THE GHYLL, SOUTHWATER

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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Prepared for:

S & C Slatter

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- RPS was commissioned by S & C Slatter to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at The Ghyll, Pevensey Rd, Southwater, Horsham, RH13 9XZ. This comprised a desk study, UK Habitat Survey and an ecological scoping survey, which assessed the potential of the site to support species of conservation concern or other species which could present a constraint to the development of the site.
- The proposal involves the construction of an artificial football pitch, mini soccer pitch and the associated hardstanding and access routes.
- The site is approximately 0.8 ha in size and comprises modified grassland, hardstanding and a small section of non-native hedgerow.
- There are one statutory and four non-statutory designated sites within 2 km of the application boundary. A CEMP has been recommended to avoid impacts to these sites.
- A description of the potential effects of the proposed development on the habitats and species identified as being present or potentially present are described in this report, followed by recommendations for mitigation and enhancement measures.
- Lighting plans should be assessed by a suitability qualified ecologist to determine impacts to bats and dormice.
- The trees and woodland adjacent to site will be retained and protected throughout the development in line with the British Standards BS 5837: Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction.
- Recommendations to protect notable and protected species during the works are made in this report including protection of amphibians, reptiles, birds, bats, [redacted] and suitable methods relating to bats and night working where necessary.
- Low suitability terrestrial habitat is present within the site for GCN. A precautionary working method statement has been recommended to ensure GCN are protected during works.
- A biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment will be required to ensure a 10% net gain is delivered in line with legislative requirements.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Scope of this Report

1.1.1 RPS was commissioned by S & C Slatter to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at The Ghyll, Pevensey Rd, Southwater, Horsham, RH13 9XZ.

1.1.2 To undertake an initial assessment of the potential ecological impact of the proposals, a desk study, UK Habitat Survey, and a preliminary protected species assessment were carried out. This is termed as a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAR) in accordance with CIEEM (2017). This assessment is considered 'preliminary' until any required protected species, habitat or invasive species surveys are completed, and the results incorporated into a final Ecological Appraisal or Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) which supports the planning application.

1.1.3 The PEA aims to:

- undertake a desk-based review of designated sites and records of protected species and other species that could present a constraint;
- map and assess the habitats present on site;
- assess the site for potential to support protected species or other species that could present a constraint, and make appropriate recommendations for further survey work if necessary;
- provide outline options for mitigation measures as appropriate; and
- make recommendations for appropriate biodiversity enhancements in line with national and local planning policy.

1.1.4 This report pertains to these results only; recommendations included within this report are the professional opinion of an experienced ecologist and therefore the view of RPS. The surveys and desk-based assessments undertaken as part of this review and subsequent report including the Ecological Appraisal Notes are prepared in accordance with the British Standard for Biodiversity Code of Practice for Planning and Development (BS42020:2013).

1.2 Study Area and Zone of Influence

1.2.1 The site is located to the south of Pevensey Road, in the village of Southwater, Horsham, and is approximately 0.8 ha in size. The National Grid coordinates for the centre of the site are TQ 15992 26382.

1.2.2 The site comprised predominantly heavily managed modified grassland, with hardstanding and ornamental hedgerow also present. Within the wider leisure centre ownership boundary, additional habitats including trees, scrub, woodland, hedgerows, and buildings were present.

1.2.3 The immediate surrounds of the site are urban in nature, comprising the residential properties of Southwater Village. There is a stream which runs through the western parcel of woodland on site, continuing along from the western site boundary and transitioning into Southwater Country Park.

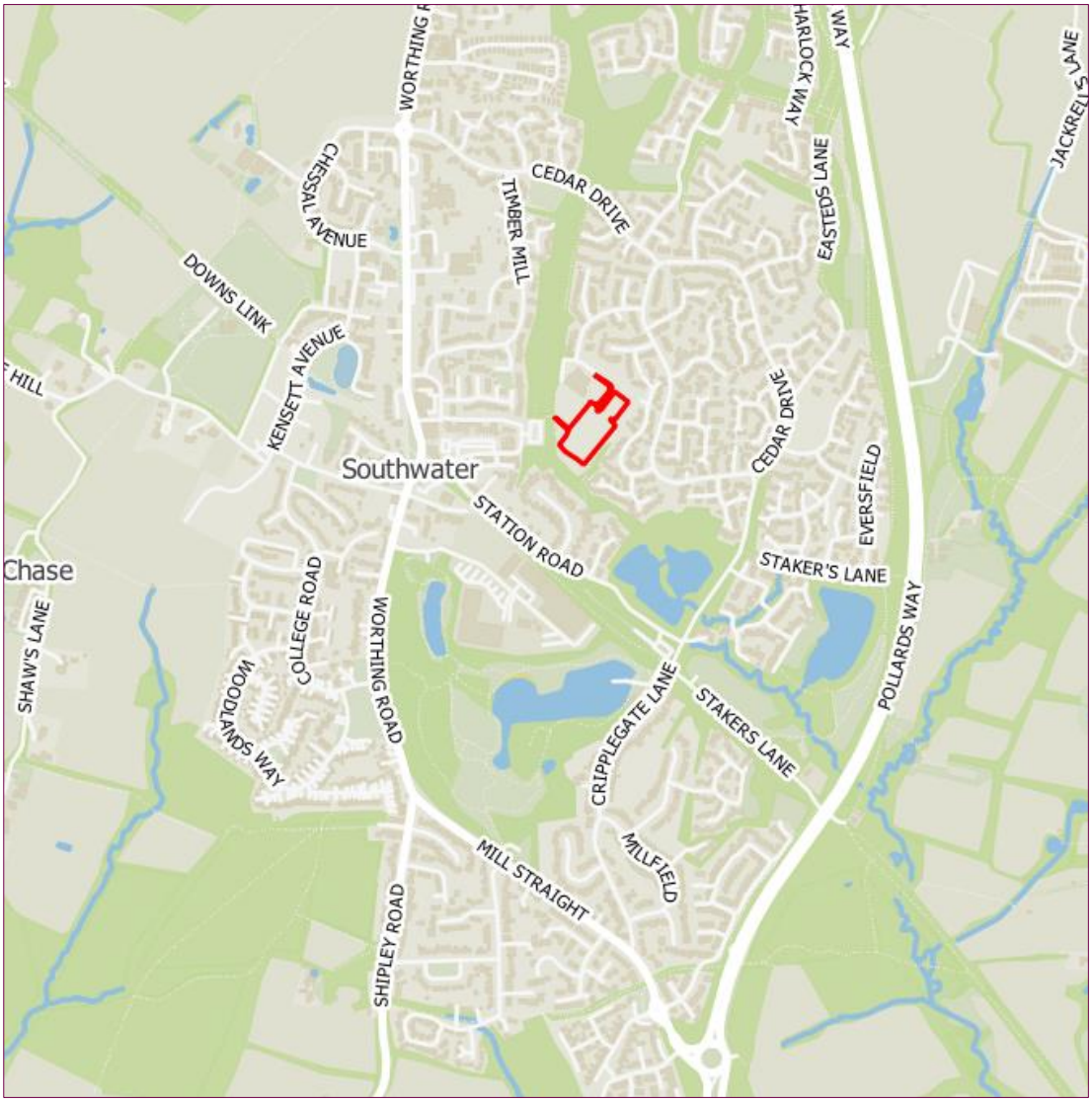
1.2.4 The wider surrounds include the remaining residential properties of Southwater and several parcels of ancient woodland. To the south of the site lies Southwater Country Park including several lakes used for recreational activities. Beyond Southwater, the surroundings are rural comprising farmland and fields as well as a number of nearby rural villages and towns. The A24 is to the east of the site.

1.2.5 The term Zone of Influence is used to describe the geographic extent of potential impacts of a proposed development. The Zone of Influence is determined by the nature of the development and also in relation to designated sites, habitats or species which might be affected by the proposals.

1.2.6 For this site, the Zone of Influence is considered to be the site and adjacent habitats, and with specific reference to [redacted] great crested newts, 500 m and 30 m from the site, [redacted].

1.2.7 The site location is shown on **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

Figure 1-1 Site location



1.3 Development Proposals

1.3.1 The site proposal involves the construction of a new artificial turf football pitch and natural turf mini soccer pitch, with associated hardstanding and access routes.

1.4 Legislation and Policy

1.4.1 Relevant legislation and policy guidance are referred to throughout this report where appropriate. Their context and application are explained in the relevant sections of this report.

1.4.2 The relevant articles of legislation are:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023);

- ODPM Circular 06/2005 (retained as Technical Guidance on NPPF 2023);
- Local planning policies (Horsham District Local Plan 2023 – 2040);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (EU Exit Amendment);
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992;
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; and
- The Environment Act 2021.

1.4.3 A summary of legislation relevant to protected or other species identified as potential constraints in this report is provided in Appendix A.

2 METHODS

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Ecological records within a 2 km radius of the site were requested from Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre (SxBRC; 2024). Data requests were limited to records for protected species recorded within the last ten years and sites of nature conservation interest within 2 km of the site. This included a review of existing statutory sites of nature conservation interest, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Area of Conservation (SACs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs), and non-statutory sites, such as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs).

2.1.2 Locations of statutory designated sites were accessed via the government 'MAGIC' website (MagicMap, 2024).

2.1.3 A 1:25,000 OS map was used to identify nearby features such as ponds or green corridors that could provide habitat or connectivity to other areas.

2.2 Ecological Appraisal

2.2.1 The Ecological Appraisal was undertaken on the 28th of November 2024, by suitably qualified RPS Ecologist, Daisy Lomas Simmons.

2.2.2 The Ecological Appraisal consisted of two components: a UKHabs Survey and a scoping survey for protected species and other species of conservation concern which could present a constraint to development.

2.2.3 Broad habitat types within the site were identified in accordance with UK Habitat Classification v2.0 (UKHab, 2023). This includes applying The UK Habitat Classification Primary Habitat Hierarchy and where necessary, Secondary Code groupings. In summary, this comprised walking over the survey area and recording the habitat types and boundary features present. The survey was also undertaken as described in the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Assessment (CIEEM, 2017).

2.2.4 A protected species scoping survey was carried out in conjunction with the UKHabs survey. The site was assessed for its suitability to support protected species, in particular great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, reptiles, birds, [redacted], bats, and other species of conservation importance that could pose a planning constraint.

2.2.5 The surveyor looked for evidence of use including signs such as burrows, droppings, footprints, paths, hairs, refugia and particular habitat types known to be used by certain groups such as ponds. Any mammal paths were also noted down and where possible followed. Fence boundaries were walked to establish any entry points or animal signs such as latrines. Areas of bare earth were inspected for mammal prints. Areas of habitat considered suitable for protected species or those of conservation interest were recorded.

2.3 Limitations

Desk Based Assessment

2.3.1 The desk study data is third party controlled data, purchased for the purposes of this report only. RPS cannot vouch for its accuracy and cannot be held liable for any error(s) in these data.

Survey

2.3.2 The habitat survey was undertaken at a sub-optimal time of year. However, given the habitats present (modified grass, developed land, and ornamental hedgerow), it is not considered a significant limitation to the survey and further botanical assessment is not required.

2.3.3 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation can ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment.

2.3.4 The protected / notable species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of these species occurring on the site, based on the suitability of the habitat, known distribution of the species in the local area provided in response to our enquiries and any direct evidence on the site. It should not be taken as providing a full and definitive survey of any protected / notable species group.

Accurate Lifespan of Ecological Data

2.3.5 The majority of ecological data remain valid for only short periods due to the inherently transient nature of the subject. The survey results contained in this report are considered accurate for two years, assuming no significant considerable changes to the site conditions.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Designated Sites

3.1.1 A single statutory designated site for nature conservation value is present within 2 km of the site. This is Southwater Country Park (CP), located 0.14 km south of the site.

3.1.2 Four non-statutory sites are located within the 2 km search radius of the site. The closest of these is Southwater Country Park Complex Local Wildlife Site (LWS), located 0.28 from the site.

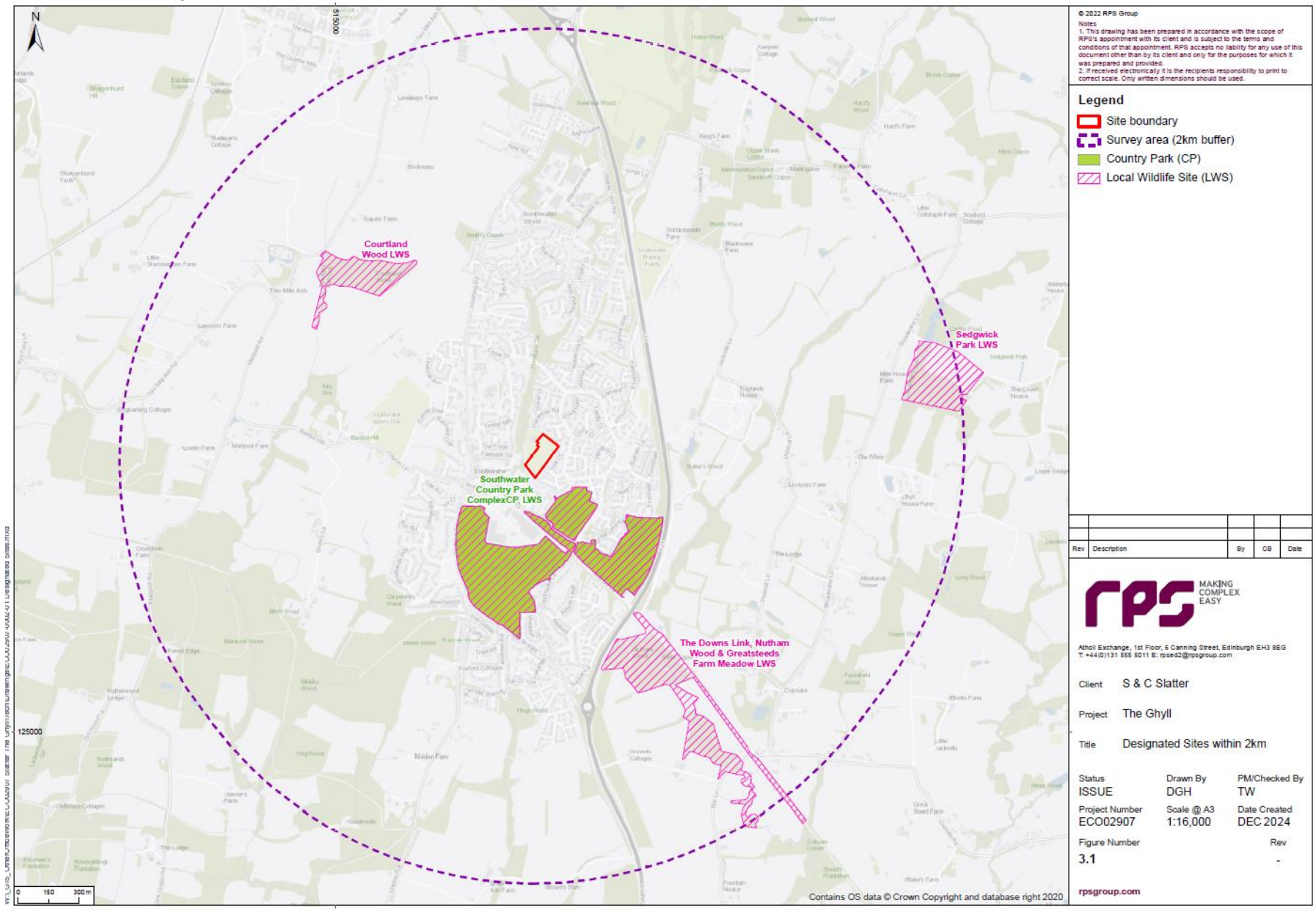
3.1.2 A summary of these sites is provided in **Table 3-1** below and the location of each site is detailed in Error! Reference source not found..

Table 3-1 Designated sites within 2 km of the study area (2024)

Site name	Type	Approx. area (ha)	Interest Features	Distance from site (m)
Statutory Sites				
Southwater Country Park	CP	31.26	Species rich grassland, ponds, reedbed, scrub, ancient woodland and parkland	0.14
Non-statutory Sites				
Southwater Country Park Complex	LWS	25	Species rich grassland, ponds, reedbed, scrub and ancient woodland	0.28
The Downs Link, Nutham Wood & Greatsteeds Farm Meadow	LWS	35.1	Disused railway, semi-natural woodland, coniferous plantation and neutral meadow	0.82
Courtland Wood	LWS	6.6	Ancient semi-natural woodland	1.07
Sedgwick Park	LWS	22.3	Unimproved neutral grassland, ancient woodland and parkland	1.70

Abbreviations used in Table 3.1: CP: Country Park; LWS: Local Wildlife Site; NS: Not supplied; ha: hectare.

Figure 3-1 Non-statutory sites within 2km



3.2 Species

3.2.1 Records of protected species were obtained from Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre. A number of species of conservation importance or otherwise notable species were recorded within the 2 km search radius of the site. A summary of these records is provided in **Table 3-2**.

3.2.2 In order to simplify the results, only records of species from the last 10 years are shown. In addition, only data with a 6-figure grid reference resolution or higher are provided, since locations given at a lower resolution do not allow accurate calculation of distance to the site boundary.

Table 3-2 Species records from the last 10 years within 2 km of the site

Common name	Scientific name	Nearest distance from site (km)	Year of most recent record	Conservation Status
PLANTS				
Bluebell	*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*	0.46	2021	WCA 8
Toothwort	*Lathraea squamaria*	0.46	2019	Sussex Rare
Ragged Robin	*Silene flos-cuculi*	0.46	2015	RedList_NT
Sainfoin	*Onobrychis viciifolia*	0.46	2016	RedList_VU
Corn Mint	*Mentha arvensis*	0.49	2017	RedList_NT
Devil's-bit Scabious	*Succisa pratensis*	0.49	2017	RedLIst_NT
Crosswort	*Cruciata laevipes*	0.68	2017	RedList_NT
Wood-sorrel	*Oxalis acetosella*	1.02	2021	RedList_NT
INVERTERATES				
Stag Beetle	*Lucanus cervus*	0.15	2021	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, HabDir2, Sussex Rare
Wall	*Lasiommata megera*	0.16	2020	NERC, UKBAP, RedList_NT
Small Blue	*Cupido minimus*	0.35	2014	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, RedList_EN
White Letter Hairstreak	*Satyrium w-album*	0.32	2021	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, RedList_EN
Slender-horned Leatherbug	*Ceraleptus lividus*	0.41	2021	NS, Suusex Rare
Purple Emperor	*Apatura iris*	0.46	2020	NERC, RedList_NT, Sussex Rare
Small Heath	*Coenonympha pamphilus*	0.46	2021	NERC, UKBAP, Redlist_VU
White Admiral	*Limenitis camilla*	0.46	2022	NERC, UKBAP, RedList_VU
Grizzled Skipper	*Pyrgus malvae*	0.46	2014	NERC, UKBAP, RedList_VU
Brown Hairstreak	*Thecla betulae*	0.46	2021	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, RedList_VU,k Sussex Rare
Downy Emerald	*Cordulia aenea*	0.46	2021	Sussex Rare
Grey Dagger	*Acronicta psi*	0.46	2020	NERC, UKBAP
Sprawler	*Asteroscopus sphinx*	0.46	2019	NERC, UKBAP
Sallow	*Xanthia icteritia*	0.46		NERC, UKBAP
Brussels Lace	*Cleorodes lichenaria*	0.46	2020	Sussex Rare
Mocha	*Cyclophora annularia*	0.46	2020	Sussex Rare
Small Phoenix	*Ecliptopera silaceata*	0.46	2018	NERC, UKBAP, RedList_VU
Dusky Thorn	*Ennomos fuscantaria*	0.46	2018	NERC, UKBAP
Maple Pug	*Eupithecia inturbata*	0.46	2020	Sussex Rare
Great Oak Beauty	*Hypomecis roboraria*	0.46	2018	Sussex Rare
Common Wainscot	*Mythimna pallens*	0.46	2020	Sussex Rare

White-speckled Clothes	*Nemapogon koenigi*	0.46	2020	Sussex Rare
Shaded Broad-bar	*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*	0.46	2014	NERC, UKBAP
White Ermine	*Spilosoma lubricipeda*	0.46	2017	NERC, UKBAP
Buff Ermine	*Spilosoma luteum*	0.46	2018	NERC, UKBAP
Scarce Maple Pigmy	*Stigmella aceris*	0.46	2021	Sussex Rare
Yellow-legged Clearwing	*Synanthedon vespiformis*	0.46	2020	Sussex Rare
Cinnabar	*Tyria jacobaeae*	0.46	2019	NERC, UKBAP, RedList_VU
Oak Hook-tip	*Watsonalla binaria*	0.46	2021	NERC, UKBAP, RedList_EN
Cinnamon Bug	*Corizus hyoscyami*	0.47	2018	Sussex Rare
Ladybird Fly	*Gymnosoma rotundatum*	0.48	2014	Sussex Rare
Lackey	*Malacosoma neustria*	0.50	2019	NERC, UKBAP, Redlist_VU
Roesel's Bush-cricket	*Roeseliana roeselii*	0.50	2016	Sussex Rare
Long-winged Cone-head	*Conocephalus fuscus*	0.51	2014	Sussex Rare
Four Banded Longhorn Beetle	*Leptura quadrifasciata*	1.84	2014	Sussex Rare
AMPHIBIANS				
Common Toad	*Bufo bufo*	0.46	2021	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP
Smooth Newt	*Lissotriton vulgaris*	0.46	2019	WCA 5
Common Frog	*Rana temporaria*	0.46	2020	WCA 5
Great Crested Newt	*Triturus cristatus*	1.04	2019	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, HabDir2:4, HabRegs2
Palmate Newt	*Lissotriton helveticus*	1.46	2019	WCA 5
REPTILES				
Common Lizard	*Zootoca vivipara*	0.44	2018	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP
Grass Snake	*Natrix natrix*	0.46	2016	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP
Slow-worm	*Anguis fragilis*	0.62	2023	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP
BIRDS				
Tawny Owl	*Strix aluco*	0.35	2021	BoCC5:Amb, Note_Bird
Red Kite	*Milvus milvus*	0.46	2021	WCA1i, Birds Dir Anx 1, Note_Bird
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	0.46	2023	BoCC5:Amb, Note_Bird
Pochard	*Aythya ferina*	0.46	2021	BoCC5:Red, Note_Bird
Tufted Duck	*Aythya fuligula*	0.46	2019	Note_Bird
Mute Swan	*Cygnus olor*	0.46	2021	Note_Bird
Common Gull	*Larus canus*	0.46	2021	BoCC5:Amb, Note_Bird
Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	0.46	2018	BoCC5:Amb, Note_Bird
Stock Dove	*Columba oenas*	0.46	2018	BoCC5:Amb, Note_Bird
Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	0.46	2021	WCA 1i, BoCC5:Red, Birds Dir Anx 1, Note_Bird
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	0.46	2016	BoCC5:Amb, Note_Bird
Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	0.46	2023	BoCC5:Amb, Note_Bird
Barn Owl	*Tyto alba*	0.46	2021	WCA 1i, Note_Bird
Marsh Tit	*Poecile palustris*	0.91	2021	NERC, UKBAP, BoCC5:Red
Cuckoo	*Cuculus canorus*	0.94	2015	NERC, UKBAP, BoCC5:Red
Linnet	*Linaria cannabina*	1.53	2020	NERC, UKBAP, BoCC5:Red, Note_Bird
MAMMALS				
Common Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	0.13	2021	WCA 5, UKBAP, HabRegs2, HabDir4

Brown Long-eared Bat	*Plecotus auritus*	0.30	2016	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, HabRegs2, HabDir2:4
Harvest Mouse	*Micromys minutus*	0.46	2019	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, RedList_NT
Polecat	*Mustela putorius*	0.46	2018	NERC, UKBAP, HabDir2:4
Rabbit	*Oryctolagus cuniculus*	0.46	2021	RedList_NT
Daubenton's Bat	*Myotis daubentonii*	0.46	2020	WCA 5, NERC, HabRegs2, HabDir4
Soprano Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*	0.46	2020	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, HabRegs2, HabDir2:4
Bechstein's Bat	*Myotis bechsteinii*	0.49	2017	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, HabRegs2, HabDir2:4
Dormouse	*Muscardinus avellanarius*	0.50	2021	WCA 5, NERC, HabDir4, RedList_VU
Feral Ferret	*Mustela putorius subsp. furo*	0.77	2015	NERC, UKBAP
Hedgehog	*Erinaceus europaeus*	0.99	2021	NERC, UKBAP, Redlist_VU
Nathusius' Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus nathusii*	1.75	2019	WCA 5, HabRegs2, HabDir4, RedList_NT
Serotine	*Eptesicus serotinus*	1.75	2019	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, HabDir4, HabRegs2, RedList_VU
Noctule	*Nyctalus noctula*	1.75	2019	WCA 5, NERC, UKBAP, HabRegs2, HabDir4

Abbreviations used in Table 3.2: WCA1i: Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 1, part 1; WCA5: Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5; WCA8: Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 8; N: Nationally Notable; Nb: Notable B; NR: Nationally Rare; NS: Nationally Scarce; NERC: Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act Species of Principal Importance; UKBAP: UK Biodiversity Action Plan; HabDir2, 4, 5: Habitats Directive Annex 2, 4, 5; RedList_VU: Vulnerable; RedList_EN; Endangered; RedList_NT; Near Threatened; RedList_RE: Regionally Extinct; HabRegs2: The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &) Regulations 2017 (Schedule 2); HabRegs4: The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &) Regulations 2017 (Schedule 4); BoCC5:Red: Birds of Conservation Concern 5 Red status; BoCC5:Amb: Birds of Conservation Concern 5 Amber status; Birds Dir Anx 1: Bird Directive Annex 1; Birds Dir Anx 2.1: Bird Directive Annex 2.1; Birds Dir Anx 2.2: Bird Directive Annex 2.2; Sussex Rare: Sussex Rare Species Inventory; Note_Bird: Sussex Notable Bird List.

3.3 UK Habitat Survey

3.3.1 The survey results are presented in the form of a map with the habitat types and boundary features marked, displayed in **Figure 3-2.**

3.3.2 Habitat types were identified in accordance with UK Habitat Classification v2.0 (UKHab, 2023). Descriptions of the habitat types and boundary features are detailed below. Where they applied, secondary codes are included.

3.3.3 Habitats within the wider ownership boundary of the leisure centre, including trees, scrub, woodland, hedgerows, and buildings, were noted but are not outlined below, as they do not form part of the development boundary.

Modified Grassland (g4 106)

3.3.4 The majority of the site was dominated by amenity grassland including the existing sports pitch and play area. It was heavily managed (< 5cm tall) and species poor at the time of the survey, dominated by perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*. with frequent white clover *Trifolium repens* and occasional common daisy *Bellis perennis*. Closer to the margins, frequently occurring creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* was present with occasional common dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg. and rarely occurring ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and bristly oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*.

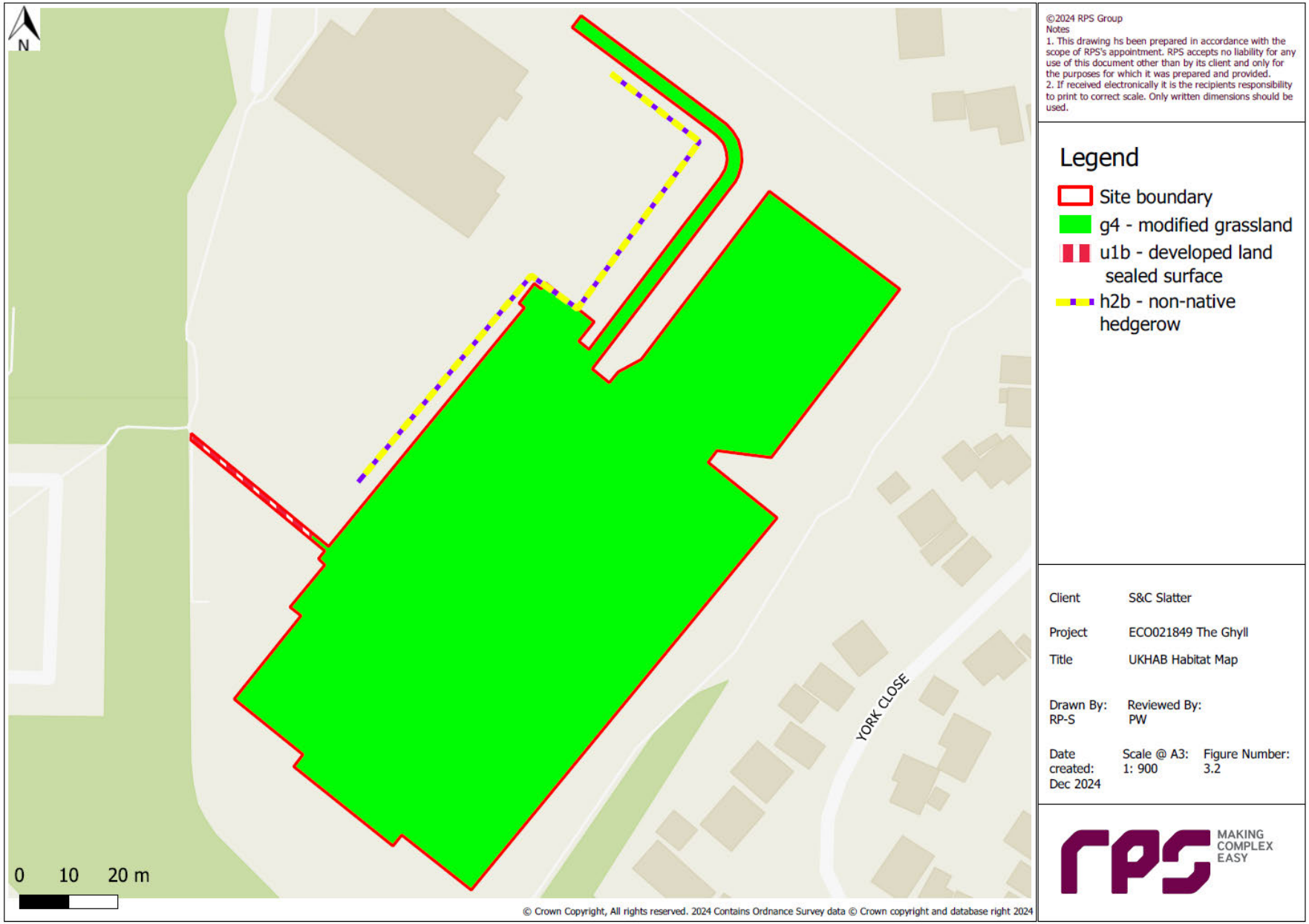
Non-Native and Ornamental Hedgerow (h2b)

3.3.5 A managed lawson cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* hedgerow bordered both the bowling green and MUGA located north of the proposed works, approximately 1.5m and 5m tall, respectively. A small section of this hedgerow encroaches into the proposed working area. Occasional bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and ivy *Hedera helix* were present in the understory.

Developed Land; Sealed Surface (u1b)

3.3.6 A small hardstanding footpath was located within the play area to the north-west.

Figure 3-2 UKHab Habitats Map



3.4 Ecological Scoping Survey

Plants

3.4.1 No protected or notable plant species were recorded on site at the time of the survey. The playing field was managed to a short sward, with the occurrence of rare or notable species considered unlikely.

3.4.2 Records for protected and notable plants were returned within 2 km of the site. The closest of these was for native bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* recorded approximately 0.46 km from the site. No suitable habitat for this species was recorded on site.

Invertebrates

3.4.3 The habitats present on site provided very limited suitability for invertebrates due to the dominance of very short, uniform, and heavily managed modified grassland.

3.4.4 Records for invertebrates were returned within the desk study, however the site is considered unlikely to support a notable or important assemblage of invertebrates.

3.4.5 Habitats adjacent to the site, such as woodland and scrub, provide more suitable habitat for invertebrates.

Amphibians

3.4.6 No suitable aquatic habitat for GCN was recorded on site at the time of the survey. The terrestrial habitats present within the site boundary were considered to be sub-optimal for GCN due to the dominance of short-sward grassland.

3.4.7 A search of MAGIC Map indicated that there were seven waterbodies within 500 m of the site boundary. Four of these were lakes located to the south of site, comprising Southwater Country Park, and the remaining three were located to the north and east.

3.4.8 Records for amphibians, including GCN were returned in the desk study. In addition, two European Protected Species licenses were granted for GCN within 2 km of the site boundary. One was approximately 1.3 km north of the site boundary in 2020, and the other was approximately 1.7 km east in 2014 (MAGIC, 2024).

3.4.9 A small stream runs through a western parcel of woodland within the wider leisure centre site, which may provide suitable habitat for supporting amphibians during their aquatic and terrestrial life stage. The stream provided good off-site connectivity to only one of the seven waterbodies, located approximately 160 m south of site, in Southwater Country Park. The remaining off-site waterbodies were separated from site by multiple roads from the neighbouring housing estate, which likely acts as a barrier to dispersal.

Reptiles

3.4.10 The grassland in its current managed state with short sward height provides sub-optimal habitat for reptiles. The hedgerow provides very limited suitable habitat for reptiles due to its sparse understorey. Adjacent habitats within the wider leisure centre boundary provide more suitable refuge areas, including woodland and scrub.

3.4.11 Records for reptiles including grass snake, slow worm and common lizard were returned within 2 km of the site in the desk study.

Birds

3.4.12 The hedgerow on site provides some foraging and nesting habitat for a range of common and widespread breeding birds. No nests were noted during the survey, although several common bird species, including pigeon *Columba livia* and magpie *Pica pica* were recorded.

3.4.13 More suitable habitats including woodland and scrub were recorded within the wider leisure centre boundary.

3.4.14 The data search returned records for a wide variety of bird species.

Bats

Commuting / Foraging

3.4.15 The modified grassland, comprising much of the site, is of very limited value for foraging and commuting bats, as there is limited value for invertebrates. The woodland and stream within the wider leisure centre boundary provide more suitable foraging and commuting habitat, and due to the proximity between these habitats and the site, the site is assessed as low foraging potential.

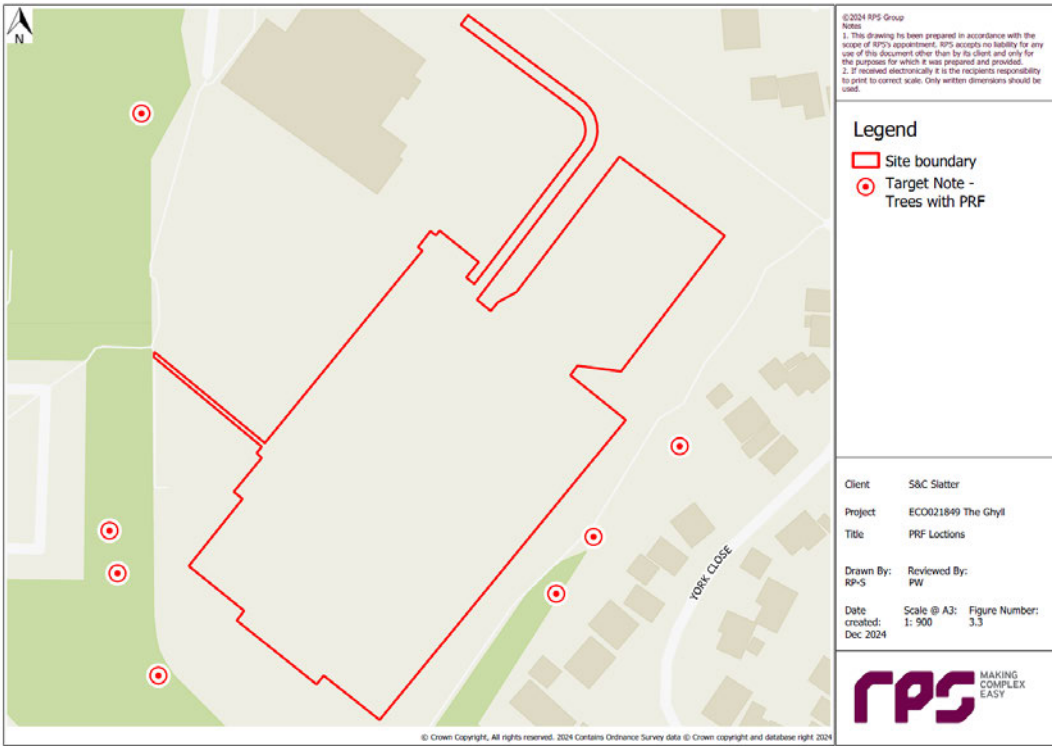
Roosting

3.4.16 No habitats within the redline boundary offer suitable roosting features for bats.

3.4.17 Within the wider survey area, several mature oak and ash trees along the southern boundary of the playing field and the trees along the narrow parcel of woodland beside the stream to the west of site (refer to **Figure 3.3**) contained potential roosting features (PRF's) for bats, such as snapped limbs, dense ivy, and rot holes (Collins, 2023).

3.4.18 There was one main building located to the north of the site, Southwater Leisure Centre. It was well maintained with a pitched tiled roof and plastic soffits. One section of the building to the east had a flat felt roof and multiple streetlights were noted in the surrounding area. The building was assessed as negligible roosting suitability.

Figure 3-3 PRF locations



3.4.19 Several records for multiple bat species were return in the desk study.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Dormice

3.4.22 The site does not provide suitable habitat for dormice.

3.4.23 The woodland in the wider leisure centre boundary provides suitable habitat for dormice, and records were returned within 0.5 km from the site. In addition, four European protected species licenses were granted for dormice within 2 km of the site boundary. The closest of these was approximately 1.1 km north of site, in 2019 (MAGIC, 2024).

Water Vole and Otter

3.4.24 The site does not provide suitable riparian habitat for water vole or otter.

3.4.25 The stream within the wider leisure centre boundary was not considered to provide suitable habitat for either species due to the shallow water depth, lack of feeding vegetation, lack of rest areas, and unsuitability for fish. Otters may eat amphibians and reptiles that could be present, but given the unsuitability of the stream in other ways, it is considered unlikely that otter will be present.

3.4.26 No records for either species were returned in the desk study.

Hedgehog

3.4.27 The site offers limited foraging habitat for hedgehog, with more suitable habitat (woodland and scrub) located adjacent to site. Records for hedgehog were retuned 0.99 km from site.

Other Mammals

3.4.28 No evidence of any other mammal species of conservation interest was observed during the ecological scoping survey.

3.4.29 There is potential for other mammals such as fox *Vulpes vulpes*, or rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* to cross the site.

4 EVALUATION AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS

4.1 Designated Sites

4.1.1 One statutory designated and four non-statutory designated sites were located within 2 km of the Site. The closest of these is Southwater Country Park, located 0.14 km from the site.

4.1.2 Due to the proximity to the site, negative impacts to the protected sites may be incurred as a result of the development. Mitigation to prevent impacts to protected sites is therefore outlined in Section 5.

4.1.3 Where the measures recommended are implemented and observed throughout construction, it is considered the development will not negatively impact protected sites.

4.2 Habitats

4.2.1 The current proposals will result in the loss of low-value modified grassland and a small section of non-native hedgerow for the new football pitch. These are considered of low ecological value but will require compensation for their loss under guidelines pertaining to Biodiversity Net Gain. There is no space available on site for this compensation, and off-site enhancements are therefore likely to be required. This is discussed separately in the BNG report (RPS 2024).

4.2.2 In the absence of suitable mitigation, the woodland, scrub, stream and trees adjacent to site may be negatively impacted during construction. Mitigation to prevent negative impacts to these habitats are outlined in Section 5. Where the mitigation is implemented in full, impacts to these habitats are considered negligible as a result of the development

4.3 Species

Plants

4.3.1 The majority of the site was comprised short, uniform, and heavily managed modified grassland and was not considered suitable to support any populations of rare or notable plants. No further surveys for plants are required and they will not be considered further in this report.

Invertebrates

4.3.2 The habitats present on site provided limited suitability for invertebrates due to the dominance of short, uniform, and heavily managed modified grassland. No further surveys for invertebrates are considered necessary.

4.3.3 Adjacent habitats, including the woodland, should be protected during construction to avoid negative impacts to invertebrates.

Amphibians

4.3.4 GCN are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended), which affords the species protection under Section 9. The species is also listed on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

4.3.5 No suitable aquatic habitat for GCN was recorded on site at the time of the survey, with the terrestrial habitats present considered to be suboptimal for GCN.

4.3.6 However, given the presence of waterbodies within 500m, as well as more suitable terrestrial habitat present adjacent to site, it is not possible to rule GCN or other amphibians out completely

from the site during construction. Further surveys are not considered necessary, but mitigation measures are outlined in Section 5.

Reptiles

4.3.7 All common UK reptile species (adder *Vipera berus*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and slow worm *Anguis fragilis*) are protected through part of Section 9 (1 and 5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Further information on the legislation regarding reptiles is included in Appendix A.

4.3.8 The habitats on site were sub-optimal for reptiles and did not contain any suitable refuge or hibernation habitat. It cannot be ruled out that reptiles such as grass snake may cross the site periodically from adjacent suitable habitats and become injured in open excavations. Recommendations to protect reptiles during construction are therefore outlined in Section 5. Where these recommendations are implemented on site, it is considered the development will have a negligible impact to local reptile populations.

Birds

4.3.9 Breeding birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take the birds or their eggs, or to intentionally destroy or disturb a nest, when it is in use or being built.

4.3.2 The hedgerow on-site provides suitable nesting opportunities for a range of common bird species. Therefore, removal of this habitat may impact nesting birds and recommendations are made in Section 5 of this report.

Bats

4.3.1 All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as updated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. All British bats are also included on Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 as European Protected Species. The following bat species are listed as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, (commonly referred to as UKBAP Priority species): Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*, Noctule, Soprano pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Greater horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, and Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*.

Commuting/ Foraging

4.3.2 The site offers low suitable foraging habitat to support commuting and foraging bats, with more suitable habitat located adjacent to site. These adjacent habitats may be impacted by increased light spill and a suitability qualified ecologist should assess lighting plans to determine whether further surveys are required.

4.3.3 Notwithstanding the results of the above, a sensitive lighting scheme should be implemented during both the construction and operational phases of the development. Additional mitigation measures have been outlined in Section 5.

Roosting

4.3.4 Multiple potential roosting features were noted within mature trees recorded off-site. Trees in close proximity to the development footprint will have the most potential to be disturbed by light spill, and a suitability qualified ecologist should assess lighting plans to determine whether further surveys are required. Should lux levels above 0.5 lux fall on the trees with PRFs, the trees will require aerial assessment to confirm their PRF status, with additional surveys possibly required as a

result. Where light spill falls below this level, no further surveys are required. Light spill should be reduced as far as possible to avoid impacting roosting bats.

4.3.5 The building off-site did not offer any suitable features for bats and is to be retained during development and therefore no further survey work on the building is required.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Dormice

4.3.8 The site does not provide suitable habitat for dormice and no further surveys are required.

4.3.9 Dormice are nocturnal and therefore can be impacted by light spill. A suitability qualified ecologist should assess lighting plans to determine impacts on dormice. Additional mitigation measures for dormice are outlined in Section 5.

Water Vole and Otter

4.3.10 The site and adjacent habitats do not provide suitable habitat for water vole or otter, and therefore no further surveys or mitigation measures are required and they will not be considered further in this report.

Hedgehog

4.3.11 Hedgehog may use the site for foraging. Hedgehogs are a BAP species and therefore a material planning consideration.

4.3.12 Mitigation to protect hedgehog is provided in Section 5.

Other Mammals

4.3.13 It cannot be ruled that other species may cross the site during construction. Mitigation to protect [redacted] hedgehog outlined in Section 5 will serve to protect other species should they cross the site during construction. Where the recommendations provided in Section 5 are observed throughout the development it is considered the development will have a negligible impact on other mammals.

5 MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

5.1 General

5.1.1 A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment has been undertaken for the site to ensure that the scheme delivers a net gain, in line with both local and national policy (RPS, 2024).

5.1.2 Trees and hedgerows adjacent to site will be protected by Root Protection Fencing installed in line with British Standards BS 5837: Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to formally delineate the protection area required for retained trees during construction.

5.2 Designated Sites

5.2.1 Due to the proximity of designated sites to the development site, measures should be put in place during construction to prevent any pollution events from dust or surface water run-off occurring, and to ensure any contaminated soil or water are contained and disposed of appropriately, to minimise risks to offsite sites and habitats. These measures should be detailed in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to be produced prior to commencement.

5.3 Habitats

5.3.1 The development would result in a loss of the grassland and ornamental hedgerow.

5.3.2 The retained hedgerows and adjacent habitats will be protected during construction. Good practice guidelines will be included within a CEMP which will be put in place and followed to ensure that retained features are not adversely affected by the development.

5.3.3 Good practice guidelines will include but are not limited to:

- Exclusion fencing installed along the boundaries of the site during construction to protect adjacent habitats, hedgerows and trees, where they will not be directly affected by the proposals but are near construction areas. Best practice guidelines for constructing exclusion zones, barriers and ground protection around trees provided in British Standard 5837:2012 (Trees in Relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations) should be followed and where necessary adapted for hedgerows;
- The sensitive siting of construction compounds, access roads, laydown areas and associated lighting away from the hedgerow boundaries;
- A plan produced to ensure that air or water-borne pollution generated during the construction of the lodge development does not impact on surrounding retained habitats; and
- Screening barriers will be erected around the edge of the retained hedgerow and trees to protect them from dust pollution during the clearance and construction stages of the development, where required.

5.4 Species

Amphibians

5.4.1 In order to prevent impacts to GCN in the unlikely event they are present on site, the works should be undertaken under a Working Method Statement (WMS) for GCN. The method statement will detail the proposed methods of works, proposed timings for works, details of required supervision and details of protective methods. The documents will be kept on site and adhered to throughout the construction works. Prior to the commencement of works, a Toolbox Talk to all contractors will be provided by a suitably licensed GCN ecologist, who may supervise the works or conduct a

fingertip search of the grassland immediately prior to works, should they deem it necessary. In the unlikely event a GCN is encountered on site, all works will cease and RPS should be contacted for further advice.

5.4.2 The WMS will serve to protect common amphibians should they be encountered during the works. The methods outlined to protect [redacted] will also serve to prevent entrapment in open excavations.

Reptiles

5.4.3 The WMS outlined for GCN above will also ensure reptiles are protected during works.

5.4.4 In the unlikely event that reptiles are found trapped during the development, all works on site will cease and RPS should be contacted for further advice.

Birds

5.4.5 To avoid offences such as damaging or destroying active nests during site clearance works, prior to construction it is recommended that if tree removal is required, vegetation clearance is undertaken outside of the breeding season (which runs from February – September inclusive). If this is not possible, vegetation should be checked prior to clearance by a suitably experience ecologist, and any active nests found must be left undisturbed, with a suitable buffer, until the chicks have fledged.

5.4.6 The trees adjacent to site are to be retained and protected throughout the works.

Bats

Commuting / foraging

5.4.7 Additional mitigation measures will be provided upon review of the lighting plans for the site.

5.4.8 Bats are nocturnal and adapted to roost and forage in low light conditions therefore any increases in artificial light levels can cause disturbance or disrupt existing flight paths. Notwithstanding the results of the above, a sensitive lighting scheme is recommended to ensure any additional lighting during construction and post development does not increase the amount of light on any bat roosting locations, proposed bat boxes, site boundaries and retained habitats to avoid impacting roosting, foraging and commuting bats.

5.4.9 Lighting to be installed as part of the development should be in line with Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK, the following will be required:

- LED lighting will be used, and light levels should be kept as low as possible. Metal halide, fluorescent sources should not be used;
- Lighting will be directed to where it is needed (away from boundary features and existing potential roost features);
- Only luminaires with an upward light ratio of 0% and with good optical control should be used, luminaires should always be mounted on the horizontal, i.e. no upward tilt;
- Any external security lighting should be set on motion-sensors and short (one minute) timers;
- Internal lighting within any new structures should be recessed where installed in proximity to windows to reduce glare and light spill; and
- Light sources should emit minimal ultra-violet light, peak higher than 550nm and be of a warm white spectrum (ideally <2700 Kelvin)

Roosting

5.4.10 Additional mitigation measures will be provided upon review of the lighting plans for the site.

5.4.11 Where lighting impacts are assessed as significant, a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) for bats is recommended to ascertain the potential roosting features that may be present. The results of this survey will be used to inform design in order to avoid or minimise the potential impacts to any bats which may be utilising roosting features present within the site.

5.4.12 In order to increase the potential roosting value of the site for bats, it is recommended that bat boxes be installed onto retained trees adjacent to the site boundary, within the wider ownership boundary. Boxes should be installed in groups of three to provide different climates around the tree for different times of the year and should be selected to target local species.

[redacted]

[redacted]

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

Dormice

5.4.15 Additional mitigation measures will be provided upon review of the lighting plans for the site.

5.4.16 The measure outlined in the CEMP will serve to protect dormice from damaging construction activities.

Hedgehog and Other Mammals

5.4.17 The mitigation measures proposed above for [redacted] would also protect other wildlife on site.

REFERENCES

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Appendix A Relevant Legislation

A.1 REPTILES

All common UK reptile species (adder *Vipera berus*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* and slow worm *Anguis fragilis*) are protected through part of Section 9 (1 and 5) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This prohibits:

- Intentional or reckless injuring or killing;
- Selling, offering or exposing for sale, or having in possession or transporting for the purpose of sale, any live or dead wild animal or any part of, or anything derived from, such an animal; or
- Publishing or causing to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying buying or selling, or intending to buy or sell, any of those things.

A.2 BIRDS

All birds, their nests and eggs are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as updated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. It is an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; and
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Schedule 1 birds cannot be intentionally or recklessly disturbed when nesting and there are increased penalties for doing so. Licences can be issued to visit the nests of such birds for conservation, scientific or photographic purposes but not to allow disturbance during a development even in circumstances where that development is fully authorised by consents such as a valid planning permission.

A.3 BATS

All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as updated by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. All British bats are also included on Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 as European Protected Species. It is an offence to:

- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture bats;
- deliberately or recklessly disturb bats (whether in a roost or not); and
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts

A roost is defined as 'any structure or place which [a bat] uses for shelter or protection'. As bats tend to reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time of survey.

A licence will therefore be required by those who carry out any operation that would otherwise result in offences being committed.

The following bat species are listed as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England, (commonly referred to as UKBAP Priority species): barbastelle, Bechstein's, noctule, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, greater horseshoe, and lesser horseshoe.

A.4 BADGER

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This act is based on the need to protect badgers from baiting and deliberate harm or injury. The act makes it an offence to:

- Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger, or attempt to do so;

- Intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Sett interference includes disturbing badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access routes.

A sett is defined as “any structure or place that displays signs indicating current use by a badger”.

A.5 DORMOUSE

Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* is fully protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019. The Regulations prohibit:

- Intentionally, recklessly or deliberately kill, injure or take a Dormouse;
- The deliberate disturbance of this species in such a way as to be significantly likely to affect:
  - Their ability of to survive, hibernate, migrate, breed, or rear or nurture their young; or;
  - The local distribution or abundance of Dormice.
- Damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place (nest);
- The possession or transport of Dormice or any other part of.

Dormice are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through their inclusion in Schedule 5. Under the Act, they are protected from:

- Intentional or reckless disturbance (at any level);
- Obstruction of access to any place of shelter, breeding or rest;
- Selling, bartering or exchange of these species, or parts of.

Offences can be deliberate, intentional or reckless and penalties for any of the above include fines of up to £5k and imprisonment of up to 6 months, per animal affected.

Dormice are also listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 as a Species of Principal Importance; national objectives & targets include the maintenance of the geographical range and viability of existing Dormice populations to ensure that it remains in favourable conservation status.