



Ashfield Land Management and Gazeley GLP Northampton s.à.r.l

# Annex I: Golden Plover Survey Report

Rail Central

855950

FEBRUARY 2018

**RSK**

## RSK GENERAL NOTES

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**Client:** Ashfield Land Management Limited and Gazeley GLP Northampton s.à.r.l

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Where field investigations have been carried out, these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work.

This work has been undertaken in accordance with the quality management system of RSK.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1. This report presents the results of wintering bird surveys carried out at a site known as Rail Central (Ordnance Survey Grid reference: SP 73363 54488). The surveys comprised seven visits to assess golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) between February 2016 and January 2017 by Tom Coyne.
2. The requirement for the surveys was identified due to the proximity of the potential development area (PDA) to the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA).
3. One of the SPA's qualifying species is golden plover and although the site is over 5 km from the SPA, Natural England requested that specific surveys for golden plover were undertaken to assess the potential impact on the species.
4. Natural England have been consulted throughout the survey process and it has been agreed that golden plover surveys at the Junction 15a Site are not required.
5. No golden plover were seen during any of the surveys, which indicates that the site does not offer habitat of importance to this species.
6. Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) were recorded in the extreme southeast of the site. The mitigation plans will be reflective of the fact that this species are using the site to nest and over winter.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## Purpose of this Report

This report presents the results of golden plover surveys undertaken in connection with a possible future rail development project on land south of Milton Malsor, Northamptonshire (Ordnance Survey Grid reference: SP 73363 54488), in conjunction with improvement works at Junction 15a and other junction improvements (*Figures I1.1 and I1.2*).

The potential development area (PDA) lies approximately 5.6km from the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA). Golden plover are a defining species of the SPA.

RSK consulted Ross Holdgate of Natural England regarding the potential impacts to golden plover. Although the distance is sufficient for activities within the PDA not to directly affect the SPA, Natural England (NE) requested that the potential for impacts to overwintering populations of golden plover should be investigated.

RSK carried out the surveys between February 2016 and January 2017.

## Structure of this Report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- *Section 2* describes survey methods;
- *Section 3* gives the results;
- *Section 4* evaluates the results and gives conclusions; and
- *Section 5* gives references;

**Appendix A** provides the figures



## 2 METHODS

### Objectives

The surveys were undertaken to assess the use of the site by overwintering populations of golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) within the PDA and immediate surrounding area.

### Background Data Search

An updated detailed background data search was undertaken for all species and designated sites in 2018. The detailed results of the data search are provided in *Appendix 16 Annex A*. Robert Bullock (Northamptonshire bird recorder) was consulted regarding the presence of Red and Amber listed bird species in 2016. Records from the National Atlas project from 2007 to 2011 were requested for the main SRFI site and a 2 km buffer zone around the site. Data returned is provided in *Appendix 16 Annex A*.

### Golden Plover Habitat Assessment

It was agreed with Natural England that the PDA would be assessed using an adapted version of the habitat matrix detailed in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy which developed Habitat Regulation criteria for assessing fields as high, medium and low suitability for golden plover.

The matrix criteria included the size of the field, the field use (pasture / arable) and vegetation structure and height. All land within the potential development area and up to a distance of 500m of the potential development area will be assessed.

Details of the criteria considered for the categorization of each field is provided in *Table I1* below.

**Table I1. Habitat matrix for suitability of fields for golden plover (adapted from the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy).**

	Optimal	Sub-optimal	Unsuitable
Historic Use	No records of historic use by golden plover*		
Crop Type	Winter Cereal Crops and long established pasture	Recently established grassland	Brassica crops, other
Field size	Field of greater than 10 hectares	Field between 10 hectares and 3 hectares	Fields smaller than 3 hectares
Proximity to other suitable	Adjacent to other field which is	Within 1 field separation of other	Separated from other fields in the

fields	considered optimal or sub optimal under other criteria.	fields which are considered optimal or sub optimal under other criteria.	area considered optimal or sub optimal under other criteria.
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\*Data from Robert Bullock (Northamptonshire bird recorder) returned no records of golden plover during the national atlas project from 2007 to 2011.

Suitable habitat for golden plover was identified in various locations across the site, illustrated in *Figure I2.1*, which also shows sub-optimal and unsuitable habitat. A traffic light system was used to colour code the map and differentiate between optimal, sub-optimal and unsuitable as follows:

- Red (Unsuitable) – If the field was considered unsuitable for any of the criteria. Golden plover activity in that field is considered unlikely
- Amber (Sub-optimal) – Considered optimal for one criteria either singularly or in combination with sub-optimal criteria. A single sub-optimal criteria or combination of sub-optimal criteria also resulted in a overall sub-optimal categorisation as it was considered possible the golden plover may use the field.
- Green (Optimal) Two optimal criteria indicating that it is considered likely that golden plover could use the field.

Land use including buildings, residential area, woodland and a mixture of woodland and grassland is considered unsuitable habitat but has not been assigned a colour on *Figure I2.1* to allow the reader to interpret the land use in these areas.

## Golden Plover Field Survey

### ***Main SRFI Site***

A total of four surveys were carried out on the following dates in 2016:

- 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016;
- 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2016; and
- 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

Following consultation with Natural England, a further three surveys were carried out on the following dates in 2016/2017 to ensure a complete coverage of the peak golden plover season in the UK:

- 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2016;
- 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016; and
- 10<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

The survey methodology involved walking pre-determined transects of the PDA with specific viewpoint stops (*Figure 13.1*) to observe any golden plover flying over or roosting/feeding in fields within or immediately adjacent to the PDA.

The surveys were timed to coincide with dawn or dusk to ensure that the peak flight times (from roost sites to feeding sites) were covered by the survey.

#### **Junction 15a Site**

Consultations were undertaken with Ross Holdgate of Natural England regarding the land take at the Junction 15a Site and the potential impact on golden plover. It was agreed that in view of the relatively small, largely temporary, areas involved Natural England are satisfied that there will be no impact to golden plover and lapwing populations associated with the SPA. Therefore, field surveys were not undertaken for this site.

#### **Other Junction Improvements**

Other junction improvements are imitated to adopted highway and habitat is unsuitable for Golden Plover.

## **Limitations**

#### **Main SRFI Site**

Golden plover reach peak numbers in the UK during winter months and therefore the surveys were undertaken during an ideal time of year. The general weather conditions during the surveys were considered excellent for conducting bird surveys.

#### **Junction 15a Site**

Surveys were not necessary at this site, meaning there are no associated limitations.

#### **Other Junction Improvements**

No surveys have been undertaken, but they are not considered necessary.



## 3 RESULTS

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### Background Data Search

#### Main SRFI Site

Although no golden plover were highlighted through the Background Data Search (*Appendix 16, Annex A*), over-wintering golden plover have been noted on the adjacent site known as 'Northampton Gateway' (Environmental Scoping Report, October 2016). No records for golden plover were returned from the National Atlas project from 2007 to 2011.

#### Junction 15a Site

No records of golden plover were highlighted through the Background Data Search (*Appendix 16, Annex A*)

### Survey Results

#### Main SRFI Site

No golden plover were identified during any of the seven survey visits, indicating that no areas of the site offer important habitat for this species. Lapwing were noted in a field in the southeast corner of the Main SRFI Site during the surveys in March 2016 and these are likely to be displaced as a result of the development. It should be noted that Lapwing were also recorded in the breeding bird surveys and it was confirmed that this species uses the site to nest. Nesting sites were confined to one individual field. Details of the location and numbers of breeding Lapwing are provided in the breeding bird survey report (*Appendix 16 Annex H*).

#### Junction 15a Site

Surveys are not necessary at this site, as agreed during consultation with Natural England, therefore no survey results are available.

#### Other Junction Improvements

Not applicable.

## 4 EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

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No golden plover were recorded during the surveys. Ecological mitigation areas created adjacent to the J15a Site will include measures to enhance the habitat for Golden Plover, including crop management.

After consultation with Natural England it has been agreed that there will be no impact through this development on local populations of over-wintering golden plover. No further surveys are required regarding this species.

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) are known to nest on site, however evaluations for this species are provided within the Breeding Bird Survey Report (*Appendix 16, Annex H*).

## 5 REFERENCES

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Fuller R.,J. (1980). *A Method for Assessing the Ornithological Interest of Sites for Conservation*. Biological Conservation 17: 229-239

Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D. W. and Evans, J., (1998). *Bird Monitoring Methods*. RSPB.

RSK (2018) BDS Report, not published

## APPENDIX A: FIGURES

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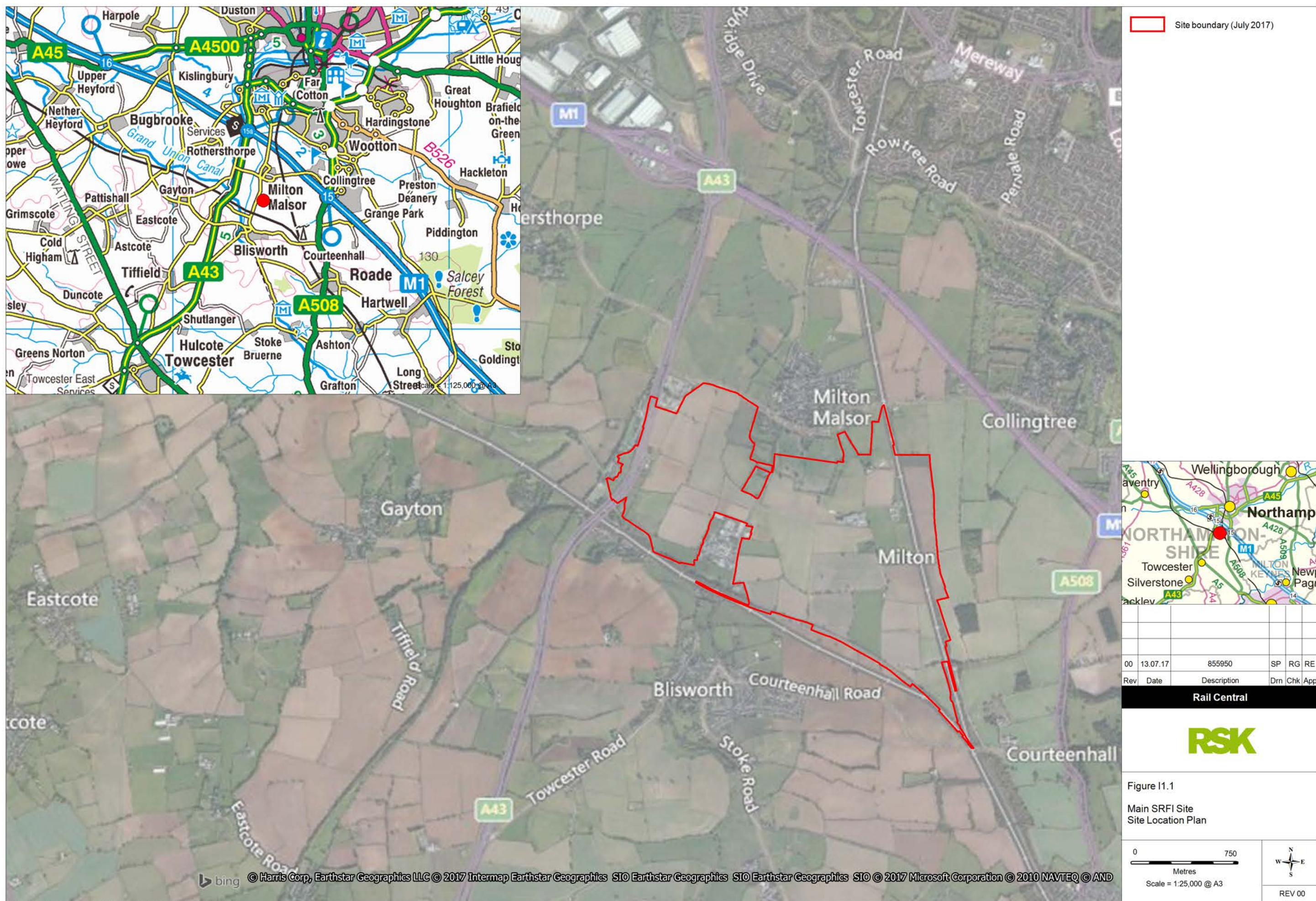
Figure I1.1 – Site Location Plan

Figure I1.2 – Site Location Plan

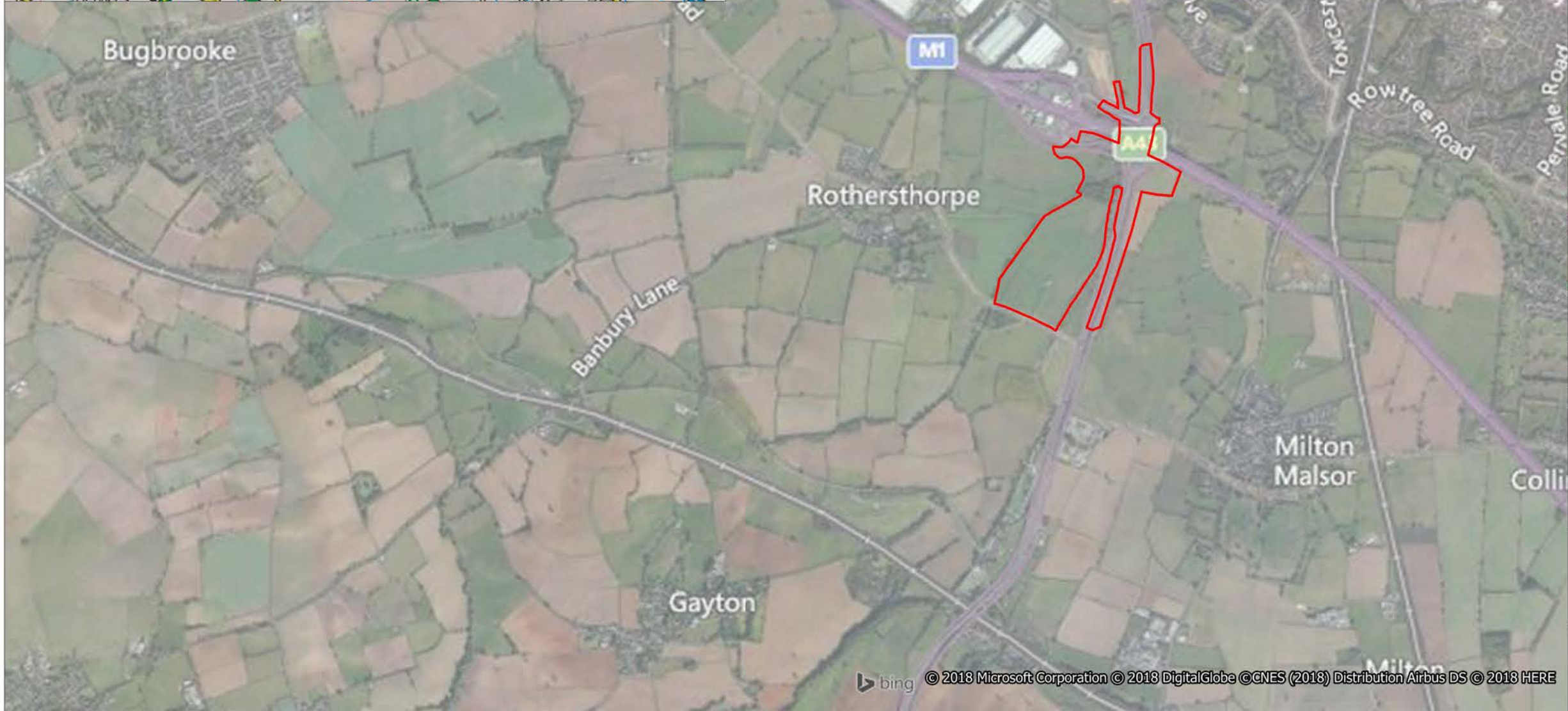
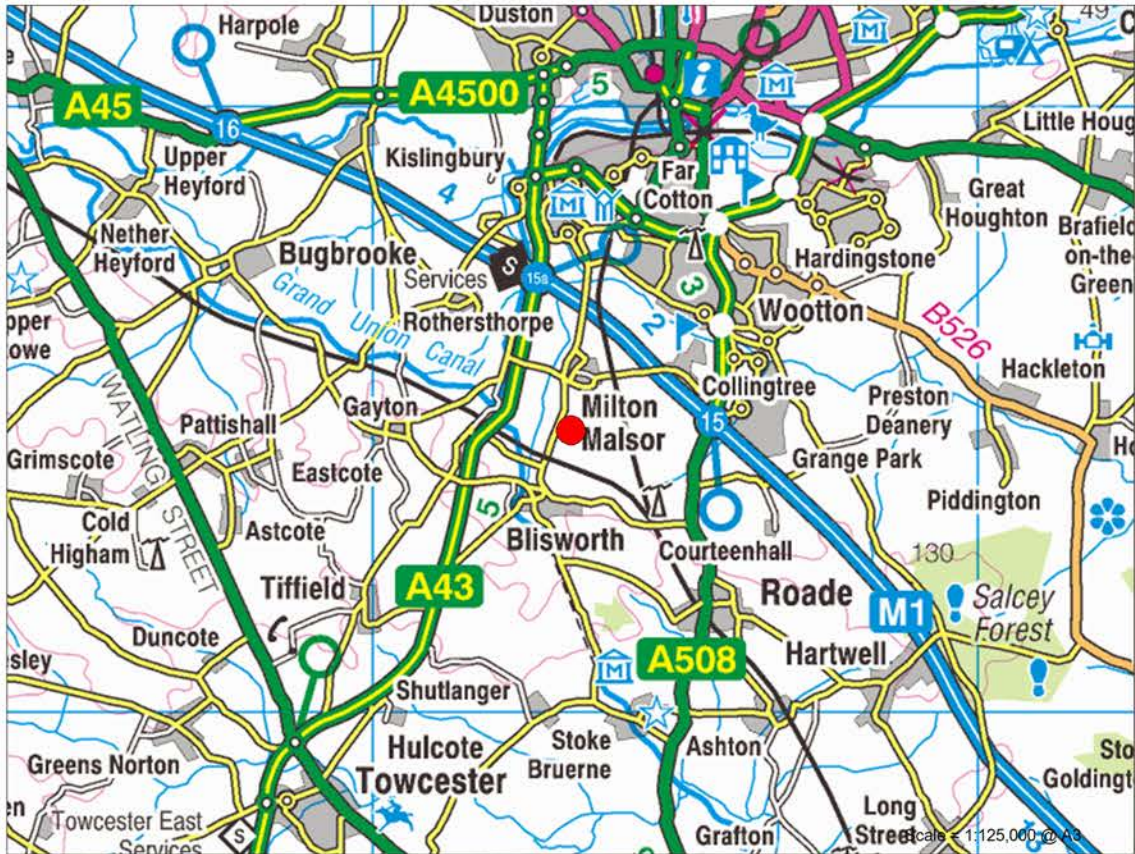
Figure I2.1 – Golden Plover Habitat

Figure I3.1 – Wintering Bird Vantage Survey Locations









Site boundary (Jan 2018)

00	29.01.18	855950	SP	RG	RE
Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App

Rail Central

Figure 11.2

Junction 15a

Site Location Plan

0

750

Metres

Scale = 1:25,000 @ A3

N

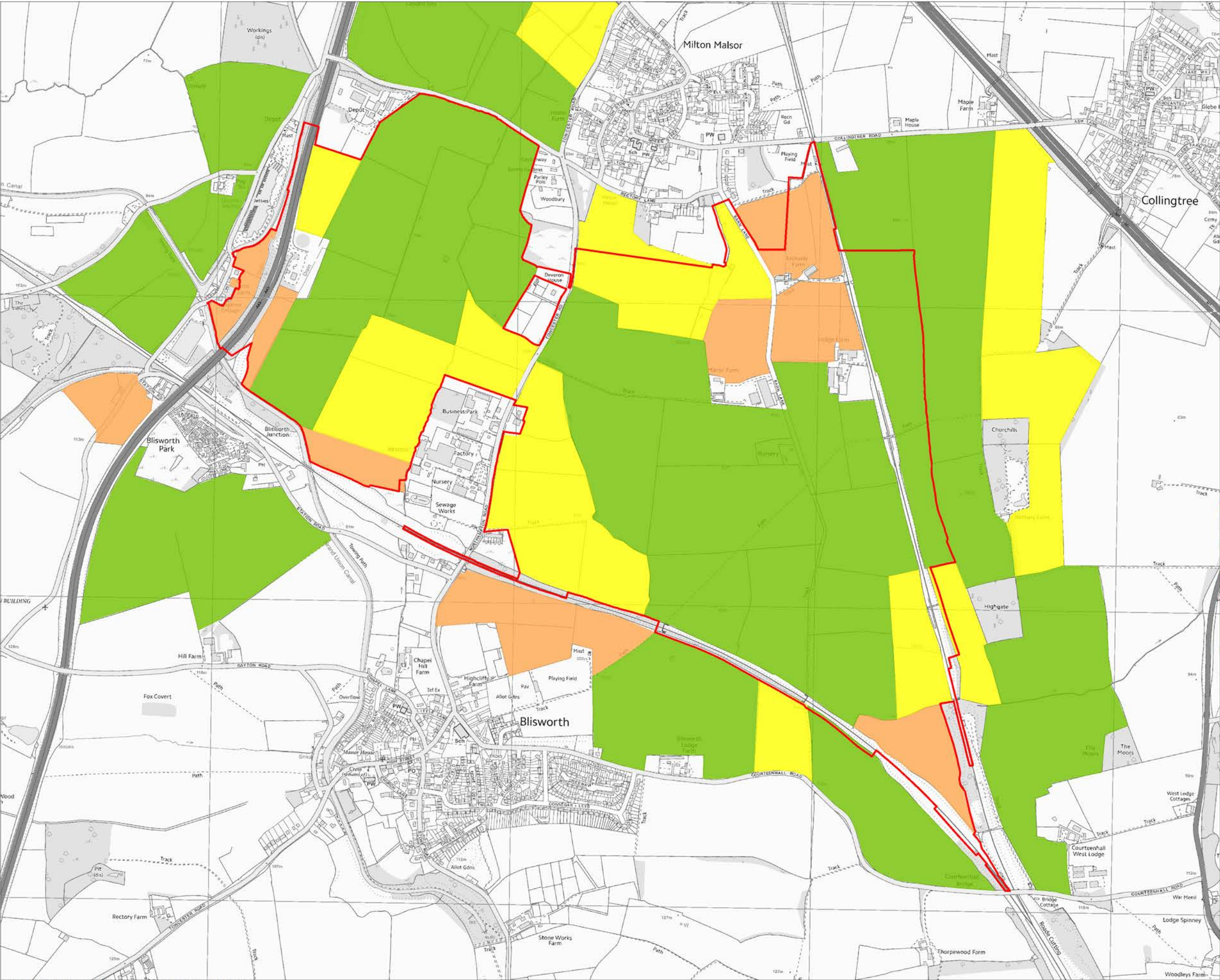
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E

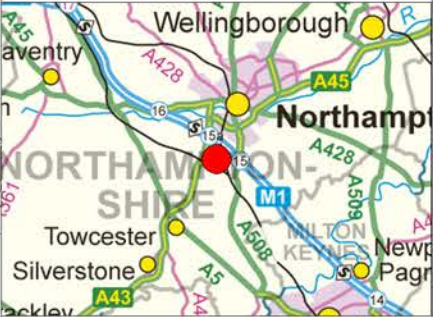
S

REV 00





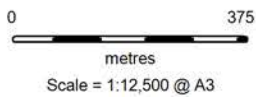
- Site boundary (July 2017)
- Golden Plover Habitat
- Optimal habitat
  - Sub-optimal habitat
  - Unsuitable habitat



00	13.07.17	855950	SP	RG	TC
Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App
Rail Central					

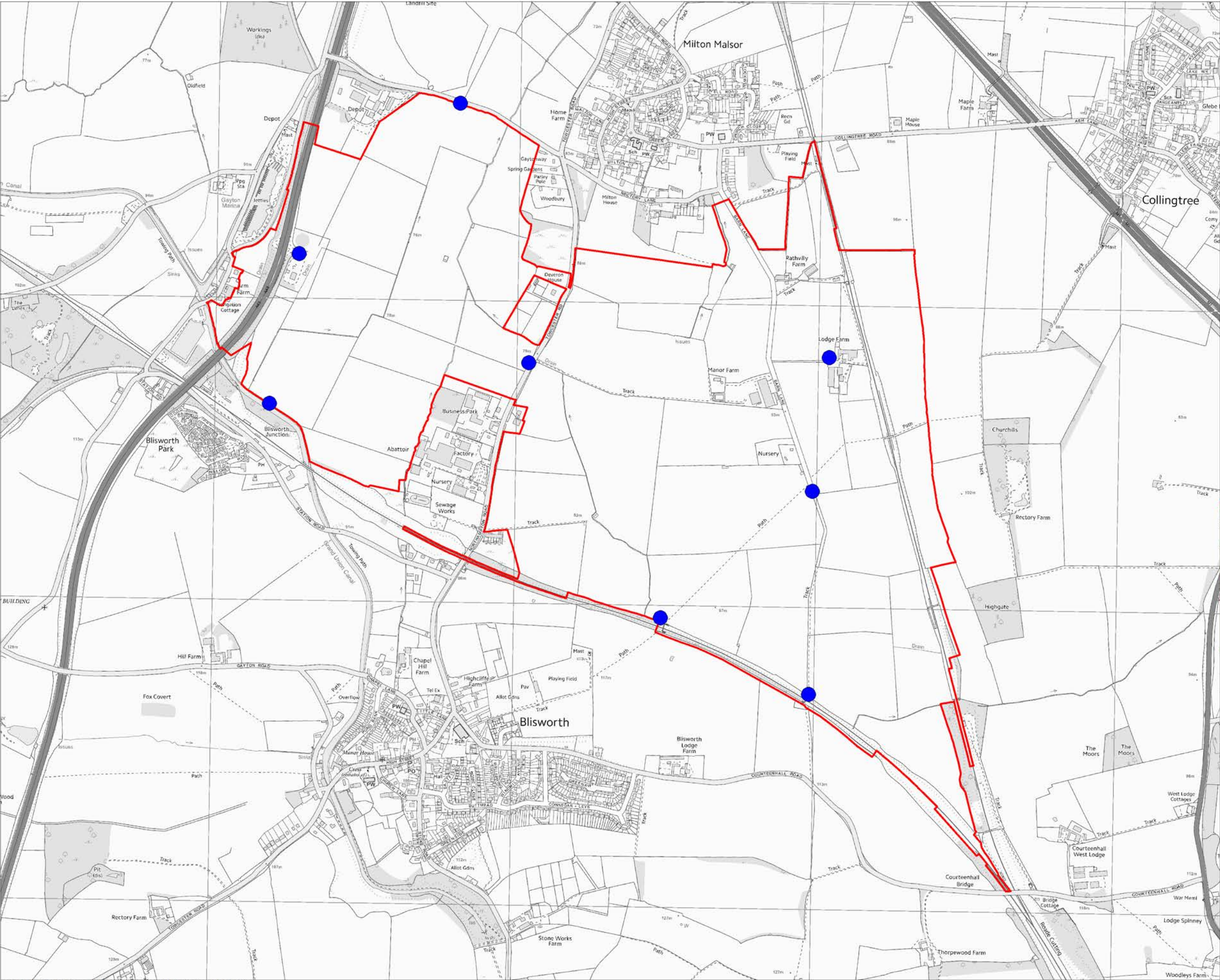


Figure 12.1  
Golden Plover Habitat

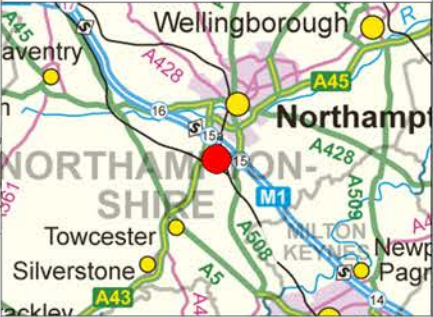


REV 00





- Site boundary (July 2017)
- Vantage survey point



00	13.07.17	855950	SP	RG	TC
Rev	Date	Description	Drn	Chk	App
Rail Central					



Figure 13.1  
Wintering Birds Vantage Survey Locations

0375metresScale = 1:12,500 @ A3

NWSE

REV 00