

Site:	Forty Acres Farm, Havant
Client:	Barratt David Wilson Homes
Job Number:	A108712
Survey Type(s):	Letter Report
Date(s):	April 2019

Introduction

WYG were instructed in April 2019 by Barratt David Wilson Homes to prepare an Ecological Letter Report to support a planning application for the creation of a Wader and Brent Goose Refuge at Forty Acres Farm in Havant.

The site is subject to a Full Planning Application (APP/18/00450) for a residential development of 320 dwellings, a 66-bed care home, public open space, ecological mitigation, access and infrastructure. This application was made in May 2018 and is currently undergoing determination.

This application relates to the provision of a Wader and Brent Goose Refuge which is required in order to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of Chichester and Langstone Harbours Special Protection Area (SPA). The site boundary for this application is shown in Figure 1. During the course of APP/18/00450 it was suggested that the Refuge would need to be completed prior to the commencement of the residential development. This is referenced in the draft allocation policy for the site in the Pre-Submission Havant Borough Local Plan 2036. To avoid a significant delay to construction this application is intended to allow works to the refuge to commence before the approval of APP/18/00450. Given the indicative timetable for the works required to complete the refuge this is considered essential to allow it to be completed in time to be used by waders and brent geese in the winter of 2019/20.

The works proposed as part of this application are:

- Construction of a temporary access and haul road;
- Removal of a tree line (not subject to the site-wide tree protection order);
- Removal and storage of topsoil;
- Import of inert material to level site and meet final levels for residential development;
- Replacement of topsoil and preparation;
- Sowing of seed mix and fertiliser application; and
- Subsequent maintenance of grassland including further fertiliser application.

Baseline

WYG completed a series of ecological surveys of the site to support application APP/18/00450. These comprised:

- Extended Phase 1 habitat survey (WYG, 2018a);
- Reptile presence/likely absence report (WYG, 2018b);
- Bat activity and emergence survey report (WYG, 2018c); and
- Wintering bird survey report (WYG, 2018d).

These set out the baseline for the site, including the area subject to this application. Elements relating to this application are summarised below.

Designated Sites

The site lies 180m north of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA (and Ramsar), designated for its internationally important assemblage of wintering birds including dark-bellied brent geese *Branta branta bernicla* (which are a primary reason for the selection of the SPA). During the winter, these birds frequently use inland areas for foraging and as refuges at high tide. These inland sites are monitored as part of the Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy. As per Policy H15 of the Draft Havant Borough Local Plan 2036, the eastern portion of the site – which is subject to this application – is classified as a Secondary Support Site for brent geese (Unit H04C in the Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy). The western portion is classified as a Low Use site (Unit H04B).

There are further statutory and non-statutory sites identified within the Extended Phase 1 Survey (WYG, 2018a), however given the proposals these are not considered relevant to this application.

Habitats

The site predominately comprises intensively farmed arable fields. To the south of the site is improved grassland dominated by perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne* and white clover *Trifolium repens*. A linear shelter belt of alder *Alnus glutinosa* trees runs north to south through the site with an understorey of bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and nettle *Urtica dioica*. The field margins comprise tall ruderal vegetation including nettle, rosebay willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*, common burdock *Arctium minus*, common ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* and teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*.

Protected and Notable Species

The reptile presence/likely absence survey (WYG, 2018b) identified a good population of slow worms *Anguis fragilis* on site. These were distributed around the boundaries of the fields and along the edges of the linear shelter belt.

The bat activity and emergence survey (WYG, 2018c) recorded low numbers of only four species of bat on site; common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, and serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*. The majority of recorded activity was foraging and commuting by pipistrelle species along the site boundaries and linear tree belts. No roosts were identified on site and the tree belts were considered to have negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Although no breeding bird surveys were completed on site (as they were considered unlikely to be an important receptor in EcIA terms), the linear tree belt is considered to be suitable to support breeding birds.

No other protected or notable species are considered likely to be present on site.

Discussion

Designated Sites

In the absence of mitigation, the development proposed by APP/18/00450 would result in the permanent loss of foraging habitat for qualify species of Chichester and Langstone Harbours SPA and Ramsar. This application seeks to create a permanent wader and brent goose refuge, resulting in an increase in the quality of foraging habitat on site. It will also increase the suitability for brent geese by removing the alder shelter belt. This will result in a more open site which is preferred by geese, with reduced vantage points for potential predators.

There is the potential for disturbance of birds during the winter season (October – March inclusive). Therefore, it is proposed that all works are completed by October 2019 to prevent any potential for disturbance.

Habitats

None of the habitats present qualify as habitats of principal importance (HPI). Therefore, the loss of these habitats to create the wader and brent goose refuge does not constitute a significant impact. The grassland to be created will provide a habitat of comparable botanical value. There will be a net loss of trees (albeit those to be lost are in poor condition). These will be compensated by tree planting as part of the landscape design for APP/18/00450.

Protected and Notable Species

Reptiles

The removal of the tree belt will result in a small loss of suitable habitat for slow worms. There will also be a small loss of habitat from the construction of the temporary haul road. These works also have the potential to result in the killing or injury of slow worms in the absence of mitigation.

Due to the small area of habitat to be lost, compensation is not proposed – although a significant area of habitat creation will take place as part of the landscape design for APP/18/00450.

To avoid the potential killing or injury of slow worms, the route of the temporary haul road and any suitable habitat within the site will be directionally strimmed under the supervision of a suitably experienced Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). Vegetation will be strimmed to 300mm to encourage reptiles to displace to adjacent habitat outside the works area. This will be followed by a fingertip search by the ECoW before a further strim to ground level. These works will only take place during suitable weather conditions (i.e. not during periods of heavy rain) when overnight temperatures are above 5°C.

Bats

The removal of the tree belt will result in the loss of a linear corridor used by low numbers of bats. Due to the presence of further shelter belts on site, and around the site boundaries this will not result in any fragmentation, or a significant loss of foraging habitat. Compensation is not proposed – although a significant area of habitat creation will take place as part of the landscape design for APP/18/00450.

No works are proposed at night therefore there will be no disturbance of foraging or commuting bats. There will be no impact on roosting bats as none of the trees on site are suitable for roosting.

Birds

As works will take place during the nesting bird season, there is the potential for the removal of the tree belt to result in damage to or destruction of active bird nests. To avoid this, all tree removal will be preceded by a nesting bird check to be completed by a suitably experienced ECoW. This check will take place 24 hours prior to removal to prevent nests becoming occupied between the check and clearance.

Should any nests be identified, they will be left in-situ with a suitable vegetation buffer (to be determined by the ECoW) until all chicks have fledged and have ceased to return to the nest.

Timetable

Table 1 below sets out an indicative timetable for the proposed works to deliver the wader and brent goose refuge by October 2019.

Item	Timing (duration)	Description
Removal of tree belt	Mid-May (approx. 1 week)	Felling of alder tree belt, chipping of arisings. Works preceded by nesting bird checks by ECoW.
Construction of temporary haul road	Mid-May (approx. 1 week)	Vegetation strimming of haul road under supervision of ECoW. Import of hardcore to create temporary haul road.
Installation of tree protection fencing	Mid-May (approx. 1 week)	Install heras fencing to protect retained trees and vegetation from works.
Topsoil removal	Late May/early June (approx. 3 weeks)	Stripping of top 200mm of topsoil by bulldozer. Soil to be stored in stockpile by excavator.
Import of fill	Early June – early July (approx. 5 weeks)	Fill to be delivered via temporary haul road, levelled and compacted.
Replacement of topsoil	Early July – Early August (approx. 3 weeks)	Replacement of stockpiled topsoil using dumper and excavator, followed by levelling and preparation for sowing.
Sowing	Early – mid-August (approx. 1 week)	Sowing of grazing grass mix (e.g. Emorsgate EG26) including perennial rye grass and clover. Rolling of site to firm and level for cutting.

Letter Report



Fertiliser application	Late August (approx. 1 week)	Application of fertiliser by machine.
Cutting	Late September (approx. 1 week)	Cutting of grass to optimum height for grazing (100mm) by machine.
Fertiliser application	Early April 2020 (approx. 1 week)	Application of fertiliser by machine.
Treatment	May 2020 (approx. 1 week)	Application of herbicide if required to prevent establishment of undesirable species.

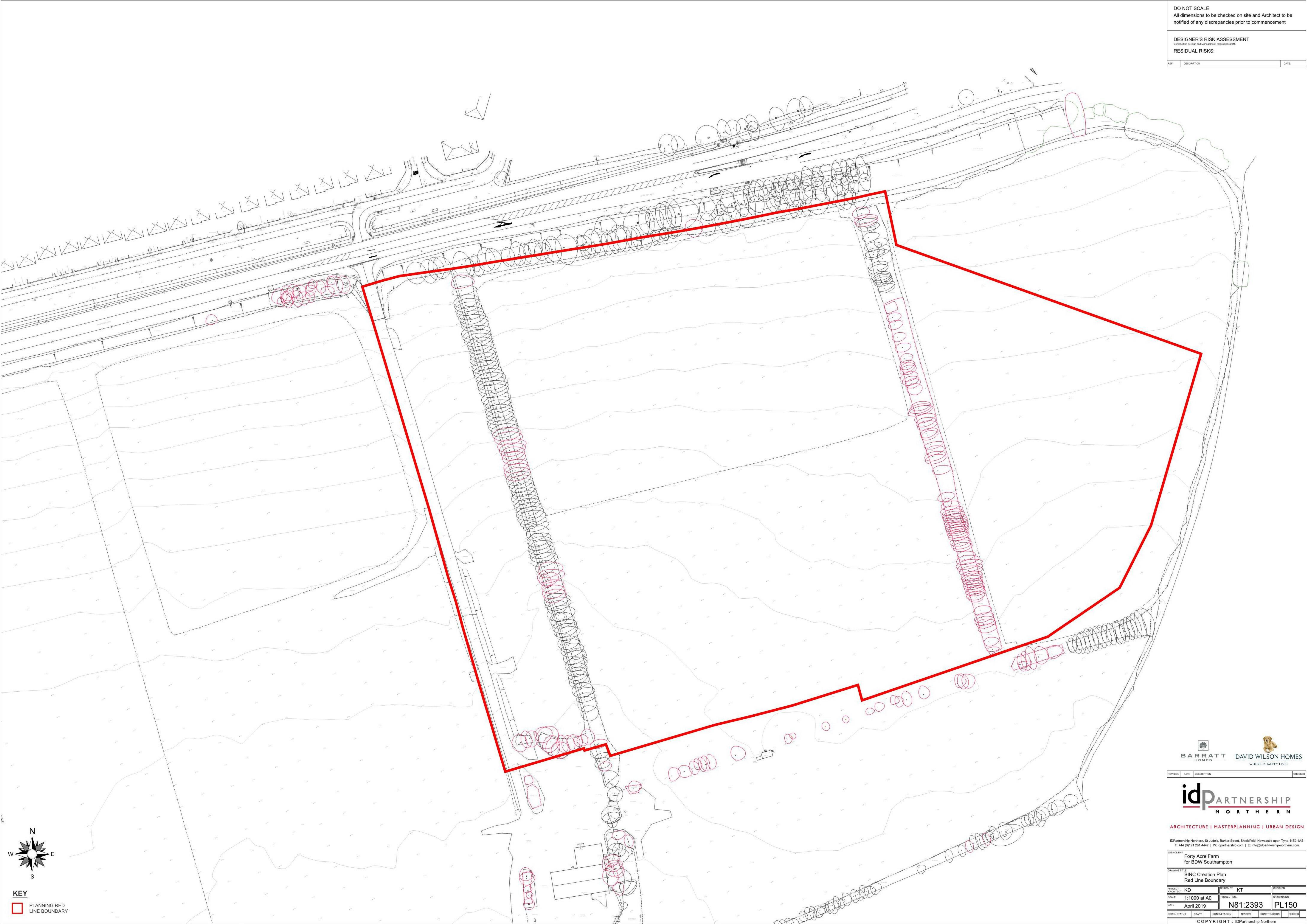
Quality Control				
Version:	1	FINAL		
Prepared by:			John Simper MCIEEM Senior Ecologist	
Checked and Verified By:			David West CEnv MCIEEM Associate Ecologist	
Version:	Date:	Updated by:	Verified by:	Description of changes:

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Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

Figure 2 – Proposed Works Plan



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KEY
PLANNING RED
LINE BOUNDARY

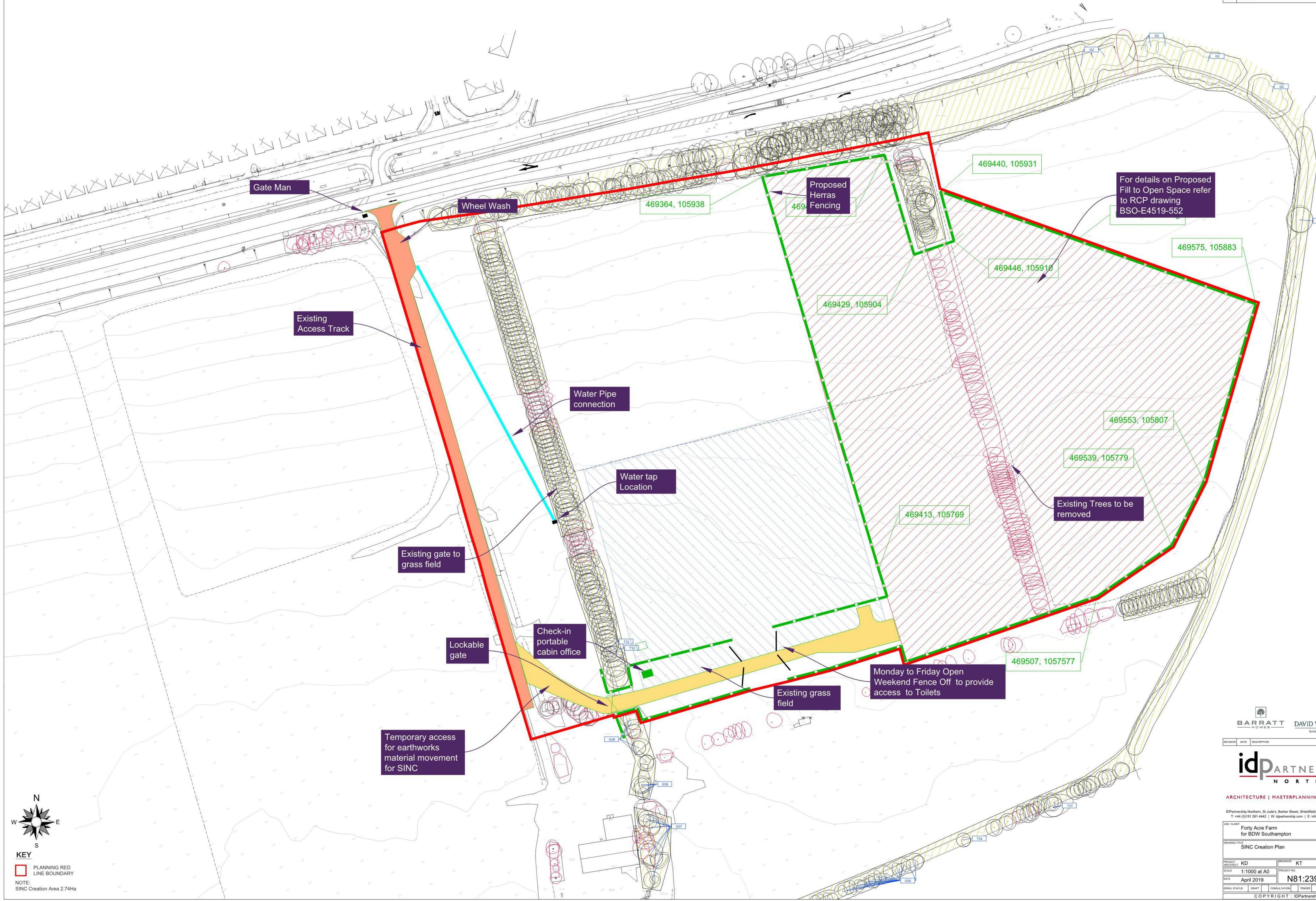
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JOB / CLIENT			
Forty Acre Farm for BDW Southampton			
DRAWING TITLE			
SINC Creation Plan Red Line Boundary			
PROJECT ARCHITECT		DRAWN BY	
KD		KT	
SCALE		PROJECT NO.	
1:1000 at A0		N81:2393	
DATE		DRAWING NO.	
April 2019		PL150	
DRAWING STATUS	DRAWN	CORRECTIONS	RECORD

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KEY

PLANNING RED LINE BOUNDARY

NOTE:
SINC Creation Area 2.74Ha

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JOB / CLIENT
Forty Acre Farm
for BDW Southampton

DRAWING TITLE
SINC Creation Plan

PROJECT	APPROVED BY	DRAWN BY	CHECKED
KD	KT		

SCALE	DATE	PROJECT NO.	DRAWING NO.
1:1000 at A0	April 2019	N81:2393	PL151

DWG. STATUS	DWGT	CONSTRUCTION	TRACES	CONSTRUCTION	RECORD

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