.6 Application Site Environmental Context

### 3.6.1 Topography

The application site gently slopes to the east. The land slopes from approximately 40 m Above Ordnance Datum (m AOD) in the west to between 27 m AOD and 31 m AOD in the east and northeast, which follows the general topographical trend in the surrounding area.

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## 3.6.2 Transport

### Highway Network

The application site is well connected to the highway network. The A534, a 70 mile per hour (mph) dual carriageway that provides connections between the centre of Wrexham (via Stryt Holt) and North Wales and the Cheshire, is located less than 1 km north of the application site and is accessed via the Industrial Estate Road to the west of the application site.

The A5156, a 70 mph dual carriageway connects to the A483 Junction 6. The A5156 is located approximately 2.3 km north-west of the application site. The onward connection to the A483 (Junction 6) provides access to Chester to the north-east and Owestry to the south.

Vehicular access to the application site is currently provided via access roads linking the residential properties with Francis Lane (Honeysuckle Cottage) and Bryn Lane (Little Acorns).

### Public & Sustainable Transport

There are bus stops within walking distance of the application site that are served by Bus Routes 41 & 42W, which provide services to and from Wrexham City Centre. The bus stops on Abbey Road and Ash Road North are located approximately 550 m and 650 m walking distance from the application site, respectively.

Wrexham Central and Wrexham General Train Stations are located within Wrexham City Centre, just under 10 km from the application site. Both Stations are served by Transport for Wales and provide services between Newport in south Wales and Bidston in Liverpool.

Further information on the transport conditions at the application site and in the surrounding area is provided in the ES Volume II, Chapter 8 *Transport*.

## 3.6.3 Geology and Hydrogeology

According to British Geological Survey maps, the application site is not located within an area of artificial ground. However, given the history of development on part the application site and the potential for historically infilled ponds, the presence of localised Made Ground within the application site is anticipated. The Groundsure report obtained for the application site identifies land immediately south of the application site as ‘Landscaped Ground’.

The application site is underlain by superficial deposits of Devensian Till – Diamicton. This is identified to be a Secondary (undifferentiated) Aquifer. Nearby British Geological Survey (BGS) logs from an area to the south-east indicate that the Till may be approximately 38 m below ground level (bgl) whilst BGS logs from an area to the north-west indicate the Clay extends to a depth of approximately 26 m bgl.

The western and northern/north-western parts of the application site are shown to be underlain by the Kinnerton Sandstone Formation. The eastern and south-eastern parts of the application site are shown to be underlain by the Salop Formation comprising mudstone. The Kinnerton Sandstone Formation is a Principal Aquifer, and the Salop Sandstone Formation is a Secondary A Aquifer. Both of these aquifers underlying the application site have low vulnerability.

There is a Source Protection Zone (SPZ) Total Catchment 3 (an area defined around large and public potable groundwater abstraction sites) located beneath the application site associated with the Principal Aquifer; however, the thickness of cohesive Till above this is considered to provide sufficient protection from any shallow contaminants of potential concern.

Further information on the ground conditions at the application site is provided in ES Volume II, Chapter 12 *Ground Conditions & Contamination* and ES Volume IV, Appendix 12.1 *Preliminary Risk Assessment*.

## 3.6.4 Surface Water & Flood Risk

### Hydrology

The application site lies within the River Dee catchment. The River Dee itself is located approximately 3.1 km east from the application site and the nearest surface water feature to the site comprises an underground water course approximately 110

m west. The closest above ground watercourse is an unnamed tributary of the River Dee located approximately 135 – 225 m south of the application site and flows towards the north-east and the River Dee.

The catchment is designated as a Phosphorus Sensitive Special Area of Conservation (SAC) associated with the River Dee. Available mapping shows that annual mean orthophosphate concentrations for the River Dee within the vicinity of the application site are low.

The application site is not located within 2 km of either a Nitrate Sensitive Area or Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.

### Flood Risk

The Natural Resources Wales Flood Risk Map shows that the site is not at risk of fluvial or tidal flooding.

Natural Resources Wales Flood Risk Maps indicate that the majority of the application site has a very low risk of surface water flooding with a chance of flooding of less than 1 in 1000 years (0.1%) in any year, including the effects of climate change. However, small areas of the application site have a low risk of surface water flooding with a chance of flooding of between 1 in 1000 (0.1%) and greater than 1 in 100 (1%) years, including the effects of climate change. This is associated with low spots on the application site.

Based on the underlying geological conditions, the susceptibility of the application site to groundwater flooding is low and there are no records of groundwater flooding at or near to the application site.

Further information on flood risk is provided in the Flood Consequence Assessment, submitted alongside the planning application.

## 3.6.5 Archaeology

The geophysical survey undertaken for the application site has detected a number of magnetic anomalies expected to be features associated mainly with an agricultural landscape including former field boundaries, medieval/post-medieval ridge and furrow cultivation, ponds and/or marls pits and a handful of land drains. These are considered to be of a low heritage significance.

Additionally, a review of known baseline conditions, supported by geophysical survey, indicates that that there is a low potential for archaeological remains pre-dating the medieval period to be present within the application site. Should they be present, it is considered that any such remains would likely consist of individual findspots of low heritage significance.

Further information on the archaeological potential of the application site is provided in the Heritage Impact Assessment report that accompanies the planning application.

## 3.6.6 Built Heritage

There are no designated built heritage assets recorded within the application site and there are no World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Historic Landscapes, Conservation Areas, Registered Battlefields or Registered Parks and Gardens recorded within a 1 km radius of the application site boundary.

Three Grade II Listed Buildings are located within 1 km of the application site. These are:

- Cornish Hall, located approximately 1 km north-east of the application site;
- New Hold Lodge Farm, approximately 200 m north-west of the application site; and
- Erlas Hall, approximately 780 m west of the application site.

The following non-designated heritage assets are located within the application site:

- A single post-medieval homestead, (now the site of Honeysuckle cottage) (NDHA 88) is located along the northern boundary of the application site; the site of this asset is visible on the 1843 Tithe map and the Honeysuckle Cottage currently present within the application site retains this asset’s historic bounds; however is a modern replacement of the earlier structure;
- A single historic asset dated to the modern period, consisting of an aircraft crash site (NHA94);

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- Upstanding areas of ridge and furrow which is assigned to the medieval or post-medieval periods (NDHA12-14);
- 12 surviving and infilled marl pits and ponds (NDHS72-84); and
- 12 hedgerows which have been assessed as Important in accordance with the Hedgerow Regulations (1).

Within a 1 km radius of the application site, there are no known non-designated heritage assets pre-dating the medieval period. Non-designated heritage assets from the medieval period are predominantly associated with agricultural activity including the remains of ridge and furrow. The post-medieval period is most heavily represented in the baseline record and predominantly comprises built heritage in the form of farms and farm buildings.

### 3.6.7 Landscape Designations

The application site and its setting are not subject to any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations.

Natural Resources Wales produced a countrywide landscape character assessment in 2014 resulting in the published National Character Areas map of Wales. The map identifies 48 individual character areas, which are large tracts of countryside with regionally distinct natural, cultural and perceptual characteristics.

This National Landscape Character Area assessment places the application site on the boundary between National Landscape Character Area (NLCA) 13 Deeside and Wrexham, which covers the existing industrial estate and the south-western part of the application site, and NLCA 14 Maelor, which covers the land between NLCA 13 to the west and the River Dee corridor to the east.

The majority of the application site is not accessible to the public, although Public Footpaths Isycoed 6 and Holt 26 follow the northern two thirds of the application site's eastern boundary, inside the application site. This route then exits the application site to cross a small field before terminating at Ridleywood Road.

The key characteristics of 'NLCA 13 Deeside and Wrexham' are as follows:

- Predominantly mature, lowland countryside;
- Some areas offer a sense of seclusion due to agricultural enclosure interplaying with trees, woodlands and small river valleys;
- A singular large river, the River Dee, traverses the landscape;
- Mixed pasture with some arable and farm woodland cover;
- Strongly settled character within urban settlements in the central and southern regions of the area;
- Industrial character in particular areas;
- Small settlements outside of urban areas, in particular compact villages associated with landed estates and isolated farmsteads; and
- Broad floodplain adjacent to the Dee Estuary.

The key characteristics of 'NLCA 14 Maelor' are as follows:

- Flood plain or rolling lowland;
- Intensively farmed, rural agricultural character with much arable land and parkland;
- Mixed native hedgerows with hedgerow trees;
- Mid to large scale field pattern;
- Small scale deciduous farm woodland, with these small blocks interspersed with farmland;
- Medieval field patterns;
- Small, rural village settlements including compact nucleated hamlets; and
- Unified agricultural landscape made up of a variety of land cover elements such as pasture, woodland and marsh.

Further information on the landscape character areas in the area surrounding the application site is contained in ES Volume III *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*.

### 3.6.8 Biodiversity

#### Designated Sites

The following internationally designated wildlife sites are located within 10 km of the application site:

- Afon Dyfrdwy a Llyn Tegid (River Dee and Bala Lake) Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (in both Wales and England), located approximately 3.1 km east of the application site. It is designated for its riverine habitat and species including bullhead *Cottus gobio*, river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*, sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*, Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*, otter and floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*.
- Midlands Meres and Mosses Ramsar, located approximately 3.5 km north-west of the application site, designated for its wetland habitats and associated rare plants and invertebrate populations;
- Johnstown Newt Sites SAC, located approximately 8 km south of the application site, designated for its population of Great Crested Newts (GCN);

The following statutory designated site of national importance are located within 5 km of the application site:

- Afon Dyfrdwy (River Dee) SSSI (in both Wales and England), located approximately 3.1 km east of the application site and underpins the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC designation. It is designated for its geomorphological and geological interest, as well as its habitats and populations of floating water-plantain, slender hare's-ear *Bupleurum tenuissimum*, sea barley *Hordeum marinum*, hard-grass *Parapholis strigosa*, otter, Atlantic salmon, bullhead, brook lamprey, river lamprey, sea lamprey, club-tailed dragonfly *Gomphus vulgatissimus* and other aquatic invertebrates;
- River Dee (England) SSSI is located approximately 3.5 km to the north-east of the site and forms part of the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC (England). It is designated for its geomorphology, river habitats as well as its populations of Atlantic salmon, otter and club-tailed dragonfly;
- Vicarage Moss SSSI is located approximately 3.7 km to the north-west of the application site and is designated for its geomorphological and botanical interest, in particular the basin mire habitat on-site;
- Dee Cliffs, Farndon SSSI is located approximately 4.3 km to the north-east of the application site and is designated for its geological interest;
- Sontley Marsh SSSI is located approximately 4.7 km to the south-east of the application site and is designated for its mesotrophic mire habitat; and
- Marford Quarry SSSI is located approximately 5.0 km to the north-west of the application site and is designated for its populations of butterfly and moth species, which are associated with the calcareous plant communities on-site.

The application site falls within a Natural England Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Dee Cliffs, Farndon SSSI and Vicarage Moss SSSI. Although IRZs are applicable to England, they may extend into Wales for sites close to the border.

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

There are three non-statutory locally designated sites within 2 km of the application site. These are:

- Wrexham Industrial Estate Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is located approximately 0.6 km to the south of the application site. The reason for designation of this site is unknown, but habitats present include grassland and ancient woodland;
- Cefn Park LWS is located approximately 1.3 km to the south-west of the application site. The reason for designation of this site is unknown but the habitats on site comprise broad-leaved woodland; and
- Borrass Wood North LWS is located approximately 1.6 km to the north of the application site. The reason for designation of this site is unknown, but the application site contains ancient woodland habitats.

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## Habitats & Species

The following habitat types were identified at the application site and on adjacent land during the Phase 1 Habitat Surveys undertaken in December 2021 and March 2023:

- Semi-natural broadleaved woodland;
- Native hedgerows;
- Scattered trees;
- Veteran trees;
- Standing water (Of the seven ponds on-site, two have been identified as S7 habitat due to the known presence of GCN);
- Semi-natural broadleaved woodland;
- Arable land;
- Semi-improved neutral grassland;
- Poor semi-improved grassland;
- Modified neutral grassland;
- Amenity grassland;
- Dense scrub;
- Tall ruderal;
- Ditches;
- Introduced shrub;
- Bare ground with ephemeral/short perennial vegetation;
- Buildings & hardstanding.

Based on a review of desk based data, the following species have been identified within 2 km of the application site:

- Great crested newt (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*) and other priority (Section 7 (S7)) amphibian species;
- Bats;
- Badger (*Meles meles*);
- Breeding birds (protected & notable birds);
- Wintering birds (protected & notable birds);
- Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*);
- Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*); and
- Polecat (*Mustela putorius*).

Whilst the desk study returned no record of lesser silver water beetles (LSWB) (*Hydrochara caraboides*) within 2km of the application site, the ponds surveyed during the extended Phase 1 habitat survey were identified as having the potential to support aquatic invertebrates species.

Further information on the ecological baseline is provided within ES Volume II, Chapter 11 *Biodiversity*.

## Arboriculture

The arboricultural surveys undertaken in February 2022, March 2022 and March 2023 identified 122 individual trees, 17 tree groups and 25 hedges equating to approximately 1.55 ha of canopy cover and 4.83 km of hedgerow in the application site and

directly adjacent, such that at least part of the root protection area (RPA) falls within the application site. Of these, 26 features are high quality (Category A), 73 are moderate quality (Category B), 36 are low quality (Category C) and four are poor quality (Category U). The trees are mostly broadleaved with pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* the dominant species. The trees are mostly mature and the most substantial area of continuous canopy cover is along the eastern application site boundary.

One tree in the centre of the application site has been identified as veteran. One further tree outside of the application site boundary to the south-east on the opposite side of Ridleywood Road has also been identified as veteran. Although outside of the application boundary, the construction exclusion zone (CEZ) partially overlaps with the application site boundary.

The desk study identified no Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within the application site boundary but trees on the opposite side of Ridleywood Road are protected by TPO no. 60 1991. There are no Conservation Areas or Ancient Woodland within the application site.

There are 25 hedgerows within the application site. All of these are native and over 20 m in length so qualify as a S7 habitat. Two of them contain sufficient native woody species and associated features to be classified as ‘Important’ under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 (1).

## 3.6.9 Air Quality

As required by the Environment Act (1995), Wrexham CBC has undertaken review and assessment of air quality within their area of jurisdiction. This process has indicated that concentrations of all pollutants considered within the Air Quality Strategy are currently below the relevant Air Quality Objectives (AQOs). As such, no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) have been designated within the county borough.

Air quality diffusion tube monitoring results obtained from the 2021 Air Quality Progress Report (Wood Group UK Limited) show the NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at representative monitoring locations in the vicinity of the application site to be well below the AQO of 40µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, the baseline concentrations for particle matter smaller than 10 microns (PM<sub>10</sub>) and 2.5 microns (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) at the application site, and the receptors surrounding the application site, are also below the relevant AQOs of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and Interim Target of 12 µg/m<sup>3</sup> respectively. Further information on the current air quality conditions at the application site and in the surrounding area is provided in Chapter 9 *Air Quality*, ES Volume II.

## 3.6.10 Noise & Vibration

Noise monitoring was carried out at nine locations across the application site and surrounding area between 26 October 2021 and 02 November 2021. This comprised unattended noise monitoring at three locations for a period of 166 hours and attended short-term noise measurements being undertaken at six locations during the day, evening and night.

The results of this monitoring found the ambient noise climate at the site and surrounding area is dominated by road traffic noise, with the primary sources of this noise relating to Bryn Lane, the A534, Francis Lane and Industrial Estate Lane. Further information on the noise and vibration baseline is provided within Chapter 10 *Noise and Vibration*, ES Volume II.

## 3.7 Works Cited

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