

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Colgate Memorial Hall
Colgate
Horsham



Spatial Ecology

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Summary

- This document represents a preliminary ecological appraisal and protected species risk assessment commissioned for Colgate Memorial Hall, Colgate to support the installation of a play park (Figure 1.1).
- It is concluded due to the scope and scale of the proposal that the projects zone of influence has limited potential for harm to biodiversity, but there are a number of sensitivities that will have to be considered.
- Where there is potential for impacts to biodiversity interest appropriate mitigation measures have been proposed.



Figure 1.1 – Location of Colgate Memorial Hall, Colgate.

1 Introduction

Ed Rowsell of Spatial Ecology was commissioned to undertake a preliminary ecological appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain assessment of the proposed play park upgrades and its immediate zone of influence. Ed Rowsell holds a BSc Hons in Ecology and has been a practising professional ecologist for over 25 years, a member of the Association of Local Government Ecologists and a volunteer for the National Bat Monitoring Programme.

2 Assessment Method

A desktop assessment was undertaken assessing data from Defra's Magic Map Application (www.magic.gov.uk) and aerial imagery. In addition, a site visit was undertaken on 22.03.2025 and updated on 04.08.2026 by Ed Rowsell, an experienced ecologist and habitat surveyor.

Although it is outside of the recognised survey seasons for some species or species groups, a reasonable assessment can still be made on the potential suitability of a site for these species.

2.1 Habitats and Site Designations

The site was assessed with regard to the habitats present in line with JNCC Guidelines for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (2003) and CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017). A species list was also recorded during the site visit and a desktop assessment undertaken utilising data from the Magic Map Application and aerial imagery.

The Magic Map Application and designated sites view were searched to identify any relevant designations. Various site-based designations can be considered to be of international importance (Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar), searched for within a 12km radius; national importance (Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR)) within a 7km radius; or local importance (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), Local Nature Reserve (LNR)) searched within 1km radius of the site. Sites within this hierarchy receive varying levels of legal or policy level protection. Certain habitats and features of habitats (ancient woodland and veteran trees) are considered under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as irreplaceable habitat.

Many habitats are considered to be of principle importance under the Natural Environment Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, hereafter referred to as the 'NERC Act' and local authorities and other public bodies have a legal duty to have regard for their conservation. Because of this they are a material consideration in the planning process.

The requirements for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) arising from the Environment Act (2021) were considered during the survey. Habitat types and conditions were recorded in accordance with the UKhab and BNG guidance. Due to the size of the proposed development falling under the 0.2ha size exemption that came in with the recent 6th August exemptions it is considered the proposal is exempt from mandatory BNG.

Limitations: The survey was undertaken outside of the optimal survey season for some botanical interest. However, on the whole a habitat level assessment can be effectively undertaken at any time of year.

2.2 Birds

A desktop study was undertaken utilising data from the Magic Map Application and designated sites view. Any birds present during the field survey were identified visually or by vocalisations and in addition suitable habitat assessed for over-wintering and bird nesting potential.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are strictly protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive, which came into force in April 1979, and is transposed into UK Law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Potential SPA's are provided the same level of protection as classified sites. Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention 1971; it is UK policy to give Ramsar sites the same level of protection as SPAs.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to destroy or damage the nest of birds of any species. In addition, certain species covered by Schedule 1 of the Act are specially protected.

Many bird species are species of principle importance under the NERC Act, and local authorities and other public bodies have a legal duty to take their conservation into account. Because of this they are a material consideration in the planning process.

Limitations: The site visit was undertaken outside of the optimal surveying season for some bird species.

[REDACTED]

2.4 Bats

Ground level assessment of structures and trees was undertaken to assess their potential to provide roosting or foraging opportunities to bats in accordance with 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines' (Collins, 2024). Observed significant features suitable for roosting bats were recorded, but no systematic external or internal inspection was undertaken.

All bat species are legally protected under Annex IV of the EC Habitats and Species Directive which is transposed into UK law via the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). All species of bat are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This legislation makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately kill, injure or capture bats;
- Deliberately disturb bats in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect i) the ability of any significant group of bats to survive, breed or rear or nurture their young, or ii) the local distribution or abundance of bats;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat whilst it is occupying a roost;
- Damage or destroy bat roosts;
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

Seven UK bat species are listed as species of principle importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act, and local authorities and other public bodies have a legal duty to take their conservation into account. Because of this they are a material consideration in the planning process. The seven species listed are: Barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*); Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*); Noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*); Soprano pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*); Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*); Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) and Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

Limitations: Although not during the active season for all types of bat roosts, a full preliminary bat survey was undertaken under the 'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines' (Collins, 2023).

2.5 Hazel Dormouse

An assessment of the suitability of the habitat, any visible field signs were undertaken. Habitat suitability and visible field signs were assessed in accordance with the 'Hazel Dormouse Conservation Handbook' (Bright et al. 2006). The Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) is protected under;

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- The NERC Act 2006
- Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) An offence could be committed by:
 - Deliberately capture, injure or kill hazel dormice;
 - Damage or destroy a dormouse resting place or breeding site;
 - Deliberately or recklessly disturb a hazel dormouse while it is in a structure or place of shelter or protection;
 - Block access to structures or places of shelter or protection;
 - Possess, sell, control or transport live or dead hazel dormice, or parts of hazel dormice.

Limitations: No systematic search was undertaken for field signs.

2.6 Hedgehogs

The West European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) is afforded partial protection under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it illegal to kill or capture wild hedgehogs using certain methods such as snares or traps. They are also listed under the Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996), which prohibits cruel treatment of hedgehogs. Hedgehogs are also listed under the NERC Act as being of principal importance for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in England. This act requires all public bodies including Local Authorities to have regard for biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions.

Limitation: No systematic search was undertaken for field signs.

2.7 Reptiles

Habitat suitability for reptile species was assessed in accordance with HGBI guidance.

All reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it illegal to intentionally or recklessly kill or injure a common reptile. Rare reptiles, which include Smooth Snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) also receive legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It would be an offence to deliberately injure, kill, capture or disturb a rare reptile, or to damage or obstruct any place used for shelter or protection. Rare reptiles may only be disturbed by licensed ecologists.

All reptile species are species of principle importance under the NERC Act, and local authorities and other public bodies have a legal duty to take their conservation into account. Because of this they are a material consideration in the planning process.

Limitations: No systematic search was undertaken for field signs.

2.8 Amphibians

An assessment of potential aquatic and terrestrial amphibian habitat was undertaken; for great crested newts this includes consideration of the criteria outlined in Oldham et al. (2000). An assessment of nearby habitat was undertaken and NE. Of most relevance here is the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*), which is the only fully protected species potentially present.

Great crested newts are listed on Appendix II of the Bern Convention and on Annexes II and IV of the EU Natural Habitats Directive. In England and Wales the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Offences can be committed through:

- Capturing, killing, disturbing or injuring great crested newts deliberately;
- Damaging or destroying a breeding or resting place;
- Obstructing access to their resting or sheltering places (deliberately or by not taking enough care);
- Possessing, selling, controlling or transporting live or dead newts, or parts of them, or taking great crested newt eggs.

Limitations: No systematic search was undertaken for field signs.

2.9 Aquatic Mammals

Habitat suitability was assessed, particularly with regard to the Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibious*) and Otter (*Lutra lutra*). Habitat suitability for the water vole was assessed in line with 'The Water Vole Conservation Handbook' (Strachan et al. 2011) and for the otter in accordance with 'Ecology of the European Otter' (Chanin, 2003).

Water voles and their habitat are provided full legal protection under Schedule 5 (Section 9) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take water voles and to damage, disturb or destroy their 'place of shelter', i.e. their habitat. The species is also listed as a species of principle importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act.

The otter is a European Protected Species (EPS) and is also fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

You are breaking the law if you:

- Capture, kill, disturb or injure otters (on purpose or by not taking enough care);
- Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (deliberately or by not taking enough care);
- Obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (deliberately or by not taking enough care);
- Possess, sell, control or transport live or dead otters, or parts of otters.

Limitations: No systematic search was undertaken for field signs.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 National Planning Policy

3.1.1 Environment Act 2021

Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 requires new developments requiring planning permission to deliver a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). BNG will be measured using Natural England's Statutory Biodiversity Metric and habitats will need to be secured for at least 30 years.

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other developments can be produced.

Of particular relevance in this context is section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, which includes the following provisions:

Paragraph 187 - December 2024

Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*

- (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- (c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- (e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- (f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*

Paragraph 193 - December 2024

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- (a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- (b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- (c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- (d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

3.2 Local Planning Policy

The site sits within Horsham District Council. Horsham District Council have an adopted Local Plan, 'Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF)'. The policies most relevant to the biodiversity interest are shown below.

3.2.1 Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) - Chapter 9 and Policy 25

Chapter 9 of the HDPF is concerned with 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environment' and contains the following policy that is of the most relevance.

Policy 25 - Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character

The Natural Environment and landscape character of the District, including the landscape, landform and development pattern, together with protected landscapes and habitats will be protected against inappropriate development. The Council will support development proposals which:

- 1. Protects, conserves and enhances the landscape and townscape character, taking into account areas identified as being of landscape importance, the individual settlement characteristics, and maintains settlement separation.*
- 2. Maintain and enhances the Green Infrastructure Network and addresses any identified deficiencies in the District.*
- 3. Maintains and enhances the existing network of geological sites and biodiversity, including safeguarding existing designated sites and species, and ensures no net loss of wider biodiversity and provides net gains in biodiversity where possible.*
- 4. Conserve and where possible enhance the setting of the South Downs National Park.*

4 Findings and Recommendations

4.1 Site Designations

There are no national network sites located within 12km and no National Nature Reserves (NNR) within 7km, however, 7 SSSI's are within 7km of the scheme (Table 4.1.1).

Table 4.1.1: Statutory Environmental Designations within 12km of the site for national network sites and 7km from Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Statutory Nature designations	Designation	Distance and Direction
Buchan Hill Ponds SSSI	SSSI	~1.3km northeast
St. Leonard's Forest SSSI	SSSI	~2.4km southwest
House Copse SSSI	SSSI	~2.9km north
St. Leonard's Park Ponds SSSI	SSSI	~3.5km southwest
Cow Wood and Harry's Wood SSSI	SSSI	~4.4km southeast
Warnham SSSI	SSSI	~5.4km northwest
Worth Forest SSSI	SSSI	~5.9km east

The site falls within the High Weald National Landscape and within the SSSI Impact Zones for Buchan Hill Ponds SSSI and St. Leonard's Forest SSSI.

There is 1 Local Wildlife Site (LWS) within 1km of the site (Table 4.1.2). LWS's are local wildlife sites designated for their importance for wildlife at a county level. Although not provided any statutory protection, they are given policy level protection under planning policy by Horsham District Council. No Local Nature Reserves were identified within 1km of the proposal.

Table 4.1.2: Sites of Nature Conservation Importance within 2km of the Site.

LWS Name	Distance and Direction
St Leonards Forest	850m South West

Located within 1km of the site boundary there are 5 Traditional Orchard sites, 25 Deciduous Woodland sites and 22 Ancient Woodland sites that are classed as priority habitat under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006.

4.1.1 Conclusion:

The proposed project boundary does not include or have in close proximity any statutory designated site for nature conservation and the closest site is ~1.3km northeast with the closest Local wildlife sites 850m. It is therefore considered there is no potential for direct impacts and little opportunity for indirect impacts to any statutory designated site arising from the proposal.

4.1.2 Recommendation:

Sensitive working practices will have to be adopted to protect the adjacent habitats from damage throughout the works.

4.2 Habitats

The phase 1 habitat survey identified a number of habitats on site, the results are summarised in the text below.



Figure 4.2.1- typical view of the existing play area

Amenity grassland

The predominant habitat found on this site is amenity grassland that is regularly mown and interspersed with areas of existing safe play surface. This habitat has no particular intrinsic biodiversity value.

Hedgerows

The site is bounded on all sides by hedgerows or the remnants of hedgerows ranging from species rich native hedgerows, to formal single species (Beech) alongside the road boundaries and ornamental non-native hedge along one boundary.

Individual trees

A number of trees are located within or adjacent to the site a mix non-native ornamental trees and native species. All of the trees are relatively small and some have evidence of recent pollarding.

Any value for other species such as bats and birds is addressed within the relevant sections.

Conclusion:

The site contains features that would be considered valued habitats. However, underneath the actual footprint of the works that will be affected by this proposal the habitats are of low intrinsic value and the impact of the loss on local habitats will be negligible.

Recommendation:

The minor loss of low value habitat is not considered to constitute an impact. Care should be taken to ensure that work activities do not encroach further into surrounding habitats through demarcation and constraining the working area.

4.3 Individual Species / Group Assessment

4.3.1 Birds

During the site survey Great Tit (*Parus major*), Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Chaffinch, (*Fringilla coelebs*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*) and Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) were heard or observed. Whilst all of these species are considered common and widespread, House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is a species of conservation concern, red listed in BoCC5 (2021) due to significant declines.

The site survey identified the potential for nesting birds within a hedges and individual trees which could support breeding bird species, which are all protected whilst nesting.

Conclusion:

The site has some value for breeding birds within a range of habitats including species of conservation concern. Activities affecting these habitats such as vegetation removal within the birds nesting season (March-August inclusive) could damage or destroy nests which would constitute an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Therefore, sensitive working practices will be required. Due to the short duration, small scale and the limited direct encroachment into suitable habitats it is unlikely to constitute a significant impact.

Recommendation:

Any vegetation clearance which from the proposals appears unlikely should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive) or checked prior to commencement by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

4.3.3 Bats

The MAGIC database contained records of two European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) granted within 2km of the site.

EPSL	Bat species listed	Distance from site	Impacts licensed
2015-17924-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle.	0.3km southeast	Destruction of a resting place
2014-4078-EPS-MIT	Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle.	1.5km southeast	Destruction of a resting place

There are no Special Areas of Conservation designated for bats within 12km of the site.

A thorough internal inspection the trees on the site, looked for features that roosting bats could use such as raised bark, fissures and holes, etc on the trees.

All the trees within the site and particularly were assessed for bat roost potential and on the whole were either considered to offer 'none' potential roost features and all too small to feasibly have features suitable for roosting bats. The site represents moderate quality foraging habitat for bats and the site and its immediate surroundings are considered to be of some significance as a foraging or commuting corridor for bats.

Conclusion:

None of the areas that will be affected by the proposed works represent a direct impact on roosting or foraging habitats for bats and therefore considered there will be limited impact on local bat populations. There are no activities planned within this proposal that risk significant impacts to this species and there is considered to be no wider population implications.

But any future works or repairs to the Norfolk Centre do risk harm to bats and suitable investigation and mitigation should be undertaken.

Recommendation:

There are no activities planned within this proposal that risk directly impacting bats. There is no need for further surveys in relation to this proposal.

4.3.4 Hazel Dormouse

The MAGIC database contained no records of European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) granted for hazel dormice within 2km of the site.

The hedgerows particularly the species rich native types do represent suitable habitat for hazel dormouse and these hedgerows are moderately well connected to the wider hedgerow and woodland network. However, none of these habitats will be affected by the proposed works.

Conclusion:

The habitats affected by this proposal site have no value to Hazel Dormouse. There are no activities planned within this proposal that risk any impacts to this species.

Recommendation:

There are no activities planned within this proposal that risk directly impacting Hazel Dormouse or their habitats. There is no need for further surveys in relation to this proposal.

4.3.5 Hedgehog

The Western European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), a Section 41 species of principle concern under the NERC Act and is highly likely to occur within the site and surrounding countryside. They will use habitats in the gardens and the wider landholding for foraging, nesting and hibernation, and could potentially be hibernating in the leaf litter under hedges.

Conclusion:

The site has some value for Hedgehogs within a range of habitats. Hedgehogs are vulnerable to being disturbed during hibernation and getting trapped in site excavations. Therefore, sensitive working practices will be required, however, there are no activities planned within this proposal that risk significant impacts to this species.

Recommendation:

For any works that will occur hibernation period (October to March), any piles of leaves and vegetation should be checked by hand for hedgehogs before mechanical clearance.

Any excavations should be left covered overnight or provided with a means of escape (e.g. a scaffold plank at 90°) provided.

4.3.6 Reptiles

The MAGIC database contained no records of European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) granted for reptiles within 2km of the site.

The site survey identified no opportunities for reptiles on site. Although they may occur in adjacent rough grassland to the south.

Conclusion:

The site has very limited potential for protected reptiles to be present.

Recommendation:

No suitable reptile habitat will be affected, it is considered there is no need for reptile surveys in relation to this proposal.

4.3.7 Amphibians

The MAGIC database contained no records of European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) granted for great crested newts or positive class survey licence returns or DLL historic survey data (2017 - 2019) within 2km of the site.

The site does not contain any ponds but aerial imagery shows there are four within 500m of the site. Great crested newts are known to inhabit terrestrial habitat within 500m of ponds. Landscape features are unlikely to present a barrier to their movement with connectivity between the site and the ponds and therefore their presence cannot be discounted.

The site has very limited suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians, there is no aquatic habitat that will be directly affected by the proposal. There are 5 ponds surveyed for the NE district level Great Crested Newt eDNA study within 5km of the site (and all consider that the species is absent)

It is possible that Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*), Palmate Newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*) and Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) with the presence of the castle moat 40m to the East. Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*), a Section 41 species of principle concern under the NERC Act,

Conclusion:

It is considered unlikely that Great Crested Newt occur within or adjacent to the site, but there is potential habitat within the site boundary for Common Toad and other amphibian species. Without mitigation there is potential for impacts to Common Toad. Therefore, sensitive working practises will be required.

Recommendation:

The site has limited value for Common Toad within a range of habitats. But to avoid impacts any excavation required should not be left uncovered overnight and any old piles of rubble or logs should be shifted by hand in the first instance to allow any toads to escape. In the unlikely event a Great Crested Newt is discovered all work should stop and a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist consulted.

4.3.8 Other Mammals

The MAGIC database contained no records of European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) granted for otters or water voles within 2km of the site.

There are no aquatic habitats adjacent to the site and the site has no potential for aquatic mammals such as water vole or otter and no feasible mechanism whereby these species can be harmed,

Conclusion:

There are no activities planned within this proposal that risk any impacts to these species.

Recommendation:

There are no activities planned within this proposal that risk directly impacting mammals or their habitats. There is no need for further mammal surveys in relation to this proposal.

4.3.10 Invertebrates

On the whole the small scope and scale of the works are unlikely to significantly affect notable invertebrate species and no specific mitigation is considered likely to reduce impacts.

4.3.11 Schedule 9 Plants

Plants designated under schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which includes Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), are non-native invasive species that have been determined to be a risk to native flora.

During the field survey the non-native invasive and Schedule 9 species Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) was noted within the western boundary.

Recommendation: It is illegal to plant or cause a Schedule 9 plant to grow, should any be discovered on site appropriate mitigation measures should be employed. All plant and equipment should be checked and cleaned before moving to another site to reduce potential for spread. All material potentially containing Schedule 9 plants including Virginia Creeper, should be treated as controlled waste and only disposed of in approved locations.

5 Opportunities for Biodiversity Enhancement

Based on the ecological features identified within the site boundary and zone of influence, records of species and habitats within the area, national and local planning policies in relation to protected species and habitats; the following opportunities have been identified for biodiversity enhancement:

- Erect a bird nesting box on a tree adjacent to the site. For longevity a woodcrete or similar box is recommended.

5.1 Biodiversity Net Gain

This proposal does not trigger the requirement for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, due to the extent of the proposed works at around 45m² being lower than the de-minimis exemption of 2,000m², that came into force on 6th August 2026.

It is considered that the options noted as biodiversity enhancements above satisfactorily address the NPPF requirements for biodiversity net gain.

6 Overall Conclusions

It is concluded due to the scope and scale of the proposal that the projects zone of influence has limited potential for harm to biodiversity, but there are a number of sensitivities that will have to be considered.

Where there is potential for impacts to biodiversity interests' appropriate mitigation measures have been proposed, including measures to achieve mandatory BNG.

6.1 Further surveys and mitigation required:

Protected Habitats / Species	Additional Surveys or mitigation measures required
Designated sites and habitats.	· Sensitive working practices will have to be adopted to protect the adjacent habitats from damage throughout the works
Birds	· Should any minor vegetation clearance be required they should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive) or checked prior to commencement by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Bats	· There are no activities planned within this proposal that risk directly impacting bats. There is no need for further surveys in relation to this proposal.
Hazel Dormouse	· There is no need for further surveys in relation to this proposal.
Hedgehog	· If the container is to be moved during the hibernation period (October to March), any piles of leaves and vegetation should be checked by hand for hedgehogs before mechanical clearance. · Any excavations should be left covered overnight or provided with a means of escape (e.g. a scaffold plank at 90°) provided
Reptiles	· No suitable reptile habitat will be affected, it is considered there is no need for reptile surveys in relation to this proposal. · In the unlikely event a reptile is encountered work should stop immediately and a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist consulted and their advice followed before works re-commence.
Amphibians	· Excavation should not be left uncovered overnight and any old piles of rubble or logs should be shifted by hand in the first instance to allow any toads to escape. · In the unlikely event a Great Crested Newt is discovered all work should stop and a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist consulted.
Other mammals	· There are no activities planned within this proposal that risk directly impacting mammals or their habitats. · There is no need for further mammal surveys in relation to this proposal.

Flora / Schedule 9 Plants	• It is illegal to plant or cause a Schedule 9 plant to grow, should any be discovered on site appropriate mitigation measures should be employed • All plant and equipment should be checked and cleaned before moving to another site to reduce potential for spread. All material potentially containing Schedule 9 plants including Viginia Creeper, should be treated as controlled waste and only disposed of in approved locations.
Biodiversity enhancements	• Erect a bird nesting box on a tree adjacent to the site. For longevity a woodcrete or similar box is recommended.

7 Caveats and Limitations

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal represents a reasonable level of effort to identify potential biodiversity constraints present on the site. Access to the entire area subject to the client's instructions was surveyed and it is not considered that there were any limitations to the survey. It is however only a snapshot of the site on the day of the survey; biodiversity interest is by nature cryptic and highly mobile. Therefore, this advice can only be considered valid for one year from the date of the survey. Should either the proposal or the timing change, an ecological consultant should be contacted for a revised opinion on the biodiversity risks represented by this proposal.

8 References

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