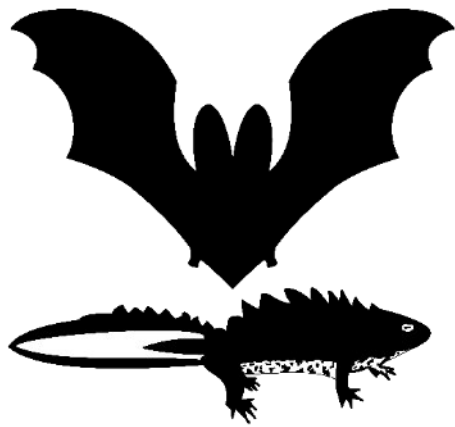




AEWC Ltd

Animal Ecology & Wildlife Consultants

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Wiltshire's Farm

**Pickhurst Lane
Codmore Hill
Pulborough
RH20 1DA**

Monika Cuskova

**25-105
July 2026**

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Summary

- AEWCLtd were commissioned by Batcheller Monkhouse on behalf of their client to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Wiltshire's Farm, Pickhurst Lane, Codmore Hill, Pulborough, RH20 1DA at central grid reference TQ 05321 20722 to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- This report presents the results of surveys undertaken on 26th January 2026 by Ivana Murphy and Monika Cuskova, with an update survey completed on 17th April 2026 by Monika Cuskova following revisions to the red line boundary that included additional habitat. The surveys recorded and mapped habitats and assessed the potential for protected and notable species, as well as 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 is approximately 1.23ha in size and largely comprises modified grassland and an agricultural building. A native hedgerow is located at the eastern boundary, with off-site woodland adjacent to the north and east.
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- **The agricultural building is assessed as having moderate potential to support roosting bats; therefore, at least two emergence surveys are required to confirm presence or likely absence. The outbuilding and shed are considered to have negligible potential, and no further surveys are required.**
- **The site contains suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN, with potential breeding waterbodies located in close proximity. Therefore, eDNA surveys of suitable waterbodies within 250m of the site will be required.**
- **Due to suitable on-site habitats, a reptile presence / likely absence survey will be required to determine whether this species group poses constraints to the proposed development.**
- **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 Batcheller Monkhouse on behalf of their client to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Wiltshire's Farm, Pickhurst Lane, Pulborough 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 initially carried out by qualified and bat licensed ecologist Ivana Murphy and qualified ecologist Monika Cuskova on the 26th January 2026.
- 1.3 An update survey was undertaken on 17th April 2026 by a qualified ecologist Monika Cuskova following revisions to the red line boundary which resulted in additional habitat being included within the site.
- 1.4 This report presents the results of the following:
 - Desktop Biodiversity Report
 - UKHab Habitat Survey
 - Protected Species Walkover Survey
- 1.5 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 Wiltshire's Farm, Pickhurst Lane, Codmore Hill, Pulborough, RH20 1DA at central grid reference TQ 05321 20722. The site is situated in a rural area, approximately 1.5km north of the village of Pulborough. The surrounding landscape predominantly comprises pasture, agricultural land, and blocks of deciduous and ancient woodland. See Figure 1.
- 2.2 The site is approximately 1.23ha and largely comprises grassland and an agricultural building. A hedgerow is located along part of the eastern boundary, with woodland bordering the site to the north and east. See Figure 2.
- 2.3 The proposed development plan involves the demolition of the agricultural building and construction of a residential property and driveway with associated landscaping as a replacement for the previous permitted scheme. This will involve the removal of an area of grassland and ruderal vegetation. The majority of the habitat area on site is unlikely to be negatively affected by these proposals. See Figure 3.

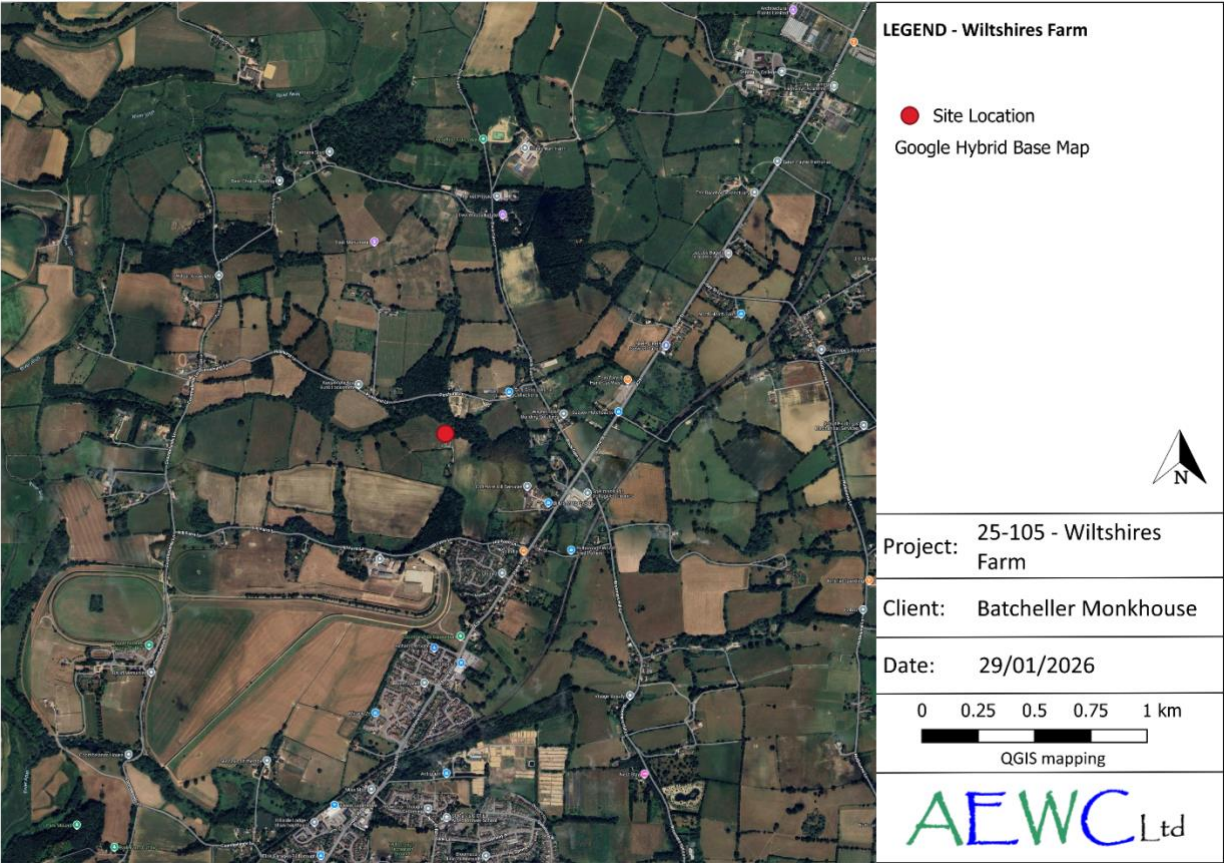
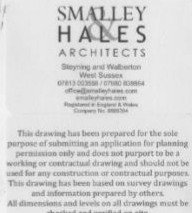


FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE SITE LOCATION



FIGURE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE SHOWING THE SITE BOUNDARY AND BUILDING SUBJECT TO BAT ASSESSMENT



- 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 26th January 2026 to record and map the habitats present, with an update walkover assessment conducted on 17th April 2026.
- 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:
- 
 - 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.

3.14

[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 Bats are difficult to locate in large structures, with so many potential roosting areas, particularly in inaccessible areas such as large buildings, finding the exact roosting site can be difficult, especially male/single bat roosting sites. It should be noted that it is not always possible to identify bat presence by examining externally around buildings as poor weather conditions may have washed away droppings which were deposited on exposed surfaces.

5 Results and Evaluation

Desk Study

Sites and Habitats

Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.1 There are two statutory designated sites located within 2km of the proposed development site. The site borders the South Downs National Park to the north and the Upper Arun Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located 1.5km to the northwest of the site.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.2 There are four non-statutory designated sites located within 2km of the proposed development site. The nearest non-statutory designated site is Codmore Hill, Pulborough Local Geological Site (LGS) which is located 650m to the southwest of the site.

Habitats of Principal Importance

- 5.3 Habitats data available via MAGIC was reviewed for the presence of Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI). There are HPI mapped within and immediately adjacent to the site. The entire site is shown as containing good quality semi-improved

grassland, a non-priority habitat. Deciduous and ancient woodland and broadleaved forest are located adjacent to the north and east. See Figure 4.

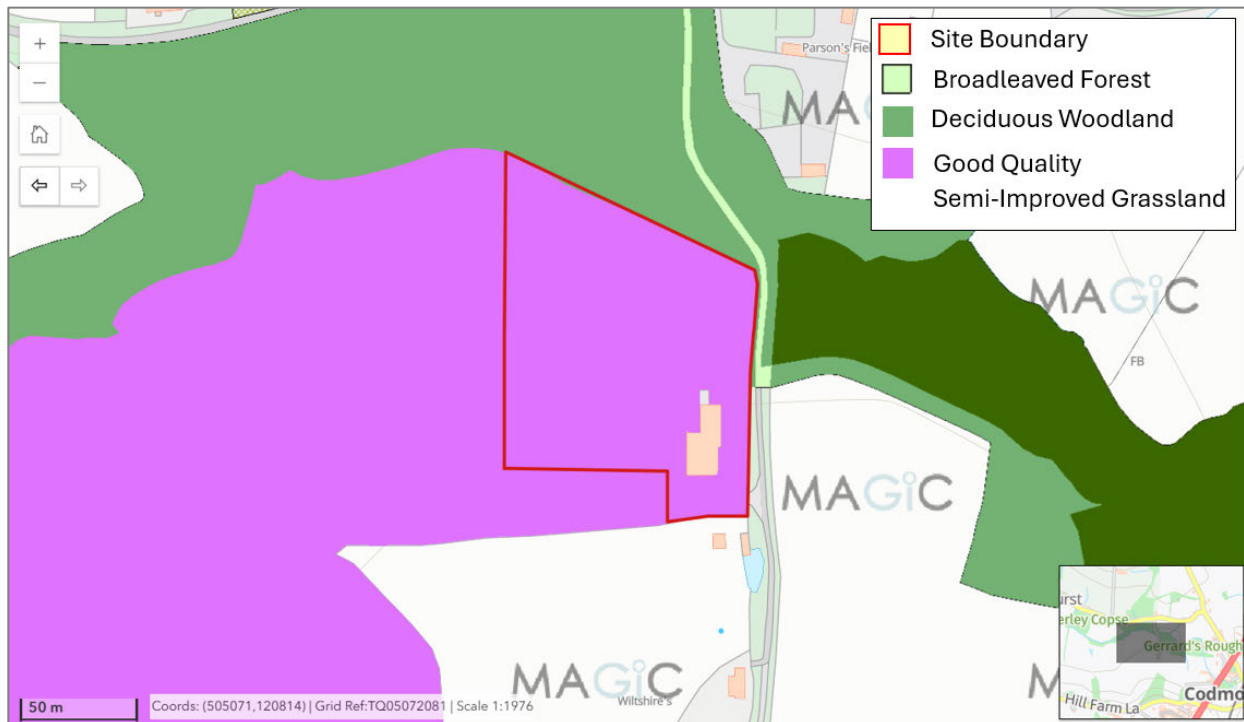


FIGURE 4: SHOWING HABITATS OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE ON AND ADJACENT TO THE SITE

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. Eight ponds and one ditch were found occurring in all directions. Additionally, a drain (arrow on Figure 5) runs approximately 13m to the northern boundary. These are shown in Figure 5 and listed below:

- Ditch 1: 18m to the south of the site
- Pond 2: 295m to the west of the site
- Pond 3: 400m to the west of the site
- Pond 4: 465m to the southwest of the site
- Pond 5: 287m to the southeast of the site
- Pond 6: 493m to the east of the site
- Pond 7: 485m to the east of the site
- Pond 8: 495m to the east of the site
- Pond 9: 474m to the northeast of the site

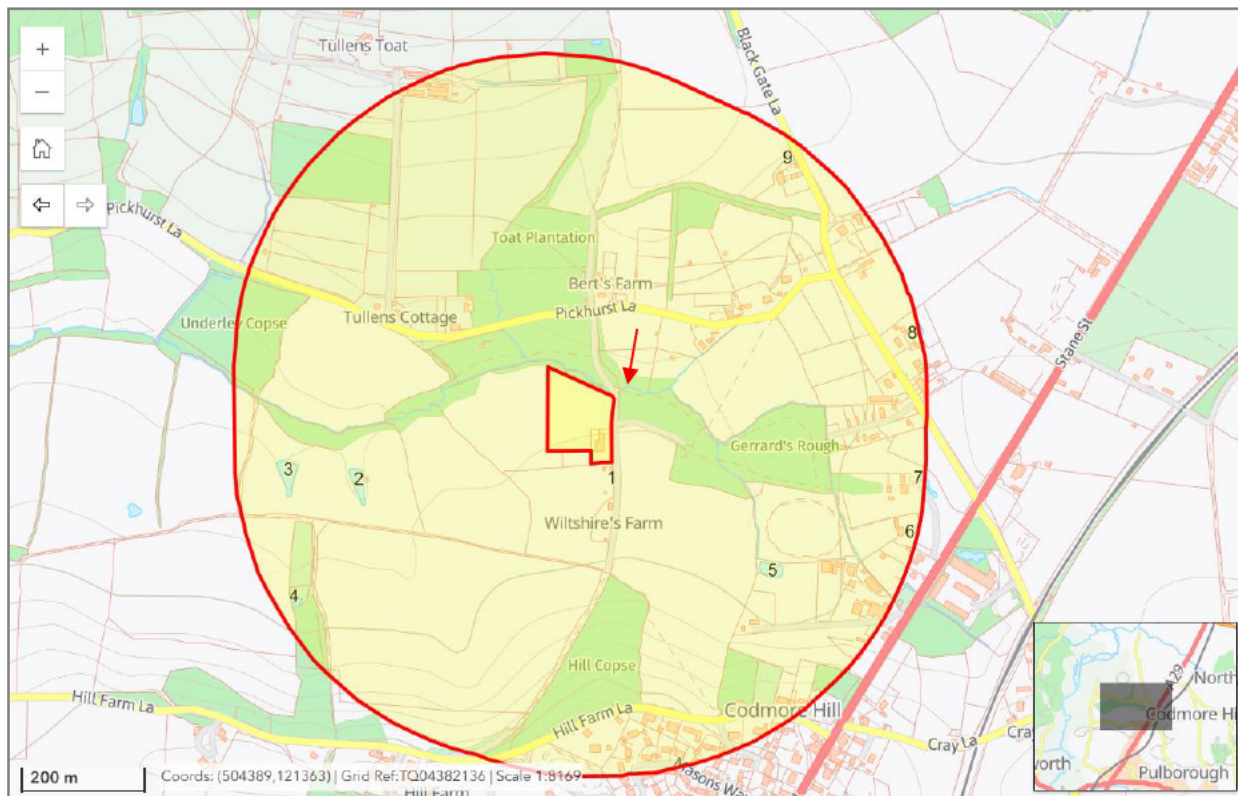


FIGURE 5: WATERBODIES WITHIN 500M

Protected and Notable Species

Bats

- 5.6 40 records of six bat species were recorded within 2km of the site in the last 10 years. These include common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctule*), Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), and serotine (*Cnephaeus serotinus*).

Birds

- 5.7 2219 records of 63 species of birds have been recorded within 2km of the site, including white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), hobby (*Falco subbuteo*), firecrest (*Regulus ignicapilla*), nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*), cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), and skylark (*Alauda arvensis*).

Barn Owls

- 5.8 There are 65 records of barn owls within 2km of the site in the last 10 years. In addition, a barn owl was observed flying out of a disused building located approximately 15m to the south of the site during a walkover survey undertaken by AEWCLtd in October 2024.

Great Crested Newts

- 5.9 No records of GCN were found within 2km of the site in the last 10 years. There is a single historic record from 1997, located 1.5km to the south of the site.

Hazel Dormice

- 5.10 No records of hazel dormice were found within 2km of the site in the last 10 years. There is a single historic record from 2007, located 1km to the southeast of the site.

Reptiles

- 5.11 There are six records of common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), seven records of slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and five records of grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) within 2km of the site in the last 10 years. The nearest record was recorded in 2019, located approximately 55m to the west of the site.

Otters

- 5.12 No records of otter were found within 2km of the site.

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 two records of West European hedgehog and 10 records of stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) within 2km of the site in the last 10 years.

Other Mammals

- 5.15 There are two 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 Table 1 and Figure 6 respectively. The habitats present on the site are described below.

Artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface

- 5.17 To the east of the agricultural building is an area of predominantly artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface. This area is composed mainly of gravel, with some small patches of bare earth and early successional ruderal vegetation present. Access drive that leads off Pickhurst Lane to the site is also composed mainly of gravel.



Photograph 1: Artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface to the east of the agricultural building.



Photograph 1: Access drive off Pickhurst Lane (photo taken April 2026).

Developed land, sealed surface

5.18 There is an agricultural building on-site with a sealed surface base, which is described in further detail in the 'Bat' section below.



Photograph 3: Agricultural building on-site.



Photograph 4: Agricultural building on-site.

Modified grassland

5.19 The site is predominantly covered by modified grassland, which was divided into two sections based on sward height and species richness. The eastern portion consists of good-quality modified grassland with varied sward height and consistently more than six species per m², while the western portion comprises poor-quality modified grassland with a uniform sward and fewer than six species per m². The good-quality grassland accounts for the larger proportion of the site, covering approximately two-thirds of the grassland area, with the remaining one-third comprising poor-quality modified grassland. A further narrow section of poor-quality modified grassland is located along the southern boundary.

- 5.20 Species noted within the good-quality modified grassland in the eastern portion of the site include Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), greater plantain (*Plantago major*), common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), crane's-bill (*Geranium pratense*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.), dock (*Rumex* sp.), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.).
- 5.21 The poor-quality modified grassland in the western portion of the site and along the southern boundary was dominated by perennial rye-grass and Yorkshire fog, with occasional creeping buttercup, ribwort plantain, and dock present.
- 5.22 Although MAGIC identifies the site as non-priority good-quality semi-improved grassland (which would likely meet UKHab classification of 'other neutral grassland'), the habitat survey indicated that the grassland does not meet the criteria for medium or higher distinctiveness grassland. Species richness did not exceed nine or more vascular plant species per m², and the sward was dominated by species characteristic of high-nutrient improved grassland, such as perennial rye-grass, creeping buttercup, common nettle, white clover, and *Rumex* sp. In addition, the grassland did not consistently comprise a high proportion of characteristic indicator species associated with higher distinctiveness grasslands. As such, the habitat has been classified as modified grassland.



Photograph 5: Good-quality modified grassland within the eastern portion of the site.



Photograph 6: Poor-quality modified grassland within the western portion of the site.



Photograph 7: Poor-quality modified grassland along the southern boundary (photo taken April 2026).

Ruderal/ephemeral

- 5.23 To the north and west of the agricultural building is an area of ruderal vegetation. The vegetation structure is varied, with some areas of sparse coverage and other areas being densely covered. Species include creeping buttercup, cleavers, bramble, and creeping thistle.



Photograph 8: Ruderal vegetation to the west of the agricultural building.

Bare ground

- 5.24 An area of bare ground is present in the southern portion of the site, created through repeated vehicle and machinery movements to access the fields.



Photograph 9: Bare ground in the southern portion of the site.

Species-rich native hedgerow – associated with a bank or ditch

- 5.25 The southern portion of the eastern boundary is formed by a species-rich native hedgerow associated with a ditch. The hedgerow is routinely managed and has a dense structure. The hedgerow is composed of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), and elm (*Ulmus* sp.). A narrow ditch which was predominantly dry along most of its length runs adjacent to the east of the hedgerow.
- 5.26 The hedgerow is considered to qualify as native hedgerow priority habitat and as an 'important hedgerow' under the 1997 UK Hedgerow Regulations, as it is species-rich, associated with a ditch, and is considered to have been present for 30 years or more.



Photograph 10: Species-rich native hedgerow with a ditch along the eastern boundary (photo taken April 2026).

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

Target Note	Description	Photograph
2	There is a stack of large logs against the hedgerow close to the southeastern end of the site. These could be utilised by wildlife including herpetofauna, small mammals, and saproxylic insects.	
3	There is a wood chipping pile off-site close to the southwestern corner, which could be utilised by wildlife including herpetofauna.	

4	There is a large pile of soil and grass cuttings off-site close to the southwestern corner of the site, which could be utilised by wildlife including herpetofauna.	
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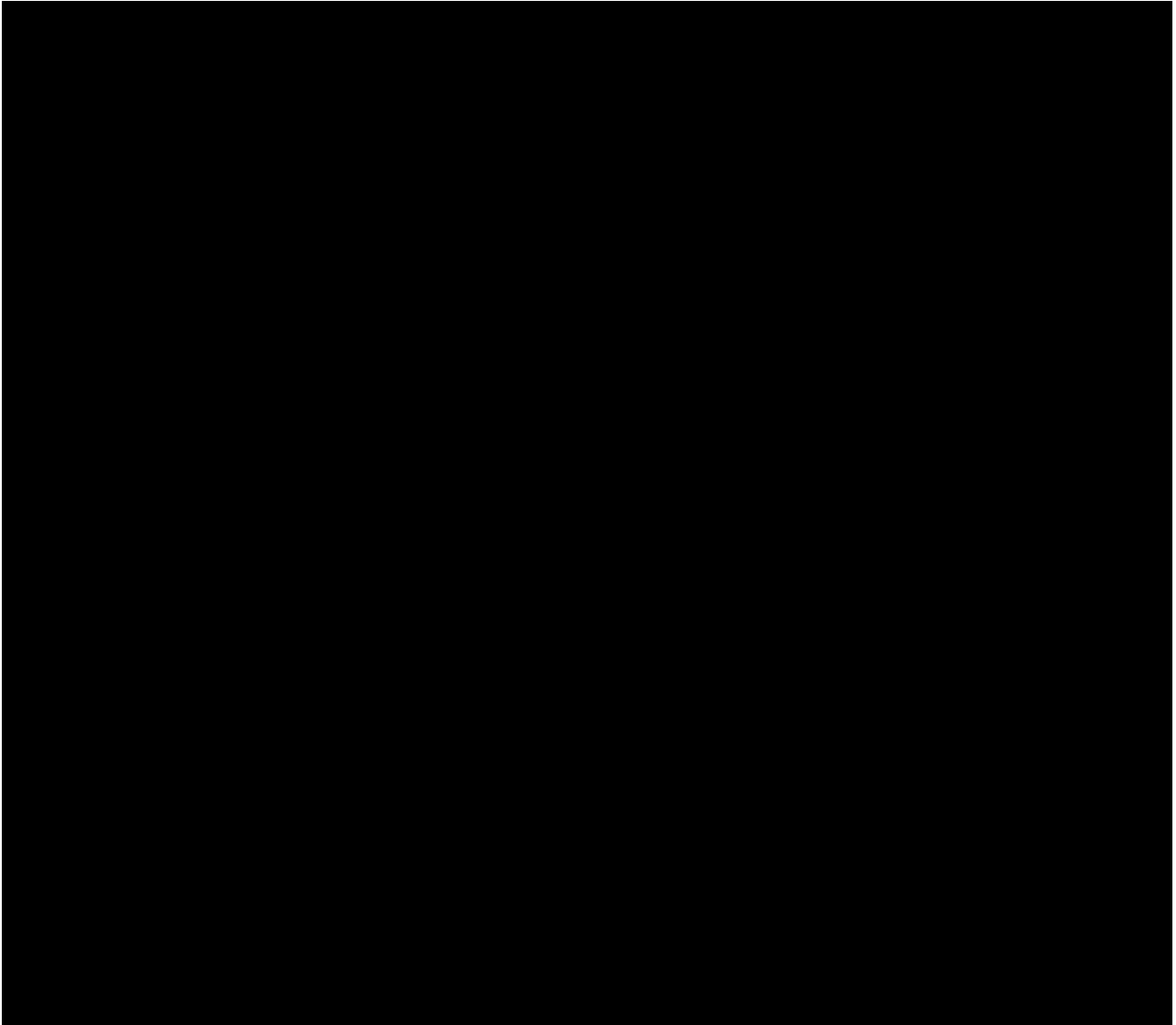


FIGURE 6: UKHAB HABITAT MAP

Habitat Evaluation

5.27 The habitats on-site are common and widespread. Areas of ruderal vegetation and poor-quality modified grassland are of lower ecological value but provide some opportunities to support wildlife. The boundary hedgerow and areas of good-quality modified grassland are of higher ecological value, offering suitable foraging and sheltering habitat for a range of species, with the hedgerow also providing habitat connectivity to other suitable habitats.

Protected Species and Species of Conservation Concern



Bats

Agricultural Building

5.30 The building is a timber structure with a pitched roof clad in corrugated concrete roofing sheets, with two open-sided extensions on the northern and western elevations. The external walls are clad in timber weatherboarding affixed to an underlying lining and boarding. A small entrance canopy with a pitched clay-tiled roof is present over the doorway on the eastern elevation.

- 5.31 Internally, no roof void is present, and no ridge beams, rafters, or other features capable of supporting roosting bats were identified. No bats or evidence of bats, such as droppings, were recorded internally.
- 5.32 Externally, sections of timber cladding were lifted in several locations on the southern and eastern elevations, creating several gaps suitable for crevice roosting bats. Two missing clay tiles were recorded on the pitched roof of the entrance canopy, creating gaps that could allow access into the batten space of the canopy roof. A narrow crevice was also noted between the underside of the canopy and the timber cladding above the doorway, forming a further potential roosting feature for crevice dwelling bat. No bats or evidence of bats were identified externally.
- 5.33 The two open-sided extensions were assessed as lacking any suitable roosting features for bats.
- 5.34 Overall, the agricultural building is considered to have moderate potential to support roosting bats, due to the presence of several crevice features associated with lifted timber cladding and roof tiles.



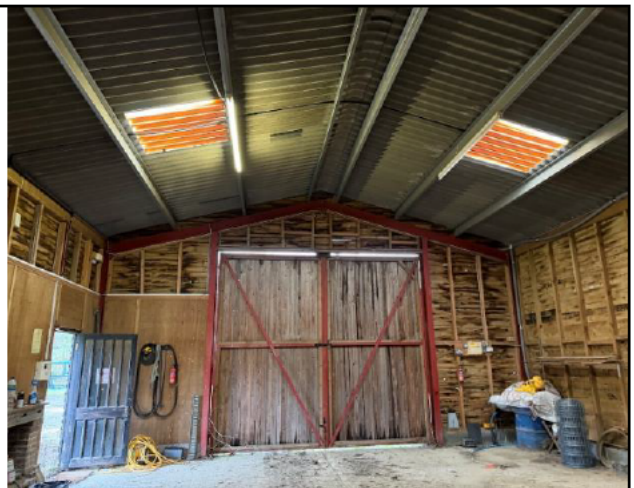
Photograph 13: Southern and eastern elevations of the agricultural building.



Photograph 14: Open sided extension on the northern elevation.



Photograph 15: Open sided extension on the western elevation.



Photograph 16: Interior of the agricultural building.



Photograph 17: Gaps underneath the timber cladding on the southern elevation.



Photograph 18: Gaps underneath the timber cladding on the southern elevation.



Photograph 19: Missing tiles on the porch canopy.



Photograph 20: A gap between the porch canopy and timber boarding.

Outbuilding and Shed

5.35 A dilapidated outbuilding is located on the southern boundary of the site, with a small, attached timber shed on its western elevation. Both structures are of single-skin

timber construction with pitched roofs clad in corrugated sheeting, and no internal roof voids present. Part of the roof covering of the outbuilding is damaged, resulting in bright and draughty internal conditions. The door to the attached shed is open also resulting in bright internal conditions. No features suitable for roosting bats were identified, and no bats or evidence of bats, such as droppings was recorded.

5.36 Overall, the outbuilding and shed are considered to have negligible potential to support roosting bats, due to the complete lack of suitable roosting features.



Photograph 21: Outbuilding and shed viewed from the northwest.



Photograph 22: Showing the single skin structure.



Photograph 23: Showing bright internal conditions.



Photograph 24: Interior of the shed.

Foraging and Commuting

5.37 No trees are present on site. The hedgerow along the eastern boundary forms a linear habitat feature that may be used by commuting bats. The woodland located to the north and east of the site provides suitable foraging habitat and potential roosting opportunities. The field area is of low suitability for foraging and commuting bats due to its open nature with low-level vegetation cover.

Breeding Birds

- 5.38 The boundary hedgerow provides suitable habitat for nesting birds. A bird's nest was recorded within the northern open-sided extension of the agricultural building, indicating use of the structure by nesting birds.



Photograph 25: A bird's nest within the northern open-sided extension.

Barn Owls

- 5.39 The two open-sided extensions provided suitable fly-in access for barn owls; however, no suitable beams for perching or roosting, or ledges or platforms suitable for nesting, were present. No evidence of barn owl activity (such as pellets, feathers, or droppings) was identified.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

- 5.40 The site is considered to have good potential to support terrestrial GCN. Areas of grassland with a varied sward height, boundary hedgerow, and denser ruderal vegetation could be utilised by GCN to shelter, forage, and move across the landscape. Additionally, a log stack, grass cutting and soil pile, and wood chippings pile were recorded within and near the boundaries, which could be utilised by GCN as refugia. There is a wet ditch located approximately 18m to the south with good connectivity to the site that may offer suitable breeding habitat. A drain is present approximately 13m to the northern boundary; however, it was shallow, intermittently flowing, and located within heavily shaded woodland, and therefore is considered likely unsuitable for breeding GCN. However, the assessment was carried out following a period of very heavy rainfall and therefore does not provide an accurate representation of the quality of this drain during the GCN breeding season.
- 5.41 No ponds were recorded within the site boundary. The site is therefore unsuitable for breeding GCN.



Photograph 26: Ditch to the south of the site.



Photograph 27: Drain to the north of the site.

Hazel Dormice

5.42 The hedgerow on site is considered to have suitability to support hazel dormouse, as it offers foraging opportunities and retains a dense, continuous structure comprising important forage species, hazel and hawthorn. The hedgerow is connected to the adjacent woodland to the north, providing suitable commuting routes between areas of suitable nesting and foraging habitat. However, the hedgerow will be fully retained and will not be impacted by the proposed development; therefore, no adverse effects on potential dormouse habitat, commuting routes, or nesting and foraging opportunities are anticipated. The remainder of the site is unsuitable for dormice.

5.43 No hazel nuts were available to check for those that may have been chewed by hazel dormouse.

Reptiles

5.44 The varied sward grassland, hedgerow and areas of denser ruderal vegetation on site provide suitable habitat for common reptiles such as slow worms, common lizards and grass snakes to shelter, forage, and commute through. Additionally, a log stack, grass cutting and soil pile, and wood chippings pile were recorded within and near the boundaries, which could be utilised as refugia.

Otters

5.45 No evidence of otters (spraints, footprints or feeding signs) were noted during the walkover survey. The ditch to the south of the site is narrow and shallow and does not support fish or features such as dense bankside vegetation, tree roots, or resting areas that would provide suitable habitat for otters. Similarly, the drain to the north of the site is shallow and narrow and lacks fish or other suitable prey species for otters.

Water Voles

- 5.46 No watercourses were recorded within the site boundary. The ditch to the south of the site is short, narrow, and shallow, does not flow, and lacks defined banks, providing no suitable burrowing habitat or hydrophilic vegetation such as rushes or sedges for food resources. The drain to the north of the site is similarly narrow and shallow and lacks wide swathes of soft vegetation growing from the banks and water that would provide cover and foraging opportunities. As such, neither watercourse offers suitable habitat for water voles.

Other Species of Principal Importance

- 5.47 There is potential for the site to support SPI such as hedgehog, common toad, and stag beetle. The dense boundary hedgerow and longer sward grassland are suitable for hedgehogs and common toads to shelter, forage, and commute. The wood chippings and grass and soil piles to the southwest of the site provide further foraging opportunities and potential refuge areas. The log stack adjacent to the hedgerow, which is shaded and damp with rotting wood, could be used by stag beetles.

Other Ecological Features of Note

Other Mammals

- 5.48 Evidence of deer was recorded on site in the form of droppings and hoof prints. In addition, a mammal track was identified in the northeastern corner of the site, indicating regular use of the area by terrestrial mammals.

Plant Species of Note

- 5.28 No plant species of note were identified.

Invasive Species

- 5.49 No invasive species of note were identified.

Other Valuable Ecological Features

- 5.50 No other valuable ecological features were recorded.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.2 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

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

Habitats of Principal Importance

- 6.4 **Ancient woodland is present adjacent to the northern portion of the eastern boundary; therefore, a minimum 15m buffer is required. There are to be no construction works or storage of machinery or materials within this buffer zone.**
- 6.5 **The native hedgerow at the eastern boundary is HPI and therefore should be retained and protected. Any unavoidable losses will require appropriate compensation.**
- 6.6 It is noted that MAGIC shows non-priority good-quality semi-improved within the site boundary. However, the site visit has revealed that the grassland did not contain characteristic indicator species associated with higher distinctiveness grasslands. As such, the habitat has been classified as modified grassland and losses of this habitat are not considered significant.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Bats

- 6.8 The agricultural building on site was considered to have moderate potential to support roosting bats within the timber cladding and batten space of the porch canopy roof tiles. Therefore, further emergence surveys are required in order to confirm presence or increase confidence in a result of likely absence of bat roosts in the building.
- 6.9 **As the agricultural building has moderate potential to support roosting bats, a minimum of two emergence surveys are required to be carried out during the peak active period of May to August, to confirm presence or increase confidence in a result of likely absence of bat roosts. Should roosting bats be identified within the agricultural building, it is likely that a third survey would be required.**
- 6.10 The outbuildings and shed on the southern boundary were assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats, and therefore there are no constraints regarding these species to the proposed demolition of these outbuildings.

- 6.11 If the proposed work will have a detrimental effect on bats or disturb or damage their roost, then an EPS licence from Natural England has to be applied for.
- 6.12 Should a Natural England development licence be required for works to proceed, this will encompass a Mitigation Strategy to ensure that the development is designed to protect bats during the construction phase and to minimise long term impacts upon the local bat population.
- 6.13 Lighting can have notable negative impacts on commuting and foraging bats, that are known to be present locally. There is potential for lighting during and post-development to cause indirect disturbance. **New external lighting should be avoided or kept to the minimum necessary, and preferably downlit and on a motion sensor to reduce lighting time. The boundary hedgerow, and adjacent woodland must not be directly illuminated.**

Breeding Birds

- 6.14 It is understood that the boundary hedgerow will not be impacted by any proposed works; therefore, no further action is required. However, should plans be amended to include works to the hedgerow, these should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird period from March to August. **Should any hedgerow 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. If active nests are found, a minimum buffer zone of 5m must be established until the chicks have fledged.**
- 6.15 **If works to the agricultural building commence during the breeding bird period, it must be carefully inspected immediately prior to the commencement of works for active nests. If nesting birds are found, works cannot commence in that area until the chicks have fledged.**

Barn Owls

- 6.16 While the barn extensions permit access into the interior for barn 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)

- 6.17 The site contains suitable terrestrial habitat for GCN, and waterbodies have been identified within 500m which could be used for breeding. 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 if GCN breeding ponds are present within 100m an offence is highly likely, if GCN breeding ponds are present

between 100m and 250m an offence is likely, and if GCN breeding ponds are over 250m from the site an offence is highly unlikely. 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
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	0.5 - 1 ha lost or damaged	0.7
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.7
Rapid risk assessment result:	RED: OFFENCE HIGHLY LIKELY	

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
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.5 - 1 ha lost or damaged	0.3
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.3
Rapid risk assessment result:	AMBER: OFFENCE LIKELY	

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
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.5 - 1 ha lost or damaged	0.03
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.03
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

FIGURE 7: RAPID RISK ASSESSMENTS OF THE SITE

6.18 The Rapid Risk assessment shows that an offence is likely if GCN breeding ponds are present within 250m of the site, therefore further survey for GCN is required. This will comprise an initial HSI of the ditch and drain to the north and south, both located within 100m of the site. If found suitable, they will be then subject to a single eDNA survey between mid-April and end of 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. Alternatively, a District Licence can be obtained without undertaking further surveys.

6.19 Based on the results of the Rapid Risk Assessment, an offence is highly unlikely if GCN breeding ponds are present over 250m from the site. The remaining waterbodies (Ponds 2-9) are over 250m from the site and therefore no further surveys for these are considered necessary.

Hazel Dormice

6.20 There is suitable habitat for hazel dormouse on-site within the boundary hedgerow, however based on current plans this will not be impacted, and therefore no further

surveys or mitigation for this species are required. **Should plans change to include impacts to the eastern boundary hedgerow, this must be discussed with a suitably qualified ecologist. Lighting should not be directed at the hedgerow to prevent disturbance to dormice.**

Reptiles

- 6.21 The site contains suitable habitat for common reptiles, which will be impacted by the proposed development. **As such, a reptile presence/likely absence survey will need to be undertaken to assess whether reptiles are using the site. 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

- 6.22 The site is considered highly unlikely to be used by otter and therefore no further surveys or mitigation for this species are required.

Water Voles

- 6.23 The site is considered highly unlikely to be used by water vole and therefore no further surveys or mitigation for this species are required.

Other Species of Principal Importance

- 6.24 The west European hedgehog and common toad are SPIs, therefore **it is recommended that any dense vegetation, such as the denser and longer sward grassland areas, 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.** 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.
- 6.25 **Should the existing log stack be removed from the site, it is recommended that a replacement log stack is installed to provide habitat for stag beetles and other saproxylic insects.**

Other Mammals

- 6.26 **Site clearance work should be undertaken carefully (by hand if necessary) to avoid crushing any small mammals 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

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

Invasive Species

6.28 No invasive species were recorded and therefore no further action is required.

Other Valuable Ecological Features

6.29 No other valuable ecological features were recorded and therefore no further action is required.

Impact Assessment

[REDACTED]

6.31 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.

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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.



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 (SSSIs)

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.