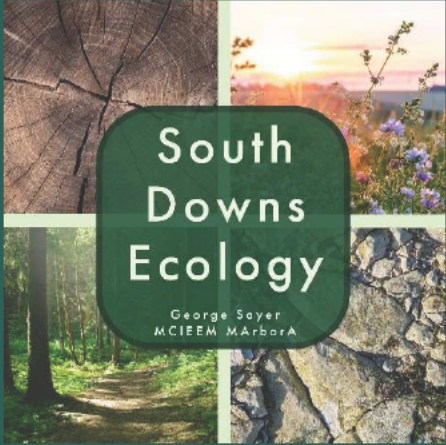




Ecological Impact Assessment

Mill Farm, Mill Lane,
Itchingfield



**South
Downs
Ecology**

George Sayer
MCIEEM MARBORA

Ecological Impact Assessment

Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Itchingfield

Quality Assurance:

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Site	Mill Farm, Mill Lane, Itchingfield, RH13 ONP
Client	The Owners
Author	Alex Rosenfeld Assistant Ecologist
Reviewer and Issuer	George Sayer MCIEEM MArborA Principal Ecologist and Director South Downs Ecology Limited
Report issue date	
Report conditions	The methods and recommendations in this report are based on the following: - CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing 2017 (CIEEM, 2017) - CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2024) Surveys have been carried out following the guidance sources set out in CIEEM's Good Practice Guidance for Habitats and Species (CIEEM, 2021), which include: - CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Second Edition (CIEEM, 2017) - CIEEM Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK. Second Edition (CIEEM, 2017) - Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (BCT, 2023)

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Summary

The applicants have commissioned a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) and Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for the replacement of 2no. agricultural barns with dwellings. The site is located off Mill Lane, Itchingfield (*centred on TQ14283000*), hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

The PEA and PBRA were conducted on 27th August 2025. The site consists of two agricultural farm buildings. These are surrounded by modified grassland, hedgerow with trees and an access track. Off-site to the north lies an area of ancient semi-natural woodland.

The site provides no significant roosting suitability for bats. Off-site trees and woodland display bat roost potential but are to be unaffected by works.

The surrounding habitats provide some very limited reptile, bat foraging and commuting, and other mammal potential, whilst birds nest's were noted within B2. Mitigation measures to protect these species as well as the ancient semi-natural woodland are proposed herein.

The site would be subject to Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, which is dealt with in a separate assessment.

With mitigation recommendations followed, the proposals are not considered to have a negative impact upon designated sites, habitats or protected species in accordance with local and national planning policy. The application of enhancements on site would also result in minor net gain and would therefore accord with the relevant Horsham Local Plan Policies.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The applicants have commissioned a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) and Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) of proposals for the replacement of 2no. agricultural barns with dwellings at Mill Farm. The site is located off Mill Lane, Itchingfield (*centred on TQ14283000*), hereafter referred to as 'the site'.
- 1.2 The PEA and PBRA were conducted on 27th August 2025 by George Sayer MCIEEM MARborA. The appraisal was completed, and the following EcIA report produced by Alex Rosenfeld – Assistant Ecologist. The report was reviewed and approved by George Sayer.
- 1.3 This appraisal consisted of a site visit to identify existing habitats on site; the habitats have been categorised broadly following the UK Habitats Classification Guidance V2.01 (UKHab Ltd 2023). In addition, an assessment of habitats and structures on the site was made to determine their potential for protected species. Following this an on-site and desktop assessment was undertaken, of the likelihood of National or European Protected Species being present on or near site, and the constraints these may pose on the development proposals.
- 1.4 Based on the results of the appraisal, recommendations for potential ecological enhancements have been provided.

Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.5 The site consist of two agricultural farm buildings. These are surrounded by modified grassland, hedgerow with trees and an access track. An area of ancient semi-natural woodland lies off-site to the north. Access to the site is off Mill Lane to the west.
- 1.6 The site is located C. 460m south of Broadbridge Heath and C. 960 m north of Christ's Hospital Railway Station. Surrounding the site is the woodland to the north-west, beyond the access track, modern residential dwellings set in gardens to the north and east, and grassland paddocks to the south.
- 1.7 The wider area consists of paddocks, arable fields, hedgerows and woodland. The closest woodland to the site is adjacent to the north west.

Proposals

- 1.8 The proposals include the replacement of the 2no. agricultural barns with residential dwellings. The dwellings will have associated gardens and will be surrounded by an ecological enhancement area.

2.0 Scope of Appraisal

1. *Identify the habitats and vegetation on site;*
2. *Identify habitat which may have potential for protected species;*
3. *Identify whether any signs of protected species are present on-site;*
4. *Recommend whether further surveys are required, or whether there are any relevant constraints with regards to protected species;*
5. *Identify impacts of the proposed development and set out appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures; and*
6. *Provide suggestions as to how the site and proposals could be enhanced with regards to protected species and habitats.*

- 2.1 This appraisal and assessment are deemed to be relevant for a maximum of 18 months due to the possibility of changes in the habitats on-site. Should the site or proposals alter, the ecologist should be consulted to confirm that the appraisal is still valid.

3.0 Planning Policy and Legislation

National Planning Policy

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024 sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. 'Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment' states that development should be 'minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.'
- 3.2 The Government Circular 06/2005, which is referred to by the NPPF, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.
- 3.3 The current Local Plan is subject to Regulation 19. Therefore, The Horsham District Planning Framework (Horsham District Council, 2015 - 2031) was used to appraise the proposals.

Local Planning Policy

- 3.4 The site is within the Horsham District. As the existing local plan is at Regulation 19 stage, the proposals shall be assessed against existing Horsham District Planning Framework 2015.
- 3.5 Policy 31 - Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity states:
 1. Development will be supported where it can demonstrate that it maintains or enhances the existing network of green infrastructure. Proposals that would result in the loss of existing green infrastructure will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that new opportunities will be provided that mitigates or compensates for this loss, and ensures that the ecosystem services of the area are retained.
 2. Development proposals will be required to contribute to the enhancement of existing biodiversity, and should create and manage new habitats where appropriate. The Council will support new development which retains and /or enhances significant features of nature conservation on development sites. The Council will also support development which makes a positive contribution to biodiversity through the creation of green spaces, and linkages between habitats to create local and regional ecological networks.
 3. Where felling of protected trees is necessary, replacement planting with a suitable species will be required.
 4. a) Particular consideration will be given to the hierarchy of sites and habitats in the district as follows:
 - i. Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
 - ii. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs)

iii. Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and any areas of Ancient woodland, local geodiversity or other irreplaceable habitats not already identified in i & ii above.

b) Where development is anticipated to have a direct or indirect adverse impact on sites or features for biodiversity, development will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that:

i. The reason for the development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and,

ii. That appropriate mitigation and compensation measures are provided.

5. Any development with the potential to impact Arun Valley SPA or the Mens SAC will be subject to a HRA to determine the need for an Appropriate Assessment. In addition, development will be required to be in accordance with the necessary mitigation measures for development set out in the HRA of this plan.

Legislation

3.6 Legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity of particular relevance to this EcIA includes:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
- [REDACTED]
- The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996; and
- The Environment Act 2021.

- 3.7 All species of bat and their roosts are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or handle a bat, to possess a bat (live or dead), disturb a roosting bat, or sell or offer a bat for sale without a licence. It is also an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter, whether they are present or not.
- 3.8 All UK bird species are protected against disturbance whilst occupying a nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Developments that could predictably disturb, kill or injure nesting birds could result in an offence. Furthermore, a number of bird species are targets of UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans and listed as Species of Principle Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. This obligates local authorities to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity with particular emphasis on targeted species.
- 3.9 All widespread reptiles are protected against killing and injury under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, with rarer reptiles receiving further protection under EU regulation. Reptiles must also be given consideration under the NERC Act 2006 as part of the planning process.
- 3.10 Great crested newts (GCN) are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence for anyone to intentionally kill, injure or disturb a GCN or to damage, destroy or block access to areas of suitable habitat.

- 3.12 Water voles are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is a priority conservation species. It is an offence to intentionally capture, kill or injure water voles, damage, destroy or block access to their places of shelter or protection (on purpose or by not taking enough care), disturb them in a place of shelter or protection (on purpose or by not taking enough care), possess, sell, control or transport live or dead water voles or parts of them (not water voles bred in captivity).
- 3.13 In the UK, dormice are legally protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and have significant further protection as a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Dormice are also a 'Species of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity' listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC). It is an offence for anyone to intentionally kill, injure or disturb a dormouse or to damage, destroy or block access to areas of suitable habitat.
- 3.14 All other mammals receive general protection against cruelty, inhumane killing or injuring under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

3.15 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This site is not considered to be exempt from Mandatory BNG. This will be dealt with as part of a separate assessment.

4.0 Methods

Desktop Study

- 4.1 A desktop study was conducted using the government 'MAGIC' Map GIS tool; a search was carried out for all international (Ramsar, SAC, SPA) statutory designated sites within 2.0 km of the site, national statutory designated sites (SSSI, NNR, LNR) within 2.0 km of the site; and non-statutory designated sites (SNCI) and priority habitats within 1.0 km of the site. These have been summarised below and their significance considered in the context of the development proposals. A search was also carried out to identify features of ecological interest in the area, such as water bodies and ancient woodland.
- 4.2 Given the overall scale and nature of the site and the proposals, a full data search from SxBRC was not considered appropriate. This is in accordance with CIEEM current guidance for such projects (CIEEM, 2020).

Site Visit

- 4.3 A site visit was conducted on 27th August 2025 during suitable weather conditions. Habitats were recorded according to the UK-Hab Classification System as described within the UK Habitats Manual, Version 2.01 (UKHab Ltd. 2023).
- 4.4 During the survey any constraints with regard to protected species were considered; the site was considered for its potential for protected species even when signs of these species were not noted at the time of survey. Points of interest for protected species have been plotted into the Site Habitat Plan and within target notes. Protected and Notable Species considered as part of this assessment include but are not limited to:
- Bats – Foraging, Commuting, Roosting, Swarming and Hibernating
 - [REDACTED]
 - Dormice – Nesting and Commuting
 - Great Crested Newts and other Amphibians such as Common Toads – Terrestrial Active and Hibernation Habitat and Aquatic Habitat, Including Commuting
 - Reptiles – Terrestrial Active and Hibernation Habitat
 - Rare or Notable Invertebrates
 - Rare or Notable Plants
 - Water Voles – Foraging and Shelter Habitats
 - Otters – Foraging and Shelter Habitats
 - White-clawed Crayfish

- 4.5 Surrounding trees were assessed externally by an experienced, licenced bat surveyor (George Sayer 2018-34434-CLS) for its potential to hold roosting bats; obvious access points or roost features were identified where relevant. Any evidence of bats such as grease marks, bat droppings or urine splashes were noted. The bat roost assessment was conducted following the Bat Conservation Trust - Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (2023).
- 4.6 Due to the site visit being carried out over one day, it is possible that some signs of protected species may not be apparent within this short timeframe. This is a constraint recognised within best practice guidelines and all reasonable effort has been made to identify evidence of protected species.

Ecological Impact Assessment

- 4.7 The methodology for Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) follows best practice guidelines set by the Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management (CIEEM): 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment' (CIEEM, 2024). This includes identifying the baseline conditions on the site and subsequently rating the potential effects of the development based on the sensitivity and value of the resource affected, combined with the magnitude, duration and scale of the impact (or change). This is initially assessed without mitigation measures, and then assessed again after allowing for the proposed mitigation measures; this provides the residual effects. The assessment is divided into construction effects and longer-term operational effects.
- 4.8 Each ecological feature within the site has been considered within a defined Geographic context such as:
- International and European;
 - National;
 - Regional;
 - County;
 - District;
 - Local;
 - Site Level; and
 - Negligible.

4.9 Based upon CIEEM guidance, value was determined with reference to the following factors:

- Its inclusion as a Designated Site or other protected area;
- The presence of habitat types of conservation significance, e.g. Habitats of Principal Importance (NERC 2006);
- The presence (or potential presence) of species of conservation significance e.g. Species of Principal Importance (NERC 2006);
- The presence of other protected species e.g. those protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981;
- The sites social and economic value.

4.10 Specifically in the case of bats, the impact assessment has been conducted in accordance with the recently published Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Reason and Wray, 2023).

5.0 Baseline Ecological Conditions and Protected Species Assessment

Desktop Study

Designated Sites and Habitats

- 5.1 The following is a summary of all protected and notable wildlife sites, with sites of international importance recorded within 2.0km of the site, sites of national importance within 2.0 km and sites of local importance within 1.0 km. These are divided into statutory and non-statutory; those with full legal protection and those without, but which the Local Planning Authority should still consider when deciding on planning policy and applications. These sites are summarised in tables 1 and 2 below. A description of locally designated sites is also made below.
- 5.2 This information is included so that the site can be considered within the ecological context of the surrounding area, guiding decisions related to habitat change and protected species; these sites are not necessarily representative of the habitat on or surrounding the site and may not be influenced by the proposals.
- 5.3 The site falls within the 12.0km radius of The Mens SAC, SSSI (10.8 km E), and as such is within the Wider Conservation Area of the SAC as defined by Natural England and South Downs National Park Authority (2018). As such potential for impacts upon this site shall be assessed.
- 5.4 The following statutory designated sites are present within 2.0 km of the proposal site:

Table 1: Statutory Protected Designated Sites**Table No. 01 - Internationally Designated Statutory Sites Identified within a Potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development Site**

Site	Reason for Designation	Location
<i>The Mens SAC, SSSI</i>	<i>The Mens is an extensive area of mature beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> woodland rich in lichens, bryophytes, fungi and saproxylic invertebrates, and is one of the largest tracts of Atlantic acidophilous beech forests in the south-eastern part of the habitat's UK range. The site is also designated as it's a nationally important site for barbastelle <i>Barbastella barbastella</i> bats.</i>	<i>10.8km West</i>

5.5 No non-statutory sites are noted within a 1.0km radius of the site.

Habitats

Desk Study

5.6 Priority Habitat types are located within 1.0 km of the site. These Priority Habitats consist of Deciduous Woodland and Ancient Semi-natural Woodland; these habitats are present just off-site to the north.

Site Assessment

5.7 The site is given over to the habitats discussed further below.

u1c – Artificial Unvegetated, Undeveloped Surface

5.8 Entering the site from the west is a track consisting of compacted hardcore. Beside the buildings are similar areas for storage and access, with two shipping containers sited adjacent one of the buildings. This habitat is of **negligible ecological value**.

U1b5 – Buildings

5.9 Two buildings are noted onsite. One (B1) is an old pole barn and the other (B2) is a small agricultural barn/store. The buildings are of wood and corrugated steel. Both are of **negligible ecological value**. The potential to support protected species shall be discussed in Section 6.0.

G4, 32, 81 - Modified Grassland

5.10 To the south, east and north of the buildings lies a large pasture field used for livestock, part of which lies within the site. Species noted include perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, broad-leaved plantain *Plantago major* and common daisy *Bellis perennis*. Piles of rubble have been placed over some areas of the habitat, with ruderal species growing amongst these. Overall, this habitat is of **site ecological value**.

H2a2, 11 – Other Native Hedgerow with Trees

- 5.11 To the west, behind the buildings lies a hedge of field maple *Acer campestre*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, with a number of emergent ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. Part of the hedge has been damaged by the recent fall of a large oak, and another section behind the pole barn has been removed. Overall, this habitat is of **site ecological value**.

W1f, 28 – Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Ancient Woodland

- 5.12 Off-site to the north-west lies an area of ancient woodland. Species noted include pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, ash, and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, with understorey of field maple and blackthorn, and dense patches of bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg.*. The habitat appeared in reasonable condition, being mostly native, albeit the groundcover was relatively shaded and lacking and Ash Dieback has clearly resulted in loss of trees. Overall, this habitat is of **local ecological value** as an irreplaceable priority habitat, but a small remnant of such.

6.0 Protected Species Assessment

Bats

Desk Study

- 6.1 No European Protected Species Mitigation Licences have been noted within a 2.0km radius of the site. Bats are likely under-recorded due to the rural nature of the site.

Site Assessment

- 6.2 B1 is a single skin corrugated metal pole barn, with a timber frame loosely clad to three aspects in metal sheeting and open to the front. Externally, no crevices were noted and the metal cladding provides no roosting features, being extremely open with many panels flapping in the wind.
- 6.3 B1 is totally open inside with lots of light entering from outside. There were no suitable crevices between timbers or between metal sheets and timbers, and the barn is in an exposed location. Overall, it is of **negligible suitability** to roosting bats being of a very unsuitable nature and in very exposed location.
- 6.4 B2 is single skin small barn/store, formed of a timber frame with a mixture of single-skin wooden cladding and corrugated metal sheeting to the walls, and a corrugated metal roof. Externally there were no obvious roost features, although gaps around the door and gables allow ample opportunity for bats to access. Internally, no significant crevices or gaps were noted which would be of value to roosting bats, and no evidence of bats was noted. A small attached outbuilding adjacent is formed of concrete blocks; this was damaged by a recent treefall which has created some gaps in the blocks, but these were inspected and found to be recent and devoid of evidence of bats. Overall, the building was considered to be of **negligible suitability** to roosting bats due to the general lack of features bats could use, and the lack of evidence of bats.
- 6.5 Several large mature oaks off-site to the east and within the woodland would offer bat roost suitability, as would other woodland trees. One field maple to the edge of the track (just off-site) displayed a suitable crevice. Endoscope inspection revealed a suitable cavity but no evidence of bats.
- 6.6 The hedge and in particular the woodland would be suitable for foraging bats. Continuity of vegetation along the southern boundary of the site is quite heavily broken at present and as such, the hedge is unlikely to form a major commuting feature, although gapping-up here would likely have a benefit to bats.
- 6.7 The open grassland and unvegetated surface are too lacking in diversity and too exposed to the elements to support more than occasional foraging by light-tolerant bats.

Birds

Desk Study

- 6.8 A wide range of bird species are present in the local area due to the presence of woodland, wetland and farmland habitats.

Site Assessment

- 6.9 The site provides nesting value for birds. During the survey several nests were noted within B2. The hedgerow to the south of B2 also provides nesting potential for a variety of species such as blackbird and robin. Overall, the site is of **site value** to nesting birds.

Reptiles

Desk Study

- 6.10 Numerous records of common reptiles such as common lizard and slow worm exist within the area.

Site Assessment

- 6.11 The surrounding grassland is generally too well-maintained to support reptiles, but the margins provide some limited opportunities for individual reptiles and the hedge might provide some limited hibernation potential. Overall, the area is of **site value** for reptiles.

Other Species

[REDACTED]

7.0 Evaluation of Impacts and Mitigation

Designated Sites

Potential Impacts

- 7.1 The site lies within 12.0km radius of The Mens SAC, designated for supporting barbastelle bats. No impacts are foreseen due to the intervening distance, small scale of proposals and general lack of impacts on bats or flightlines.

Mitigation and Compensation

- 7.2 None required.

Residual Impacts

- 7.3 The impacts will be negligible. Planting along the southern boundary would represent a new potential flightline for bats and hence a potential net benefit to the SAC.

Habitats

Potential Impacts

- 7.4 The proposals shall result in the loss of hedgerow with trees and modified grassland, creating new vegetated gardens.
- 7.5 In the absence of mitigation the ancient woodland to the north west of the site, off-site hedges and mature trees could be degraded by works. Works would occur within the 15.0 m buffer zone usually applied to such woodlands, with B2 lying wholly within the buffer. Between B2 and the buffer lies the existing track and no woodland habitat extends beyond this. Potential impacts are therefore somewhat lessened by the fact the immediate buffer zone around the woodland is developed land.

Mitigation and Compensation

- 7.6 Planting of new hedgerow across the wider site shall re-join two areas of vegetation and ensure no permanent overall loss of hedgerow habitat.
- 7.7 The new dwellings have been designed to be set back from the woodland, with the western dwelling being moved east until it sits almost entirely on other previously developed land and outside the 15.0 m buffer. Within the buffer only removal of the existing building, and reinstatement of landscaping here would occur.

7.8 To ensure no harm to the adjacent woodland and off-site trees and hedges, a range of basic protection measures shall be adopted during works as follows:

- Ensure dust producing activities such as cutting of timbers are undertaken during still days, inside another building/container, or using water to dampen the surface and reduce dust production;
- During the construction phase all materials shall be stored on existing hard surfaces outside the buffer zone;
- All chemicals, fuels, liquids such as paints shall be stored internally and away from the woodland buffer;
- Demolition of the existing structure will be undertaken from existing surfaces only with due care. All materials shall be fully disposed of and the ground returned to landscape.

7.9 The site will be subject to Mandatory BNG; this will be dealt with as a separate assessment.

Residual Impacts

7.10 With mitigation measures followed, the impacts will be negligible.

Bats

Potential Impacts

7.11 None foreseen. No structure or vegetation of value to roosting bats is to be removed during the course of works. Inappropriate lighting could lead to a loss in foraging and commuting habitat within the woodland and adjacent hedgerow. The loss of hedgerow to the south of B2 shall lead to a minor loss in foraging habitat.

Mitigation and Compensation

7.12 Works shall only undertaken during daylight hours. Any construction and operational phase lighting, if required, shall be angled down and away from the hedgerows and woodland. New lighting must strictly accord with the recommendations within the BCT/ILP 08/23 guidance. Any rooflights or dormers facing the woodland shall be fitted with appropriate blinds to prevent unnecessary lightspill. New hedgerows shall be planted onsite to offset any loss in foraging habitat and to form a new connective corridor between two areas of vegetation off-site. A BNG assessment accompanies the application to confirm this results in a net gain for biodiversity.

Residual Impacts

7.13 The overall impact of the scheme will be negligible.

Nesting Birds

Potential Impacts

- 7.14 As nests were noted within B2, there is a likelihood birds shall attempt to nest within this building in 2026. The hedgerow to the south of B2 provides value for nesting birds. Removal of the hedgerow and buildings during nesting season could lead to the destruction of a nest and injury or killing of a wild bird. This would be an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) 1981.

Mitigation and Compensation

- 7.15 Works shall be undertaken outside of bird nesting season (March – September inclusive). If not possible, the contractor shall ensure the buildings and hedgerow to the south of B2 have been assessed for the presence of nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to removal.
- 7.16 Loss of existing hedgerow shall be compensated through planting of new hedgerow to the south of the site. A BNG assessment accompanies the application to confirm this results in a net gain for biodiversity.

Residual Impacts

- 7.17 The overall impact of the scheme will be negligible.

Reptiles

Potential Impacts

- 7.18 In the absence of mitigation there is potential for individual reptiles to be harmed or killed during clearance. The risk is very low.

Mitigation and Compensation

- 7.19 Any grass requiring cutting around the buildings shall be undertaken in a careful, directional manner away from the site. The grassland shall be kept well-mown in the works area and immediate surroundings to prevent suitable habitat from developing.
- 7.20 The hedgerow stumps shall be excavated when reptiles and other animals would be active and able to vacate; such works shall not be conducted between November-February inclusive when reptiles are likely to be hibernating or torpid.

Residual Impacts

- 7.21 The overall impact of the scheme will be negligible.

Mammals

Potential Impacts

- 7.22 In the absence of mitigation there is potential for mammals such as hedgehogs, [REDACTED] and foxes to fall into excavations or become trapped in large pipework or other work elements. Given the proximity to the woodland, the risk is moderate.

Mitigation and Compensation

- 7.23 Any excavations shall be either covered overnight, or fitted with a rough timber plank at 30 degrees maximum incline, to allow mammals to escape. Any pipes over 100mm diameter must be capped when not in use.
- 7.24 Materials such as sand, gravel and cement must be retained in bulk bags or kept off the ground, to ensure mammals do not excavate into the materials.

8.0 Ecological Enhancements

8.1 The proposals will be expected to demonstrate an overall positive impact on the natural environment. The works are subject to BNG. The following enhancements shall increase roosting, nesting and foraging opportunities for a range of species.

- Integration of at least 1 bat box into each dwelling, preferably one cavity type and one crevice type;
- Integration of at least 2 bird boxes into each dwelling, including at least one swift box or swift brick and one general or sparrow box;
- Install a hedgehog box and log pile to the proposed BNG area;
- Install a bat box and a bird box to a suitable tree. Examples might include larger boxes for noctule bats, and a box for birds such as barn owl or nuthatch.

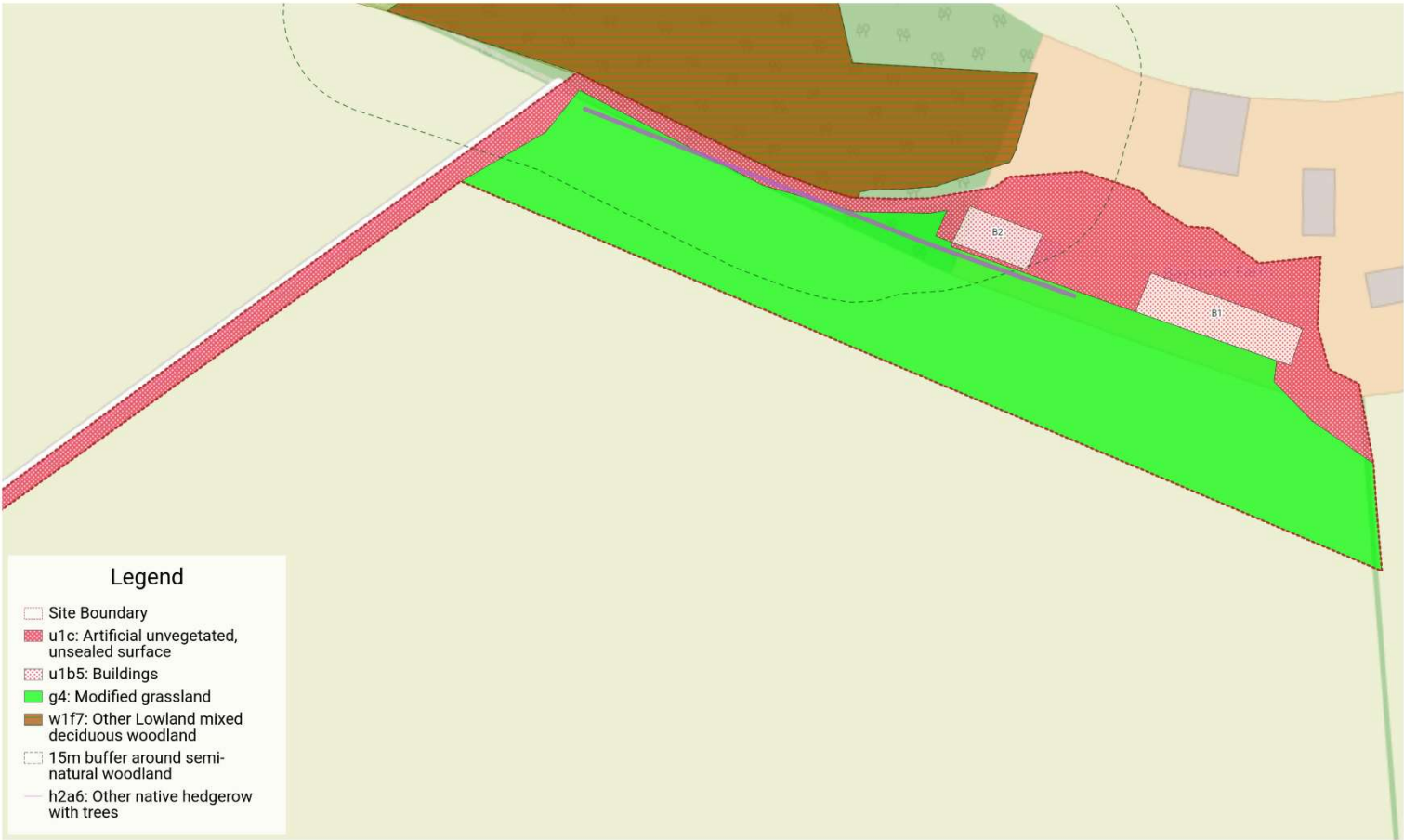
9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Overall, the proposals are considered to represent a negligible impact upon ecology and no further surveys are recommended.
- 9.2 The site consist of two agricultural farm buildings. These are surrounded by modified grassland, hedgerow with trees and an access track.
- 9.3 No significant effects are anticipated upon any designated sites or priority habitats, including The Mens SAC. Some very minor risk of impacts upon commuting and foraging bats, reptiles, birds and mammals exist, but can easily be avoided through basic protection measures.
- 9.4 A separate Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment details how a gain will be achieved, whilst in addition enhancements are detailed herein that are not captured as part of BNG.
- 9.5 With mitigation and enhancements taken into account, the proposals will not negatively affect designated sites, habitats or protected species and will ultimately result in a net gain. This is in accordance with national and local planning policy.

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11.0 Figure 2: Site Habitat Plan



12.0 Appendix A - Site Photos

Photo 1 – View of B2 and shipping containers looking towards site entrance.



Photo 2 – View of B1 viewed from the west.



Photo 3 – View of hedgerow on southern boundary and grass field offsite.



Photo 4 – View of the ancient woodland to the north west of the site.



Photo 5 – Example of a birds nest located in B2



Photo 6 – Internal view of the block extension to B2.

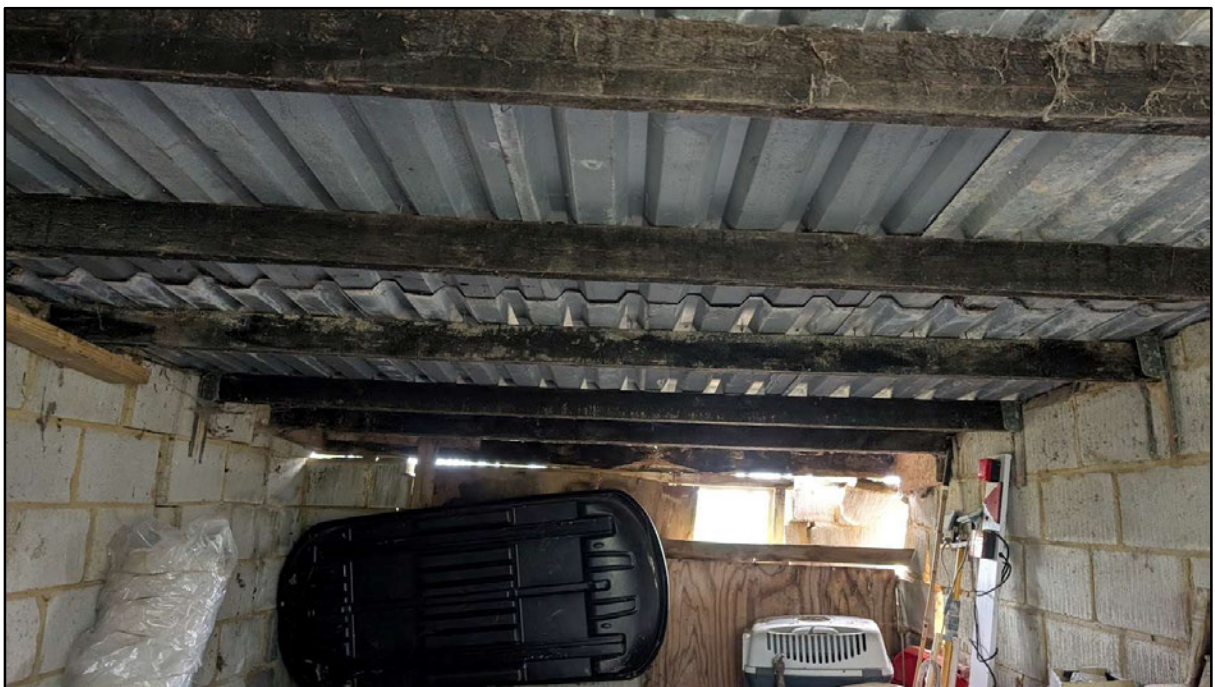


Photo 7 – Internal view of B1



Photo 8 – Internal view of B2



13.0 Appendix B - Site Aerial



14.0 Appendix C – Species List

Modified Grassland

Common Name	Scientific Name	DAFOR
Broad-leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	O
Creeping Bent	<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	A
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	R
Yorkshire Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	F
Broad-leaved Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>	F
Creeping Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	LA
Common Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	O
Common Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	R
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	O
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	D
Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	LF

Hedgerow with Trees

Common Name	Scientific Name	DAFOR
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	A
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	F
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	F
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	F

(Off-site) Lowland Deciduous Mixed Woodland (Major Woody Species)

Common Name	Scientific Name	DAFOR
Pedunculate Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	A
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	A
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	F
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	F
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	LD
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	F
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	F