

OFFICIAL

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Issue:	6
Date:	7 June 2025
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Level 2

Module P501

Systems of work

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User information

This Network Rail document contains colour-coding according to the following Red–Amber–Green classification.

Red requirements – no variations permitted

- Red requirements are to be complied with and achieved at all times.
- Red requirements are presented in a red box.
- Red requirements are monitored for compliance.
- Non-compliances will be investigated and corrective actions enforced.

Amber requirements – variations permitted subject to approved risk analysis and mitigation

- Amber requirements are to be complied with unless an approved variation is in place.
- Amber requirements are presented with an amber sidebar.
- Amber requirements are monitored for compliance.
- Variations can only be approved through the national variations process.
- Non-approved variations will be investigated and corrective actions enforced.

Green guidance – to be used unless alternative solutions are followed

- Guidance should be followed unless an alternative solution produces a better result.
- Guidance is presented with a dotted green sidebar.
- Guidance is not monitored for compliance.

Alternative solutions should be documented to demonstrate effective control.

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Issue record

Issue	Date	Comments
1	March 2013	First issue.
2	June 2016	Scheduled periodic review and update carried out. New section 2.3 portable and transportable plant added. Requirements of Letter of Instruction NR/BS/LI/285 incorporated into Section 4. Requirements of Letter of Instruction NR/BS/LI/327 incorporated into Section 6.
3	June 2017	Added reference to M&EE COP0032. Changed term RRV Excavator for OTP in Clause 8. Updated terminology and wording for clarity.
4	March 2019	Removed content to form guidance note, ALO, Live OLE. Rationalised content. Moved content to make module flow better. Combined Safe system of work and OTP/Plant planning into one document. Updated section movement under Live OLE.
5	June 2022	General review and update, referenced NR/L2/RMVP/0200/F0462.
6	June 2025	Revised to include improved OTP type mitigations for risk of runaway when working on gradients. Improved description of actions required when working in electrified areas. New reference to NR/L3/ELP/SAI25 for working in electrified areas. A new hierarchy of measures to protect OLE when OTP is working under isolated conditions. New section on checking for product acceptance of OTP at the planning stage. Added references to M&EE Codes of Practice COP0032 and COP0011.

Reference documentation

All reference documents and legislation are given in: NR/L2/RMVP/0200/MANUAL - Infrastructure Plant Manual

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1 Purpose

The implementation of this module contributes to mitigating the following risks:

- a) compliance with legislation;
- b) runaway/failure to stop on demand, e.g. OTP running away on a gradient;
- c) MEWPs becoming out of control, e.g. MEWP operator being crushed under a structure;
- d) collision, e.g. collision between an RRV and an OTM;
- e) overturning, e.g. RRV overturning during lifting operations;
- f) damage to assets, e.g. RRV or its load hitting a passing train during ALO operation;
- g) contact with energised or de-energised Overhead Line Equipment
- h) points run through; and
- i) derailment, e.g. trailer being loaded incorrectly and staff injuries.

2 Scope

This module defines the requirements for controlling risks when working with plant in particular situations, for example, on gradients and cants, in electrification areas or poor track conditions.

This module applies to all organisations involved with the planning or supply of plant or carrying out/controlling plant operations on Network Rail Managed Infrastructure (NRMI) and Network Rail projects.

The term 'Plant' used in this module covers on-track plant (OTP), on-track machines (OTM), portable, transportable and mobile plant (PTMP) and civils construction machines (CCM) which all require a documented safe system of work.

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3 Documented safe system of work

All work undertaken on NRMI (Network Rail Managed Infrastructure) shall have an associated documented safe system of work.

A safe system of work is a formal procedure that is documented and followed so that work is carried out safely. There are 6 stages to follow in the preparation of a safe system of work as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 - The 6 stages of a safe safe system of work

4 Planning the safe system of work

If the work is to be undertaken on or near the line, the safe system of work shall be planned in accordance with NR/L2/OHS/019.

If planning for any work to be carried out at height adhere to the requirements of NR/L2/OHS/022.

NOTE 1: Working at height is defined as any work activity where there is a need to control a risk of a person or object falling a distance liable to cause personal injury.

The On-Track Plant Operations Scheme (POS) provider shall be involved in the planning of any OTP operations. When work is to be delivered using OTP it shall be:

- notified to the POS provider and the OTP planner; and
- planned in advance in accordance with the relevant modules of NR/L2/RMVP/0200.

The planner shall produce a safe system of work for using the plant. If lifting is required as part of the work, that part of the process shall be in accordance with NR/L2/RMVP/0200/P503 and completed by a competent lift planner holding the required competence as set out in NR/L2/RMVP/0200/P500.

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The safe system of work shall identify the plant required to carry out the work and any arrangements required so that work can be completed safely.

To complete emergency repairs to the infrastructure the requirements in NR/L2/OHS/019 shall be followed.

NOTE 2: The 'planner' is the person who produces the safe system of work (e.g. OTP work plan). This person may also complete Lift Planning if they hold the relevant competence to do so.

NOTE 3: Additional guidance on planning can be found in M&EE COP0002 – Code of Practice for planning the use of mobile operated plant.

5 Site visit

A site visit should be carried out at the planning stage and the findings recorded.

Where hazards are identified, documented controls that minimise the risks should be implemented.

Wherever possible the site visit should be undertaken during daylight hours. This will help to give a clearer picture of the site conditions to identify the hazards, and the control measures that will be needed

It is good practice for the site visit to be undertaken by the planner (or a planner with lift planning competence when lifting is involved). Alternatively a POS representative could undertake the site visit and provide the planner with the information obtained.

It might not be possible to collect all information needed to plan the safe system of work from the site visit alone. Reference documentation can be used to determine any missing information. Examples are the National Hazard Directory, Geo-RINM Viewer (GRV) and load diagrams showing typical weights.

Considerations to be reviewed as part of a site visit should be as a minimum:

- a) the movement of trains and protection of any lines open to traffic;
- b) the suitability of access points and the need to on/off track or turn vehicles without fouling a line open to traffic if using on-track plant;
- c) the location of any level crossings, user worked crossings, foot crossings within the work site and any control that will be required;
- d) the subsequent permissions and approvals relating to interaction with the public highway and delivery point management;
- e) the levels of track cant and gradient at any on/off or cross tracking points and the work site where working movements may take place;
- f) the potential for vehicles to damage the infrastructure whilst moving around the site;
- g) the potential for vehicles to touch overhead electrification systems or conductor rail electrification systems during movements around the site;

NOTE 1: The return conductor of OLE systems is positioned along the side of the gantry structures and is not in a fixed height position. The access road adjacent to the railway might be higher than rail level. These factors need to be considered when calculating a safe clearance to the return conductor.

- h) requirements for the safe system of work to be authorised by the Network Rail Electrical & Plant Maintenance Engineer (E&PME) or the Designated Project

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Engineer (DPE) See NR/L3/ELP/29987, if the planned work involves operation of plant under live overhead line equipment

- i) the potential for vehicles to touch third party power lines during movements around the site;

NOTE 2: See HSE document GS6 Avoidance of danger from overhead electric power lines for further information on safe working near third party power lines.

- j) the numbers of persons involved and how they will arrive at the worksite from the access point;

NOTE 3: Walking long distances along ballast/track should be avoided and the choice of plant to be used could be influenced by its ability to provide transport for the numbers of persons involved.

- k) requirements for effective communication between all parties operating and/or controlling machines on site;
- l) the position of any cable troughing and drainage channels, lineside equipment or items fixed to the rail;

NOTE 4: This could include axle counter equipment, force transducers, accelerometers or treadles.

- m) the location of any buried services if it is intended to excavate or drive anything into the ground;

NOTE 5: Refer to Network Rail publications NR/L1/INI/CP1010, NR/L3/MTC/RCS0216/GA08 and HSE publication HSG47, Avoiding danger from underground services, for more information on locating buried services safely.

- n) the load carrying capacity of platform surfaces, bridges or other track supporting structures, particularly if it is intended to carry out any lifting operations on or near such structures;
- o) positions of safety for staff involved with using the plant and affected by the plant, and any areas of limited space or clearance associated with the use of the plant;
- p) if working in tunnels, identify clearances, refuges and arrangements for sufficient ventilation (see NR/L2/RMVP/0200/P505 for further information)
- q) storage locations, including temporary refuelling facilities, environmental issues and security of the plant on site;
- r) the potential to encroach third party properties and the need to obtain the necessary permissions before the plant is used;
- s) the effects when using plant, for example noise, dust and fumes, and any interaction between items of plant on the same site or neighbouring sites;
- t) that machine operators are competent to operate the plant selected.

Suitably sufficient records should be compiled as part of the site visit and used to complete planning processes.

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6 Prepare a plant safe system of work

6.1 Documentation

The planner shall create the safe system of work to record the significant hazards and controls to be put in place as a result of completing the risk assessment for the work.

The OTP safe system of work created by Network Rail functions shall be documented using the SMF/PL/0253 - OTP Work Plan for all OTP operations.

6.2 Authorisation

The plant safe system of work shall be reviewed and approved by a responsible manager or by persons identified as competent do so.

If the safe system of work is not authorised, the planner shall return to the planning stage and draft a new safe system of work.

If short notice work is identified, the safe system of work shall be authorised by a more senior manager than the responsible manager who would normally authorise the safe system of work before the plant is ordered (see Appendix A).

7 Possession and protection requirements

The nature of the work and the proximity to Any Line Open (ALO) will affect the need for a possession of the line, line blockage, or line blockage with additional protection.

An assessment of ALO risks shall be undertaken as set out in M&EE COP0032. Protection of the line shall be applied as set out in GE/RT8000/HB7 or GE/RT8000/HB15 as appropriate.

8 Working with lines open to traffic

8.1 General requirements

Only work with lines remaining open to traffic when there is no other safe system of work that can be implemented:

Where the risk assessment shows that a line can foreseeably be fouled by the plant and/or its load, work shall only be carried out:

- a) with all affected lines blocked; or
- b) with a documented and authorised ALO plan, and additional risk control measures in place.

8.2 Conditions when working with any line open to traffic (ALO)

When planning and implementing ALO working by plant the planning principles and risk mitigations given in M&EE COP0032 shall be followed.

When activities are being undertaken outside the railway infrastructure boundary where there is the potential to foul lines open to traffic, the requirements given in NR/L3/CIV/0063 – Piling, drilling, crane, MEWP and self-propelled modular transport (SPMT) operations adjacent to the railway shall be followed.

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8.3 Action in the event of fouling an open line

In the event of inadvertent fouling of an open line, the machine and load shall be immediately made safe by returning the machine and its load to a safe position or emergency protection shall be carried out as specified within GE/RT8000/HB2.

If a task cannot be completed as planned without fouling the adjacent line, the work shall be stopped and either re-planned, cancelled, or a line blockage taken with the correct additional protection as detailed in GE/RT8000/HB7.

9 Use of plant

9.1 Inside a worksite

Do not leave plant in a worksite in a position where it could be struck by a train or other vehicle moving on any line.

NOTE: The safe system of work for the line under possession will detail how train movements are managed.

9.2 Outside of a possession worksite or line blockage

Plant that is permitted to be used outside of a possession, worksite or without a line blockage shall:

- a) be planned in accordance with NR/L2/OHS/019, and;
- b) have a safe system of work that is compliant with GE/RT8000;

If the track geometry can foreseeably be affected, then the safe system of work shall detail whether:

- a) the track can be returned to its original or a safe state before the passage of a train; and
- b) any plant and persons involved with the operation can move to a position of safety within the time limits specified in GE/RT8000 before the passage of a train.

If the track cannot be returned to a safe state, or people and plant cannot move to a position of safety before the passage of a train, a line blockage shall be taken and emergency protection shall be implemented in accordance with GE/RT 8000.

Where the operation of plant is mobile along the trackside, working without a line blockage shall only be permitted where the movement is defined in the safe system of work.

10 Working on gradient or cant

Where plant is used on gradients, the safe system of work shall include measures to prevent the occurrence of a runaway or failure to stop.

Select OTP appropriately by drive type to mitigate against the risk of a runaway.

The selection of OTP shall include an assessment of the effects that poor/low rail adhesion will have on the braking performance of a machine.

NOTE: OTP Drive types are 9a Hydrostatic Drive, 9b High Ride and 9c Low Ride. see RIS-1530-PLT

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When selecting OTP, the selection process shall assess and record the site conditions and limitations as stated on the Engineering Conformance Certificate.

In some cases, a 9c (low ride) machines might not be suitable for certain infrastructure limitations such as raised check rails.

Where plant is used on cants, only use plant within its safe working limits to prevent an overturn event occurring.

11 Working in areas with axle counters

When working in areas fitted with axle counters, the potential for inadvertent operation or damage to the axle counters shall be assessed and control measures implemented to prevent this.

NOTE: This is especially relevant where an item of plant is placed on the track and passed over an axle counter which registers its presence. If the plant is then removed from the track the section will continue to show occupied. Apply the requirements of NR/L3/OPS/084 Line Clear Arrangements Following Engineering Works in Axle Counter Areas – Line Clear Verification Process.

12 Working in electrified areas

12.1 Direct current conductor rail equipment (DCCR)

For electrified lines with DCCR, plant shall not operate without an isolation in place.

Where an isolation is required on electrified lines with DCCR, it shall be implemented in accordance with NR/L3/ELP/3091.

For OTP the limitations shown on the Product Acceptance (PA) Certificate or Engineering Conformance Certificate (ECC) shall be adhered to.

NOTE: An isolation is where conductor rail equipment is isolated, earthing straps fitted and a valid conductor Rail Permit (CRP) is issued.

12.2 Overhead line equipment (OLE)

12.2.1 Plant movements under live OLE

Where plant, including any fitted attachment or load is physically capable of coming into contact with OLE, work planners shall firstly apply for an isolation.

Where an isolation is required, it shall be implemented in accordance with NR/L3/ELP/29987

Limitations shown on the Product Acceptance (PA) Certificate or Engineering Conformance Certificate (ECC) shall be adhered to.

NOTE 1: An isolation is where the OLE is isolated, earthed and an Overhead Line Permit is issued.

NOTE 2: Requirements relating to low electrical risk working and plant activities not requiring an earthed isolation are set out in NR/L3/ELP/SAI25/Cat L.

NOTE 3: For up-to-date details of approved plant available, contact the POS Providers and Plant Suppliers who are required to maintain an asset register of all their plant assets.

NOTE 4: See NR/L2/RMVP/0200/ F0462 - Movement of OTP Under Energised OLE, Planning and Approval

NOTE 5: Requirements relating to plant movement restrictions under live OLE are set out in NR/L3/ELP/SAI25/02.

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12.2.2 On/off/cross tracking and travelling under live OLE

OTP shall only be on/off/cross tracked or travel under live OLE when the OTP is stowed and locked in travel mode meeting W6a or Plant gauge.

NOTE: lower gauge exceedances for rubber tyred vehicles as allowed under RIS-1530-PLT are permissible where there is no impact on OTP movements under OLE.

OTP shall only be on/off or cross tracked at RRAPs that meet the clearance requirements defined in NR/L2/RMVP/0200/P301.

Movements under live OLE shall not be undertaken where this requires any component or attachment to be moved from its stowed position.

Limitations shown on the Product Acceptance (PA) Certificate or Engineering Conformance Certificate (ECC) shall be adhered to.

Access and egress to the plant by staff needs to be safe. This should be limited to access to the operating cab and/or access to personnel carrying areas fitted with correct roofing or covers to separate staff from the risks of contact with live OLE.

12.2.3 Working under live OLE

Plant shall not work under live OLE unless it:

- a) meets the clearance requirement stated in NR/L3/ELP/29987 Module 2; and
- b) has a detailed risk assessment and a safe system of work confirming all clearances to the OLE can be maintained, which is briefed to all staff concerned prior to working; and
- c) has approval from the Network Rail E&PME or the Designated Project Engineer (DPE) see NR/L3/ELP/29987 Module 2; and
- d) has a height configuration that is the same in its working mode to that in its travel mode; or
- e) a Product Accepted movement limiting device (MLD) configured to limit the range of movement such that entry into the Live Zone of exposed live parts is prevented; and

In addition OTP or OTM shall not work under live OLE unless it has:

- f) been approved for this purpose (see NR/L2/RMVP/0200/P300 and any limitations on the PA Certificate or ECC); and
- g) been earth bonded in accordance with the requirements of RIS-1530-PLT and NR/L2/RMVP/0200/P300;

12.2.4 OLE Protection

Where isolations are obtained, measures shall be put in place to prevent plant, including any fitted attachment or load, from striking the isolated OLE. All such works shall be planned to follow the principles of prevention by following the hierarchy of controls given at Table 1.

State in the system of work the control measure chosen from Table 1, along with an authorised justification for not choosing any higher priority control measure.

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NOTE : Contact with OLE even whilst isolated can cause damage to components and equipment which could result in equipment failure, faults and delay

Priority	Action	Method
1.	Slew the OLE	Physically move the wires away from working plant
2.	Movement limiting devices (MLD) Height limiters	Compliant with RIS-1530-PLT
3.	Wire/component protection	Polyurethane (PU)/foam covers, cladding panels
4.	Demarcation	Lights, hi-viz markings, goal posts
5.	Site observation	Visual monitoring of OTP/OTM working and warning of encroachments

Table 1 – OLE protection - hierarchy of controls

12.3 External overhead lines

Systems of work shall detail areas where overhead third party cables cross the railway.

NOTE: Further guidance can be obtained from Health and Safety Executive publication HSE GS 6, Avoiding danger from overhead electric power lines.

Third Party cables could be power or communications cables. The cable owners should be contacted at the planning stage to inform them of any works that might foreseeably foul their assets, and gather any details relating to restrictions that would need to be applied. Generally, contact details for assets owners should be located on pylons or posts used to support the cables.

13 Working with on-track machines and on-track plant

When working with OTMs and OTP, the safe system of work shall include:

- a) confirmation that operator(s) are competent and authorised to operate the plant to be used;
- b) verification that any testing or witnessing of tests has been completed for:
 - the operation of parking and dynamic brakes;
 - the operation of warning systems, for example RCI systems, internal and external warning lights, horns, sirens; and
 - the operation and cleanliness of all lights, for example marker lights, head lights, working lights.
- c) details of any limitations imposed by the ECC that might affect the planned works;
- d) speed restrictions that apply to working and travelling modes and the safe separation of machines;

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- e) verification that safety devices are placed across cab doorways and that notices are displayed to warn against the dangers of passing traffic where rail vehicle movements may take place within 3 metres of the plant;
- f) verification that all protection equipment is in place (e.g. Vortok fencing);
- g) information relating to points within the possession and all movements over them;
- h) exclusion zone requirements - see relevant Task Risk Control sheets contained within NR/L3/MTC/RCS0216;
- i) setting of movement limiting devices including height limiters and RCIs; and
- j) arrangements for the safe exit from the machine on at least one side to a position of safety without crossing a line open to traffic

14 Portable and transportable plant

If using portable or transportable plant (e.g. track jacks, hand tampers), the safe system of work shall include protection in accordance with GE/RT8000/HB7.

15 Transporting plant to site

The safe system of work shall include all movements of plant from the stabling point to the site access point.

NOTE: Further guidance on the transportation of plant is given in NR/GN/RMVP/0200

16 Safe site storage of plant and attachments

The safe system of work shall include the safe storage of plant and attachments on site including the stabling point and site access point.

NOTE: Further guidance on the safe storage of plant is given in NR/GN/RMVP/0200

17 Site lighting

The safe system of work shall detail site lighting requirements for on/off tracking of OTP, and all other plant when either setting up or undertaking works.

NOTE: Further guidance on site lighting requirements is given in NR/GN/RMVP/0200

18 First aid needs assessment

As part of the safe system of work, the Principal Contractor (PC) shall carry out a 'needs assessment' to determine first-aid requirements that will be adequate and appropriate to the hazards and risks present at the work site.

This procedure should also identify a designated person on site, responsible for contacting the emergency services and the methods by which serious casualties can be evacuated and transferred to hospital.

The 'needs assessment' is required by The Health & Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 and should be included as part of the emergency procedures in the documented safe system of work to deal with any injuries occurring.

NOTE: Further guidance on carrying out a first aid 'needs assessment' is given in:

HSE document L74, Guidance on The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981.

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HSE document, Case studies for first-aid at work. The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981.

19 Lifting operations

If the planned work involves lifting operations including the use of MEWPs, the safe system of work shall include a lift plan and a risk assessment of the factors that might affect the lifting operation

A lift planner shall additionally:

- a) determine the most appropriate OTP for the work and check that the machine will be capable of undertaking each lift within its safe working limits; and
- b) plan any lifting of rail as set out in NR/L2/RMVP/0200/P503;

Where generic or routine lift plans are available, they may be used to help identify the OTP required.

NOTE: Further guidance and good practice for planning lifting operations is given in NR/GN/RMVP/0200 and M&EE COP0011.

20 Selecting plant

To determine the most appropriate plant for the work, the planner shall:

- a) review:
 - i) the range of work activities to be undertaken, and;
 - ii) the information obtained from any site visit(s); and;
 - iii) appropriate reference documentation (Hazard Directory etc.) and;
 - iv) local and personal knowledge; and
 - v) the requirements of relevant modules in NR/L2/RMVP/0200.
- b) produce a documented plan of the sequence of work activities and devise risk controls that will be required at each stage based on the hazards identified;
- c) identify machines that will have the capability of undertaking the work within their safe limits of operation; and
- d) check the ECC of any OTP to identify and check that there are no limitations on their use that would affect the work.

Prior to booking OTP the person making the booking shall check if it has PA. If a record of PA is not held, the supplier shall be asked to provide evidence of PA.

If there is no suitable OTP with PA available from within normal approved sources, Network Rail or the POS provider shall consider and record whether the safety of the OTP can be verified by equivalent means, specifically:

- a) the relevant item has a valid ECC; and
- b) the asset owner has confirmed in writing that there have been no incidents relating to the use of the item; and
- c) the asset owner has confirmed in writing that the item is compliant with all relevant legal requirements (including, HSWA, POWER & LOLER); and

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- d) the asset owner has confirmed in writing that any hardware or software modifications to the original specification are compliant with RIS-1710-PLT; and
- e) the asset owner warrants that the operation of the item is compliant with NR/L2/RMVP/0200, including, without limitation, competence requirements.

If there is no OTP with PA, or verification by equivalent means is not obtainable from normal approved sources, Network Rail or the POS provider should look to use suppliers in other areas.

When trying to identify the most suitable item of OTP, it is good practice to consult with the OTP supplier/POS Provider. For Network Rail organisations, Area Plant Managers (or equivalent) may be consulted.

21 Ordering plant

When the plant has been selected, determine its availability and operational status from the supplier(s) for the period that work is to take place.

If alternative plant is to be used, the planner/lift planner shall check it can safely and effectively undertake the work activity as planned. If it can't, the planner/lift planner shall either:

- a) re-plan the method of work and update the safe system of work; or
- b) request other alternative plant that can safely and effectively undertake the work activity.

Only approved POS providers are permitted to hire-in OTP for use on NRMI and NR projects.

OTP shall be ordered no later than T-6 to allow robust planning.

The POS provider, the OTP supplier (if not the same organisation) and the client shall agree where and when the plant shall be delivered.

NOTE 1: If the selected OTP is not available, the supplier might be able to provide alternative OTP suitable for the work.

NOTE 2: Contractual arrangements require OTP suppliers to confirm receipt of an order or acceptance of a call off order within 24 hours of the order being placed, and to confirm which plant is to be provided within a further 48 hours.

NOTE 3: Additional guidance and good practice on delivery point management is available in NR/GN/RMVP/0200 clause 9.5.

22 Records

All records of OTP systems of work shall be retained for 6 years as set out in NR/L3/INF/02226 Corporate Records Retention Schedule.

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Appendix A - Planning flowchart

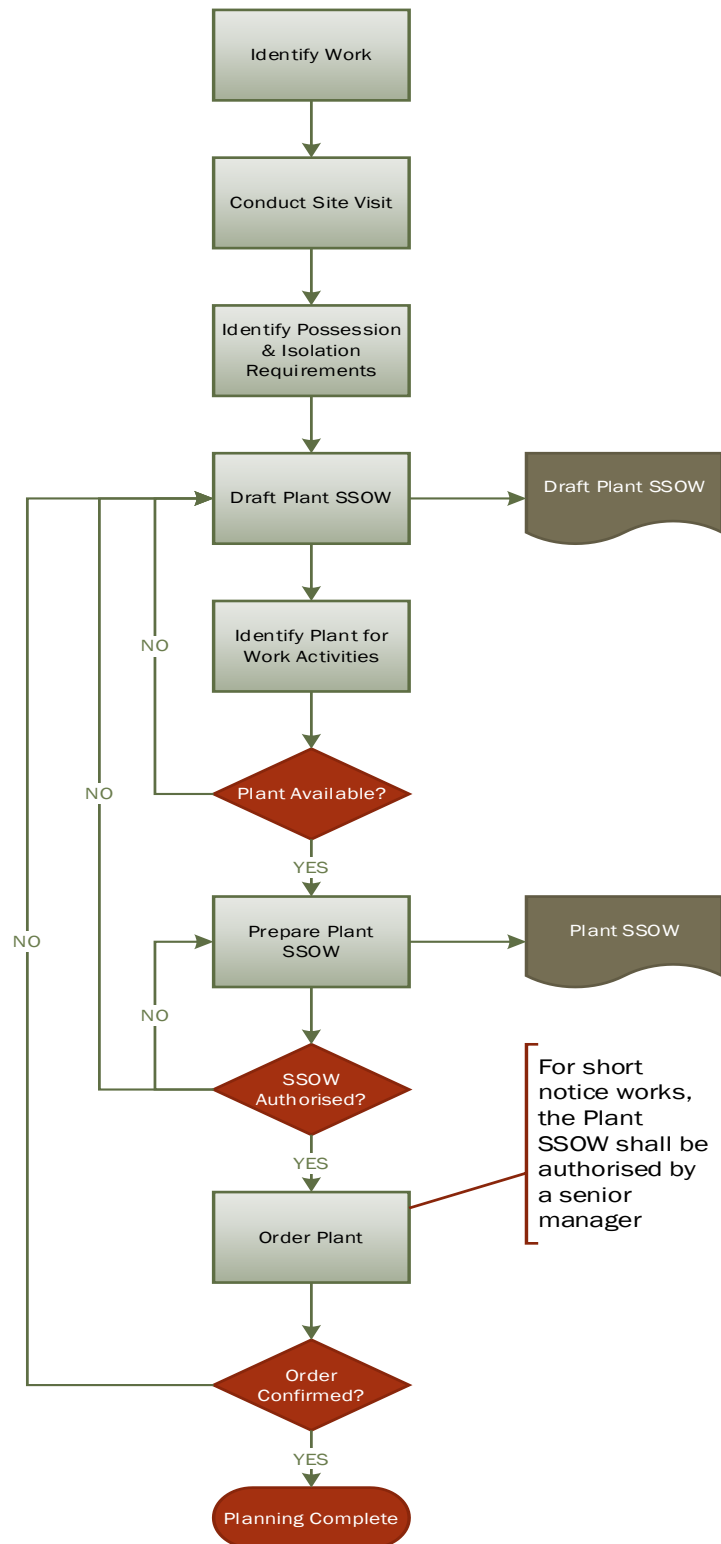


Figure A1 – Flowchart for planning and producing Safe system of work