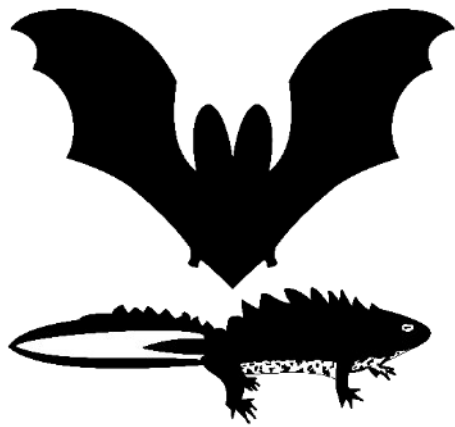




Land East of Henfield Road, Cowfold

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Survey Report

January & June 2026



AEWC Ltd

Animal Ecology & Wildlife Consultants

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land Off Henfield Road

**Henfield Road
Cowfold
West Sussex
RH13 8DT**

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**25-101
February 2026**

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Summary

- AEWCLtd were commissioned by Landacre Developments Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Land off Henfield Road, Cowfold, West Sussex, RH13 8DT at central grid reference TQ 21392 22023 to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- This report details the results of the survey, which was carried out on the 28th January 2026 by qualified ecologists Natalie Arscott and Paul Thrift, to record and map the habitats present, assess the site for the potential presence of any protected species or species of conservation concern, and identify habitats of conservation importance.
- Additional information regarding the present and historical ecological interest of the site and within a 2km radius was provided by Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre. This helps to inform the likelihood of protected species occurring within the site boundary.
- The site extends to approximately 2.6ha and largely comprises two paddocks and an access track of modified grassland, with a small pond in the southeast. Boundaries comprise native hedgerows with trees, a line of trees, individual trees, and areas of mixed and bramble scrub, with a belt of bramble scrub and native hedgerow with trees and associated ditch separating the two paddocks. Cowfold Stream runs adjacent to the southern boundary.
- The site is predominantly covered by intensively grazed modified grassland of limited biodiversity value. Higher ecological value is associated with boundary features, including scrub, native hedgerows, trees, and the adjacent watercourse. All native hedgerows are considered to be priority habitat.
- **Further surveys are recommended for bats, great crested newts, hazel dormice, and reptiles. Site-specific mitigation may be required depending on the outcome of these surveys.**
- **Should any tree be proposed for removal or significant pruning or reduction, a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) for bat roosting potential by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required.**
- **Full recommendations to avoid ecological impacts are detailed in Section 6 of this report.**

This report has been prepared by AEWCLtd, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the Contract with the client. We disclaim any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above. This report is confidential to the client, and we accept no responsibility whatsoever to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

The information and data which has been prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' and 'Code of Professional Conduct' issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 AEWCLtd were commissioned by Landacre Developments Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Land off Henfield Road, Cowfold to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- 1.2 This survey comprised a desktop study of biological records within the vicinity of the site, an ecological walkover survey to record and map the habitats present, and an assessment for protected wildlife and species of conservation importance, including habitats, and was carried out by qualified and bat licensed ecologist Natalie Arscott and assisted by qualified ecologist Paul Thrift on the 28th January 2026.
- 1.3 This report presents the results of the following:
 - Desktop Biodiversity Report
 - UKHab Habitat Survey
 - Protected Species Walkover Survey
- 1.4 In addition, the report outlines any recommendations and further surveys that may be necessary. This will ensure that any protected species are not detrimentally impacted by the proposed development works on site, that there is no loss of ecological viability, and that the favourable conservation statuses of the species in the local area are not affected.

2 Background

- 2.1 The proposed development site is located at Land off Henfield Road, Cowfold, West Sussex, RH13 8DT at central grid reference TQ 21392 22023. The site is situated in a semi-rural location on the southern edge of Cowfold village. The surrounding landscape predominantly comprises agricultural fields, pasture, and small blocks of woodland, with interconnecting hedge and tree lines. There are scattered residential properties throughout the landscape with more built-up residential development within the village of Cowfold to the north. See Figure 1.
- 2.2 The site is approximately 2.6ha and comprises two horse-grazed paddocks, each containing a small field shelter, with a small pond located in the eastern paddock. There are hedgerows with trees and areas of scrub at the boundaries, and a belt of scrub, hedgerow, and trees separates the two paddocks. The site access is located in the northwest corner and includes a short length of hardstanding and a grass track. Cowfold Stream runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. See Figure 2.



FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE SITE LOCATION



FIGURE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE SHOWING THE SITE BOUNDARY



Desk Study

- 10/02/2026

- 3.2 Aerial photos of the site (Google Earth, 2026) were examined to determine habitats surrounding the site and hence species likely to be present to make appropriate recommendations in the wider landscape context.
- 3.3 Records of protected and notable species and non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site were requested from the local biological records centre (Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre).
- 3.4 Records were screened for relevance and age with only those from the last 10 years and of species that could occur on site considered further.
- 3.5 A search for waterbodies within 500m of the site boundary was undertaken using MAGIC mapping to assess their connectivity to the site.

UKHab Habitat Survey

- 3.6 A daytime ecological walkover assessment was carried out on the 28th January 2026 to record and map the habitats present and evaluate the site for its potential to support protected species in addition to other species of conservation importance that could be relevant in respect of planning policies.
- 3.7 The survey involved a UK Habitat Classification System Survey which was carried out based on the standard methodology produced by UKHab Ltd (2023) and included searches for signs of protected species, as described in the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Assessment (CIEEM, 2017). This involves the following elements:
 - Habitat mapping using a set of standard colour codes to indicate habitat types on a UK Habitat Classification Map.
 - Description of features of ecological or nature conservation interest in notes relating to numbered locations on the UK Habitat Classification Map, called Target Notes (for habitat and features of possible interest).
- 3.8 Plant nomenclature in this report follows Stace (2019) for native and naturalised species of vascular plant. Nomenclature for mosses and liverworts follow the Checklist for British and Irish Bryophytes (2021). Plant names in the text are given with the English name first, followed by the Latin name. Latin names for all species are given just once and not repeated.

Protected Species Walkover

- 3.9 An assessment was made of habitat suitability in and around the site for those protected species that occur in the region. Obvious signs and incidental sightings of protected species are noted when encountered, but walkover surveys do not usually confirm species presence or absence.

3.10 Taking into consideration the geographical region and habitat type, species that could be encountered are:

- [REDACTED]
- bats;
- breeding birds;
- barn owls;
- great crested newts (GCN);
- hazel dormice;
- reptiles;
- otters;
- water voles; and
- other Species of Principal Importance (SPI) (e.g. hedgehog, stag beetle etc).

3.11 In addition, observations of any Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI), other mammals, invasive species, plant species of note, or other valuable ecological features will be recorded and detailed.

3.12 Details of the initial survey methods are given below.

3.13 **Habitats of Principal Importance** – Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) within or adjacent to the site (such as deciduous woodland, arable field margins, traditional orchards, ponds, rivers, wet woodlands, native hedgerows) are recorded.

[REDACTED]

3.15 **Bats** – The site and surrounding area were assessed for habitats with suitability for foraging and commuting bats, such as woodland, tree lines, hedgerows, scrub, waterbodies, watercourses, and semi-natural grassland. Any buildings were examined and assessed for evidence of bats, such as rub marks, staining or droppings or for features that have good potential to be used by bats, such as loft voids, raised tiles, hanging tiles, gaps in soffits and lead flashing cracks, crevices and mortise joints.

3.16 **Breeding Birds** – Habitats were assessed for their suitability for nesting birds. This would centre on birds that favour hedgerows, areas of longer grassland, scrub, trees as well as buildings.

3.17 **Barn Owls** – The buildings were subject to a full external and internal inspection for evidence of use by barn owl (*Tyto alba*), namely live/dead owls, pellets, droppings, feathers, nest debris, nestling fluff, and eggs or eggshells.

- 3.18 **Great Crested Newts (GCN)** - Initial surveys centre on identifying suitable habitat within the site. If breeding ponds are present within the locality, then great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) could potentially be using the terrestrial habitat on the site. Maps are used to identify any ponds (that are not isolated by unsuitable habitat or physical barriers) within 500m of the site. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) is used to quantifiably assess whether a pond is suitable, this is undertaken for any onsite ponds during the walkover survey.
- 3.19 **Hazel Dormice** – Hedgerows, scrub, and woodland are assessed for their suitability for foraging and nesting hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Favoured berry and nut bearing species such as hawthorn, hazel and bramble were looked for in particular. Additionally, the connectivity of this habitat and to suitable habitat beyond the site is also assessed. If hazel nuts are present a brief search for nuts that have been chewed by hazel dormouse (i.e. displaying the characteristic smooth round hole) was conducted.
- 3.20 **Reptiles** – The site was assessed for suitable habitat for reptiles, such as long grassland and areas of scrub, with particular attention paid to those features that provide suitable basking areas (e.g. south-facing slopes and walls), hibernation sites (e.g. banks, log piles and piles of rotting vegetation) and opportunities for foraging (e.g. rough grassland and scrub).
- 3.21 **Otters** – Initial surveys aim to assess the site for watercourses suitable for otters (*Lutra lutra*). If suitable watercourses are present on or adjacent to the site, evidence of otters is searched for. Signs of otters includes spraints, feeding remains and sightings are recorded if encountered during the survey.
- 3.22 **Water Voles** – Initial survey aims to assess the site for watercourses that may be suitable for water voles (*Arvicola amphibious*). If suitable watercourses are present on site, evidence of water voles is searched for. Signs of water voles includes faeces, latrines, feeding stations, burrows, footprints, runs or pathways and sightings which are recorded if encountered during the survey.
- 3.23 **Other Species of Principal Importance (SPI)** – The habitats present on site were assessed for the likelihood of presence for species of regional and national importance, for example hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*), common toad (*Bufo bufo*), and various notable beetles, moths and pollinators.
- 3.24 **Other Mammals** – Any signs of occupancy by other mammals (e.g. rabbit warrens) are recorded.
- 3.25 **Invasive Species** – Any invasive plant or animal species identified during the site walkover are recorded.

- 3.26 **Plant Species of Note** – Any plant species of conservation concern found on the site are recorded.
- 3.27 **Other Valuable Ecological Features** – Other ecological features such as veteran trees, bird feeding stations, habitat enhancements etc. within or adjacent to the site are recorded.

4 Constraints/Limitations

- 4.1 An initial site assessment such as this is only able to act as a snapshot to record any flora or fauna that is present at the time of the survey. It is therefore possible that some species may not have been present during the survey but may be evident at other times of the year. For this reason, habitats are assessed for their potential to support some species, even where no direct evidence (such as droppings) has been found.
- 4.2 Some protected species records are confidential and therefore not included within the data search results provided by the records centre. Absence of records does not automatically correspond to absence of species within the impact zone of the development.
- 4.3 The survey was undertaken outside of the growing season and therefore some plant species may not have been visible above ground or readily identifiable.

5 Results and Evaluation

Desk Study

Sites and Habitats

Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.1 The only statutory designated site located within 2km of the proposed development site is the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The site is located 1.85km to the southwest of the AONB boundary.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.2 There are no non-statutory designated sites located within 2km of the proposed development site.

Habitats of Principal Importance

- 5.3 Habitats data available via MAGIC was reviewed for the presence of HPI. There are no HPI mapped within or immediately adjacent to the site. See Figure 4.

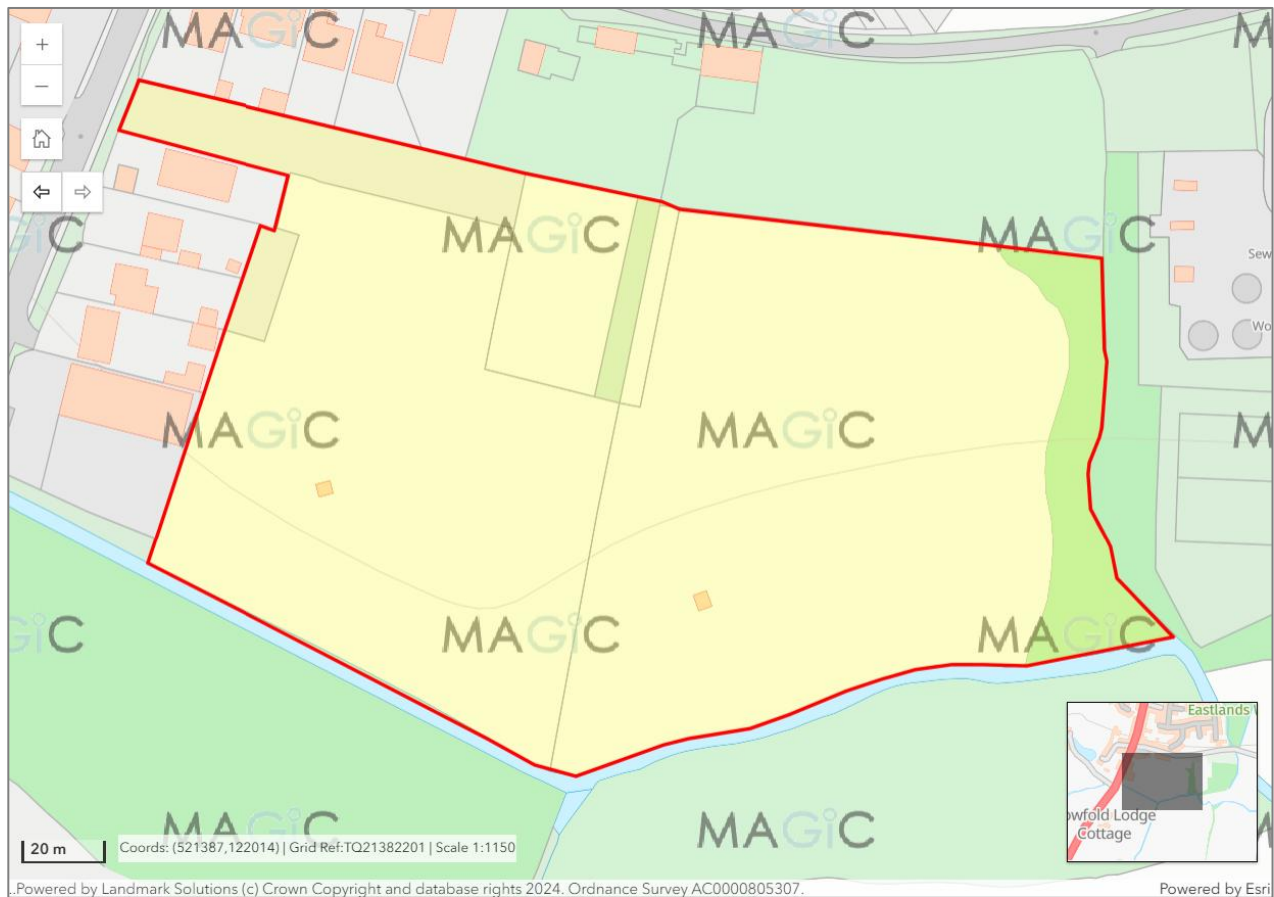


FIGURE 4: SHOWING HABITATS OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE ON AND ADJACENT TO THE SITE

Waterbodies within 500m of the Site Boundary

5.4 The Ordnance Survey map available via MAGIC was reviewed for ponds within the accepted GCN dispersal distance of 500m that are not separated from the site by significant barriers to dispersal such as main roads. Thirteen ponds were found occurring in all directions. These are shown in Figure 5 and listed below:

- Pond 1: Onsite
- Pond 2: 125m to the west
- Pond 3: 125m to the northwest
- Pond 4: 245m to the north
- Pond 5: 235m to the northeast
- Pond 6: 260m to the south
- Pond 7: 320m to the northwest
- Pond 8: 310m to the east
- Pond 9: 340m to the east
- Pond 10: 405m to the northeast
- Pond 11: 450m to the north
- Pond 12: 385m to the southwest
- Pond 13: 490m to the south

Great Crested Newts

- 5.9 There are records of GCN within 2km of the site. The nearest record was recorded 960m to the southeast in 2024.

Hazel Dormice

- 5.10 There are records of hazel dormice within 2km of the site. The nearest record was recorded 900m to the northeast in 2023.

Reptiles

- 5.11 There are records of slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) within 2km of the site. The most recent records were recorded in 2024, located 280m to the northwest.

Otters

- 5.12 Records of otter are kept confidentially by this Local Records Centre.

Water Voles

- 5.13 No records of water vole were found within 2km of the site.

Other Species of Principal Importance (SPI)

- 5.14 There are records of common toad (*Bufo bufo*), stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), and west European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) within 2km of the site.

Other Mammals

- 5.15 There are records of European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) within 2km of the site.

Field Survey

Habitats

- 5.16 A UKHab habitat map and list of target notes are included in Figure 6 and Table 1 respectively. The habitats present on the site are described below.

Bramble Scrub

- 5.17 Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) scrub is present as a wide linear belt between two fence lines separating the two paddocks, shrouding the hedgerow, with an approximate 5m gap providing access for the connecting grass track between paddocks. Much of the northern section of this belt has been recently cut down to facilitate ditch works, although it has not been cleared at ground level to facilitate regrowth. A further belt of bramble scrub is present at the southern end of the western boundary, where it borders the tree line and extends outwards into the paddock. A small patch of bramble scrub is also present within the western paddock on the southern boundary.



Photograph 1 – Northern central section bramble scrub that has been recently cut down.



Photograph 2 – Southern central section bramble scrub.



Photograph 3 – Southern central section bramble scrub.



Photograph 4 – Western border bramble scrub.



Photograph 5 – Western border bramble scrub.



Photograph 6 – Southwestern patch of bramble scrub.

Developed Land, Sealed Surface

- 5.18 Developed land on site comprises a tarmac access driveway located in the northwest corner, providing hardstanding access to the field gate, and two timber field shelters which are present in the paddocks and described in further detail in the ‘Bat’ section below.



Photograph 7 – Tarmac access drive.



Photograph 8 – Tarmac access drive.

Mixed Scrub

- 5.19 Mixed scrub is present primarily along the eastern site boundary, where it forms a wide belt with informal paths running through it due to the movements of grazing ponies. This area supports elder (*Sambucus nigra*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), bramble, field maple (*Acer campestre*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), silver birch (*Betula sp.*) and alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), with ground flora sparse and limited to occasional dock (*Rumex sp.*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), likely due to regular grazing.
- 5.20 A small patch of mixed scrub is also present along the southern boundary near the eastern corner, comprising elder, willow (*Salix sp.*), bramble and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Within the western paddock along the southern boundary, a patch of mixed scrub extends a short distance into the site, forming a sparse and widely spaced mix of bramble and willow.

	
Photograph 9 – Eastern boundary mixed scrub.	Photograph 10 – Informal paths within the eastern boundary mixed scrub.
	
Photograph 11 – Southeastern patch of mixed scrub.	Photograph 12 – Southwestern patch of mixed scrub.

Modified Grassland

- 5.21 Modified grassland covers the majority of the habitat area across the site and is present within both paddocks, as well as within the access track near the northwest corner and a small, fenced garden area on the western boundary. The eastern and western paddocks support grassland of near identical composition and structure, although the western paddock was noted to be slightly more waterlogged.
- 5.22 Both paddocks comprise poor quality modified grassland due to intensive horse grazing, resulting in a very short sward, very low species-richness, sparse vegetation cover, and areas of significant ground disturbance. Species recorded here include creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), common daisy (*Bellis perennis*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dock, clover (*Trifolium* sp.), greater burdock (*Arctium lappa*), and common nettle, with occasional very small hawthorn shrubs present.
- 5.23 Grassland within the access strip is ungrazed and of better quality, supporting >6 species per m², and is slightly more tussocky although still relatively short. Species recorded here include oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), rye grass (*Lolium* sp.),

bramble, silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), ribwort plantain, dock, ground ivy, common vetch (*Vicia sativa*), common daisy, common nettle, creeping buttercup, and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*).

- 5.24 A small, fenced garden area is present on the western boundary and comprises short sward, sparse, species-poor modified grassland, with a similar composition to the paddocks. This area also contains planters, log piles, timber, and pallets.



Photograph 13 – Southeast corner view of grazed paddocks.



Photograph 14 – Northwest corner view of grazed paddocks.



Photograph 15 – Ungrazed grassland along access track.



Photograph 16 – Small garden area with sparse grass cover.

Pond

- 5.25 A small pond is present in the southeast of the site, measuring approximately 40 m² in area. At the time of survey, it held a reasonable level of water following a prolonged period of heavy rainfall, however it is likely to become shallow during drier periods. Aquatic vegetation cover was low (approximately 1–5% macrophyte cover), with no marginal vegetation and water quality was assessed as poor. Overall, the pond is considered to offer limited habitat value.



Photograph 17 – Pond in southeast of the site.

Non-Native and Ornamental Hedgerow

- 5.26 A short section of non-native ornamental hedgerow is present in the northwest corner along the fence line between the site gate and the road, running adjacent to the tarmac driveway. This comprises Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*), cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), and cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.).



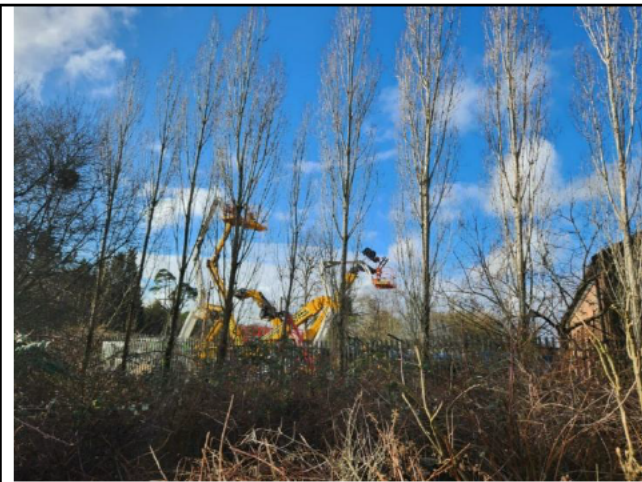
Photograph 18 – Laurel in driveway hedge.



Photograph 19 – Cotoneaster in driveway hedge.

Line of Trees

- 5.27 A line of slender birch (*Betula* sp.) trees is present along the southern half of the western boundary. The trees are medium-sized, tall and narrow in form, with scrub vegetation present beneath the canopy.



Photograph 20 – Line of trees on the western boundary.



Photograph 21 – Line of trees on the western boundary.

Native Hedgerow

- 5.28 A short length of native birch hedgerow is present along the northern boundary of the access track. The hedge is over 1.5m in height but appears recently and heavily managed, with extensive brush piles present along its base following clearance works. The structure is relatively open with breaks in continuity and limited understorey development. Cherry laurel runs adjacent to the hedgerow to the north within the neighbouring property.



Photograph 22 – Native hedgerow bordering the access track.



Photograph 23 – Native hedgerow bordering the access track.

Native Hedgerow with Trees

- 5.29 A native hedgerow with trees is present along the southern boundary of the site across both paddocks. This hedge appears largely unmanaged, resulting in a tall, scrubby structure, with the shrub layer relatively poor and gappy in places. Within the eastern paddock, hedge shrubs recorded include hazel (*Corylus avellana*), blackthorn, bramble, alder, hawthorn, elder and willow, with associated trees comprising ash, birch, field maple, oak (*Quercus* sp.), and willow. Along the southern boundary of the western paddock, this section is dominated by willow, holly, hazel

and birch, with oak (*Quercus* sp.) present as small trees. This southern boundary hedgerow is considered to qualify as native hedgerow priority habitat. The eastern section comprises more than seven native woody species and therefore may be classified as an important hedgerow under the UK Hedgerow Regulations (1997).



Photograph 24 – Native hedgerow with trees along southern boundary of the western paddock.



Photograph 25 – Native hedgerow with trees along southern boundary of eastern paddock.

Native Hedgerow with Trees – Associated with Ditch

5.30 A native hedgerow with trees is present between the two fields, associated with a shallow ditch which was only holding water at the northern end at the time of survey. Several oak trees are present along this hedgerow, including two large oaks within the northern section. The hedgerow comprises European privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), alder, holly, blackthorn, and hawthorn. There are few hedgerow shrubs in the northern section, partly due to recent clearance, whilst the southern section is densely vegetated. This hedgerow qualifies as native hedgerow priority habitat but does not definitively meet the criteria of an important hedgerow.



Photograph 26 – Associated ditch at the northern end of the central hedgerow.



Photograph 27 – Associated ditch along southern section of the central hedgerow.



Photograph 28 – Southern end of the central hedgerow.



Photograph 29 – Southern end of the central hedgerow.

Other Rivers and Streams

- 5.31 Cowfold Stream runs adjacent to the southern site boundary, entering the red line boundary for less than 10m of its length. Along the eastern half, the southern (off-site) bank is steep and tall, while the northern (site-side) bank is shallower and lower. Both banks are fairly shallow along the western half. The southern (off-site) bank is well vegetated with bramble scrub and sedges (*Carex* sp.), whereas the northern (site-side) bank is poorly vegetated due to intensive grazing up to the water's edge. A notable amount of fallen timber was present within the channel along the eastern half, with moderate flow and a high-water level recorded at the time of survey.
- 5.32 At the western end, the watercourse appears to have been dredged, with very limited marginal vegetation. Some aquatic vegetation was present within the channel, including rushes (*Juncus* sp.) and dock. This section is straighter and more sun-exposed, with stiller water and no fallen timber present.



Photograph 30 – Eastern section of the stream.



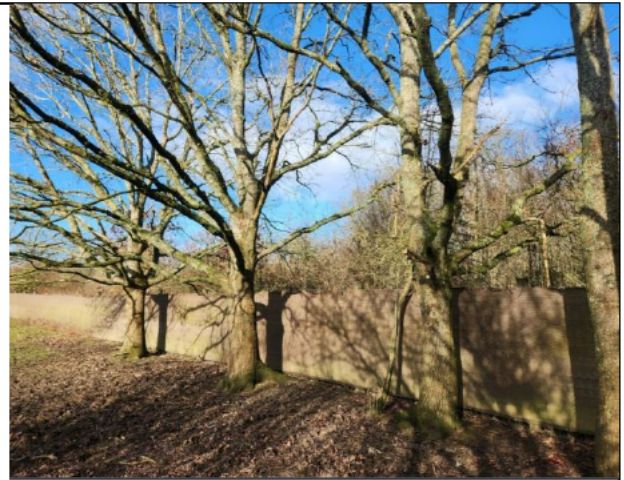
Photograph 31 – Western section of the stream.

Individual Trees

- 5.33 A small number of individual oak trees are present across the site. Two medium-sized oaks are located along the northern boundary of the access track. Within the northeast corner, three medium-sized and one small oak are present adjacent to the boundary fenceline.
- 5.34 One very large oak tree is located in the southeast corner of the western paddock. This tree is broad, with a spreading crown and substantial primary limbs, indicating long-term establishment within the pasture. The tree has the potential to qualify as a veteran specimen; however, no definitive veteran features were observed at the time of survey.



Photograph 32 – Oak trees on the access track.



Photograph 33 – Oak trees in the northeast corner.



Photograph 34 – Very large oak viewed from the east.



Photograph 35 – Very large oak viewed from the west.

Table 1 - Target Notes Shown on Figure 6 - Habitat Map

Target Note	Description	Photograph
1	Brash piles in the access track, which could provide refuge for wildlife.	
2	Small fenced garden with refugia and hibernation potential.	

3	Three disused rabbit holes on the eastern boundary and rabbit holes along the northern fenceline. Further rabbit holes could be seen off-site to the north, and rabbit droppings were present.	
4	Cherry laurel on the northern boundary; Portuguese laurel and cotoneaster in the driveway (see Photograph 18–19).	



FIGURE 6: UKHAB HABITAT MAP

Habitat Evaluation

5.35 The site is dominated by common and widespread habitats, primarily comprising poor quality modified grassland, which offers limited biodiversity value. Higher ecological value is associated with boundary features, including areas of scrub, native hedgerows, individual trees, and the adjacent watercourse. All native hedgerows are considered to be HPI.

Protected Species and Species of Conservation Concern

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Bats

Buildings – Field Shelters

5.31 Two timber field shelters are present, one within each paddock. Both are of simple, single skin timber construction with corrugated bitumen gable roofs. The eastern field shelter is in good condition, while the western shelter has a slightly more dilapidated roof. Both shelters were assessed as having negligible potential for bats due to a complete absence of any potential roosting features, such as suitable crevices, internally or externally.

	
Photograph 36: Field shelter east.	Photograph 37: Field shelter west.

Trees

5.32 At the time of the survey, it was unknown which trees, if any, would be impacted by the proposed development and therefore the trees were not individually assessed for roosting potential. However, suitable roosting features for bats were observed on the large oaks onsite.

Foraging and Commuting

- 5.33 The hedgerows with trees along the site boundaries and centrally through the site provide sheltered, linear habitat features that may be used by commuting bats, and the individual trees, scrub, watercourse, and pond on-site would provide foraging opportunities. The central field areas are of very low suitability for foraging and commuting bats due to the low level of vegetation cover and lack of plant diversity or structural variation.

Breeding Birds

- 5.34 There is suitable habitat for breeding birds on site, including within the boundary hedgerows, areas of bramble and mixed scrub, individual trees (including large mature oak trees), and the two timber field shelters within the paddocks. Four external bird boxes are attached to the western field shelter, with additional bird boxes present on several mature oak trees on the site.
- 5.35 These features provide suitable nesting opportunities for a range of common and widespread bird species, and breeding birds are therefore considered likely to be present during the breeding season.
- 5.36 Old bird's nests, including swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) nesting cups, were recorded within both field shelters, with additional old nests observed within trees across the site.
- 5.37 The fields are not considered suitable for ground-nesting birds due to their small size and sparse vegetation cover with frequent disturbance due to ponies grazing.



Photograph 38: Large oak with bird boxes.



Photograph 39: Very large oak with bird boxes.



Barn Owls

- 5.38 Both field shelters provide suitable fly-in access for barn owls; however, they lack suitable beams for perching or roosting and there are no suitable platforms or ledges for nesting. No evidence of barn owl activity was recorded during the survey.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

- 5.39 The site is considered to have some potential to support terrestrial GCN. The majority of the site comprises poor quality, heavily grazed modified grassland with sparse vegetation cover, offering limited sheltering and foraging opportunities. Higher suitability is provided by boundary features, including hedgerows, scrub and refugia within the small garden area and northwest access track. Ponds with connectivity to the site are present within 500m, including ponds located within 250m, and there are records of GCN within 1km of the site, therefore this species is considered likely to be present within the wider area.
- 5.40 One pond was recorded within the site boundary, located in the southeast of the site. The pond on site is likely of low suitability for breeding GCN given an HSI score of 0.55 which equates to 'below average' suitability. See Table 2.

Table 2 – HSI calculation

Pond ref	1
SI ¹ - Location	1
SI ² - Pond area	0.05
SI ³ - Pond drying	0.9
SI ⁴ - Water quality	0.67
SI ⁵ - Shade	1
SI ⁶ - Fowl	1
SI ⁷ - Fish	1

SI⁸ - Ponds	0.6
SI⁹ - Terrestrial habitat	0.33
SI¹⁰ - Macrophytes	0.4
HSI Score	0.55
HSI Category	Below average

Hazel Dormice

- 5.41 The hedgerows and dense scrub on site are considered to have suitability to support hazel dormouse, as they provide a range of native woody species offering foraging opportunities and form well-connected linear features linking to suitable habitat in the wider landscape. These features may therefore be used by dormice for commuting, foraging, and potentially nesting. However, suitability is reduced in places due to grazing pressure, which has resulted in sparse low-level vegetation in parts of the scrub.
- 5.42 No hazel nuts were available to check for those that may have been chewed by hazel dormouse.

Reptiles

- 5.43 The site is considered to have some suitability to support common reptile species, including slow worm, common lizard and grass snake. The majority of the site comprises heavily grazed modified grassland, which offers limited sheltering and foraging opportunities. However, boundary features such as areas of scrub, hedgerows, and refugia within brash piles and the small fenced garden area provide localised suitable habitat for reptiles to shelter, forage, and commute.

Otters

- 5.44 No evidence of otter activity (such as spraints, footprints or feeding remains) was recorded during the walkover survey. The adjacent watercourse has limited suitability for otters and is located some distance from major river systems, with otters considered rare in the local area. The site-side bank offers low suitability for holts or lay-up sites due to sparse ground-level vegetation resulting from grazing pressure. While the watercourse may provide some limited potential for commuting, overall habitat suitability for otters within and immediately adjacent to the site is considered low.

Water Voles

- 5.45 The adjacent watercourse has limited suitability for water voles, with some diggable banks present; however, habitat quality is reduced by a lack of grass-dominated marginal vegetation for foraging. The site-side bank is largely bare due to grazing pressure, while the opposite bank is dominated by bramble scrub. No evidence of

water voles was identified. Water voles are considered rare in the local area, and overall suitability of the watercourse is considered low.

Other Species of Principal Importance

- 5.46 There is potential for the site to support SPI such as hedgehog and common toad. Boundary scrub, hedgerows, and refugia features provide foraging and sheltering opportunities for these species. The pond could also be used by toads for egg-laying.

Other Ecological Features of Note

Other Mammals

- 5.47 Rabbit burrows were recorded within scrub along the eastern boundary and adjacent to the northern boundary, with evidence of localised digging observed on site.

Plant Species of Note

- 5.36 No plant species of note were identified.

Invasive Species

- 5.48 Cotoneaster was recorded in the northwest corner of the site and is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Cherry laurel and Portuguese laurel were also recorded in this area; these non-native species are not listed on Schedule 9 but do have invasive tendencies.

Other Valuable Ecological Features

- 5.49 A large mature oak tree of potential veteran value was recorded on site. Multiple bird boxes were present on the field shelters and several mature trees.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1 In line with Natural England's Standing Advice, where further survey for protected species is recommended these should be conducted prior to submitting a planning application and appropriate mitigation measures be incorporated into the development design.

Designated Sites

- 6.2 No direct impacts are likely on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites due to none being located in close proximity, and therefore no further action is required.

Habitats of Principal Importance

- 6.3 **The native hedgerows within the survey area are considered HPI and therefore should be retained and protected from damage where possible. Any unavoidable losses will require appropriate compensation.**

Bats

- 6.5 Both timber field shelters onsite were considered to have negligible potential to support roosting bats and, as such, there are no known constraints regarding these species and the proposed demolition of these buildings.
- 6.6 There are trees on the site that may have suitability for roosting bats, however at the time of the survey it was unknown which, if any, would be impacted by the proposed development and therefore the trees were not individually assessed for roosting potential. **Should any tree be proposed for removal or significant pruning or reduction, a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required in the first instance to determine whether potential roosting features are present and whether further surveys are required.**
- 6.7 The native hedgerows with trees and areas of scrub provide good quality commuting and foraging habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape. The current proposals include intersecting the central hedgerow and belt of scrub with an access road and removing a portion of the scrub at the eastern boundary. As such, **it is recommended that a bat activity survey is conducted, to determine how these habitats are used by bats and inform mitigation and compensation, where required. The results of the survey will also be used to inform guidance regarding lighting. The survey should involve the deployment of two static detectors on-site for five nights of suitable weather per month, spanning April to October inclusive.**

Breeding Birds

- 6.8 **Scrub, hedgerow, or tree removal should be undertaken outside the breeding bird period from March to August. Should any vegetation clearance be scheduled to take place between the beginning of March and the end of August, this must be immediately preceded by a survey to check for nesting birds.** No vegetation can be cleared whilst a nest is occupied, regardless of species.
- 6.9 **Should works to either field shelter commence during the breeding bird period, they must be carefully inspected immediately prior to the commencement of works for active nests.** If nesting birds are found, works cannot commence until the chicks have fledged.

Barn Owls

- 6.10 While field shelters permit access into the interior for owls, they entirely lack any features suitable for perching, roosting or nesting barn owls and are considered to have negligible potential to support this species. Therefore, no further action is required.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

- 6.11 The site contains some suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN, and waterbodies have been identified within 500m which could be used for breeding, as well as a pond on-site. A Rapid Risk Assessment has been carried out based on the area of suitable habitat to be impacted and the location of the nearest waterbodies to the site. This shows that in the absence of mitigation, an offence is highly likely. See Figure 7.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	Damaged or destroyed	1
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	>1 ha lost or damaged	0.9
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	1 - 5 ha lost or damaged	0.4
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	1 - 5 ha lost or damaged	0.04
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
		Maximum: 1
Rapid risk assessment result:		RED: OFFENCE HIGHLY LIKELY

FIGURE 7: RAPID RISK ASSESSMENT OF THE SITE

- 6.12 The Rapid Risk assessment shows that an offence is likely if GCN are present within 250m of the site, **therefore further survey for GCN is required. This will comprise an initial HSI of all ponds within 250m of the site boundary. Any suitable ponds should then either be subject to a single eDNA survey between mid-April and end of June, or four presence / absence surveys survey between mid-March and mid-June. If presence of GCN is confirmed, further population surveys (to give a total of six surveys per pond) and a licence from Natural England may be required for works to proceed. If district licensing is preferred, this is offered by NatureSpace in this location and can be obtained without having undertaken surveys.**

Hazel Dormice

- 6.13 Boundary hedgerows and scrub provide suitable habitat and connectivity for hazel dormouse, and sections of hedgerow and scrub will require removal, therefore further survey is required. **A nest tube or footprint tunnel survey will be required. These surveys involve deploying tubes in suitable habitat to be regularly checked for dormouse nests or footprints between April and November. If presence of hazel dormouse is confirmed, a licence from Natural England may be required for works to proceed.**

Reptiles

- 6.14 While the grassland is of limited suitability, boundary habitats and refugia features provide localised potential for reptiles. **A presence/likely absence reptile survey is therefore recommended to inform mitigation requirements. This will involve placing several refugia mats (usually roofing felt or corrugated tin) in suitable locations on the site and checking them for basking reptiles on at least seven occasions in suitable weather conditions. These surveys can be conducted between March and September / October and will ascertain reptile presence and population size and thus inform the level of mitigation required.**

Otters

- 6.15 The site is considered unlikely to be used by otter and therefore no further surveys for this species are required. **However, a pre-commencement site walkover by a suitably qualified ecologist is recommended to inspect the watercourse and adjacent terrestrial land for evidence of this species.**

Water Voles

- 6.16 The site is considered unlikely to be used by water vole and therefore no further surveys for this species are required. **However, a pre-commencement site walkover by a suitably qualified ecologist is recommended to inspect the watercourse and adjacent terrestrial land for evidence of this species.**

Other Species of Principal Importance

- 6.17 **The west European hedgehog is an SPI, therefore it is recommended that any dense vegetation, such as scrub and hedgerow, should be cleared sensitively by destructive search with a qualified ecologist present on site. If close board fencing is to be fitted it should be raised above ground level to allow hedgehogs to pass underneath or have hedgehog gaps installed, and some habitat areas should be left un-landscaped to provide shelter and foraging opportunities. Good building practice recommended for [REDACTED] above will ensure that any hedgehogs traversing through the site are not trapped during the works. Additional habitat for hedgehogs could be provided through relaxation of mowing and seeding with an appropriate wildflower meadow mix in some areas of the site.**
- 6.18 Common toads will be protected from harm through measures recommended for reptiles and / or GCN following completion of further surveys.

Other Mammals

- 6.19 **Site clearance work should be undertaken carefully (by hand if necessary) to avoid crushing small mammals, such as rabbits, within their burrows. Any temporary or permanent fencing should avoid the use of loose mesh or netting that may entangle mammals.**

Plant Species of Note

6.20 No plant species of note were recorded and therefore no further action is required.

Invasive Species

6.21 **Care must be taken to prevent the further spread of Portuguese laurel, cherry laurel, and cotoneaster. Ideally efforts should be made to remove these from the site.**

Other Valuable Ecological Features

6.22 Any veteran trees should be retained intact and protected in line with British Standard BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations.

6.23 The local authority should be contacted to check if any trees within the survey area have Tree Preservation Orders.

Impact Assessment

6.24 Impacts to bats, great crested newts, hazel dormice, and reptiles cannot be determined until further surveys have been undertaken. Site-specific mitigation may be required.

6.25 Overall, it is considered that there are no likely significant impacts to the other fauna or flora populations within the local area from the proposed works provided the recommendations above are adhered to.

Appendix 1 – Survey Timetable

Species	Survey	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Badger	Bait marking & sett search												
Bats	Roost assessments												
	Ground level tree assessments												
	Emergence & activity												
	Hibernation												
	Trapping												
Birds	Wintering												
	Breeding												
Great crested newt	HSI												
	eDNA												
	Presence/absence & population												
	Refugia												
Hazel dormouse	Tube												
	Nut search												
Otter	Field signs												
Reptiles	Refugia & search												
Water vole	Field signs												
Invertebrates	Presence & communities												
Vegetation	Phase 1 habitat & NVC												
	Optimal												
	Sub-optimal												
	Outside survey season												

Appendix 2 – Legal Protection

General

This section briefly describes the legal protection afforded to protected species and habitats. It is for information only and is not intended to be comprehensive or to replace specialised legal advice. It is not intended to replace the text of the legislation but summarises the salient points.

Badger

Badgers are protected under the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992*. Under this legislation it is an offence to kill or injure a badger, to damage, destroy or block access to a badger sett, or to disturb a badger in its sett. The Act also states the conditions for the protection of badger's licence requirements.

Barn Owl

Barn owls are listed on *Schedule 1* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* which makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- take, damage or destroy the nest while that nest is in use or being built;
- take or destroy the egg;
- disturb them while they are in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young, or to disturb their dependent young;
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

The penalty for an offence involving a barn owl, its nest, or egg, includes a fine of up to £5,000, or up to six months imprisonment, or both, per bird, nest or egg.

Bats

All species of bats are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also protected under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- possess;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

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

Furthermore, seven bat species (barbastelle, bechstein's, noctule, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, lesser horseshoe and greater horseshoe) are also Species of Principal Importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Breeding Birds

All species of wild bird are protected under Section 1 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000*. Under the above legislation, it is an offence to intentionally:

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

Certain species are listed on *Schedule 1* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and receive protection under *Sections 1(4) and 1(5)*. There are special penalties where the offences listed above are committed for any *Schedule 1* species and it is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb any such bird when it is building its nest or while it is in or near a nest containing dependant young; or
- disturb the dependant young of any such bird.

Amphibians

Natterjack toad, northern pool frog and great crested newt are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also protected under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- possess;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

Palmate newts and smooth newts are also afforded protection against sale only under *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*.

Natterjack toad, common toad, great crested newt and northern pool frog are also Species of Principal Importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Hazel dormouse

Hazel dormouse is listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also protected under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- possess;

- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

Hazel dormouse is also a Species of Principal Importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Otter

Otter is listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also protected under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- possess;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

Otter is also a Species of Principal Importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Reptiles

Common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and adder (*Vipera berus*) are listed under *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, in respect of *Section 9(5)* and part of *Section 9(1)*. This protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000*. Under the legislation, it is an offence to:

- intentionally or deliberately kill or injure any individual of these species; or
- sell or attempt to sell any part of these species either alive or dead.

Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also protected under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- possess;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

All UK reptile species are Species of Principal Importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Water vole

Water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*) is listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, which affords them protection under *Section 9*, as amended. This makes it an offence to:

- capture, kill or injure;
- damage, destroy or block access to a place of shelter;
- disturb whilst in a place of shelter or possessing, and
- sell any part of a water vole, dead or alive.

Other Mammals

All mammals receive some protection under the *Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996*, which makes it an offence to crush or asphyxiate an animal (e.g. within its burrow).

Species and Habitats of Principal Importance

Section 41 of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) (2006)* requires 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 has 56 Habitats of Principal Importance and 943 species of principal importance listed and has been drawn up in consultation with Natural 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.

Invasive species

It is an offence to plant, or otherwise cause to grow in the wild non-native plant species listed under *Schedule 9* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, for which *Section 14* of the Act applies. These include, but are not limited to:

- Himalayan balsam
- Cotoneaster sp.
- Japanese knotweed
- Giant hogweed.

Ancient woodland

The *National Planning Policy Framework (2012)* states that ‘*Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss*’. In addition, Natural England’s standing advice for ancient woodland states that *an appropriate buffer zone of semi-natural habitat [be in place] between the development and the ancient woodland (depending on the scale and impact of development), a minimum buffer should be at least 15 metres to avoid root damage and at least 50m for pollution or trampling*’. Ancient woodlands, and ancient and veteran trees, may also be protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's)

SSSI's are areas notified under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended*, as being of special interest for nature conservation. They are the finest sites for wildlife and natural features supporting many characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and natural features. LPAs have a duty to consult Natural England before granting planning permission on any development that is in or likely to affect a SSSI.

National Site Network: Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) & RAMSAR sites

Development proposals which will adversely affect these sites are not permitted (except where there are no alternative solutions and the proposal is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest). If a development could possibly impact on a SPA or SAC, the applicant will need to submit an assessment of potential impacts and their significance with their planning application for the local authority to make an 'Appropriate Assessment'.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)

These are a statutory designation made by local authorities. LNRs may be given protection against damaging operations and development on and around them via the local plan.

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

This is a non-statutory designation for sites identified at a county level. They typically form a network of sites that are recognised of being of conservation importance locally and are often included in Local Authority development plans.

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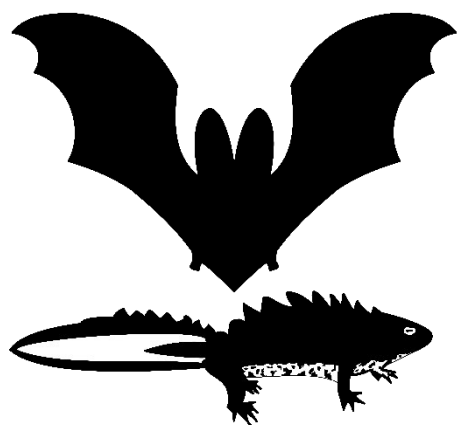
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AEWC Ltd

Animal Ecology & Wildlife Consultants

Reptile Survey Report

Land East of Henfield Road (A281)

**Henfield Road
Cowfold
West Sussex
RH13 8DT**

Natalie Arscott & Paul Thrift

**25-101
June 2026**

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Author	Paul Thrift
Authorised by	Natalie Arscott
Report and version number	25-101-RS-V1
Survey Dates	07/04/2026 - 31/05/2026

Summary

- AEWCLtd were commissioned by Landacre Developments Ltd to undertake a presence / likely absence survey for reptiles at Land East of Henfield Road (A281), Cowfold, West Sussex, RH13 8DT at central grid reference TQ 21392 22023 to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- This report details the results of the survey, which was carried out between the 7th of April and the 31st of May 2026 by qualified ecologists Natalie Arscott and Paul Thrift.
- Suitable habitat for reptiles was identified within the site boundary during a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Further surveys were therefore required in order to ascertain whether reptiles are present at the site and represent a constraint to the proposed development.
- Reptile surveys were carried out on all areas considered potentially suitable for reptiles. Artificial refugia (sheets of roofing felt, corrugated tin and corrugated bitumen) were placed in these areas and checked seven times in April and May 2026 during suitable weather conditions.
- **A low population of grass snake was identified within the site.** A single adult male grass snake was identified in the same location, in the northwest corner of the site, on two occasions. No other reptile species were recorded during the survey period. The grass snake identified is considered likely to be part of a wider local population.
- **Given the low population recorded and the proposed retention of boundary habitats, it is considered that in-situ mitigation, where reptiles are retained on-site, will be appropriate for the proposed development. Mitigation and enhancement measures must be implemented, which can be set out in a detailed Reptile Mitigation Strategy and Method Statement.**

This report has been prepared by AEWCLimited, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the Contract with the client. We disclaim any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above. This report is confidential to the client and we accept no responsibility of whatsoever nature to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

The information and data which has been prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Professional Guidance and 'Code of Professional Conduct' issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 AEWCLtd were commissioned by Landacre Developments Ltd to undertake a presence / likely absence survey for reptiles at Land East of Henfield Road (A281), Cowfold to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- 1.2 The proposed development comprises 40 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure. The proposals will result in the loss of much of the modified grassland across the site, together with limited areas of scrub and a section of hedgerow required to facilitate the development layout.
- 1.3 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal carried out at the site in January 2026 identified some suitable habitat on-site for reptiles, including areas of scrub, hedgerow, and ungrazed grassland associated with the access track, that will be impacted by the proposed works.
- 1.4 Further surveys were therefore required to ascertain whether reptiles are present at the site and represent a constraint to the proposed development.
- 1.5 This report details the results of the reptile survey and outlines recommendations in relation to reptiles and the proposed development of the site.

Aims and Objectives

- 1.6 The objectives of the survey were to:
 - Undertake a reptile survey to determine presence / likely absence of reptiles within the proposed development site;
 - Evaluate the conservation importance of the survey area in relation to reptiles;
 - Provide information to inform the impact assessment of development proposals for the area; and
 - Provide information for use in the design and development of ecological mitigation and enhancement measures where appropriate.

Site Location and Description

- 1.7 The proposed development site is located at Land East of Henfield Road (A281), Cowfold, West Sussex, RH13 8DT at central grid reference TQ 21392 22023. The site is situated in a semi-rural location on the southern edge of Cowfold village, adjacent to Henfield Road and Eastlands Lane. The surrounding landscape predominantly comprises agricultural fields, pasture, and small blocks of woodland, interconnected by hedgerows and tree lines, with scattered residential properties throughout the wider landscape and more built-up residential development within Cowfold village to the north. A sewage treatment works lies adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site, with Cowfold Stream located along the southern boundary. The nearest major roads are the A281, adjacent to the west of the site, and the A272, located approximately 390m to the north. See Figure 1.

- 1.8 The proposed development site is approximately 2.6ha and comprises two horse-grazed paddocks, each containing a small field shelter, with a small pond located in the eastern paddock. There are hedgerows with trees and areas of scrub at the boundaries, and a belt of scrub, hedgerow, and trees separates the two paddocks. The site access is located in the northwest corner and includes a short length of hardstanding and a grass track. Cowfold Stream runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. See Figure 2.

Proposed Works

- 1.9 The proposals are for a residential development comprising 40 dwellings with associated private gardens, internal access roads, parking areas, drainage basins, and areas of public open space. The proposals will result in the loss of much of the modified grassland across the site and the removal of limited sections of scrub and hedgerow to facilitate access and development parcels. The majority of boundary vegetation, including native hedgerows, trees, and scrub, will be retained and enhanced where appropriate. Additional planting buffers and areas of open space are also incorporated throughout the site, including alongside the southern boundary and in the northeastern section of the site. The existing pond will be encompassed within a drainage basin feature. See Figure 3. Since this is an outline application, it should be noted that proposals are illustrative only and will be updated at the Reserved Matters stage.

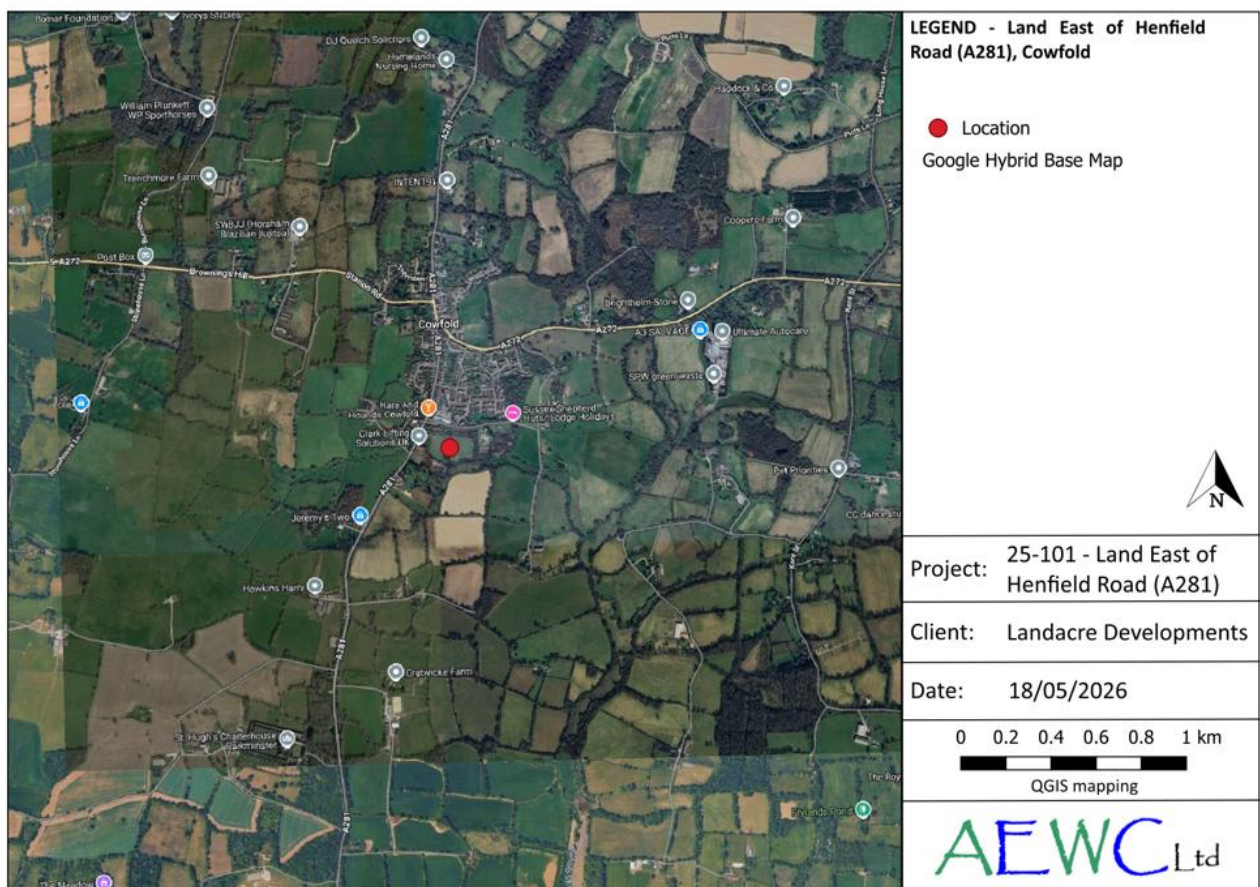


FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE SITE LOCATION



FIGURE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE SHOWING THE SITE BOUNDARY



FIGURE 3: PROPOSED PLANS

Legislation

- 1.10 Common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and adder (*Vipera berus*) are listed under *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, in respect of *Section 9(5)* and part of *Section 9(1)*. This protection was extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000*. Under the legislation, it is an offence to:
- intentionally or deliberately kill or injure any individual of these species; or
 - sell or attempt to sell any part of these species either alive or dead.
- 1.11 Smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizard (*Lacerta agilis*) are listed on *Schedule 5* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, which affords them full protection under *Section 9*, as amended. They are also protected under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*. In combination, this makes it an offence to:
- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
 - possess;
 - intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
 - sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.
- 1.12 All UK reptile species are Species of Principal Importance in England under *Section 41* of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.

Habitat Requirements

- 1.13 A general habitat requirement of reptile species is sunny, undisturbed glades and/or slopes, usually in the vicinity of some thick cover (vegetation). Further details of species-specific habitat preference are given below:

Common Lizard

- This species occupies a large range of habitat types. Their home range is usually quite small.
- Open patches to bask in, especially piles of rubble and wood in sunny areas.
- Ground cover of ivy is especially good for lizards for feeding and to avoid predators.
- Dense but short vegetation, open to the sun.

Slow Worm

- Occupies a large range of habitat types.
- Thick ground vegetation – they bask less often than other British reptiles.
- Regularly frequent habitats influenced by man, such as railway cuttings, allotments and gardens.

Grass Snake

- This species has a large home range.
- Grass snakes are highly aquatic and are strongly associated with riparian habitat.
- Compost heaps or dung piles are good egg laying habitat for Grass Snakes.

Adder

- Light chalk or sandy soils are preferred.
- A main requirement is that the area should be undisturbed.
- Heathlands, woodlands rides and chalk down land are good habitat for adders.

Sand Lizard

- Areas of open sand dunes.
- Mature dry heath.

Smooth Snake

- Found almost exclusively in dry heathland, especially in mature stands of heather or gravely lowland heaths.

2 Method

- 2.1 A site visit was carried out as part of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal on the 26th of January 2026 by Natalie Arscott and Paul Thrift of AEWC Ltd, who assessed the site for reptiles, with particular attention paid to those features that provide suitable basking areas (e.g. south-facing slopes), hibernation sites (e.g. banks, walls, piles of rotting vegetation) and opportunities for foraging (e.g. rough grassland and scrub).
- 2.2 A total of 109 artificial refugia sheets were positioned across the site on the 13th of March 2026. These included sheets of roofing felt, corrugated tin, and corrugated bitumen, a minimum of 0.5m² in area. Sheets were placed in areas of suitable habitat for reptiles throughout the site in likely basking spots (for example, sunny areas near to cover). See Figure 5 for approximate location of refugia.
- 2.3 The sheets were left for just over three weeks to bed in. A total of seven site visits were then made throughout April and May 2026 to record reptiles. The sheets were removed on the last visit.
- 2.4 Refugia sheets were placed evenly around the site boundary and areas of vegetation separating the paddocks as these locations were identified as holding potential for reptiles.
- 2.5 Survey visits took place when weather conditions were most suitable for reptile surveying. The most suitable conditions are intermittent or hazy sunshine, low air temperature (10-20°C) and little or no wind (Gent & Gibson, 1998).

- 2.6 Any reptiles seen basking on or sheltering underneath the refugia were noted, and species, sex and age recorded. Time was also spent observing potential basking sites for reptiles on each visit.
- 2.7 Where reptiles are found an estimate of the population size is made.
- 2.8 All seven surveys were undertaken in April and May giving survey effort scores of 35 for slow worms, 31 for grass snakes, and 35 for common lizards based on tables 7 and 8 of the Reptile Mitigation Guidelines. See Figure 4. The recommended minimum standard effort units have therefore been exceeded for all species considered to have potential to be present.

Table 7 Minimum standard effort and recommended methods for presence/absence surveys

Reasonable chance of presence	Method(s)	Minimum standard effort units
Slow-worm	ARS	25
Common lizard	ARS + DOS	30
Sand lizard	DOS#	50
Grass snake	ARS + DOS	30
Adder	ARS + DOS	30
Smooth snake	ARS	50

Key:

* DOS = direct observation survey

ARS = artificial refuge survey

ARS may be used in addition to DOS if sand lizard expected at high density, and refuges laid at density of at least 200/ha

Table 8 Monthly survey effort weighting

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Slow-worm	NR	NR	2	5	5	5	3	2	4	2	NR	NR
Common lizard	NR	2	3	5	5	5	4	3	5	3	NR	NR
Sand lizard	NR	NR	3	5	4	3	2	2	3	NR	NR	NR
Grass snake	NR	NR	3	4	5	5	3	3	4	2	NR	NR
Adder	NR	2	4	5	4	3	2	2	4	1	NR	NR
Smooth snake	NR	NR	3	5	5	4	3	3	4	NR	NR	NR

NR = No survey recommended: whilst surveys done in these months might locate animals, the chance of this is very low and so any such survey visits do not count towards standard effort

FIGURE 4: EXTRACT REPTILE MITIGATION GUIDELINES TABLE 7 AND 8

3 Constraints/Limitations

- 3.1 There were no notable constraints to the survey. Artificial refugia sheets could be distributed at an appropriate density throughout all areas of suitable habitat and all survey visits were undertaken during optimal conditions and sufficiently spread out.

4 Results

- 4.1 The site comprises two horse-grazed paddocks and an ungrazed access track of modified grassland with areas of scrub, native hedgerows, native hedgerows with trees and an associated ditch, a line of trees, a pond, and individual trees. The ungrazed grassland associated with the access track, together with areas of scrub and hedgerow around the site boundaries and within the central corridor, provide suitable basking, sheltering and foraging habitat for common reptile species such as slow worm, common lizard and grass snake. Refugia within the small, fenced garden area provide suitable hibernation opportunities for reptiles. Most of the site comprises very short grazed grassland with no areas of dense vegetation or refuge features, which is considered unsuitable for reptiles. The site and surrounding area are considered unsuitable for adder, sand lizard and smooth snake due to the habitat types and poorly draining clay soil. A full habitat suitability assessment is provided in Table 1.



Photograph 1 – Southeast corner view of grazed paddocks.



Photograph 2 – Northwest corner view of grazed paddocks.



Photograph 3 – Ungrazed grassland and native hedgerow along access track.



Photograph 4 – Small garden area with sparse grass cover and reptile refugia.

	
Photograph 5 – Western boundary bramble scrub.	Photograph 6 – Eastern boundary mixed scrub.
	
Photograph 7 – Southern central section bramble scrub and native hedgerow with trees associated with a ditch.	Photograph 8 – Native hedgerow with trees and mixed scrub along southern boundary of eastern paddock.

Table 1: Habitat Suitability Assessment

Reptile Habitat Characters	Whole Site Assessment	Notes
Location in relation to species range	Good	Within range for all common species of reptiles.
Vegetation structure	Moderate	The majority of the site comprises species-poor horse-grazed modified grassland. However, areas of scrub, hedgerow, ungrazed grassland and a central vegetated corridor provide increased structural diversity.
Insolation (sun exposure)	Good	The majority of the site is open and well exposed to sunlight, although some shading occurs along the site boundaries.
Aspect	Good	The site is relatively level with no major bias towards or away from the sun.
Topography	Moderate	The majority of the site is flat, although banks associated with Cowfold Stream along the southern boundary provide some variation in topography and potential basking opportunities.

Reptile Habitat Characters	Whole Site Assessment	Notes
Surface geology	Poor	The site is on clay and experiences considerable waterlogging during wetter periods, with the ground being very firm during dry periods.
Connectivity to nearby good quality habitat	Moderate	The site retains connectivity to suitable habitat within the wider countryside via boundary hedgerows and scrub corridors, although this is partially constrained by residential development to the north, Henfield Road to the west and the sewage treatment works to the east.
Prey abundance	Moderate	Areas of scrub, hedgerow and grassland are likely to support a moderate abundance of invertebrate prey species.
Refuge opportunity	Moderate	Areas of scrub, dense hedgerow vegetation and refugia within the fenced garden area provide suitable refuge opportunities.
Hibernation habitat potential	Moderate	Refugia within the fenced garden area, together with areas of scrub and hedgerow root systems, provide potential hibernation habitat.
Disturbance	Poor	The site is actively used for horse grazing which results in regular disturbance across much of the site. As the horses are small, they are able to forage throughout some of the scrub areas as well as the grassland.
Egg-laying site potential (grass snake and sand lizard only)	Poor	No suitable egg-laying habitat was identified. Small compost heaps present on site were regularly disturbed and are unlikely to provide suitable egg-laying opportunities.

4.2 Table 2 shows the weather conditions recorded at the site during the surveys.

Table 2: Weather conditions during the reptile survey

Visit	Date	Time		Weather	Temp °C		Cloud cover (%)	Wind (BF scale)
		Start	Finish		Start	Finish		
1	07/04/2026	15:00	15:45	Sunny and dry with little wind.	18	18	0	1
2	16/04/2026	12:30	13:15	Sunny, dry and still, with wet ground conditions.	14	15	60	1
3	23/04/2026	09:15	10:15	Sunny, still and dry.	13	15	0	0
4	30/04/2026	09:30	10:25	Dry and sunny with a light breeze, warming rapidly throughout the survey.	16	19	0	2

Visit	Date	Time		Weather	Temp °C		Cloud cover (%)	Wind (BF scale)
		Start	Finish		Start	Finish		
5	06/05/2026	15:30	16:30	Dry and overcast with a slight breeze.	13	13	90	1
6	16/05/2026	15:00	15:45	Dry, predominantly overcast with occasional sunny intervals.	13	13	80	2
7	31/05/2026	07:30	08:30	Overcast, dry and still with an intermittent light breeze.	16	18	80	1

- 4.3 One species of reptile was identified during the surveys: grass snake. Table 3 details the results of the survey and maximum counts for each species on each survey visit, these records indicate the minimum number of reptiles present on the site and can be used to give an estimate of population size where sufficient survey effort units have been reached.

Table 3: Results of the reptile surveys.

Visit	Slow worm					Common Lizard					Grass Snake				
	Adult		Sub		Juv	Adult		Sub		Juv	Adult		Sub		Juv
	♂	♀	♂	♀		♂	♀	♂	♀		♂	♀	♂	♀	
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

(♂=Male, ♀=Female, Sub = Sub adult, Juv=Juvenile)

- 4.4 A single adult male grass snake was recorded during two of the seven survey visits (visits 2 and 5). On both occasions, the grass snake was present in the same location, in the northwest corner adjacent to the site access. As such, it is likely that this was the same individual on both occasions. No other reptiles were recorded during the survey period. See Figure 5.



FIGURE 5: LOCATIONS OF REPTILE REFUGIA MATS AND AREAS WHERE REPTILES WERE RECORDED DURING THE SURVEY PERIOD

5 Evaluation

- 5.1 The seven survey visits identified a peak count of one adult grass snake present using the site, located in the northwest corner only.

Table 4: Reptile Population Class Estimates.

Species	Population Size Class		
	Low	Medium	Large
Adder	<5	5-10	>10
Grass Snake	<5	5-10	>10
Common Lizard	<5	5-20	>20
Slow worm	<10	10-40	>40

Figures in the table refer to maximum number of adults seen by observation and/or under tins (placed at a density of up to 100 per hectare of suitable habitat), by one person in one day.

- 5.2 Using the population size class estimates from the Reptile Mitigation Guidelines (Natural England, 2011), see Table 4, the peak number of one grass snake recorded at the site would indicate that a 'low' population of this species is present.

- 5.3 The low population of grass snake recorded during the survey is consistent with the habitats present on site. The majority of the site comprises heavily grazed modified grassland which is of negligible suitability for reptiles. The access track, scrub, hedgerows and central habitat corridor provide some suitable cover, basking and foraging opportunities. The presence of grass snake is likely to be associated with these more densely vegetated habitats and the site's proximity to Cowfold Stream, which provides suitable habitat and connectivity to the wider landscape, as well as foraging opportunities for grass snakes which are strongly associated with riparian habitats.
- 5.4 Given that only a single adult grass snake was recorded on two occasions, it is considered most likely that this individual is part of a wider local population which utilises the site as part of a larger home range. Grass snakes are known to be very mobile with large home ranges and are not considered likely to be solely dependent on the site.
- 5.5 Based on the results of the survey, it is considered that other reptile species are likely absent from the site. If present, they are likely to occur only on occasion or at very low densities.

6 Conclusions & Recommendations

- 6.1 The surveys across the site have identified a low population of grass snake present within the site. Both records of this species were associated with the access track in the northwestern part of the site, adjacent to the native hedgerow. Given that only a single adult grass snake was recorded, it is considered likely that this individual is part of a wider local population, rather than the site supporting a discrete population of grass snakes in isolation.
- 6.2 A lack of any mitigation could result in a negative impact on this species through potential death. Two possible mitigation options exist for reptiles:
- **In-situ mitigation**, which requires a suitable quantity and quality of habitat to be retained or provided within the proposed development site so as to enable the persistence of viable populations of reptile species. This is the preferred approach as it offers the advantage of conserving populations on a site where the habitat is known to be suitable and minimising the level of disturbance to reptiles.
 - **Ex-situ mitigation**, which is required when there is insufficient space or scope for on-site conservation requires suitable receptor sites. Reptiles will need to be translocated to these off-site receptor sites, taking fully into account good practice guidelines and recommendations. Habitat enhancement may be required prior to translocation and subsequent monitoring should be practiced in order to establish whether or not the translocation has been successful.

- 6.3 Wherever practicable, in-situ mitigation is the preferred, least disruptive mitigation method for reptiles. The current illustrative proposals indicate that the majority of boundary habitats, including native hedgerows and areas of scrub, will be retained. These habitats should be retained and enhanced where possible to maintain suitable habitat for grass snakes within the site. A wide belt of habitat is also to be enhanced along the southern boundary, through the creation of meadow-type grassland with semi-natural attenuation basins. Areas of scrub are proposed for enhancement, and it will be possible to install features such as log piles and hibernacula.
- 6.4 Given the low population recorded and the retention of boundary habitats within the illustrative layout, with notable areas of habitat enhancement, **it is considered that in-situ mitigation will be appropriate for the site.** Given that only a single grass snake was recorded and most of the proposed working area comprises unsuitable habitat, it is considered that an on-site capture and translocation process will not be required. However, **mitigation measures, including phased habitat manipulation in appropriate conditions under supervision, must be adopted to prevent harm to any reptiles present. On-site enhancements must also be carried out to benefit reptiles in the long-term.**
- 6.5 **It is recommended that a condition requiring the production of a detailed Reptile Mitigation Strategy and Method Statement, to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement of development.** This document should detail the mitigation measures to be implemented and specify enhancements for reptiles, such as the creation of hibernacula, log piles and areas of tussocky grassland within retained open space.

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