



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Project

Toat Café, Stanes Cottage and Stanes Farm

Project No.

EC2338

Client

George Macari, Anonio Avenue Ltd

Date

June 2025



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George Macari, Anonio Avenue Ltd

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The advice which we have prepared and provided is true to the best of our knowledge and utilises information available at the time. The advice has been prepared and provided in accordance with the CIEEM's Code of Professional Conduct.

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Date

June 2025

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Summary

enims Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of Toat Café, Stanes Cottage and Stanes Farm situated within Pulborough, West Sussex (Centred on Grid Reference TQ 06002094) This is in order to support a planning application for the site.

Designs are not yet finalised but are for residential housing with improved road access to the A29.

The 5.4ha application site comprised a modern cottage and numerous outbuildings including a café and car wash facility.

Whilst the proposed development is unlikely to directly impact Statutory sites, the site lies within the IRZ of SACs designated for breeding and hibernating rare bats species and habitats within the site may be functionally linked to these sites, in that they may be part of the habitats supporting the sensitive bat populations. Therefore, consultation with Natural England is required for advice on the nature of the potential impacts and how these might be avoided or mitigated.

The site supported other neutral and modified grassland, hedgerow and trees. The mature oak trees had veteran features and were of higher intrinsic value and should they support roosting or dispersal routes for bats they would be of higher value.

Stanes Cottage supported bat roosting features and droppings have been found, confirming use by bats. The toilet block had low potential for roosting bats.

Some mitigation measures are given in the report, but there may be additional measures dependant on the findings of the further survey work. Precautionary measures will be required for [REDACTED] nesting birds and great crested newt, including a site walkover/pre-works check for [REDACTED] great crested newt before commencement of site clearance.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages projects to implement ecological enhancements so to achieve net gains for biodiversity. Possible opportunities to enhance wildlife potential, appropriate to this site, are given in this report.

Further Survey Effort/Ecology Requirements

Consultation with Natural England will be required to understand the potential for impacts on designated sites for rare bat breeding and hibernating populations.

Further bat roost survey is required to determine the species present and characterise the roost in order to support a planning application and subsequent licence application. A ground level tree assessment should be undertaken to determine if any of the trees have potential to support roosting bats and further survey may be required following the finding of this survey.

An eDNA sample or bottle trapping/torching surveys should be carried out on the pond 20m west of the site boundary (pending access). eDNA can be carried out between the 15th of April and the 30th of June. While bottle trapping/torching should be spread between mid-March and mid-June, with half of the visits between mid-April and mid-May. A positive eDNA sample will require a population estimate through bottle trapping/torching.

Grassland, scrub, and debris piles on the site are suitable for common reptiles, and further survey for this species is required.



1 Introduction

1.1 Background to Commission

enims Ltd was commissioned by George Macari, Anonio Avenue Ltd in May 2025 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Toat Café, Stanes Cottage and Stanes Farm. The appraisal was carried out to provide baseline ecological information about the site and to identify any potential ecological constraints associated with the proposed development of the application site. Due to the nature of the application site and proposed development, bats were a consideration and a Preliminary Roost Assessment of buildings was included as part the site survey visit. The information presented in this report will outline any necessary further survey requirements and serve to support a planning application.

1.2 Scope of Report

The purpose of this PEA is to establish the current biodiversity value of the site, identify and assess any potential ecological constraints/impacts associated with the proposed development, and to provide recommendations for additional survey work if required. Avoidance, mitigation/compensation and/or enhancement measures are recommended where necessary to ensure compliance. The assessment is based on the following information sources:

- A desk study of the site and up to a 1km surrounding radius.
- A Preliminary Roost Assessment of the building(s) to be impacted.
- A walkover of the application site in order to record habitats following UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab LTD 2023) and to identify features with potential to support protected or otherwise notable species.
- The site plan '1726-S-05_Existing Site Plan', supplied and designed by MCA Architects.
- The site plan '1726-S-06_Site Location Plan', supplied and designed by MCA Architects.
- A masterplan of the proposed development 'Proposed Site Plan – Option 1', supplied and designed by MCA Architects.

1.3 Site Description

Toat Café, Stanes Cottage and Stanes Farm is approximately 5.4 hectares in size located in Pulborough, West Sussex (Centred on Grid Reference TQ 06002094). The site is comprised of several buildings, a large concrete hard standing area, multiple grassland fields, hedgerows, scrub and mature trees. The site lies within the administrative authority of Horsham District Council.

Plans showing the location of the site and surrounding landscape are included in Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix A.

1.4 Project Overview

Plans are not yet finalised, but proposals are for residential housing and improved access to the A29. A masterplan showing the layout of the proposed development can be seen in Figure 3, Appendix A.

1.5 Relevant Legislation and Planning Policy

The following key pieces of nature conservation legislation are relevant to this appraisal. A more detailed description of relevant legislation is provided in Appendix B:



- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2017 (as amended) /Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations);
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); and
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Bats are of particular relevance to the application site due to the presence of buildings, as these can support bat roosts. All bats species are protected under Schedule 2 of the Habitat Regulations and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. In brief, these legislative instruments make it an offence to deliberately or recklessly capture, injure, or kill any bat. Roosts are protected from damage or destruction. Furthermore, it is an offence to deliberately disturb a bat, whether roosting or otherwise. In addition, the following native bats are identified as Species of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006:

- Barbastelle Bat - *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein's Bat - *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Noctule - *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano Pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Brown Long-eared Bat - *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater Horseshoe Bat - *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat - *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

The National Planning Policy Framework (DfCLG 2021) requires local authorities to avoid and minimise impacts on biodiversity and, where possible, to provide net gains in biodiversity when making planning decisions. Paragraph 174 states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geographical value and soils”.

Paragraph 180 sets out the principles that local planning authorities should apply when determining planning application and states that:

“development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around development should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity”.

Other planning policies at the local level, which are of relevance to this development, include Horsham District Planning Framework (excluding South Downs National Park) which satisfies the council's obligations under the NERC Act.

Policy 25 – Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character states:

“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.”



2 Methodology

2.1 Overview

This PEA has been prepared with reference to best practice as published by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017 & 2018), the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2023) and British Standard 42020:2013 (BSI, 2013).

2.2 Desk Study

A search was carried out using the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website (www.magic.gov.uk) for any Statutory nature conservation designations located on site and/or within 1km. Where relevant, consideration was also given to Statutory sites located further distances away. Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) and Ancient Woodland sites on site and/or within 500m were also identified. The Woodland Trust online Ancient Tree Inventory (<http://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk>) was reviewed for the locations of any known ancient and veteran trees on or adjacent to the site.

Records of granted Natural England species licences from within 1km of the application site were also searched for using the MAGIC website. Online maps and aerial imagery were used to identify the presence of water bodies within 250m of the site, in order to establish if the application site could be used by great crested newts.

The status of species is taken directly from the relevant legislation; the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework', local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury et al. 2021)¹.

Scientific names are given following the species first mention. Thereafter, only common names are used.

2.3 Site Survey

The site survey was conducted on 9th June 2025. The survey was undertaken under optimum conditions and during the recommended period, April through October (JNCC, 2010). Weather conditions on that day were sunny with partial cloud, and temperatures around 18 °C.

The site survey was undertaken by Pete Satchell and Fraser Gurney. Pete is Managing Director at enims Ltd, with many years' experience in the ecology sector, protected species ecology and undertaking site surveys. Fraser is a consultant ecologist with enims Ltd and an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (ACIEEM). Fraser is experienced in a wide range of field survey techniques and has particular expertise in bat and bird ecology, where he holds a Level 1 Bat Licence.

An assessment of the buildings was carried out to gather evidence to determine whether the building(s) either had the potential to support bat roosts, or showed direct indications of current/previous use by roosting bats. All surveys were carried out in strict accordance with Good Practice Guidelines published by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins 2023). External and internal inspections of the buildings were undertaken whereby a search was made for direct evidence of bat activity, such as corpses, droppings, urine stains and scratch marks. Potential access points, particularly those free of cobwebs and other

¹ The Red and Amber lists of Birds of Conservation Concern refer to bird species of particular conservation concern for a number of reasons. In general terms, Red list species are globally threatened showing severe recent declines in population. Amber list species are species either with unfavourable conservation status or those species showing moderate recent declines in population; they may also include particularly localised species.



obstructions, were also recorded, irrespective of whether there was direct evidence of use in the vicinity. Equipment included a high-powered torch and binoculars.

During the survey visit, a walkover of the site was also carried out, covering the entire area within the redline boundary and including any boundary features of interest. Habitats were described and recorded broadly in accordance with UK Habitat classification Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd, 2023) Habitats were also assessed using the Habitat of Principal Importance (HPI) criteria, as set out by JNCC (BRIG, ed. A. Maddock, 2011). HPI are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Incidental records of birds and other fauna noted during the course of the habitat survey were also compiled. The presence of non-native invasive plant species were also recorded and locations of stands mapped.

2.4 Protected Species Assessment

The habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species using a combination of desk study information and field observations carried out during the habitat survey. The assessment was based on professional judgement and best practice survey guidance methodology for identifying field signs of protected species. The potential for protected species presence was based on the following criteria:

- **Present** – Confirmed presence through first hand survey evidence or recent verified records
- **High Potential** – Local records highlight presence in the local vicinity. The site and immediate surrounds support good quality habitat or good connectivity to such habitat
- **Moderate Potential** – Habitat within the site provides key elements for any species or species group, although may be limited by factors including habitat area, isolation or disturbance. Desk study records highlight presence in proximity to site
- **Low Potential** – On-site habitat is of low or moderate quality for any species or species group, lacking key elements and limited by factors including habitat fragmentation and habitat area. Few or absence of local records, but within national distribution and thus cannot be completely discounted.
- **Negligible Potential** – Habitats within the site are very poor quality or completely absent for any species or species group. Desk study records are absent, the site is outside of the normal range of the species or species group, and the surrounding habitat is unlikely to support wider populations. Presence cannot be completely ruled out but it is considered 'reasonably unlikely' to support any species or species group.

When assigning a level of bat roosting potential (none, negligible, low, moderate or high) to a feature, the descriptions in Table 1 were considered.

Table 1. Criteria for the potential of features and habitats to support roosting and foraging/commuting bats (Collins, 2023).

Suitability	Description of roosting habitat	Commuting or foraging habitat
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of year (i.e no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flightpaths or by foraging bats; however a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one of more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e., unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could still be used by individual hibernating bats).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gapped hedgerow or un-vegetated stream, but isolated, i.e., not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.	Continuous, high quality habitat that is a well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

2.5 Site Evaluation

An evaluation of the site was carried out in accordance with guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM 2018), which ranks the nature conservation value of a site according to a geographic scale of reference. The scale that measures conservation value is as follows: international, national, regional, county/metropolitan, district/borough, local/parish, or of value at the site scale. In evaluating the nature conservation value of the site, the following factors are also considered: nature conservation designations, rarity, naturalness, fragility, connectivity and relevant nature conservation aims and objectives for a given area, as contained in national and local biodiversity action plans and planning policies.

2.6 Survey and Assessment Limitations

The data and conclusions presented within this report are an evidence-based assessment of the current status of the application site. The data and conclusions do not provide a full and definitive survey of any protected species group. Evaluations have been made based on the results of this ecological assessment. The likely ecological constraints to the proposed development are detailed, as well as any need for further ecological survey and mitigation measures.

Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals, such as the time of year, migration patterns and behaviour. Therefore, the absence of evidence of a particular species should not be taken as conclusive proof that the species is not present, or that it will not be present in the future.

[REDACTED]

The data provided in this report is valid for 12 months from the date of the survey, due to the mobile nature of bats.

3 Results

3.1 Designated and Notable Sites

3.1.1 Statutory Sites of Nature Conservation

No statutory designated sites are present on site or within 1km. There is one designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for bats located 9km north west. Ebernoe Common SAC is designated due to the Annex 1 habitats which include Atlantic acidophilous beech forests and two Annex 2 species, Barbastelle and Bechstein's bat. Ebernoe Common SAC hosts maternity colonies for these two species which utilise the dense holly, dead tree stumps and open glades and water within the habitat.

3.1.2 NERC Act HPI / Local BAP Priority Habitats

Consultation with the MAGIC Maps database found there were five parcels of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland within 500m of the site boundary, with the closest located 200m south west of the site border.

3.1.3 Other Notable Designations

Consultation with the MAGIC Maps database found there were four parcels of Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland within 500m of the site boundary, with the closest located 200m south west of the site border.

South Downs National Park is located 520m west of the application site. The South Downs National Park has a unique combination of geology and micro-climates that support many rare and internationally important species (South Downs National Park Authority, 2015).

3.2 Habitats

The results of the site visit are presented in Figure 4, Appendix C.

The 5.4ha site is divided into three sections:

- NHP Allocation 3.05ha which includes Stanes Cottage, Toat café and car wash facilities
- Stanes Farm (north) 1.54ha
- Stanes Farm (south) 0.68ha

The NHP Allocation area comprised the main building (B1 – B5 Stanes Cottage and outbuildings, OS grid reference TQ 06049 20868) at the southwest end. The northeast end of NHP Allocation has a toilet block (B6, OS grid reference TQ 06106 20990) and café/carwash (B7). Otherwise NHP allocation is mostly hard standing and modified grassland, with longer grassland, scrub and lines of trees around the edges.

Stanes Farm (north) comprised other neutral grassland, scrub and lines of mature oak trees around edges.

Stanes Farm (south) comprised other neutral grassland, grassland/bramble scrub and willow scrub. Mature oak trees were present in lines. Along the south west edge there was a row of derelict buildings (B8, OS grid reference TQ 05986 20810).

3.2.1 Built-up Areas and Gardens (u1) (Photographs 1 - 8, Appendix C)

B1 Stanes Cottage: Modern red brick house with concrete pitched tiled roof in good condition. A double attached garage with pitched tiled roof. An open attached wooded porch to the northwest elevation and



wooden extension with a sloping tiled roof to the northwest elevation. Loft void is a mix of boarded and unboarded with 1F felt present and the void used for storage.

Surrounded by concrete and paved patio and driveway areas, with garden to the south. A small wooden shed was present in the garden.

B2 Wooden Garage: No internal access. Located northwest of B1 on concrete hard standing. Wooden single skin weatherboarded garage with double doors to northeast elevation and a pitched corrugated metal roof. In very good condition.

B3 – B5 Static caravans: No internal access. Located northwest of B1 on modified grassland and concrete hardstanding. Three standard construction sealed static caravan units in good condition.

B6: Toilet Block: No internal access. Single skin red brick with a flat felt roof sited within the concrete car park of the café. In moderate condition, a small section of wooden soffit had fallen away towards the south end, leaving a gap to the box soffit surrounding the roof.

B7 Toat Café & Car Wash: No internal access. Prefabricated static units bolted together formed the food preparation area and indoor seating area of the café. In moderate condition.

Two steel framed enclosures with clear vinyl sides were present as semi-outdoor seating areas and concrete hard standing / artificial grass areas around the café provided further outdoor seating areas.

To the northeast of the café was the car wash facility, comprising one steel frame vinyl unit designed to allow an undercover works area. This was sited on concrete hard standing car park.

B8 Outbuildings: No internal access. Located along a track from the A29 road to the south, a long row of buildings running north to south on a hard standing area. Constructed from single skin breeze block and weatherboarded sections to the walls with a flat corrugated plastic roof.

B9 Caravans: No internal access. Several caravans located around B8, of standard construction and in moderate condition.

Table 3. Buildings identified within the application site

Building Reference	Description
B1	Stanes Cottage
B2	Wooden Garage
B3 – B5	Static Caravans
B6	Toilet Block
B7	Toat Café & Car Wash
B8	Outbuildings
B9	Caravans

3.2.2 Individual Trees and Lines of Trees (w1g) (Photographs 9 - 11, Appendix C)

A large number of mature oak trees were located over the site, mostly along the perimeter of the NHP Allocation area and along the boundary vegetation of Stanes Farm north and south.

Individual trees were located over the site. A snapped and partially fallen willow was located at OS grid reference TQ 06063 20926.

A number of these had veteran features.

3.2.3 Dense Scrub (h3) (Photographs 9 - 11, Appendix C)

Dense and sparse scrub was located along the boundaries of the three site sections. Species present included bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and willow (*Salix* sp.).

The north boundary of the NHP Allocation area had brash piles of previously cut vegetation. Bramble scrub grew through some of the brash piles.

3.2.4 Other Neutral Grassland (g3)

North of the modified grassland in the NHP Allocation area was an expanse of unmanaged grassland which was more species diverse. Species present included false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), common fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), silverweed (*Argentina anserina*), buttercup (*Ranunculus* sp.), sowthistle (*Sonchus* sp.), great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and bramble encroached from the scrub around the site edges.

The species assemblage indicated the grassland may be seasonally wet.

3.2.5 Modified Grassland (g4)

To the north of the verge for the A29 road in the NHP Allocation area and to the north of the car park in the NHP Allocation area were large areas of modified grassland cut to a short sward. Species diversity was almost entirely grass, with few forbs.

3.2.6 Non-Native and Ornamental Hedgerow (h2b)

A conifer hedge separated the NHP Allocation from Stanes Farm (south).

3.2.7 Ditch associated with a hedgerow (h2 Secondary code 50)

A small dry ditch ran along the west edge of the NHP Allocation area (Photograph 12, Appendix C). This appeared to be artificially constructed as it was in a straight line along the car park edge.

3.3 Protected Species Assessment

[REDACTED]

3.3.2 Bats

Consultation with the MAGIC maps database showed no bat licenses granted within a 1km radius of the site boundary.

Bat populations are associated with The Mens, Ebernoe Common and Singleton and Cocking Tunnels Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

In addition to the SACs above, there are a number of other important populations in the surrounding countryside including:

- Petworth Park - Bechstein's bats use trees within the park as maternity roosts. The park and surrounding woodland provide essential foraging.
- Slindon - barbastelle bats use this woodland as a maternity roost.
- Woodland north of Chichester - also a maternity roost for barbastelle bats.

Key Conservation Areas Based upon published data, Natural England recommends that the following impact zones around the SACs are included:

6.5km Key conservation area – all impacts assessed

12km Wider conservation area – significant impacts or severance to flightlines to be considered

The 6.5 km includes the Key conservation area in which all impacts must be considered as habitats within this zone are considered critical for sustaining the populations of bats within the SACs. The 12km encompasses the wider conservation area which is the full extent of the range of foraging areas required by the bats.

[TLL-15-Draft-Sussex-Bat-SAC-Protocol.pdf](#)

- The site lies 3.87km from The Mens SAC and is therefore within the Key conservation area.
- The site lies 9km from Ebernoe Common SAC and is therefore within the Key conservation area.
- The site lies 19.2km from Singleton and Cocking Tunnels SAC and is therefore outside both the Key conservation area and wider conservation area.
- The site lies 8.35km from Petworth Park, around 10km from Slindon Woods and around 15km from woodlands north of Chichester.

The proposed development is located within the IRZ of SACs designated for bats and there is potential for impacts to this species group.

Buildings

During the survey visit, the main dwelling (B1) and eight other buildings were assessed for bat roosting potential. The findings of the assessment are set out in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Findings from the site survey visit

Building Reference	Description	Roost Potential	Other Notes
B1	Stanes Cottage	High Potential and a Confirmed Roost	Bat droppings present in loft void above main dwelling
B2	Wooden Garage	Negligible Potential	
B3 – B5	Static Caravans	Negligible Potential	
B6	Toilet Block	Low Potential	Single gap in soffit
B7	Toat Café & Car Wash	Negligible Potential	
B8	Outbuildings	Negligible Potential	
B9	Caravans	Negligible Potential	

Vegetation

Many trees within the application site and along the boundaries have potential to support roosting bats.

The tree lines and hedgerows on-site provide commuting habitat for bats. These are connected to the wider landscape and areas of woodland habitat are located approximately 200m to the west and 400m north of the application site. The trees, shrubs and grassland provide suitable foraging resources.

3.3.1 Dormouse

Little suitable habitat for dormouse was present within the site and the site was some distance away from known local dormouse populations (shown on NBN Atlas) the opposite side to the A29 road. There was negligible potential for dormouse to be present.

3.3.1 Otter & Water Vole

No suitable habitat for otter or water vole was present within the site. The dry ditch did not have habitat suitable for these species. Otter and water vole were considered unlikely to be present within the site.

3.3.1 Nesting Birds

Significant suitable habitat was located over the site for common species of nesting birds. Trees, scrub and ground nesting habitats were available with little disturbance. Buildings were also suitable for nesting where access was available and a disused nest was present inside B8. During the site survey a pair of whitethroat (*Curruca communis*) were present and likely using the scrub for nesting.

The site did not have habitat suitable for breeding by Schedule 1 birds.

3.3.2 Great Crested Newt

Consultation with MAGIC Maps database showed one great crested newt pond survey in 2017-2019 within 2km of the application site located 500m north west of the application site border. This showed a HSI score of 0.36 'poor' with no great crested newts found.

Consultation with the MAGIC maps database showed no great crested newt licenses granted within a 2km radius of the site boundary.

There was one pond located within 20m west of the site boundary and one located across a main road 180m south of the site boundary. Access was not available to either pond during the site survey.



Habitats on the site were suitable for foraging by great crested newt and debris (such as the brash piles and rubbish) provided suitable refuge and hibernacula.

It is considered that the site had high potential for other amphibians.

3.3.1 Reptiles

Significant suitable habitat was located over the site for reptiles. The scrub and grassland provided a mosaic of habitats reptiles require for foraging and debris (such as the brash piles and rubbish) provided suitable refuge and hibernacula.

The site had high potential for reptiles and three species were indicated within 2km of the site from NBN Atlas records; grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*).

3.3.2 NERC Act SPI/Local BAP Species

Suitable habitat for hedgehog and brown is present within the site and hedgehog may use brash piles to hibernate beneath.

4 Impact Assessment

4.1 Evaluation of Ecological Features

Discussion of Potential Ecological Impacts

Full details of works are not available at the time of writing, however, it is anticipated that there will be demolition of all existing buildings and loss of the grassland and scrub habitats. Outline plans indicate the trees will be retained.

4.1.1 Nature Conservation Sites

The proposed development site itself is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations.

The site is within the Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for Sites of Special Scientific Interest and the outline proposals meet the criteria for consultation with Natural England:

- **All Consultations:** All planning applications (except householder applications) where the proposed development is outside or extends outside existing settlements/urban areas and will increase lighting levels or affect trees/woodland, waterbodies, rural buildings/structures (manmade or natural) or linear landscape features such as hedgerows, streams and rivers through direct loss, fragmentation or change of use.
- **Infrastructure:** Pipelines and underground cables, pylons and overhead cables (excluding upgrades and refurbishment of existing network). Any transport proposal including new or extended footways, cycleways, roads/car parks, railways and waterways (excluding routine maintenance). Airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.

[Impact Risk Zones - Threshold check](#)

Functionally linked habitats: Bats roosting within the SACs rely on land outside of the site boundaries. Such land which is required to sustain the bats associated with the SACs is referred to as being 'functionally linked' to the SAC. Where impacts to such functionally linked land could result in significant effects to the bat populations associated with the SAC, full consideration needs to be undertaken under the Habitats Regulations (in the same way as habitat in the SAC).

In short, whilst the European protected species legislation protects the bats and their breeding and resting places, it is the effect of the designation of the SAC that protects, through the Habitats Regulations Assessment process, the habitat of the bats outside the SAC. Further information is available in the Natural England guidance on functional linkages.

Habitats Regulations Assessment: Special Areas of Conservation are classified under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations). The Habitats Regulations require additional consideration during the planning stage to ensure that the proposed development does not affect the reasons for designation.

- The site is within the IRZ for SACs which are designated for bats. The site has features with potential for bats and a confirmed roost is present within one building. Mature trees on the site



have potential for roosting, foraging and commuting. There is potential for the proposed development to impact the key and wider conservation areas of the functionally linked habitats of the foraging bats associated with the SACs.

4.1.1 NERC Act HPI / Local BAP Priority Habitats and Other Notable Designations

4.1.2 Habitats

The proposals will result in the permanent loss of a relatively large area of scrub and grassland habitat and potentially hedgerow and trees. Retained trees, scrub and hedgerow are at risk of damage through impacts to root systems.

The proposed development may impact trees with veteran features.

4.1.3 Protected Species

[REDACTED]

4.1.5 Bats

As European protected species, bats are fully protected against the loss, damage or obstruction of roosts and the killing and injury of individual bats. The proposed works has high potential to destroy, damage, modify, obstruct and disturb roosts and well as kill, injure or disturb any roosting bats that may be present at the time of works. Works to any trees that support bat roosts would also have the same negative impacts. Removal of woody linear habitat could sever commuting routes directly and the introduction of lighting to the area could disturb roosting, foraging and commuting bats; which may have implications for the survival of local bat populations.

4.1.6 Nesting Birds

There is potential for negative impacts to nesting birds such as the killing and injury of individuals, damage or destruction of nests and eggs and preventing adults from accessing nests. Such activities would be an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

4.1.7 Great Crested Newt

Clearance of grassland, scrub and trees could kill, injure and disturb individual great crested newt if present at the time of works. In addition, removing rubbish and deadwood piles could have negative impacts on newts using these features for refuge. Such activities would constitute an offence under European and national legislation.

4.1.8 Reptiles

Clearance of grassland, scrub and trees could kill, injure and disturb individual reptiles if present at the time of works. In addition, removing rubbish and deadwood piles could have negative impacts on reptiles using these features for refuge or hibernation. Such activities would constitute an offence under national legislation.

4.1.9 NERC Act SPI/Local BAP Species

Hedgehog could be harmed on site when clearing vegetation, particularly if hibernating or sheltering beneath hedgerows and under piles of woody debris or leaf litter. Brown hare is a more mobile species so likely to be able to move away from harm, however, very young hare in nests may be less mobile.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Overview

The assessment of the ecological constraints and subsequent recommendations are based on the current development proposals. If the development proposals change, this may alter the conclusions and advice in this report.

5.2 Further Survey

5.2.1 Bats

5.2.1.1 Roosting

Further survey of the buildings with for bats should be undertaken. The survey requirements of the buildings referenced in the report are set out in Table 5.

Additional visits may be needed where evidence of roosting behaviour is observed, and further information or confirmation is required.

Table 5. Details on the further survey required for the buildings assessed during the site visit

Building Reference	Roost Potential	Survey Requirement
B1	High Potential and a Confirmed Roost	3 emergence survey visits (May to September) with one visit to be in peak maternity season (mid May – end of June)
B2	Negligible Potential	-
B3 – B5	Negligible Potential	-
B6	Low Potential	One emergence survey visit (May to August)
B7	Negligible Potential	-
B8	Negligible Potential	-
B9	Negligible Potential	-

5.2.1.2 Foraging and Commuting

Survey should be carried out to determine the levels of activity by bats, the species of bat using the site and whether there are any 'hotspot' areas within the application site or adjacent to the boundaries.

Surveys should record if barbastelle or Bechstein bats are using the site.

Survey should comprise the deployment of static monitoring devices and several walked transects between April and October with visits spread out to cover spring, summer and autumn periods.

5.2.1.3 Trees

A ground level tree assessment (GLTA) should be carried out to determine the potential of trees for bats. This should be followed by aerial assessment of any features and/or emergence survey, if required.



5.2.2 Great Crested Newt

An eDNA sample should be taken from the pond 20m west of the site boundary (pending access) between the 15th of April and the 30th of June. Should the eDNA sample confirm great crested newt presence, then six population estimate visits would be required using bottle trapping and torching as detailed below.

Alternatively, great crested newt presence/absence surveys can be carried out on the pond 20m west of the site boundary (pending access). The surveys would include bottle trapping, with traps left in the ponds overnight, and torching, with the ponds searched with high-powered torches after dark. The surveys would need four visits to determine the presence/absence of great crested newt, with two more visits required for a population estimate if presence is confirmed by the first four visits. Survey visits should be spread between mid-March and mid-June, with half of the visits between mid-April and mid-May.

5.2.3 Reptiles

Survey to determine the presence or likely absence of reptiles should be undertaken. This would require the deployment of artificial refugia (cut squares of roofing felt) across the site, where are then checked for reptiles on seven occasions under suitable weather conditions. Survey should be carried out between April and June inclusive and September, in suitable weather conditions.

5.3 Ecological Impact Avoidance and Mitigation Measures

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the mitigation hierarchy and promotes its use throughout the development planning process, in order to minimise harm to, and maximise benefits for, biodiversity. The NPPF highlights the primary objective for any proposed development should be avoiding adverse effects on biodiversity through good design. Any unavoidable adverse effects on biodiversity should be adequately mitigated to minimise any negative impacts. Compensation may be used after avoidance and mitigation measures have been fully considered, in order to address any residual impacts of the proposals.

[REDACTED]

5.3.2 Bats

Following the further bat survey work, a report should be produced that sets out mitigation measures for bats, including the requirement to obtain a bat licence before works can commence, special working methods and bat sensitive lighting.

New lighting proposals should follow the Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and artificial lighting in the UK (Institute of Lighting Professionals, 2023). Lighting should not be directed on to any known bat roosts, bat roost features or commuting and foraging habitat.

Should Bechstein or barbastelle bats be found to be using the site, the proposed development will be required to be designed to avoid impacts to these species.

5.3.3 Nesting Birds

Removal of any suitable nesting habitat for birds should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (i.e., works should take place September through February) to avoid acting unlawfully. If this is not possible, then suitable habitat must only be removed following a nesting bird check carried out immediately prior to works (or within 24 hours) by a suitably qualified ecologist. Any active nests must remain 'in situ' with an appropriate vegetation buffer until young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

5.3.4 Great Crested Newt

Following the great crested newt survey, a report should be produced that sets out mitigation measures for this species.

5.3.5 Reptiles

Following the reptile survey, a report should be produced that sets out mitigation measures for reptiles.

5.3.6 NERC Act SPI/Local BAP Species

To avoid potential harm to other protected species that may be in the local area at the time of works, the following simple measures should be followed:

- The work site should be kept tidy at the end of each shift, with chemical and equipment stored securely. Excavations should be backfilled or covered to prevent hedgehog from falling in. If this is not possible then a plank should be left in the excavation at an angle no greater than 45 degrees to provide a means of escape.
- Removal of storage materials, debris piles, leaf litter and any ground vegetation within the boundary vegetation habitats should be undertaken carefully and with consideration to the potential presence of hedgehog. Any individuals encountered should be allowed to move away safely or be moved to an area of similar habitat away from the works.

5.4 Ecological Enhancement

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local policy encourages developers to incorporate ecological enhancements into projects to achieve net gains for biodiversity. Generally, enhancements act to improve the quality of the habitat for the flora and fauna on and within the vicinity of the site. These enhancements can also provide aesthetic appeal, thus adding to the value of the project. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides guidance to planning authorities on how development proposals may provide enhancements to biodiversity, and contribute to wildlife and habitat connectivity in the wider area.

Possible opportunities to enhance the wildlife potential, appropriate to this site, are provided below. It is important that any measures adopted be clearly demonstrated to the Planning Authority through inclusion in design plans and accompanying documentation.

- A range of boxes are available that provide a self-contained space for roosting bats. Some which can actually be incorporated into the walls of new builds, others may be attached to trees or the building exterior. These bat boxes can provide additional roosting features to those

already available on-site, or provide new roosting space to encourage a wide range of bat species to utilise the surrounding area.

- The installation of bird boxes can provide additional nesting space for birds, secure from predatory animals such as foxes. Many small bird species, such as blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) and great tit (*Parus major*) will preferentially nest in nest boxes, where available, and boxes to suit different species should be offered. As a building development, there is an opportunity to provide nest boxes built into walls specifically for house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and swift (*Apus apus*). These are both on the red list of Birds of Conservation Concern.
- Installation of bee bricks would benefit invertebrates, integrated into buildings in a south-facing wall at a minimum height of 1m, with no vegetation obstructing the holes. Planting bee-friendly plants nearby would provide the bees using the bricks with a good quality foraging resource.
- Planting of native tree and shrub species should be incorporated into the proposed development, with a focus on connecting patches of retained vegetation and planting in gaps in hedgerows. A mix of native species should be used including hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn and hazel (*Corylus avellana*). The masterplan for the proposed development indicates this will be possible in the centre of the site and around the site boundary.
- Where possible, cut vegetation should be retained and piled on-site in areas of existing vegetation and boundary habitats to create refuge for a range of species, including reptiles, hedgehogs and invertebrates.

Further opportunities for ecological enhancement can be recommended following the further survey outlined above.

5.4.1 Biodiversity Net Gain

As part of the planning permission, a biodiversity net gain of 10% will be required for the development. It is understood that the client will aim to maximise the biodiversity gains onsite and is considering using nearby adjacent land to use for any offsets required. The adjacent land is an area known as "Whiteland's Farm" which borders the site to the north and is under the same ownership. A full and thorough site assessment for any offsite offsetting would be required for the purposes of achieving 10% net gain.

As part of the biodiversity net gain trading rules regarding medium distinctiveness habitats onsite such as mixed scrub, other neutral grassland and individual trees will need to be observed. When planting new habitats it is recommended that a minimum of moderate condition is achieved for the purposes of BNG, and potential conditions to achieve moderate condition are listed below:

5.4.1.1 Trees

To achieve moderate condition for tree planting, the following must be met:

- Native species
- More than 20% of the tree canopy area has vegetation beneath
- Protection from adverse impacts from human activities; planting trees of small to medium size with compact canopy form would reduce the need for excessive pruning in the future

5.4.1.2 Mixed Scrub

To achieve moderate condition for the mixed scrub, then the following must be met:

- At least 3 Native Species >80% of coverage, with no single species covering more than 75%



- Absence of Schedule 9 listed invasive non-native species and others detrimental to native wildlife cover less than 5%
- The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and/or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat

5.4.1.3 Neutral Grassland

To achieve moderate condition for the neutral grasslands, the following must be met:

- A good example of its habitat type, with >8 species per m², an abundant grassland species not sown for intensive agricultural production and <30% cover of ryegrasses and white clover
- Cover of bracken is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble) is less than 5%
- Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas such as rabbit warrens



6 Conclusion

The application site comprised a modern cottage and numerous outbuildings including a café and car wash facility. The proposed works to the site are for residential housing and improved road access.

Whilst the proposed development is unlikely to directly impact Statutory sites, the site lies within the IRZ of SACs designated for breeding and hibernating rare bats species and habitats within the site may be functionally linked to these site, in that they may be part of the habitats supporting the sensitive bat populations. Therefore, consultation with Natural England is required for advice on the nature of the potential impacts and how these might be avoided or mitigated.

The surrounding area supported other neutral and modified grassland, hedgerow and trees. The mature oak trees had veteran features and were of higher intrinsic value and should they support roosting or dispersal routes for bats they would ben of higher value.

Building B1 supported bat roosting features and droppings have been found, confirming use by bats. Building B6 had low potential for roosting bats.

Further bat roost survey is required to determine the species present and characterise the roost in order to support a planning application and subsequent licence application. A ground level tree assessment should be undertaken to determine if any of the trees have potential to support roosting bats and further survey may be required following the finding of this survey.

A great crested newt eDNA survey or bottle trapping/torching should be carried out on the pond 20m west of the site boundary. Grassland, scrub, and debris piles on the site are suitable for common reptiles, and further survey for this species is required.

Some mitigation measures are given in the report, but there may be additional measures dependant on the findings of the further survey work. Precautionary measures will be required for [REDACTED] nesting birds, including a site walkover [REDACTED] before commencement of site clearance.

As part of the planning permission, a biodiversity net gain of 10% will be required for the development. Some measures to achieve this are given in the report. It is understood that the client is considering using Whiteland's Farm (bordering the site to the north and under the same ownership) to use for any offsets required. A full and thorough site assessment for any offsite land would be required if used to help achieve the 10% net gain.

Subject to the mitigation, enhancement measures and further survey (and any mitigation recommended from this further survey) outlined in this report, the proposed development should be able to proceed as indicated in the masterplan drawings.

7 References

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Appendix A: Application Site



Figure 1. Location of site (red outline) in surrounding landscape. QGIS 2025.



Figure 2. Site boundary (red line). QGIS 2025.



Figure 3. Masterplan for proposed development at Toat Cafe.

Appendix B: Legislation Information

Statutory Designated Sites

Particular national and international legislative instruments enable the designation of sites of conservation interest. These 'statutory designated sites' are then afforded varying degrees of protection under environmental legislation and government policy. The land designations considered by this study are set out below, with details of their associated legislation.

Designation	Protection
National Parks	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949; Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; local planning policy.
Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949; local planning policy.
National Nature Reserves (NNRs)	National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; local planning policy.
Ramsar sites	Ramsar Convention; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; Countryside and Rights of Way act 2000.
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	EU Habitats Directive; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)	EU Birds Directive; Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.



Non-Statutory Designated Sites

Non-statutory designated sites, such as County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) are local sites designated by Local Planning Authorities that are considered to be of significant nature conservation value. They often have an important role in the wider landscape by connecting statutory designated sites and can support European protected species and species listed under the Habitats Directive.

Ancient Woodland is a non-statutory designation, which is generally applied to woodlands known to predate 1600. Before this time woodland was rarely artificially planted, hence these woodlands are likely to be naturally established. Subtypes include Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands and Ancient Replanted Woodlands. Although tree cover in the latter has predominately been replaced, original features such as characteristic wildlife are retained. Ancient woodlands are protected under national planning policy. Current planning policy guidance requires that developments must not result in the loss or deterioration of Ancient Woodlands, which are a valuable biodiversity resource.

European Protected Species (EPS)

European protected species are protected in the UK by Regulation 40 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), with EPS listed under Schedule 2. This is the national implementation of the European Union's 'Habitats Directive' (Council Directive 92/43/EEC (a) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna). Protection is also afforded to any EPS under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), owing to their inclusion in Schedule 5.

These legislative instruments make it unlawful to intentionally, deliberately or recklessly capture, kill, injure or disturb in a place of shelter, any EPS. The damage or destruction of a breeding or resting place, whether intentional or reckless, also constitutes an offence.

The following are examples of EPS which are native to and residing in the United Kingdom:

- Sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*)
- Smooth snake (*Cornella austriaca*)
- Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*)
- Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)
- Otters (*Lutra lutra*)
- Bats (all native species)

'Widespread' Species

Widespread Reptiles

Through inclusion in Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is an offence under Section 9 to intentionally kill, injure or sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale, any living or dead widespread species of UK reptile, or any product derived from one.

In addition, all native reptiles are adopted as Species of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Water Voles

The water vole *Arvicola amphibius* is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Protection is afforded against killing and injury of water voles, as well as the damage, destruction or obstruction of burrows, or disturbance of burrows while in use.



Nesting Birds

Under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird; take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

There are 49 bird species listed as Species of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. These species are therefore material planning considerations.

Schedule 1 Listed Birds

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 there are special penalties for offences regarding birds listed in this Schedule. Additionally, it is an offence to disturb Schedule 1 listed bird or dependent young at nest.

Badgers

Badgers are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Under this legislation, badgers and their setts are protected against all deliberate damage, destruction and disturbance. Badgers are widespread and abundant; their legal protection is primarily aimed at preventing blood sports, however there are still implications for developers.

NERC Act Habitats and Species

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force on 1st October 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act required the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

There are 56 Habitats of Principle Importance (HPI) included on the S41 list. These are all the habitats in England that were identified as requiring action in the former UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). These areas include terrestrial habitats such as upland hay meadows to lowland mixed deciduous woodland. Additionally, 943 Species of Principle Importance (SPI) were included in the S41 list. The species found in England were identified as requiring action under the former UK BAP, which has since been replaced by the Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. The priority species and habitats designed under S41 of the NERC Act will be considered as part of the constraints and opportunities assessment, thus identifying if these habitats will be impacted and also where opportunities are present to enhance the area for local priority species.

Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

All mammals receive some protection under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996, which makes it an offence to intentionally cause unnecessary suffering of any wild mammal. The Wild Mammals Act may apply during site clearance works, particularly where burrowing animals such as foxes and rabbits are present as they could be crushed or asphyxiated in their burrows by heavy machinery.



Appendix C: Survey Results



Figure 4. Habitat map. QGIS 2025.



Photograph 1.
Northwest elevation of B1, garage to right of photograph



Photograph 2.
Internal loft space of B1, location of bat droppings



Photograph 3.
B1 attached garage with loft void over



Photograph 4.
B2 wooden garage northwest of B1.



Photograph 5.
B3 – B5 static caravans northwest of B1.



Photograph 6.
B7 NHP Allocation toilet block



Photograph 7.
B7 NHP Allocation café and car wash facility



Photograph 8.
B8 Stanes Farm (south) outbuildings



Photograph 9.
Staness Farm (north) boundary scrub and mature and veteran oaks.



Photograph 10.
Other neutral grassland and mature oaks



Photograph 11.
Other neutral grassland with debris pile



Photograph 12.
Dry ditch with conifer hedge to left of picture