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Ref: L250901 – McDonald's Gwyns Drift Pontardawe – Site Walkover for Proposed Foul Water Sewer

To Whom It May Concern,

Background

Practical Ecology Ltd were commissioned by McDonalds' Restaurants Ltd to undertake a site visit and walkover of the proposed foul drainage pipeline route and sewer connection for the erection of a freestanding drive-thru/restaurant, car parking, landscaping and associated works, including Customer Order Displays (COD) and play frame at Tesco Gwyns Drift Pontardawe SA8 3AZ, herein referred to as the 'Site'. The proposed development was approved by Neath Port Talbot Council¹ in March 2025 (planning application reference number: P2023/0101).

A Site visit and letter report² were undertaken by Practical Ecology Ltd in March 2023. However, this was for internal use only and was not submitted as part of the application. No further survey was required as a result of the Site visit and letter report.

The Site

The approved Site is approximately 0.49 ha (central OS grid reference SN 72291 03493) located at Pontardawe Tesco car park, Gwyns Drift, and comprises sealed surfaces in the form of a tarmac car park, two small areas of shrub planting to the east and northeast and a small area of grassland on the north corner of the Site. The pipeline extends from the north of the Site, along the Tesco delivery access road to the northwest and runs to the existing sewer. The red line boundary, pipeline route and existing manhole cover to the existing sewer connection (including a 4 m buffer) is shown in **Figure 1**, overleaf.

¹ <https://www.npt.gov.uk/>

² L230320 Gwyns Drift Pontardawe

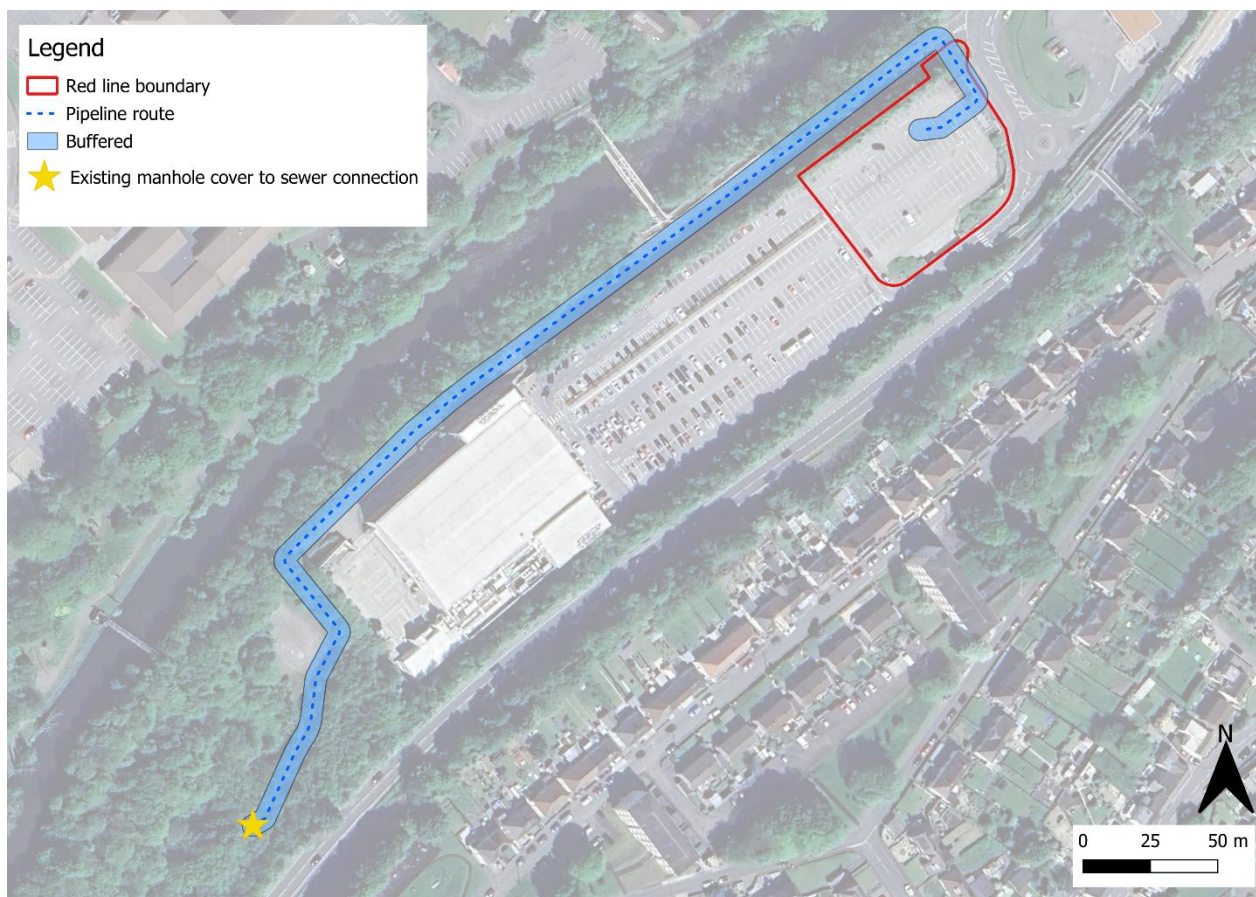


Figure 1: Proposed foul water sewer pipeline route and approved site boundary (red line). Basemap from Google Satellite (2025).

Desk Study

A search for Statutory Sites of Nature Conservation Value and Priority Habitats³ within 1 km of the Site was undertaken using the Multi Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)⁴ and DataMap Wales⁵.

Records of protected species, notable species, invasive species, and non-statutory sites from within 1 km of the Site were procured from the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc)⁶ as part of this desk-based study and are presented in this report where relevant. Records provided by the record centre that are more than ten years old are only reported on if they are deemed to still be relevant.

Site Walkover

A walkover of the Site was undertaken on 24th July 2025 by Victoria Shone-Silk MSc, an Ecologist with three years' experience in ecological consultancy.

This survey assessed the value of onsite and adjacent habitats and their potential to support protected or notable species and habitats following the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal⁷ published by the Chartered Institute

³ Maddock, A. ed., 2008. UK Biodiversity Action Plan; Priority Habitat Descriptions. [pdf] Available at: http://archive.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/UKBAP_PriorityHabitatDesc-Rev2011.pdf

⁴ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

⁵ https://datamap.gov.wales/layers/geonode:gwc21_priority_habitat_high_sensitivity

⁶ <https://www.sewbrec.org.uk/>

⁷ CIEEM, 2017. Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal: Second Edition. December 2017.

for Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

The survey also included a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) of trees which will be subject to removal to facilitate the proposed pipeline.

Limitations

Due to the seasonal behaviour of animals and the seasonal growth patterns of plants, ecological surveys may be limited by the time of year in which they are undertaken. Many animals in the UK have variable detectability throughout the year due to seasonal behaviour, including hibernation and migration. Therefore, this survey may not provide a complete list of the plants and animals present, or which may utilise the Site throughout the year.

As part of standard practice, a data search has been undertaken from the local biological record centre. This is not considered to be a complete list of species present and is better considered to be a list of species recorded, with many species known to be under-recorded.

These limitations are not considered to have affected the accuracy of the assessment or the recommendations provided in this report.

This letter report presents conditions and recommendations for the Site based on the state of the Site during the survey visit. Any changes to the Site prior to works, including changes in the management of the Site habitats, will therefore potentially invalidate this letter report and its recommendations.

Results and Assessment of Effects

Habitats

Fifteen parcels of ancient woodland are present within 1 km of the Site, the closest parcel is approximately 360 m northeast of the proposed pipeline route. There are 10 parcels of lowland grassland within 1 km of the Site including a parcel of MG5a *Cynosurus cristatus* - *Centaurea nigra* grassland and two parcels of U4a *Festuca ovina*-*Agrostis capillaris*-*Galium saxatile* grassland, the closest located approximately 610 m east of the Site.

The majority of the Site comprises developed land; sealed surface in the form of the existing delivery road for the adjacent Tesco, and extends into an area of mixed scrub, bare ground, other neutral grassland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland where the pipe will connect to an existing sewer manhole cover (see **Figure 1**). The woodland is not designated as ancient woodland. These habitats are also present within the 4 m buffer of the proposed pipe route and are likely to be temporarily impacted during the pipe installation.

There is a potential risk to the River Tawe from dust generation, surface water run-off and pollution incidents during construction if appropriate measures are not undertaken to mitigate against these risks.

Mixed scrub

A small area of mixed scrub to the south of the existing Tesco building will be removed to facilitate the installation of the pipework. The scrub comprises buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), willow species (*Salix* sp.), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) saplings, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), birds-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), English ivy (*Hedera helix*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*). Small alder trees covered in ivy are also present in the mixed scrub.

Bare Ground and Other Neutral Grassland

An area of bare ground and grassland is present in the southern portion of the pipeline route. The majority of this area

is on bare ground, with the grassland limited to the edges. Species present in the grassland edges include Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), bent species (*Agrostis sp.*) and slender rush (*Juncus tenuis*), as well as birds-foot trefoil, white clover (*Trifolium repens*), red clover (*T. pratense*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), melilot species (*Melilotus sp.*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), creeping buttercup, tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*), common centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*). Invasive non-native Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is also present, further details are included below. English oak (*Quercus robur*), willow species and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) saplings are also present within the 4 m buffer, along with buddleia, dogwood (*Cornus sanguineus*), gorse and bramble scrub.

Woodland

Woodland is located in the southern portion of the proposed pipe route and the location of the proposed sewer connection to an existing manhole cover. The woodland within the 4 m buffer comprises silver birch (*Betula pendula*), alder and willow with buddleia, bramble and dogrose (*Rosa canina*). The woodland understorey comprises wood meadow grass (*Poa nemoralis*), Yorkshire fog, wood millet (*Milium effusum*), pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*), dove's-foot crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*), hemp agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), English ivy, marestalk (*Equisetum arvense*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), broadleaf plantain (*Plantago major*), ribwort plantain, hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), white clover, common daisy (*Bellis perennis*), dandelion (*Taraxacum agg.*) spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), wood dock (*Rumex sanguineus*), ragwort, stinking iris (*Iris foetidissima*). Invasive non-native species Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and Himalayan balsam are also present in the woodland, further details are included below.

Species present adjacent to the proposed sewer connection include bramble, wood avens, stinking iris, broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), English ivy, cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), pendulous sedge, black horehound (*Ballota nigra*), wood meadow grass, marestalk, cleavers, dogwood, sycamore, alder, willow species, hawthorn, gorse, buddleia and Himalayan balsam.

Great Crested Newt

No records for great crested newt were returned in the desk study. No ponds were identified within 500 m of the proposed pipeline route. A watercourse feature is present approximately 78 m southwest of the proposed sewer connection, however this is likely to be a drain which connects to the River Tawe and is considered unlikely to support great crested newt.

The woodland provides suitable foraging habitat for great crested newt with tree roots and scrub root balls providing suitable hibernation habitat. However, due to the lack of records and ponds in the wider area, great crested newt are considered reasonably likely to be absent from the Site, and no impacts resulting from the proposed pipeline and sewer connection are anticipated.

Bats

The desk study returned several bat species including common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*), Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), *Pipistrellus* species and *Myotis* species.

The woodland and mixed scrub provide suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats. No trees in the woodland were identified with potential roost features (PRFs) for bats, and no trees are anticipated to be removed within the woodland.

Standalone trees in the mixed scrub to be removed adjacent to the existing Tesco are covered in ivy, however the

trees are relatively young with thin trunks. As such, these trees are not considered to have any PRFs, and have 'none' suitability⁸ for roosting bats. No impacts to roosting bats are anticipated.

Reptiles

The data search returned two records for grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) and two records for common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*). The closest record for grass snake is 471 m from the Site and the closest record for common lizard is 569 m from the Site.

The woodland onsite provides suitable foraging and refuge habitat for grass snake, with the River Tawe in close proximity also providing suitable foraging habitat for the species. The grassland onsite provides suitable foraging habitat for common lizard, with adjacent mixed scrub and woodland providing suitable refuge and potential hibernation habitat.

The proposed pipework installation and sewer connection may kill or injure individuals if present at the time of works during any clearance, or as a result of inappropriate storage of materials and machinery. There is also a risk of entrapment of reptiles if any excavations or pipework are left uncovered overnight without provision of means to escape.

Birds

A wide assemblage of bird species were returned in the data search. Red and amber listed species most likely to be impacted by the proposed pipeline include goshawk* (*Accipiter gentilis*), marsh tit (*Poecile palustris*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), mistle thrush (*T. viscivorus*), redwing* (*T. iliacus*), dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*), red kite* (*Milvus milvus*), spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), willow warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) and wood warbler (*P. sibilatrix*). Birds marked with * are Schedule 1 species.

A sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) nest was identified near the proposed sewer connection. No other birds or nests were identified during the Site walkover, however the woodland provides suitable nesting habitat for an assemblage of bird species including those listed under Schedule 1 including goshawk and red kite.

The small area of mixed scrub to be removed provides suitable nesting habitat for birds such as wood pigeon (*Columba palumbus*).

Nesting habitat in the form of mixed scrub will be removed to facilitate the proposed development and there is a risk of destroying active nests if undertaken during the nesting bird season. Some nesting bird habitat in the woodland may also be removed and nesting birds disturbed during the works including potential disturbance of nesting Schedule 1 species and confirmed nesting sparrowhawk.

Otter

Four records of otter (*Lutra lutra*) were returned in the data search, the closest record was 923 m from the Site and dated 2019. Other records for otter were located between 1.03 km and 1.1 km from the Site, and whilst none were identified within the River Tawe itself, they are recorded along stretches of water course which directly connect to the river. As such, it is considered reasonably likely that otters are present in the River Tawe.

The proposed pipeline route does not have suitability for otter, and no direct impacts are anticipated however, any dust generation, surface water runoff or other pollution events during construction poses a risk of indirect impacts to

⁸ Collins, J. ed., 2023. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th ed). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

otters present in the river.

Other Priority and Notable Species

The data search returned six records for hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), three records for common frog (*Rana temporaria*), one record for common toad (*Bufo bufo*) and one record for palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*) within 1 km of the Site within the last 10 years.

The woodland provides suitable foraging and refuge habitat for small mammals such as hedgehog, and there is likely to be suitable hibernation habitat within other areas of the woodland. There is a risk of injury or killing of species such as hedgehog as a result of any habitat clearance and pipework installation.

The woodland provides suitable foraging habitat for common amphibians with tree roots and scrub root balls providing suitable hibernation habitat. However, due to the lack of ponds in the wider area, the risk of encountering and causing direct impacts to common amphibians is perceived to be low.

There is a risk of entrapment of small mammals and common amphibians if any excavations are left uncovered overnight without provision of means to escape.

Invasive Non-Native Species

Several invasive non-native plant species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended)(1981) were returned in the data search. Species include montbretia (*Crocasmia aurea x pottsii* = *C. x crocosmiiflora*) and Himalayan balsam.

Several stands of Japanese knotweed (OS grid ref SN 72051 03251 and west of the 'existing water crossing' identified on the pipeline route plan (see **Appendix 1**)) and Himalayan balsam are present adjacent to the proposed sewer connection and the surrounding woodland. The works will likely result in the spreading of Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam into the wider area through the tracking of vehicles and movement of vehicles and machinery offsite.

Recommendations

Open-trenching would likely result in intrusion into root protection zones of trees which run along the proposed pipeline route, pollution of the River Tawe including dust and surface water runoff, and damage to grassland and woodland habitat in the southern portion of the route. As such, directional drilling of the new pipeline route is recommended to avoid impacts to River Tawe and to minimise impacts to adjacent woodland and grassland.

To mitigate against potential impacts to the River Tawe, and the adjacent woodland during construction, a suitable buffer in line with guidance will be required⁹. This will include adequate fencing to prevent accidental damage and storage of materials, and the implementation of a Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEcMP). The implementation of a CEcMP will prevent dust generation, control surface water run-off, limit intrusion into root protection zones and reduce the risk of pollution incidents during construction. The CEcMP will also include measures to ensure vehicles and machinery do not track any invasive and non-native species offsite, and mitigations for nesting birds, reptiles, otters, small mammals and common amphibians.

Root and tree/hedgerow protection measures (in line with the British Standard for trees in relation to construction BS 5837:2012) must be installed in the pre-construction phase and maintained throughout the construction phase.

An invasive and non-native species specialist should be consulted for the removal of Japanese knotweed and

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pollution-prevention-for-businesses>

Himalayan balsam which will be disturbed during the works, and to prevent the spreading of both species into the wider area. No clearance work should be undertaken prior to advice being sought from a specialist.

Clearance of the scrub and any vegetation to facilitate the sewer connection installation should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (the nesting bird season is considered to run from March to September, inclusive, but does vary depending on weather) to avoid the disturbance of Schedule 1 nesting birds.

If this is not possible and clearance is undertaken during the during nesting season, then it should only be undertaken within 24-48 hours of a nesting bird check undertaken by a suitably experienced ecologist, provided no nesting Schedule 1 birds are identified. Should nests of species not listed under Schedule 1 be encountered then clearance around the nest will be paused and a reasonable buffer installed until young have fledged the nest and the nest is abandoned.

Any small mammal disturbed during construction should be allowed to flee of their own volition or relocated to the Site boundary. Any excavations or holes to be covered or fenced off overnight, or planks placed inside to create a means of escape.

Conclusion

Providing the recommendations outlined within this report are implemented, then the proposals will be in accordance with policy and legislation.

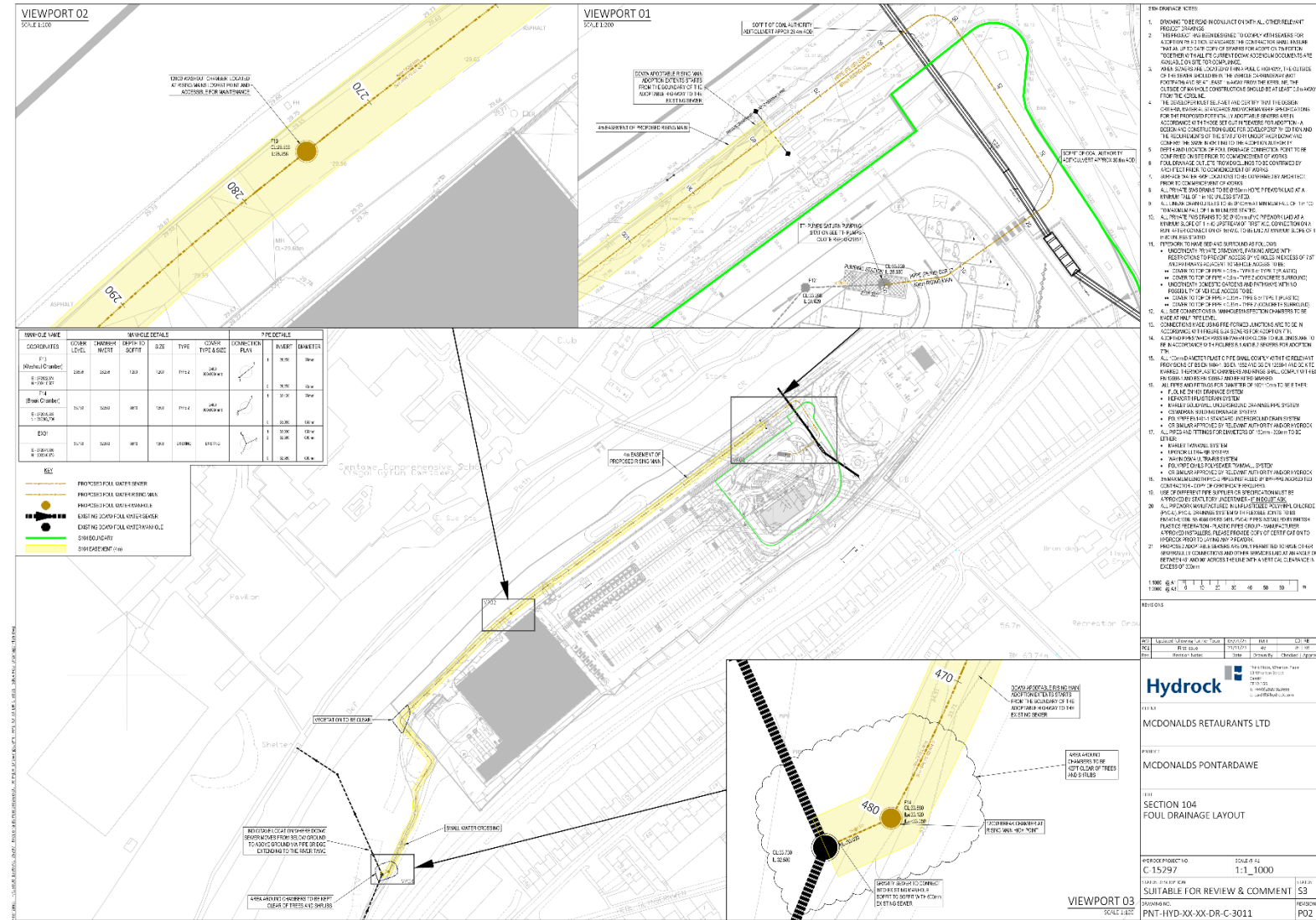
Kind regards,

Victoria

Victoria Shone-Silk MSc BSc (Hons), Ecologist

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Appendix 1: Pipeline Route



Appendix 2: Site Photographs



Photo 1: Location of adoptable rising main



Photo 2: Vegetation (scrub and trees) to be removed



Photo 3: Bare ground and grassland



Photo 4: Existing sewer and proposed sewer connection



Photo 5: Japanese knotweed



Photo 6: Himalayan balsam