

TECHNICAL NOTE



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Environmental Consultants

To: Laura Cherry, MJCA
From: Jan Wilkinson
Date: 13th July 2020
Subject: Borrass Quarry – Planings Application

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Introduction

Wilkinson Associates was commissioned by MJCA, on behalf of Breedon Southern Limited (Breedon) to carry out an ecology survey and provide technical advice in connection with an application for planning permission for the importation, processing and storage of road planings at Borrass Quarry and the importation and storage of bitumen coated asphalt chippings (pre-coated chippings).

This Technical Note summarises the findings of the survey and presents an assessment of the ecological status of the development area, which is located adjacent to the northern boundary in the eastern part of Borrass Airfield (the southern part section of Borrass Quarry). Particular reference is made to the status of great crested newts (GCN) at Borrass Quarry in general, and within Borrass Airfield specifically. The context for this is briefly explained below.

The proposal

In brief, the proposal is to import, store and recycle up to 74,999 tonnes per annum of road planings and import and store up to 5,000 tonnes per annum of pre-coated chippings. The proposal will use the existing access road through the site and into the proposed development area. The planing stockpile will be approximately 60m by 30m and no more than 5m high. An existing mobile crusher and screen will remain on site to process the planings. The crushing and screening process will produce Reclaimed Asphalt Pavement (RAP) which will be transferred to a storage structure which is to be constructed on site (approximately 40m by 20m by 10m).

The pre-coated chippings will be stored in four storage bays in the northern part of the proposed development area.

Historical records of GCN at Borrass Quarry

A comprehensive programme of ecological surveys was carried out at Borrass Quarry in 2003 in association with a planning application for a northern extension to the Quarry; this is the current Holt Estate part of the Site, lying to the north of Borrass Airfield. The surveys included GCN presence/absence and population surveys of all ponds, lagoons and waterbodies within the Site boundary as well as a number of off-site ponds. Although now considerably out of date, these survey data have been uploaded to the North Wales Environmental Information Service database (Cofnod) and they form the basis of the GCN records shown on the database.

Additional GCN monitoring surveys of selected ponds were carried out in 2015 and 2018, focusing mainly on the known GCN ponds in and around the Holt Estate but including several other ponds as appropriate. The main GCN population at Borrás Quarry is centred on a large pool adjacent to the northern boundary of the Holt Estate, known as Vicarage Gorse (Pond 9). Regular monitoring is carried out of this pond plus two others in the same group (Ponds 7 and 8, which were restored by Tarmac in 2009). All of the recorded GCN ponds in and around the Holt Estate are more than 500m from the current application area, and all except for Pond 8 are more than 1 km away.

Borrás Airfield has fewer GCN records compared with the Holt Estate, and most of it offers little in the way of suitable terrestrial or aquatic habitat. The exception is an area of restored woodland in the southern part of the Airfield, associated with the Millenium Eco Centre, where two ponds are present; however, when surveyed in 2018 one of these was dry and the other was almost dry and unsuitable for breeding GCN. This area lies more than 250m from the proposed development site. There are no previous GCN records from within a 250m zone surrounding the development area.

Figure 1 shows the location of the ponds mentioned in this brief summary of the GCN records at Borrás Quarry and Table 1 summarises the survey results since 2003.

Survey methods

An ecological survey was carried out on 27th May 2020 by Jan Wilkinson, an experienced ecologist who has had a long association with Borrás Quarry since 2003 and is familiar with the whole site. A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out within the proposed development area and particular attention was paid to areas of semi-natural vegetation on the boundaries and any areas that could potentially attract or support GCN.

In addition, all waterbodies within 250m of the proposed development area boundary were inspected for their potential to support breeding GCN. Two of these (Ponds 2 and 3 on Figure 1) had been surveyed in the 2003 surveys mentioned above, with negative results. The current survey comprised a visual inspection of each waterbody as far as possible (access constraints for each waterbody are described in the results section), and particular note was made of any terrestrial habitat links/ connectivity between the ponds and the development area.

Phase 1 habitat survey results

The Phase 1 habitat survey results are shown in Figure 2. Target Notes and photographs describing the habitats and features are given in Table 2. The following description is a summary of the survey findings.

Almost the whole of the proposed development area comprises concrete hardstanding, with a Tarmac access road running along the eastern side (see Target Notes 1 and 5). The area is currently used for car parking, and there are low soil bunds separating some of the parking areas. These comprise dry, sandy soil with some rubble/aggregate and support only a sparse growth of ephemeral and ruderal vegetation.

The only significant areas of vegetation development are around the northern and part of the western boundaries. These include part of a larger perimeter screening plantation in the north east corner (Target Note 2), a band of bramble-dominated scrub on the northern boundary, and two discontinuous groups of trees on the western boundary. These areas have either been planted or

allowed to develop on dry, free-draining sandy soil and on bunds. They offer very little suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN owing to a lack of ground covering vegetation.

Assessment of waterbodies within 250m

There are four waterbodies within a 250m radius of the development area boundaries:

- Target Note 6 is a small drainage sump (approximately 3m x 3m) inside a chainlink fence. It comprises a sandy hollow with a small wet area in the base (approximately 1.5-2m across) with very shallow (approximately 2 cm) water which was drying out rapidly. There is some bulrush and hard rush with willows and birch on the banks. There is no aquatic vegetation and the sump is completely unsuitable for breeding GCN.
- Target Note 7 is a slightly larger drainage sump (approximately 8m x 5m) on the edge of the perimeter screening plantation, here including sycamore, ash and hawthorn. The sump was rapidly drying out and contained only extremely shallow water, with a sandy base visible. There is no aquatic vegetation and the sump is completely unsuitable for breeding GCN. The sump was surveyed for GCN in 2003 (negative) and is shown as Pond 2 on Figure 1.
- Target Note 8 is drainage swale in a deep hollow, surrounded by tarmac and concrete and lying adjacent to the main quarry access road. It contains no aquatic or marginal vegetation and had a very low water level at the time of survey (approximately 5 cm). The base appears to be gravel and the lower banks were largely bare. There are some trees and sparse vegetation around the tops of the banks. This swale was surveyed for GCN in 2003 (negative) and is shown as Pond 3 on Figure 1.
- Target Note 9 is a previously unsurveyed off-site pond situated in the garden of Borrás Hall. Access could not be directly gained to the pond, but it could be seen from the adjacent arable field and it was almost dry, with no open water visible. It is considered to be unsuitable for GCN. There is a partial habitat connectivity link between the garden and the edge of the perimeter screening plantation in the form of a hedgerow/narrow planted tree belt.

None of these waterbodies are considered to have any potential to support breeding GCN. The nearest recorded GCN pond is almost 1 km to the north west of the development area. Given the poor suitability of the habitats within the development area for terrestrial GCN, the risk of GCN being adversely affected by the proposal is considered to be minimal.

Wider quarry issues

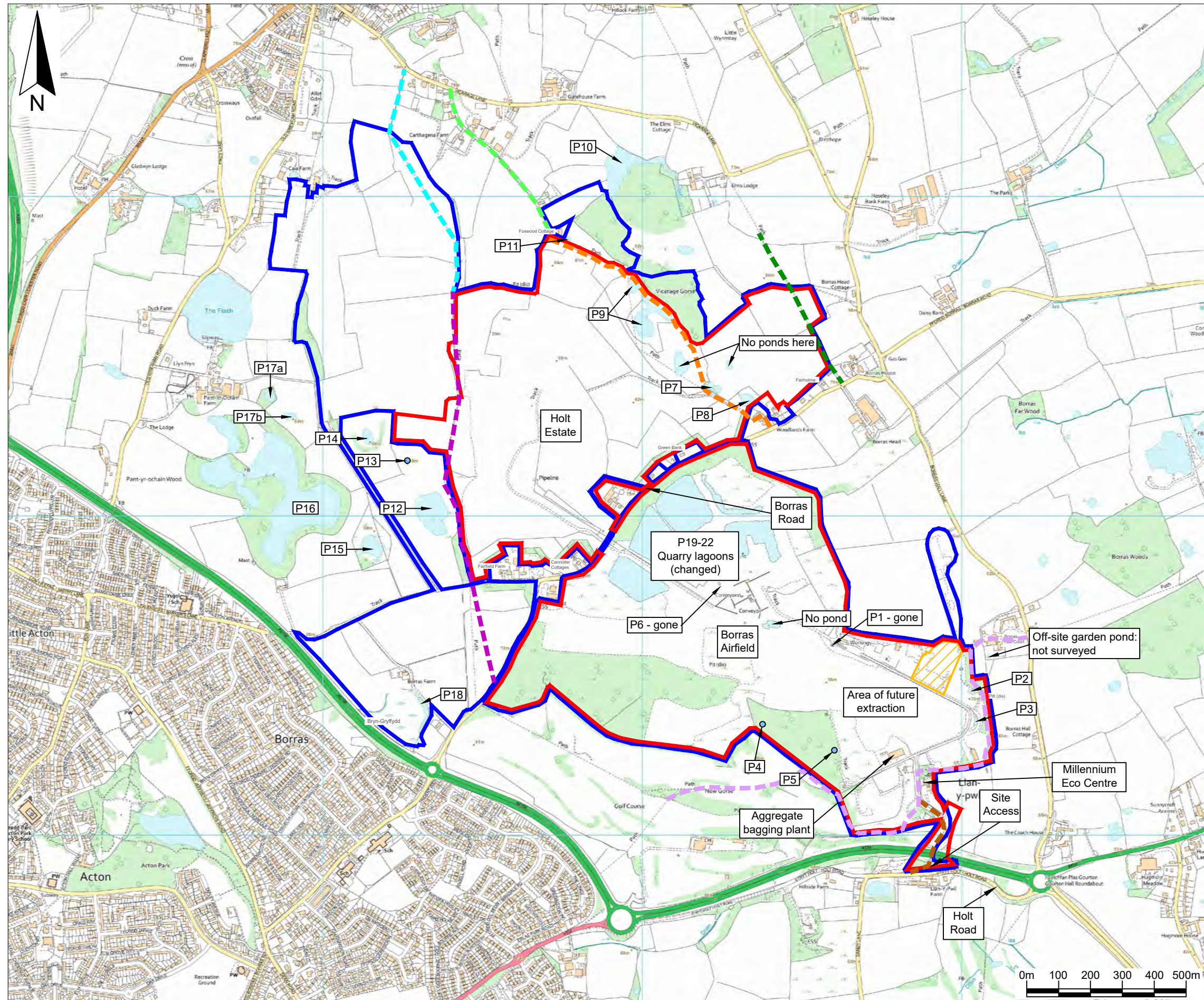
Monitoring and management of the known GCN ponds on the Holt Estate is an ongoing requirement at Borrás Quarry. It had been intended to carry out an updated programme of GCN monitoring surveys in 2020 but this was not possible owing to Covid-19 restrictions. However, an updated daytime survey of the three breeding ponds on the Site was carried out on the 27th May 2020; this included a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment and an evaluation of management requirements. The results will be reported separately and discussed with Natural Resources Wales.

Conclusions

The proposal to import, store and recycle road planings at Borrás Quarry will not affect any semi-natural habitats of ecological importance, including Priority habitats or habitats likely to be used by protected species including great crested newts. The tree and scrub vegetation on and adjacent to the development area boundaries will not be affected by the proposals. There are no ponds suitable for breeding GCN within 250m of the development site. Ecological issues on the wider quarry, including the requirement for ongoing management and monitoring of GCN breeding ponds, are being dealt with separately and consultation with NRW is ongoing in this regard.

Jan Wilkinson

13.7.20



Key / Notes

Approximate area of land under the control of the applicant

Approximate boundary of planning permission reference P/2003/0579 and the boundary the subject of this application

Proposed development area for the asphalt planning storage and processing and the pre-coat chippings storage bays

Ponds surveyed

Pond not on base plan

Bridleways and Footpaths*

Footpath 8

Footpath 9

Footpath 11

Footpath 12

Footpath 13

Bridleway 13

Footpath GR12

Note:
Since planning permission reference P/2003/0579 was approved there have been changes to the road network (A534) hence the application boundary now crosses the dual carriageway

*Based on information from the WCBC website

	Final	KR	TJC	GT	20/07/20
Rev	Status	Drn	App	Chk	Date

Site
BORRAS QUARRY

Client



Title
The ponds surveyed on 27 May 2020 for Great Crested Newts at Borrás Quarry

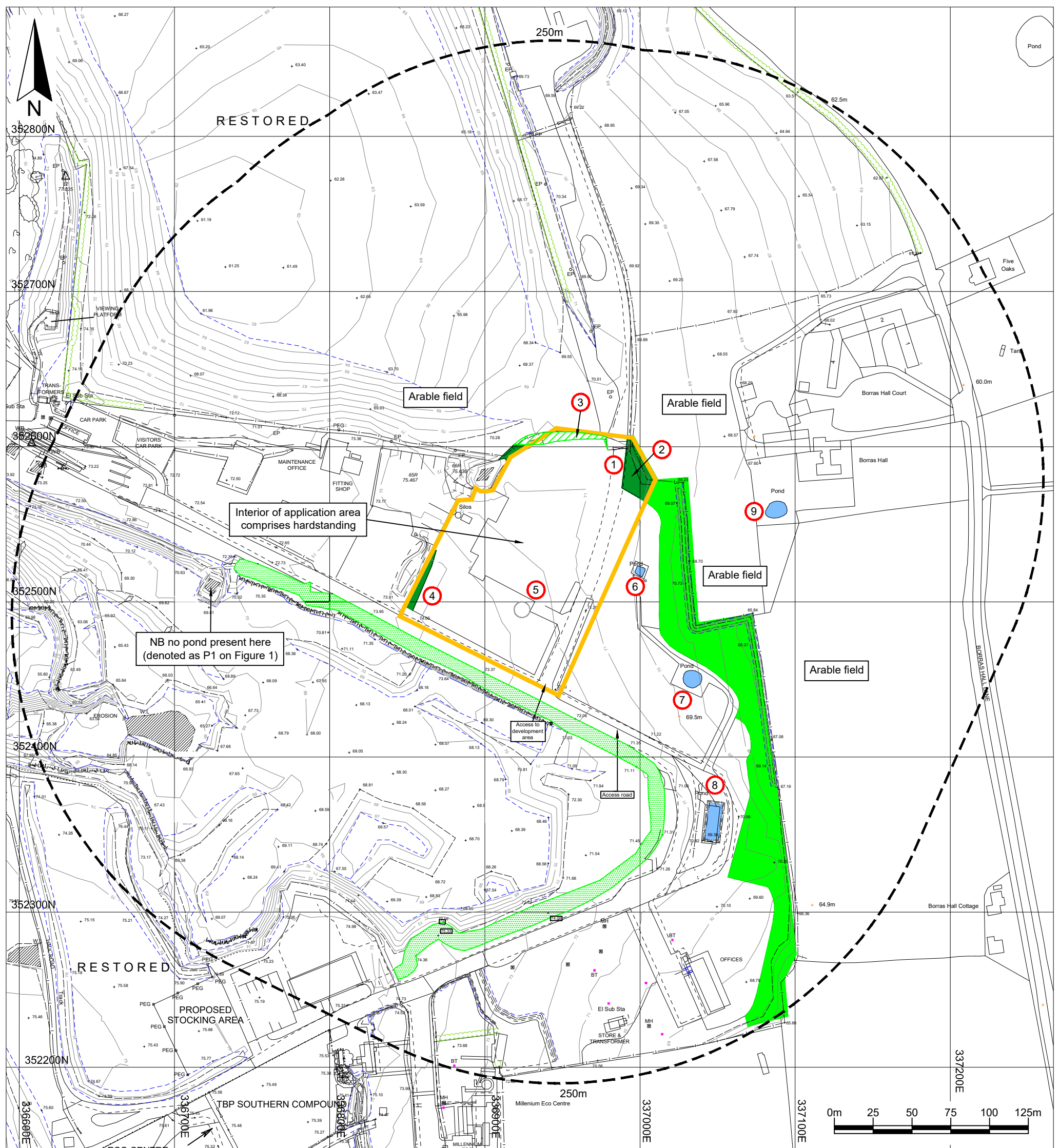
Figure 1

Scale
1:12,500@A3

Drawing Ref
BRE/BO/07-20/21882

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Key / Notes



Proposed development area for the asphalt planing storage and processing and the pre-coat chippings storage bays



Target note



Scrub



Tree belt



Waterbody



Established tree / shrub planting



Grassed bund with a maximum
2m height

—75— Current ground level contours
(mAOD) surveyed in June 2019

Note:
Topographical data based on LSS model reference
'Borras Quarry 18/10/18 + 18/06/19.LSS' provided
by Breedon on 13 November 2019

	Final	KR	TJC	GT	20/07/20		
Rev	Status	Drn	App	Chk	Date		
Site BORRAS QUARRY							
Client 							
Title Phase 1 habitat survey carried out on 27 May 2020 and the location of ponds within 250m of proposed planings area							
Figure 2		Scale 1:2,500@A3					
Drawing Ref BRE/BO/07-2/1883							
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Table 1 **GCN surveys at Borrás Quarry**

Pond No.	2003 survey	2015 survey	2018 survey	Comments
1	Absent	-	-	Ephemeral quarry pool – long gone
2	Absent	-	-	Surface water drainage pool (poor suitability)
3	Absent	-	-	Surface water drainage pool (poor suitability)
4	Absent	-	Not surveyed	Pond in restored area - dry
5	Absent	-	Absent	Pond in restored area – almost dry
6	Absent	-	-	Ephemeral quarry pool – long gone
7	No survey (unsuitable)	eDNA positive	Nothing seen	Pond restored 2009 but affected by sheep access and very cloudy
8	Present	Present	Unsuitable for survey	Walnut Tree Farm Pond - restored 2009 but now choked with bulrush again
9	Present	Present	Present	Vicarage Gorse pond – main population
10	Present	-	-	Off-site pond in Vicarage Moss (egg search only as overgrown)
11	Absent	-	-	Very small pond on edge of site
12	Absent	-	-	
13	Absent	-	-	
14	Absent	-	-	
15	Absent	eDNA negative	-	
16	Absent	-	-	Egg search only
17a	No survey	-	-	Unsuitable – heavily stocked with fish
17b	No survey	-	-	Unsuitable – heavily stocked with fish
18	Absent	-	-	Borrás Bog (egg search only)
19-22	Absent	-	-	Quarry lagoons (now moved/changed)

No.	Description
1	Northern end of the application area. First photo is looking south across the application area, which comprises concrete hardstanding and a tarmac access road along the eastern edge. There is no significant vegetation within the interior of the proposed development area, apart from sparse ephemeral vegetation on the shallow sand/soil bunds dividing the car parking area.  At the northern boundary there is a barrier at the end of the tarmac road. Off-site to the north is a hardstanding track with a hawthorn hedge to the east and a scrubby hedge to the west. On either side of this there are arable fields. 

No.	Description
2	A small portion of a larger screening plantation block lies within the north-east edge of the application area. This comprises a mix of native and introduced species including wild cherry, poplar, aspen, sycamore and willows. The trees were suffering from drought and many were in poor condition. 
3	Along the northern boundary is a belt of bramble scrub with scattered grey willow and elder and some ruderal herbs. An electricity sub-station in the north-west corner has a goat willow adjacent to it. 
4	Following the application area boundary along its west side, there is a discontinuous line of trees comprising goat willow, sycamore, ash and scattered stands of bramble. Outside the application area is a dry drainage sump (hatched area on base plan). This contains great willowherb and willows but no open water. There is no boundary vegetation in the middle of the western boundary, where the mobile plant is located, but south of here there are more scattered trees comprising Italian alder and goat willow with bramble. The interior of the application area is concrete hardstanding, as described previously.

No.	Description
5	The interior of the application area comprises concrete hardstanding, used for car parking. There are low sand bunds dividing the car parking area. These support sparse vegetation including saplings of grey and goat willow and white poplar plus species such as oxeye daisy, weld, cock's-foot, colt's-foot, ribwort plantain, and bird's-foot-trefoil. The bunds are very dry and have minimal suitability for GCN. 
6	Small drainage sump (approximately 3m x 3m) inside a chainlink fence. This comprises a sandy hollow with a small wet area in the base (approximately 1.5-2m across) with very shallow (approximately 2 cm) water which was drying out rapidly. There is some bulrush and hard rush with willows and birch on the banks. There is no aquatic vegetation and the sump is completely unsuitable for breeding GCN. 

No.	Description
7	This is a slightly larger drainage sump (approximately 8m x 5m) on the edge of the perimeter screening plantation, here including sycamore, ash and hawthorn. The sump was rapidly drying out and contained only extremely shallow water, with a sandy base visible. There is no aquatic vegetation and the sump is completely unsuitable for breeding GCN. The sump was surveyed for GCN in 2003 (negative) and is shown as Pond 2 on Figure 1. 
8	Drainage swale in deep hollow, surrounded by tarmac and concrete and lying adjacent to the main quarry access road. It contains no aquatic or marginal vegetation and had a very low water level at the time of survey (approximately 5 cm). The base appears to be gravel and the lower banks were largely bare. There are some trees and sparse vegetation around the tops of the banks. This swale was surveyed for GCN in 2003 (negative) and is shown as Pond 3 on Figure 1. 

No.	Description
9	This is a previously unsurveyed off-site pond situated in the garden of Borrás Hall. Access could not be directly gained to the pond, but it could be seen from the adjacent arable field and it was almost dry, with no open water visible. It is considered to be unsuitable for GCN.  A photograph showing a small, shallow pond in a garden. The pond is surrounded by dense green foliage and trees. A barbed wire fence runs across the foreground, with a wooden post visible on the right. The water in the pond is very still and reflects the surrounding greenery. The ground around the pond is dry and covered with grass and small plants.