

WOODVIEW SCHOOL, BILLINGSHURST

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Final Document (Revision 1)

March 2026

Preliminary Ecological Appraisals • Protected Species Surveys and Licensing • NVC • EclA • HRA • Management Plans
Habitats • [REDACTED] • Bats • Hazel Dormouse • Birds • Reptiles • Amphibians • Invertebrates • Riparian and Aquatic Species

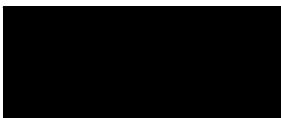
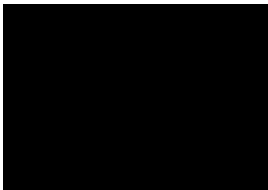
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WOODVIEW SCHOOL, BILLINGSHURST

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ecological Survey and Assessment Ltd (ECOSA) have been appointed by Salutem Shared Services to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment to support a planning application for the redevelopment of Woodview School, Ingfield Manor Drive, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 9AX. The proposals entail the demolition of the derelict buildings on site and the installation of new school buildings.

The main findings of the Ecological Impact Assessment are:

- The site mainly comprises other woodland; mixed; mainly broadleaved with areas of neutral and modified grassland. There are seven derelict buildings within the site.
- The site has suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats, foraging and [REDACTED] limited suitability for hazel dormouse, European hedgehog and common toad.
- Impacts include a loss of historic roosts for bats, and the loss of roosting or nesting opportunities for bats and birds. Loss of habitat for reptiles, terrestrial great crested newt, hazel dormouse, European hedgehog and common toad is also anticipated. There is potential to disturb, injure or kill any of these species during works.
- Mitigation measures include acquisition of an EPSM licences from Natural England for great crested newt and bats, a translocation exercise for great crested newt and reptiles, sensitive lighting scheme, and a precautionary method of works.
- Compensation measures include the provision of newly planted trees, scrubs and grassland within the site, five bat boxes and five bird boxes within the site.
- Enhancement measures include the provision of hibernacula for great crested newt and reptiles within the site.
- Given the impacts identified, and the mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures proposed it is considered that the proposals accord with all relevant local and national planning policy.
- If the planning application boundary changes or the proposals for the site alter, a re-assessment of the scheme in relation to ecology may be required. Given the mobility of animals and the potential for colonisation of the site over time,

updating survey work may be required, particularly if development does not commence within 18 months of the date of the most recent relevant survey.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Ecological Survey & Assessment Limited (ECOSA) have been appointed by Salutem Shared Services to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment to support a planning application for the redevelopment of Woodview School, Ingfield Manor Drive, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 9AX (hereafter referred to as the site).

1.2 The Site

The site is located in approximately 550 metres north-west of the hamlet of Five Oaks, and approximately two kilometres north of Billingshurst centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 0924 2868 (**Map 1**).

The site consists of approximately 1.01 hectares of grounds associated with the existing specialist school to the north. The site comprises a series of derelict buildings amongst overgrown gardens and scrub. The site is redundant and has been left redundant for a number of years.

The main school is located north of the application site, a dairy farm lies to the west, with woodland and open farmland present to the east and south of the site. The wider landscape is largely rural, dominated by blocks of woodland and agricultural fields. The village of Billingshurst is located approximately two kilometres south of the site. Tributaries of the River Arun run approximately 40 metres south of the site, with further tributaries running approximately 260 metres north-east of the site.

1.3 Aims and Scope of Report

The information within this report is based on a field survey and desktop study and relevant species-specific surveys carried out between April 2024 and December 2025. The report describes the habitats and species (hereafter referred to as ecological features) within the site's Zone of Influence (Paragraph 3.2), and provides a detailed assessment of potential ecological effects of the proposed development of the site. It identifies the need for any measures to avoid, mitigate or compensate for significant adverse effects¹ ecological features and outlines enhancements to the site's ecology to be implemented as part of the development. The objectives of the assessment are:

- To provide baseline information on ecological features within the site's Zone of Influence and determine the importance of these features;

¹ For the purposes of this assessment a 'significant' adverse effect is one which will have an adverse effect on the ecological feature at the site level or higher.

- To assess, characterise and quantify the effects on ecological features, including cumulative effects, and identify significant effects in the absence of any mitigation;
- To set out measures to avoid, mitigate and compensate for significant ecological effects in accordance with the 'mitigation hierarchy'²;
- To provide an assessment of the significance of any residual effects;
- To outline opportunities for enhancement in order to achieve a net gain for biodiversity; and
- To set out the requirements for any post-construction monitoring.

1.4 Site Proposals

The proposals entail the demolition of the derelict builds on the site and the installation of new school buildings with associated parking and play areas.

This report makes reference to the Proposed Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4 Site Layout, produced by Miller Bourne Architects (drawing no. 4908-MBA-ZZ-ZZ-D-A-0107, Rev. P02) (**Appendix 1**).

² In accordance with CIEEM Ecological Impact Assessment guidance (CIEEM, 2018) a sequential process is adopted to address impacts on features of ecological interest, with 'Avoidance' prioritised at the top of the hierarchy and Compensation/Enhancement' at the bottom. This is often referred to as the 'mitigation hierarchy'.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This section summarises the planning policy in relation to ecology and biodiversity within the Horsham District Council administrative area. This information is then used to assess the compliance of the scheme in relation to relevant planning policy and where necessary make recommendations for mitigation, compensation and enhancements (see Section 5.0).

2.2 National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's requirements for the planning system in England. The original document was published in 2012 with the most recent revised NPPF published in December 2024. A number of sections of the NPPF are relevant when taking into account development proposals and the environment. As set out within Paragraph 11 of the NPPF "*Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development*". However, Paragraph 195 goes on to state that "*The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.*".

The NPPF sets out that development proposals should not only minimise the impacts on biodiversity but also to provide enhancement. Paragraph 187 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by "*...minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures...*".

A number of principles are set out in Paragraph 193, including that where harm cannot be adequately avoided then it should be mitigated for, or as a last resort, compensated for. Where impacts occur on nationally designated sites, the benefits must clearly outweigh any adverse impact and incorporating biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged. Specific reference is also made to the protection of irreplaceable habitats³, including ancient woodland⁴. Where loss to irreplaceable habitats occurs planning permission would normally be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and an adequate compensation strategy is in place. Paragraph

³ The NPPF defines irreplaceable habitats as "*Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen.*"

⁴ Natural England defines ancient woodland as "An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)."

193 also states *“development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.”* Paragraph 194 also sets out that potential SPAs, SACs and listed or proposed Ramsar sites or sites acting as compensation for SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites, should receive the same protection as habitat sites.

In addition to the NPPF, Circular 06/05 provides guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation as it applies in England. Paragraph 98 states *“the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat”*. Paragraph 99 states *“it is essential that the presence or otherwise of a protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the Proposed Project Development, is established before planning permission is granted”*.

2.3 Local Policy

Local planning policy for Horsham District Council is provided by the policies within the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF), adopted on 27th November 2015. With the exception of land within the South Downs National Park, the HDPF replaces the policies contained in the Horsham District Core Strategy and General Development Control Policies which were both adopted in 2007. The HDPF contains a single policy referring to ecology and biodiversity:

- **Policy 31: Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity.** This policy is an all-encompassing policy which supports the maintenance and enhancement of green infrastructure network, the enhancement of existing biodiversity and creation of new habitats. The site policy also makes specific reference to retaining and enhancing linkages.

The policy also makes reference to the protection of sites and habitats in the following hierarchy Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs); and Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and any areas of Ancient woodland.

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

outweigh the need to protect the feature and appropriate mitigation and compensation can be secured.

Any development with the potential to impact Arun Valley SPA or the Mens SAC will be subject to Habitats Regulation Assessment with necessary mitigation.

The site falls within the 6.5 kilometre Key Conservation Area of The Mens SAC mentioned in the South Downs Local Plan (2014-2033), adopted in July 2019.

▪ **Policy SD10: International Sites**

This policy refers the protection of internationally designated sites, with specific reference made to Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated for barbastelle and Bechstein's bat, Arun Valley Special Protection Area (SPA), Wealden Heaths Phase II SPA, and SPAs associated with the Solent;

3.0 METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This section details the methods employed during the Ecological Impact Assessment. Any significant limitations to the assessment are also considered.

3.2 Zone of Influence

To define the total extent of the study area for this assessment, the proposed scheme was reviewed to establish the spatial scale at which ecological features could be affected⁵. The appropriate survey radii for the various elements of the assessment (i.e. desktop study, field survey and species-specific surveys) have been defined in the relevant sections below. These distances are determined based on the professional judgement of the ecologist leading the appraisal, taking into account the characteristics of the site subject to assessment, its surroundings and the nature of the proposals.

3.3 Scoping

Protected species considered within the Ecological Impact Assessment are those species/species groups considered likely to be encountered given the geographical location and context of the site. Where the site was found to be suitable to support these species/species groups, and adverse effects cannot be avoided from the outset, further species-specific surveys are undertaken. These are discussed within the results section (Section 4.0) of the current report. Where such a species is unlikely to be present on site a justification for likely absence is provided. Species considered likely absent from the site are not then considered in the assessment of ecological effects and mitigation/compensation measures section (Section 5.0) of this report.

3.4 Desk Study

3.4.1 Biological Records Centre

Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre was consulted on 13th August 2025 for the following data:

- Records of non-statutory designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)) within one kilometre of the site boundary;
- Records of legally protected and notable species (flora and fauna) within one kilometre of the site boundary, including Species of Principal Importance for the Conservation of diversity in England notified under Section 41 of the Natural

⁵ The Zone of Influence (Zoi), as defined by CIEEM, is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects as a result of the proposed project and associated activities (CIEEM, 2018).

Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and as listed in the England Biodiversity List (**Appendix 2**); and

- Records of bats within two kilometres of the site boundary. Bat species are highly mobile and therefore the search radius is increased for this species group.

3.4.2 Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside

The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database (DEFRA, 2025) was reviewed on 1st October 2025 to establish the location of statutory designated sites located within the vicinity of the site. This included a search for all internationally and nationally designated sites such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) within one kilometre of the site. See **Appendix 3Appendix 2** for details. Where appropriate, the desk study search area has been extended to take account of any appropriate statutory designated sites which need consideration in terms of potential in-direct effects and which support particularly mobile species, particularly those specifically mentioned in local planning policy. The Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) were also obtained from MAGIC, which are used to help guide and assess planning applications for likely effects on SSSIs.

Sites within two kilometres of the site boundary where European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences have been granted were reviewed. This information allows a greater understanding of the potential for European Protected Species to be present in the local area. This has been extended to a 12 kilometre search radius for bat EPSM licences surrounding the site. The extended search radius for bat licences reaches both bat-designated-SACs that the site lies within the impact catchment for. This information allows a greater understanding of the potential for European Protected Species to be present in the local area.

Records of hazel dormouse within three kilometres of the site boundary where an EPSM licence has been granted. As per current guidance (Wells, et al., 2025), presence of hazel dormouse recorded in connected habitats within three kilometres of the site boundary and in the last five years can be used as evidence for presence within the site. Therefore, the search radius is increased for this species.

3.4.3 Other Sources of Information

Online mapping resources, at an appropriate scale, were used to identify the presence of habitats such as woodland blocks, ponds, watercourses and hedgerows, in the vicinity of the site. These habitats may offer resources and connectivity between the site and suitable habitat in the local area, which may be exploited by local species populations.

The presence of ponds or other waterbodies within a 500 metre radius of the site in particular are noted in relation to great crested newt. The 500 metre radius is a standardised search radius to assist in the assessment of the suitability of a site and its surrounding habitat to support this species, based on current Natural England guidance (English Nature, 2001).

An Ecological Impact Assessment was previously carried out at the site in 2019 by ECOSA and may be referenced where relevant in this report (ECOSA, 2019).

3.5 Field Survey

3.5.1 Survey Methods

The field survey followed a modified version of UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) methodology (UKHab Ltd, 2023) and included a search for evidence of, and an assessment of the site's suitability to support, protected and notable species as recommended by CIEEM (CIEEM, 2017b). The field survey covered all accessible areas of the site, including boundary features. Habitats described in Section 4.0, have been mapped (**Map 2**) and photographed where relevant.

The UKHab Survey Application, developed using the digital survey platform Coreo was used to map habitats in the field, collect the field survey data and photograph the site.

3.5.2 UKHab Survey

An assessment was made of all habitats within the site, which were classified based on the standardised UKHab survey methodology (UKHab Ltd, 2023). Which was modified to make the habitat assessment compatible with the habitat classification within the Biodiversity Net Gain Metric (DEFRA, 2024). The UKHab classification system comprises two major parts, a hierarchical Primary Habitat system and a list of Secondary Codes. The classification of Primary Habitats is hierarchical with five levels.

It should be noted that not all habitats will be classified to Level 5, for example modified grassland is classified at Level 3 and no Level 4 or Level 5 habitat is applicable. In addition, where Level 4 or 5 habitats are considered to be present on site there may be a requirement for further surveys by a specialist botanist to confirm or classify these habitat types.

Where Biodiversity Net Gain Metric habitats are not classified under any of the hierarchical levels within the UKHab methodology the relevant secondary codes definitions have been used to identify these habitats.

During the field survey notes and photographs were taken in order to evidence the surveyor's classification of each habitat type.

Any invasive species⁶ encountered as an incidental result of the survey were recorded.

Protected and Notable Species Appraisal

A preliminary appraisal of the site's suitability to support legally protected and notable species was carried out. Specific methods for species/species groups considered during the appraisal are provided in **Appendix 4**.

3.5.3 Survey Details

The field survey was carried out by Hugh Turner, Principal Ecologist of ECOSA on 8th August 2025. The weather conditions were dry with approximately 5% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 20°C and a light wind.

During the survey, the surveyor was equipped with 10x40 binoculars, a high powered torch and a digital camera.

3.5.4 Field Survey Limitations

Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of year, migration patterns and behaviour. The field survey has therefore not produced a complete list of plants and animals and in the absence of evidence of any particular species should not be taken as conclusive proof that the species is absent or that it will not occur in the future.

Online mapping resources provide an indication of habitat features present in the wider area, but do not provide a detailed assessment of habitat types.

3.6

3.6.1 Survey Methods

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

⁶ Plant species included on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The survey was not specifically aimed at assessing the presence of these species and further specialist advice may need to be sought.

Tubes Installed (First Day of Month +/- 7 days)	Number of Checks at Monthly Intervals	End Date (end of Month +/- 7 days)
October	9*	September the following year

*Assumes checks at end of October and November then from April onwards

Sufficient survey effort has been achieved through doing three surveys since the tubes were deployed in August.

3.7.2 Survey Details

The dormouse tubes were erected on 19th August 2025 with three visits undertaken between October and December 2025. **Table 2** provides details of each hazel dormouse survey.

Table 2: Hazel dormouse survey details

Survey Date	Check Month	Weather Conditions
1 st October 2025	September	Dry with some showers, 100% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 13°C and no breeze.
11 th November 2025	October	Overcast with 100% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 13°C and a moderate breeze.
12 th December 2025	November	Dry and overcast, 75% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 11°C and a light breeze.

The hazel dormouse surveys were co-ordinated and led by Hugh Turner, Principal Ecologist of ECOSA assisted by suitably qualified ECOSA surveyors.

The survey was undertaken using 50 dormouse tubes comprising corrugated plastic tubes of standard dimensions (Wells, et al., 2025) with plywood insert secured in the relevant habitat with heavy duty garden wire.

3.7.3 Survey Limitations

The second and third dormouse surveys were not completed within 7 days of the end of the month, however, since the surveys were only delayed by a five or less days this is not considered to be a significant limitation.

3.8 Reptile Survey

3.8.1 Survey Methods

The reptile survey was undertaken in accordance with current best practice guidelines (Froglife, 2015).

The reptile survey consisted of the laying bitumen felt mats approximately 500 millimetres x 500 millimetres in areas of suitable habitat on the site. Typically, this

included areas of suitable habitat with good exposure to the sun. The mats were distributed in all areas considered to offer suitable reptile habitat. The locations of these mats are marked on **Map 4**.

The use of such refugia is an effective way of surveying for all species of reptile and current survey guidance states that seven inspections are sufficient to confirm presence/likely absence. Survey visits were undertaken in marginal weather conditions such as cold but sunny weather or hazy and somewhat overcast conditions, as this will maximise the thermal value of the refugia for basking reptiles.

During each visit surveyors also undertook a visual inspection survey of other suitable refugia in the site and other suitable basking locations. During the survey a note was also made of any suitable hibernation features present within the site.

3.8.2 Survey Details

A total of 26 reptile refugia were distributed on 18th August 2025 with seven inspection visits undertaken between 8th September and October 2025. **Table 3** provides details of each reptile survey.

Table 3: Reptile survey details

Survey Date	Air Temperature (°C)	Weather Conditions
8 th September 2025	19	Sunny, with 20% cloud cover and no breeze.
12 th September 2025	14	Dry and sunny, with 10% cloud cover and a light breeze.
17 th September 2025	14	Overcast and dry, 80% cloud cover and a light breeze.
22 nd September 2025	17	Dry, with 60% cloud cover and a light breeze.
1 st October 2025	15	Dry with some showers, 100% cloud cover and no breeze.
5 th October 2025	16	Sunny with 10% cloud cover and no breeze.
15 th October 2025	15	Dry with 70% cloud cover and a light breeze.

The reptile survey was coordinated by Hugh Turner, Principal Ecologist of ECOSA assisted by suitably experienced ECOSA surveyors.

3.8.3 Survey Limitations

There were no significant limitations to the reptile survey.

3.9 Great Crested Newt Survey

3.9.1 Survey Methods

Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment

Those ponds and waterbodies located within a 500 metre radius of the site (**Map 5**), where access permitted, were subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment (Oldham, et al., 2000). HSI is a numerical index between 0 and 1, derived from an assessment of ten habitat variables known to influence the presence of great crested newt such as geographical location, water body size and permanence, presence of predatory fish and wildfowl, availability of suitable terrestrial habitat and proximity to other ponds. Each factor is scored based on its level of suitability for great crested newt. An HSI of 1 is optimal habitat (high probability of occurrence), while an HSI of 0 is very poor habitat (minimal probability of occurrence). The HSI is calculated on a single pond basis, but takes into account surrounding terrestrial habitat and local pond density. If a pond has a very low HSI score (<0.5) there would typically be a minimal chance of great crested newt presence.

This qualitative score can then be used, with caution, to indicate whether further detailed investigations are necessary or whether a particular waterbody can be 'scoped out' as unsuitable for great crested newts. However, professional judgement should be used rather than simply relying on the HSI to eliminate ponds from further assessment. Further detailed investigations would involve targeted surveys carried out between mid-March and mid-June to determine presence/absence of great crested newt and if present then an assessment of population status.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) Survey

The great crested newt environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling was undertaken following current best practice guidelines (Biggs, et al., 2014).

Given the presence of a number of waterbodies within 500 metres of the site boundary an environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis was undertaken to establish the presence / likely absence of great crested newt from within the ponds which were accessible (**Map 5**).

The field sampling entailed the collection of 20 samples of 30 millilitres of water from pre-selected sub-sampling sites around the margin of each waterbody. Sub-sampling sites are chosen to include areas where great crested newt are likely to be present such as areas of vegetation where they may be egg laying and areas of open water where they may be displaying. The 20 samples are then mixed into a single sterile bag from which six samples of water of 15ml are taken each of which is preserved in 35ml of ethanol. The samples are then refrigerated until analysis at the lab. The samples

were sent to SureScreen Scientific eDNA testing service for analysis which were analysed in line with current guidance (Biggs, et al., 2014). The samples were taken within the required season (mid-April to June) when great crested newt eDNA is likely to be present within the pond and therefore, the analysis result indicates the presence or likely absence of the species from a given waterbody.

Presence/Absence and/or Population Size Class Assessment Surveys

The great crested newt survey was undertaken in line with current best practice guidelines (English Nature, 2001).

Following the results of the eDNA analysis further great crested newt surveys were undertaken in order to establish the population size class present. In accordance with the guidelines a minimum of three survey methods were employed on six survey visits between April and mid-June 2024. Half of the survey visits were undertaken between mid-April and mid-May. The survey methods employed included torch searches, egg searches, sweep netting and bottle trapping.

The torch searches consisted of an investigation of the ponds after dark using a one million candlepower torch to search for adult great crested newt. All amphibians encountered were counted and sexed, where possible.

The egg search consisted of a methodical inspection of all suitable marginal vegetation for folded leaves that may indicate great crested newt egg laying activity. If great crested newt eggs were encountered during the survey this methodology was abandoned since exposure of eggs increases their risk of predation. This survey technique is only used to confirm presence and therefore, once presence has been confirmed other methods are utilised in order to determine population size class.

The sweep netting survey consisted of an investigation of each waterbody using a long-handled net. All newts encountered were counted and sexed, where possible. This survey technique is only used to confirm presence and therefore, once presence has been confirmed other methods are utilised in order to determine population size class.

The bottle trapping methodology involved submerging plastic bottle traps into the waterbodies at dusk. During the night newts swim into the traps and are unable to exit until released. The traps are then checked the following dawn and all newts are recorded and released, and the traps removed from the waterbodies. The traps were set at a density of one trap per two metres of waterbody margin where access was possible.

3.9.2 Survey Details

Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment

The great crested newt HSI assessment was carried out by Hannah Gunn, Ecologist of ECOSA (Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence No. 2024-11833-CL08-GCN) on 22nd April 2024. The weather conditions were dry with approximately 50% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 9°C and a light breeze.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) Survey

The eDNA sampling was carried out Hannah Gunn, Ecologist of ECOSA (Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence No. 2024-11833-CL08-GCN) and Ryan Brazendale, Assistant Ecologist of ECOSA on 22nd April 2024. The weather conditions were dry with approximately 50% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 9°C and a light breeze.

Presence/Absence and/or Population Size Class Assessment Surveys

A total of six survey visits were undertaken between April and June 2024 with half of the survey visits undertaken between mid-April and mid-May. **Table 4** provides details of each great crested newt survey.

Table 4: Great crested newt presence/absence and/or population size class assessment survey details

Survey Date	Survey Techniques	Waterbodies Surveyed	Air Temperature (°C)	Weather Conditions
23 rd April 2024	Torch, Egg, Sweep Net & Bottle Trap	Ponds 1 & 6	9°C	Dry and calm with 100% cloud cover.
7 th May 2025	Bottle Trap, Torch, Egg & Sweep Net	Ponds 1 & 6	14°C	Dry and calm with 50% cloud cover.
23 rd May 2024	Bottle Trap, Torch & Sweep Net	Ponds 1, 6, 7 & 8	12°C	Cry and calm, with 0% cloud cover.
28 th May 2024	Bottle Trap, Torch & Sweep Net	Ponds 1, 6, 7 & 8	14°C	Raining, with 100% cloud cover and a moderate breeze.
5 th June 2024	Bottle Trap, Torch & Sweep Net	Ponds 1, 6, 7 & 8	14°C	Dry, with 50% cloud cover and a light breeze.
15 th June 2024	Bottle Trap, Sweep Net, Torch & Egg	Ponds 1, 6, 7 & 8	11°C	Dry and calm with 10% cloud cover.

The great crested newt surveys were led by Hannah Gunn, Ecologist of ECOSA (Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence No. 2024-11833-CL08-GCN), Olivia Walton, Ecologist of ECOSA (Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence No. 2020-48689-CLS-CLS), Joseph Hunt, Field Ecologist of ECOSA (Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence No. 2023-11046-CL08-GCN) assisted by suitably qualified and experienced ECOSA surveyors.

3.9.3 Survey Limitations

During the survey carried out on 5th June 2024 the water level of ponds 1 and 6, thus fewer bottle traps were deployed than during previous surveys. During the survey carried out on 15th June 2024, the water level in pond 6 was too low to deploy bottle traps, and thus egg search techniques were used instead.

3.10 Criteria used to Assess Ecological Value

The evaluation criteria used in this report are based on ECOSA's professional judgement and publicly available publications, survey data and other sources as referenced in the main text. The evaluation is based on a sliding scale of importance as follows; international and European, national, regional, county, local and site. There are a wide range of characteristics which contribute to the importance of ecological features, and these may justify an increase or reduction in the value of an ecological feature. Where deviations occur, these will be explained in the evaluation section of this report (Section 4.0). Current published relevant guidance, including information sources such as A Nature Conservation Review (Ratcliffe, 1977) and Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom (CIEEM, 2018) have also been used to inform the assessment.

4.0 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS AND EVALUATION

4.1 Introduction

This section details the results of the Ecological Impact Assessment undertaken for the site. It assesses the baseline ecological conditions of the site at the time the desktop study was completed and based on the findings of the field survey and subsequent protected species surveys. This section also provides an assessment of the ecological value of ecological features present at the site.

4.2 Statutory Designated Sites

4.2.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

There are no statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest situated within one kilometre of the site boundary. The closest designated site is Coppedhall Hanger SSSI located approximately 1.5 kilometres south-west of the site (designated for its geology). The Arun Valley SPA also lies over 10 kilometres south of the site (important for supporting populations of overwintering Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* and for its extensive floodplain/wetland habitats).

The site falls within the 6.5 kilometre key conservation area buffer of The Mens SAC (important area of broad-leaved woodland, supporting a population of barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus* bats), outlined in Policy SD10 of the South Downs Local Plan, which lies approximately 5.7 kilometres south-west of the site. Ebernoe Common SAC (important for its support of beech forests and support of barbastelle bat and Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*) is also located approximately 10.5 kilometres west of the site, thus falling within the 12 kilometre wider conservation area of the SAC.

4.2.2 Evaluation

There are no statutory designated sites within one kilometre of the site and does not lie within the five kilometre buffer zone for Arun Valley SPA. The site falls within the 6.5 key conservation area for The Mens SAC and the 12 kilometre wider conservation area of Ebernoe Common SAC.

4.3 Habitats

4.3.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with SxBRC returned records of Habitats of Principal Importance within with site and within a one kilometre radius of the site.

Deciduous woodland is located in the south of the site, which is well connected to further blocks of woodland in the east, and ancient woodland in the west. Extensive

deciduous and ancient woodland is also present directly adjacent to the north of the site, overlapping with the wider ownership of the site by the existing school. A small area of traditional orchards is also located approximately 320 metres west of the site.

Field Survey Results

Habitats within the site are shown on the Baseline Habitat Map (**Map 2**) and details of how each habitat has been classified based on the UKHab five-level hierarchical system, with relevant secondary codes, are provided in **Appendix 5**. Habitats are described in general terms using standard UKHab terminology. The main habitats recorded on site during the field survey were as follows:

Neutral Grassland

The former garden of one of the central buildings is comprised of neutral grassland (**Figure 1**), dominated by Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, and annual meadow-grass *Poa annua*. Vascular plants present within the grassland include ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, common birds-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, and yarrow *Achillea millefolium*. Scattered scrub is also present within the grassland, dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* aggregate.

An additional parcel of neutral grassland is present in the west of the site (**Figure 2**), within the woodland. Grass species included creeping bent, cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, and Yorkshire fog, with vascular plants such as perforate St John's-wort *Hypericum perforatum*, were present.



Figure 1: Neutral grassland in the former garden of one of the derelict buildings.



Figure 2: Neutral grassland within the woodland on the west of the site.

Modified Grassland

Areas of modified grassland are present within the north of the site, associated with the northernmost derelict building (**Figure 3 & Figure 4**). The grassland is dominated by perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, red fescue *Festuca rubra*, and Yorkshire fog, with

vascular plants including common comfrey *Symphytum officinale*, and ribwort plantain. Scattered scrub dominated by bramble was also present.



Figure 3: Modified grassland west of the building.



Figure 4: modified grassland to the east of the building.

Line of Trees

A line of western red-cedar is present in the centre of the site wrapping around one of the central derelict buildings (**Figure 5 & Figure 6**).



Figure 5: Line of western red-cedar in the centre of the site.



Figure 6: Line of western red-cedar in the centre of the site.

Other woodland broadleaved

An area of broadleaved woodland is present in the north-eastern corner of the site (**Figure 7**), comprised of pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, and holly *Ilex aquifolium*.



Figure 7: Broadleaved woodland in the north-east of the site.

Other woodland; mixed; mainly broadleaved

The majority of the site is dominated by woodland with a mix of broadleaved and coniferous species (**Figure 8** and **Figure 9**). Deciduous species included pedunculate oak, field maple *Acer campestre*, and small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*. Coniferous species present within the site included western red-cedar *Thuja plicata*. Leaf litter and deadwood is scattered throughout the woodland, with a variety of tree age classes present.

Variegated yellow archangel *Lamium galeobdolon subsp. argentatum* was also identified in the north of the site near the public footpath. This species is invasive and listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 please see **Appendix 2** for more details.

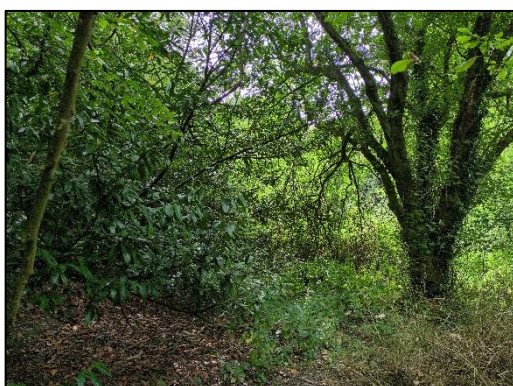


Figure 8: View of the woodland dominating the site.



Figure 9: Area of mixed woodland with clearing and leaf litter.

Developed land; sealed surface

An access road passing through the centre of the site is present, alongside a small parking area on the west of the site (**Figure 10**).



Figure 10: Access road and small parking area present in the centre of the site.

Sparsely vegetated urban land

An area of sparsely vegetated land is present in centre of the site (**Figure 11**). Present species included bramble, spear thistle, moth mullein *Verbascum blattaria*, enchanters' nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, and spear mint *Mentha spicata*.



Figure 11: Sparsely vegetated land in the centre of the site.

Buildings

Seven buildings are present within the site all of which are derelict flats and homes, as well as some derelict garages in the east of the site.

4.3.2 Evaluation

The habitats with the highest ecological value are the broadleaved and mixed woodlands and treelines throughout the site. The remaining habitats within the site are common and widespread in the context of the wider landscape. The habitats on the site are assessed as being of site level importance.

4.4 Bats

4.4.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with MAGIC returned no records of granted EPSM licences within two kilometres of the site. However, 117 records of granted EPSM licences within 12 kilometres of the site were returned. One of these impacted barbastelle was granted in 2019 while none impacted Bechstein's bat. The closest record to the site is located approximately 2.5 kilometres north-west of the site and was granted in 2015. This licence allowed the destruction of a resting and breeding place for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus* and Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*.

Consultation with SxBRC returned 50 records of bats within two kilometres of the site, including barbastelle, serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, *Myotis* species⁷, *Nyctalus* species, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, *Plecotus* species⁸, and brown long-eared bat. Within these records were 16 records of roosts, including maternity roosts and hibernacula roosts, the closest of which was a maternity roost associated with the neighbouring dairy farm in 1992. The most recent records of bats were dated 2024.

ECOSA carried out bat emergence surveys in 2019 (ECOSA, 2019) which confirmed the presence of a maternity bat roost and numerous day roosts for common pipistrelle in Building 1. Additionally, Building 8 was assessed as supporting day roosts for both common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle.

Field Survey Results

Building Assessment

A detailed building assessment was carried out by The Ecology Co-op (The Ecology Co-op, 2025) which determined four of the buildings on site provided suitability for roosting bats.

Building 1 was assessed as having moderate bat roosting suitability, with a confirmed roost within one of the roof voids following the discovery of fresh droppings. Buildings

⁷ There are seven species of *Myotis* bats in Britain. *Myotis* bats are very difficult to identify specifically, this can generally only be done by examination of physical features and Phylogenetic Analysis Identification of bat droppings. Many of these bats are common and will utilise buildings for roosting often occupying small and inaccessible voids. For the purpose of this report all species shall be referred to as *Myotis* bats unless a specific identification has been possible.

⁸ There are seven species of *Myotis* bats in Britain. *Myotis* bats are very difficult to identify specifically, this can generally only be done by examination of physical features and Phylogenetic Analysis Identification of bat droppings. Many of these bats are common and will utilise buildings for roosting often occupying small and inaccessible voids. For the purpose of this report all species shall be referred to as *Myotis* bats unless a specific identification has been possible.

2, 5 and 7 were assessed as having low suitability for roosting bats. All remaining buildings on the site were assessed as having negligible suitability for roosting bats.

Tree Assessment

A full ground level tree assessment was not carried out as part of the initial field survey, however a number of potential bat roosting features were identified on trees on site. Therefore the site is assessed as having suitability to support tree roosting bats.

Foraging and Commuting Habitat

The habitats on site provide foraging and commuting opportunities for bats but are limited in extent and has some connectivity to off-site habitats via adjacent hedgerows. Overall the site is assessed as having moderate suitability to support foraging and commuting bats.

4.4.2 Evaluation

Roosting Bats

The site provides suitable roosting habitat for bats within the buildings and mature trees on the site, however the result of the bat emergence surveys are currently unknown, so the level of importance of the site for roosting bats cannot be assessed.

There has been no significant change to the site since the surveys in 2019, and with addition of the droppings found in Building 1 by The Ecology Co-op in 2025, it is considered that the bat roosts present in 2019 are likely still in use.

Foraging and Commuting Bats

The site provides suitable foraging and commuting habitat for bats in the form of woodland and treelines and is well connected to further suitable habitat in the surrounding area. These habitats are common and widespread in the context of the wider landscape; thus the site is assessed as being of site level importance to bats.

4.5 Otter

4.5.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with SxBRC produced no records of otter *Lutra lutra* within the desktop study area, however, this does not confirm the absence of the species in the local area. The River Aran is present approximately 2.3 kilometres west of the site and supports otter.

Field Survey Results

There are no watercourses present on site, however drainage ditches are present along the northern and western site boundaries (although just outside of the site boundary). Tributaries of the River Arun are located approximately 60 metres to the south and 330 metres to the north of the site, however online OS mapping and aerial imagery does not show any hydrological connectivity between these tributaries and the ditches bounding the site. Furthermore, the Ingfield Manor School development to the north and the Slinfoldland Farm site to the west are likely to deter otter from entering the site due to high levels of disturbance. Habitat present on the site itself is not suitable for the species, therefore, otter is not considered further in this report

4.6

4.6.2 Evaluation

4.7 Hazel Dormouse

4.7.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with SxBRC returned 11 records of hazel dormouse within three kilometres of the site between 2002-2023. The closest of which is located approximately 1.85 kilometres southeast of the site, south of New Road.

Field Survey Results

The site provides suitable habitats for hazel dormouse within the dense woodland and treelines, as well as fruit bearing trees and scrubs. The site is well connected to further suitable habitat in the wider landscape including the block of woodland to the north and west of the site

Hazel Dormouse Survey Results

The hazel dormouse survey confirmed the absence of the species from the site. The results of the hazel dormouse survey are presented in **Table 5**. Locations of the hazel dormouse records are provided on **Map 3**.

Table 5: Hazel dormouse survey results

Survey Date	Results
1 st October 2025	Two wood mouse nests were found during this survey. No evidence of hazel dormouse was observed.
11 th November 2025	Two food caches and a wood mouse nest were found during the survey. No evidence of hazel dormouse was observed.
12 th December 2025	No evidence of hazel dormouse was found during this survey.

4.7.2 Evaluation

The hazel dormouse surveys confirmed the likely absence of the species on site; therefore the site has been assessed as no greater than site level importance for the species if present.

4.8 Water Vole

4.8.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with SxBRC produced no records of water vole within the desktop study area, however, this does not confirm the absence of the species in the local area.

Field Survey Results

The site does not provide suitable habitat for water vole *Amphibius arvicola*, see Paragraph 4.5.1 for details. As such, the species is not considered further within this report.

4.9 Birds

4.9.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with SxBRC returned 154 records of at least 30 different species of birds between 1981-2023. These records included red list⁹ species such as nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* and red kite *Milvus milvus*, as well as amber list¹⁰ species including dunnoek *Prunella modularis* and whitethroat *Curruca communis*.

Field Survey Results

The site provides suitable foraging and nesting opportunities for birds within the woodland and tree lines, with fruit bearing trees and scrubs present throughout. The buildings on site may also provide nesting opportunities for some bird.

Due to the limited size of the grassland on site, it is considered unlikely that the site supports a significant assemblage of wintering birds, and this species group is not considered further in this report.

4.9.2 Evaluation

The site provides nesting opportunities for a range of common bird species. Given the extent of the woodland and hedgerows present within the wider landscape, the habitat on site is considered to be of site level importance to breeding birds.

⁹ The UK's birds are split in to three categories of conservation importance - red, amber and green. Red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action. Amber is the next most critical group, followed by green. Red List criteria include species which are: globally threatened; have been subject to historical population decline in UK during 1800–1995; are in severe (at least 50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or longer-term period, or; subject to severe (at least 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or longer-term period.

¹⁰ The UK's birds are split in to three categories of conservation importance - red, amber and green. Red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action. Amber is the next most critical group, followed by green. Amber list criteria include species which are: in unfavourable conservation status in Europe; subject to historical population decline during 1800–1995, but recovering; subject to moderate (25-49%) decline in UK breeding population or contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or the longer-term period; subject to moderate (25-49%) decline in UK non-breeding population over last 25 years, or the longer-term period; rare breeders (1–300 breeding pairs in UK); rare non-breeders (less than 900 individuals), or; internationally important species with at least 20% of European breeding or non-breeding population in UK.

4.10 Reptiles

4.10.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with SxBRC produced no records of reptiles within the desktop study area, however, this does not confirm the absence of this species group in the local area.

Field Survey Results

The site provides suitable foraging and sheltering/hibernating habitats for reptiles in the form of tussocky grassland and woodland edges. These habitats provide opportunities for common species of reptile such as slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* and common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*.

Reptile Survey Results

A summary of the reptile surveys at the site is provided in **Table 6** and on **Map 4**. Slow-worm was the only species of reptile found at the site, with a peak count of two adults found on the 12th September. No reptiles were recorded in October.

Table 6: Summary of reptile survey results

Survey Date	Number of Individuals Recorded	
	Slow-worm	
	Adult	Juvenile
8 th September 2025	1	0
12 th September 2025	2	0
17 th September 2025	0	0
22 nd September 2025	1	0
1 st October 2025	0	0
6 th October 2025	0	0
15 th October 2025	0	0
Peak Count	2	0

4.10.2 Evaluation

Population Class Size Assessment

Table 7 shows the current guidance (Froglife, 1999) for assessing the population size of reptiles based on a refugia density of 10 per hectare. A density of 50 refugia per 1.5 hectare was used at the site and therefore the population size assessment has been adjusted accordingly.

Table 7: Criteria for population size assessment based upon a refugia density of 50 per 1.5 hectare

Species	Low Population	Good Population	Exceptional Population
Slow-worm	<17	17-70	>70

Given the peak count of two adult slow-worm, the site can be said to support a low population of slow-worm.

Evaluation

The suitable habitats for reptiles on the site are common and widespread in the surrounding area. Additionally, the reptile surveys returned a low population class for slow-worm only. Thus, the site is considered to be of site level importance to reptiles.

4.11 Great Crested Newt

4.11.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with MAGIC did not return any records of granted EPSM licences regarding great crested newt within two kilometres of the site. The closest record within the wider landscape was located approximately 2.3 kilometres north-east of the site, granted in 2013 and allowed the destruction of a resting place for great crested newt. Consultation with SxBRC produced no records of great crested newt within the desktop study area.

A review of OS mapping and aerial imagery revealed the presence of eight standing water bodied within 500 metres of the site. Details of these are shown in **Table 8**.

Field Survey Results

The site does not contain any standing water bodies, however drainage ditches on the northern and western boundaries are present and have been reported to have flowing water at points during the year. The ditch at the north of the site lies within close proximity to pond 8. It is therefore possible that great crested newt may use the ditch habitat for foraging/commuting, particularly given the network of ponds within 500

metres of the site, the closest of which is approximately 40 metres from the northern boundary. The terrestrial habitats on site offers opportunities for foraging and hibernating great crested newt during its terrestrial phase in the form of woodland edges, fallen deadwood and scrub.

Great Crested Newt HSI Assessment Results

Details of the ponds HSI Assessment results are in **Table 8**.

Table 8: Ponds within 500m of Site Boundary - Details

Pond No.	NGR	Location in Relation to Site Boundary	HSI Score	HSI Suitability	Waterbody Description	Access Possible	Further Survey
1	TQ 0889 2880	Approximately 260 metres north-west of the site.	0.67	Average	Medium pond located in the edge of a woodland, highly shaded with minimal macrophyte coverage.	Yes	eDNA & Population Size Class Assessment
2	TQ 0867 2870	Approximately 430 metres west of the site.	0.62	Average	Large open pond with large fish and ducks. Minimal shading and macrophyte cover.	Yes	eDNA
3	TQ 0971 2882	Approximately 380 metres north-east of the site.	0.33	Poor	Small open within field surrounded by trees. Lots of duckweed coverage, well shaded.	Yes	eDNA
4	TQ 0970 2874	Approximately 410 metres east of the site.	0.53	Below Average	Medium pond within woodland, macrophytes present and well shaded.	Yes	eDNA
5	TQ 0971 2859	Approximately 450 metres east of the site.	0.66	Average	Medium pond within the woodland east of the school, within the wider ownership of the site.	Yes	eDNA
6	TQ 0922 2884	Approximately 100 metres north of the site boundary within the wider ownership of the site.	0.72	Good	A small man-made pond within the grounds of the specialist school north of the site. Within the wider ownership of the site.	Yes	eDNA & Population Size Class Assessment
7	TQ 0913 2880	Approximately 100 metres north of the site within the	-	-	A small man-made pond with brick edges within the grounds of the specialist school north of the site. Within the wider ownership of the site.	Yes	Population Size Class Assessment

Pond No.	NGR	Location in Relation to Site Boundary	HSI Score	HSI Suitability	Waterbody Description	Access Possible	Further Survey
		wider ownership of the site.					
8	TQ 0918 2874	Approximately 40 metres north of the site within the wider ownership of the site.	-	-	Medium pond located in the edge of a woodland, highly shaded with minimal macrophyte coverage.	Yes	Population Size Class Assessment

Great Crested Newt eDNA Survey Results

The eDNA surveys returned positive results for the presence of great crested newt in ponds 1, 6, 7 and 8. Negative results for the presence of great crested newt were returned for ponds 2, 3, 4 and 5, therefore great crested newt is considered to be absent from these ponds.

Great Crested Newt Survey Results

Great crested were found in Pond 6, with a peak count of 8, and ponds 7 and 8, each with a peak count of 1. All ponds surveyed had smooth newt, palmate newt and common newt. Pond 7 had the highest numbers of smooth newt, with a peak count of 19. Pond 1 had the highest peak count of palmate newt at 20 individuals. Pond 6 also had a peak count of 29 common newt individuals. Common frog were found in ponds 1, 6 and 8.

Table 9 presents the results of the great crested newt survey with location of ponds where great crested newt were recorded provided on **Map 5**. Great crested were found in Pond 6, with a peak count of 8, and ponds 7 and 8, each with a peak count of 1. All ponds surveyed had smooth newt, palmate newt and common newt. Pond 7 had the highest numbers of smooth newt, with a peak count of 19. Pond 1 had the highest peak count of palmate newt at 20 individuals. Pond 6 also had a peak count of 29 common newt individuals. Common frog were found in ponds 1, 6 and 8.

Table 9: Summary of Great Crested Newt Survey Results

Pond No.	Peak Count				Other Amphibians
	Great Crested Newt	Smooth Newt	Palmate Newt	Common Newt ¹¹	
1	0	3	20	10	1
6	8	8	12	29	2
7	1	19	9	5	0
8	1	4	9	15	1

4.11.2 Evaluation

Population Class Size Assessment

It is difficult to establish the true size of a population of great crested newt, due to variations in sampling efficiency and the complex population dynamics involved. Hence, population estimation methods can only give an indication of whether the

¹¹ A "Common Newt" is an unidentified smooth or palmate newt identified by torch light but where it was not possible to distinguish between the two species

population is small, medium or large in terms of the number of newts present in the breeding pond.

In accordance with Natural England guidance (English Nature, 2001) survey results should be expressed as peak adult counts per pond per night gained through field survey methods, and a total site count, if appropriate.

Populations can then be classed as:

- 'small' for maximum counts up to 10;
- 'medium' for maximum counts between 11 and 100; or
- 'large' for maximum counts over 100.

Evaluation

The eDNA and presence/absence surveys confirmed the presence of great crested newt within three of the ponds within 500 metres of the site, with a peak count of 8 great crested newts in Pond 6. All three ponds were assessed as having low populations of great crested newt. The site offers some suitable foraging and commuting opportunities for terrestrial great crested newt, however these habitats are common and widespread in the surrounding area. The site is assessed as having site level importance to terrestrial great crested newt.

4.12 Invertebrates

4.12.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with SxBRC returned nine records of invertebrates, all of which were *Lepidoptera*.

Field Survey Results

The site provides suitable habitats for invertebrates in the form of the woodland, with leaf litter and deadwood present throughout, mature trees and flowering plants within the grasslands. The majority of these habitats are likely to support common and widespread invertebrate species and assemblages; however, deadwood and mature trees may support more notable species such as stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*.

4.13 Other Relevant Species

4.13.1 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Desktop Study Results

SxBRC returned a single record of European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* within two kilometres of the site. This record was dated 2005 and therefore may not be a reliable representation of this species status in the landscape.

Field Survey Results

The dense woodland and tussocky grassland provide suitable habitat for foraging European hedgehog. The site is also well connected to further suitable habitats for European hedgehog in the form of woodland blocks and open grasslands.

4.13.2 Evaluation

Given the extent of suitable habitat for European hedgehog and common toad in the wider landscape, the site is considered to be no greater than site level importance for these species.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS AND MITIGATION/COMPENSATION/ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

5.1 Introduction

This section assesses the ecological effects of the proposed development scheme on the identified ecological features as identified in Section 4.0. Methods for addressing potential impacts on ecological features have been approached in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy¹² with avoidance of impacts prioritised where possible. Where significant adverse effects cannot be avoided other forms of mitigation are prioritised over compensation. Enhancement measures have been detailed, where relevant, in order to not only minimise the impacts on biodiversity but also to provide enhancement in accordance with Paragraph 174 of the NPPF (Paragraph 2.2). It is anticipated that mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures will be secured through the planning process.

5.2 Scheme Design

The proposed development entails the demolition of the seven derelict buildings on site and the installation of new school buildings with associated parking and play areas.

The potential ecological impacts and effects of these proposals, in the absence of mitigation, are described for each ecological feature below. For each ecological feature, measures to mitigate and/or compensate for significant effects are described.

5.3 Designated Sites

5.3.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

There are no statutory designated sites within one kilometre of the site boundary. The closest is Coppedhall Hanger SSSI located approximately 1.5 kilometres south-west of the site. The sites do not fall within the Zone of Influence of the Arun Valley.

The site falls within the 6.5 kilometre key conservation area Zone of Influence of The Mens SAC, as well as the 12 kilometre wider conservation area of the Ebernoe SAC.

5.3.2 Mitigation Measures

A Shadow Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will be prepared in order to determine if there will be a significant effect on designated sites; Ebernoe Common and The Mens SACs.

¹² In accordance with CIEEM Ecological Impact Assessment guidance (CIEEM, 2018) a sequential process is adopted to address impacts on features of ecological interest, with 'Avoidance' prioritised at the top of the hierarchy and Compensation/Enhancement' at the bottom. This is often referred to as the 'mitigation hierarchy'.

5.3.3 Significance of Residual Effects

No significant residual effects on designated sites are anticipated as a result of the proposals.

5.3.4 Enhancement

No enhancement measures are recommended with regard to designated sites.

5.4 Habitats

5.4.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

The proposals will result in the removal of woodland, hedgerows and grassland habitats on site. There is also the potential for the invasive species variegated yellow archangel to spread across the site.

5.4.2 Mitigation Measures

Retained habitats will be protected from damage during construction by installing protective fencing around buffer areas. The installation of protective fencing should follow guidance set out in BS 5837:2012 – Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction (British Standards Institution, 2012).

A specialist contractor will be employed to appropriately remove and dispose of variegated yellow archangel from the site.

5.4.3 Significance of Residual Effects

To accommodate the scheme, the loss of habitats cannot be mitigated for. This is considered of moderate significance at the site level.

5.4.4 Compensation

New planting of native trees and grassland species will be carried out within the site. Non-native species and cultivars will be avoided.

Tree species should include species such as pedunculate oak, beech *Fagus sylvatica*, hazel, and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. A grassland mix such as Emorsgate EL1 flowering lawn mixture or similar should be used to replace lost grassland.

5.4.5 Enhancement

To accord with national and local policy the proposals will be subject to a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment and will need to achieve 10% net gain of the baseline biodiversity. This will likely be achieved through a combination of onsite and offsite planting and credits.

New scrub planting should be carried out throughout the site and include native fruiting species such as hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, dog-rose *Rosa canina*, and elder *Sambucus nigra*.

5.5 Bats

5.5.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

Demolition of the on-site buildings will result in the loss of historic bat roosts. Roosting bats may also be harmed during demolition works. The removal of trees on the site may also result in the disturbance, killing or injury of bats. The extent of impacts to bats will be determined by the results of the bat surveys.

The proposals will result in a minor loss of foraging and commuting habitat for bats with the removal of trees and hedgerows. External lighting installed post-development has the potential to cause disturbance to foraging and commuting bats utilising boundary and on-site vegetation.

In England, bats and their habitat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through inclusion in Schedule 5. In addition, all bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Refer to **Appendix 2** for details.

5.5.2 Mitigation Measures

A EPSM licence will need to be applied for and granted prior to the demolition of Buildings 1, 8, and any other buildings that further buildings identify as supporting roosting bats.

The species protection provision of the Habitats Directive, as implemented by the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 2017 contains three 'derogation tests' which must be applied by the Local Planning Authority at the Planning Application stage and by Natural England when deciding whether to grant a licence to a person carrying out an activity which would harm a European Protected Species. The three tests that must be met in order to successfully obtain a Natural England protected species licence are as follows:

- *The consented operation must be for 'preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment';*
- *There must be 'no satisfactory alternative'; and*

- *The action authorised 'will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range'.*

Preserving Public Health and Safety or other Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest

The existing buildings are not fit for purpose and do not fulfil the needs of the college.

No Satisfactory Alternative

A “do nothing approach” is not a viable proposition due to the factors outlined above.

Maintaining the Favourable Conservation Status of the Species at the Site

The licence application will require the preparation of a statement which details the methods for maintaining the conservation status of the species at the site. This can be achieved by the following measures:

- Given the low status of the roosts, there would be no limitations to the timings of the works during the bat active season (March to October, inclusive). However, works should take place outside of the key hibernation period, when bats are less vulnerable to disturbance, so as to minimise the impact on bat roosting locations;
- The roof void would be lined with bitumen roofing felt or non-bitumen coated roofing membrane (NBCRM) that has passed a ‘snagging propensity test’ instead of Breathable Roofing Membrane (BRM);
- Three vivara pro woodstone bat boxes will be installed on suitable trees within the retained other lowland mixed deciduous woodland prior to the demolition works commencing at the site;
- Prior to any works commencing at the site, the buildings will be inspected externally and internally by a licensed bat worker to locate any roosting bats. Where considered appropriate, any bats found will be placed within bat boxes that will be installed within the wider site prior to the works commencing;
- A toolbox talk will be given to contractors on site, and signage will be installed informing contractors of issues relating to bats and the development works; and
- To ensure that no bats are injured or maimed during the demolition process, careful removal / inspection of tiles, soffits and lead flashing will be carried out by a licensed bat worker using hand tools. Any bats found during works will be

placed within bat boxes that will be installed within the wider site prior to the works commencing.

New external lighting to be installed on the new development will comprise hooded luminaires directed away from vegetation and the adjacent boundary hedgerow and woodland habitats. Ideally the bulbs will be LED and at the warmer end of the spectrum (i.e. avoiding blue or white light). LED lights emit much lower levels of UV and therefore have a lower impact on wildlife. The new lighting will be task-related, associated with specific entrance/exit points of the development. The lux level will be as low as possible to allow the task to be carried out safely and effectively. Guidance on task-related lighting levels and mitigation options as described within the Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK report will be followed (Institution of Lighting Professionals, Bat Conservation Trust, 2023).

5.5.3 Significance of Residual Effects

The loss of suitable bat roosting, foraging and commuting habitats cannot be mitigated for within the scheme.

5.5.4 Compensation

Compensation measures will include the installation of five Schwegler 2F (or similar) bat boxes on suitably mature trees within the site.

5.5.5 Enhancement

No enhancement measures are recommended regarding bats.

5.6

5.6.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5.6.2 Mitigation Measures

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5.6.4 Enhancement



5.7 Hazel Dormouse

5.7.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

Results of the dormouse surveys confirmed that hazel dormouse are likely absent from the site, however, if they are present, vegetation clearance could result in the injury and killing of hazel dormouse. The proposals will also result in the minor loss of suitable habitat for hazel dormouse.

In England, hazel dormouse and their habitat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through inclusion in Schedule 5. In addition, this species is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Refer to **Appendix 2** for details.

5.7.2 Mitigation Measures

While it is unlikely that hazel dormouse are present on site, a precautionary method of work will be implemented during vegetation clearance. This will involve an ecologist being present on the site to check and supervise the habitat removal. In the unlikely event that hazel dormouse is identified during the clearance, works will immediately cease and Natural England will be contacted. An EPSM licence for hazel dormouse may be required from Natural England if hazel dormouse is encountered during the works.

5.7.3 Significance of Residual Effects

The loss of suitable hazel dormouse habitat cannot be mitigated for through the scheme design.

5.7.4 Enhancement

Hazel dormouse will benefit from the native species planting detailed in paragraphs 0 and 5.4.5.

5.8 Birds

5.8.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

The proposals will result in the loss of suitable breeding bird habitats. Breeding birds may be harmed during vegetation clearance and building demolition works.

All birds, their nests, eggs and young are legally protected, with certain exceptions, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Refer to **Appendix 2** for details.

5.8.2 Mitigation Measures

Vegetation clearance and demolition works will be carried out outside of the breeding bird season of March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, an ecologist will check for active nests ahead of works commencing. All active nests should be left with a suitable buffer until the nest has been left.

5.8.3 Significance of Residual Effects

To accommodate the scheme, the loss of suitable nesting bird habitats cannot be mitigated for.

5.8.4 Compensation

To replace lost nesting opportunities for breeding birds, five Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone® Nest Box (or similar) will be installed on suitably mature trees within the site.

5.8.5 Enhancement

Breeding birds will benefit from the new native species planting detailed in paragraphs 0 and 5.4.5.

5.9 Reptiles

5.9.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

Reptile surveys confirmed the presence of a low population of slow-worm within the site. The proposals will result in the minor loss of suitable habitat for slow-worm. Habitat removal has the potential to result in the injury or killing of slow-worm.

Widespread reptile species (slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and adder *Vipera berus*) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 against harm. Refer to **Appendix 2** for details.

5.9.2 Mitigation Measures

Slow-worm will be considered during the translocation and destructive search works detailed below in paragraph 5.10.2.

5.9.3 Significance of Residual Effects

To accommodate the scheme, the loss of suitable reptile habitats cannot be mitigated for.

5.9.4 Enhancement

Reptiles will benefit from the provision of hibernacula detailed in paragraph 5.10.4.

5.10 Great Crested Newt

5.10.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

The proposals could result in harm to individual great crested newt in their terrestrial phase. No breeding ponds will be lost as a result of the proposals.

In England, great crested newt and their habitat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through inclusion in Schedule 5. In addition, this species is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Refer to **Appendix 2** for details.

5.10.2 Mitigation Measures

As a result of the loss of great crested newt terrestrial habitat at the site, a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence will be required prior to the development works commencing. This can only be applied for once planning permission is in place with any relevant wildlife conditions discharged.

The EPSM licence application will require the preparation of a clear and reasoned Method Statement which details the methods for maintaining the conservation status of the species at the site.

Exclusion fencing will be installed around the boundary of the site. This will prevent movement of great crested newt into the development area following the translocation of animals. This fence will be maintained in good condition throughout the development. Internal drift fencing to aid the capture of animals will also be installed which will be removed prior to the commencement of the development.

The area enclosed by the exclusion fencing will then be subject to trapping and translocation of newts. This will be carried out by installing pitfall traps at 10 metre intervals along the full length of the exclusion fencing and the drift fence. Great crested newt fall into these traps and this is an effective method of capturing and removing them. Additionally, refuge traps (carpet tiles or similar) will be placed across the site in between the installed pitfall traps.

Once installed, the pitfall traps will require inspection every morning shortly after sunrise in order to remove animals from the traps. Any great crested newt captured will then be relocated beyond the exclusion fence to a suitable receptor site, likely to be the woodland located to the east of the school.

Trapping and translocation must be undertaken during suitable weather conditions between March and October. According to the current guidance (English Nature, 2001), trapping should be undertaken for a minimum of 30 days where a low population of

great crested newt is found to be present. The translocation exercise will be deemed complete once five clear days no capture has been achieved.

Following the completion of the translocation, a destructive search will be undertaken of the translocation area. This will entail the methodical removal of any suitable habitat using an excavator under ecological supervision. Any additional great crested newt encountered as part of the destructive search will be captured by the ecologist and relocated to the receptor area. Once the destructive search has been completed, and all suitable great crested newt habitat has been removed from the site, the development work will be able to proceed.

5.10.3 Significance of Residual Effects

To accommodate the scheme, the loss of suitable terrestrial great crested newt habitats cannot be mitigated for.

5.10.4 Enhancement

As a measure of enhancement, hibernacula will be constructed within retained habitats on site. These will be constructed in line with the specification included in the great crested newt mitigation guidelines (English Nature, 2001).

5.11 Invertebrates

5.11.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

The proposals will result in a loss of suitable invertebrate habitats and possible harm to notable invertebrates.

Accidental damage to further woodland habitats on the site would also result in loss of suitable invertebrate habitat and possible harm to notable invertebrates.

5.11.2 Mitigation Measures

Invertebrates will benefit from the new native species planting mentioned in paragraph 0.

5.11.3 Significance of Residual Effects

The loss of suitable invertebrate habitats cannot be mitigated for.

5.11.4 Enhancement

Opportunities for enhancement for invertebrates including wildflower meadow planting, bee banks, invertebrate towers and creating logeries (SEMBLE, 2014) as part of the proposals.

5.12 Other Relevant Species

5.12.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

The proposals will result in the loss of European hedgehog and common toad habitats and these species may be harmed during vegetation clearance works.

5.12.2 Mitigation Measures

The sensitive clearance measures associated with great crested will ensure that both European hedgehog and common toad, amongst a wide range of other species, are protected as site clearance works progress. If individuals are encountered during clearance work they will be moved to the receptor site.

5.12.3 Significance of Residual Effects

The loss of suitable habitats for European hedgehog and common toad cannot be mitigated for within the scheme design.

5.12.4 Enhancement

Potential enhancement measures include the provision of hedgehog domes within retained habitats on site. Both species will also benefit from the new native species planting mentioned in 0.

5.13 Cumulative Effects

Assuming that the mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures outlined in the paragraphs above are implemented, no significant residual effects are anticipated. As such it is considered unlikely that the proposals will contribute to cumulative adverse effects in association with other proposals in the local area.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Conclusion

The site supports a low population of slow-worm. There are three ponds within 500 metres that support small populations of breeding great crested newt. Hazel dormouse surveys confirmed the likely absence of hazel dormouse from the site. The building assessment carried out by The Ecology Co-op confirmed the roost in Building 1 is still active, and that an additional three buildings also have low suitability for roosting bats. Mitigation for these species include acquisition of a EPSM licence for great crested newt and bats, carrying out of a translocation exercise for great crested newts and reptiles, sensitive lighting schemes for bats, and precautionary methods of works when removing vegetation. Compensation recommendations include the provision of five bat boxes and five bird boxes to be provided within the site to account for lost roosting/nesting opportunities for bats and birds. Enhancement recommendations include the planting of new native scrub, tree and grassland species, and the provision of hibernacula for great crested newt and reptiles. There are no impacts anticipated regarding designated sites.

Providing all of the above mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures are carried out, it is considered that the proposals will accord with all relevant national and local planning policy in relation to ecology including Policy 31 of the HDPF and the NPPF (see Section 2.0).

6.2 Updating Site Survey

If the planning application boundary changes or the proposals for the site alter, a re-assessment of the scheme in relation to ecology may be required. Given the mobility of animals and the potential for colonisation of the site over time, updating survey work may be required, particularly if development does not commence within 18 months of the date of the most recent relevant survey.

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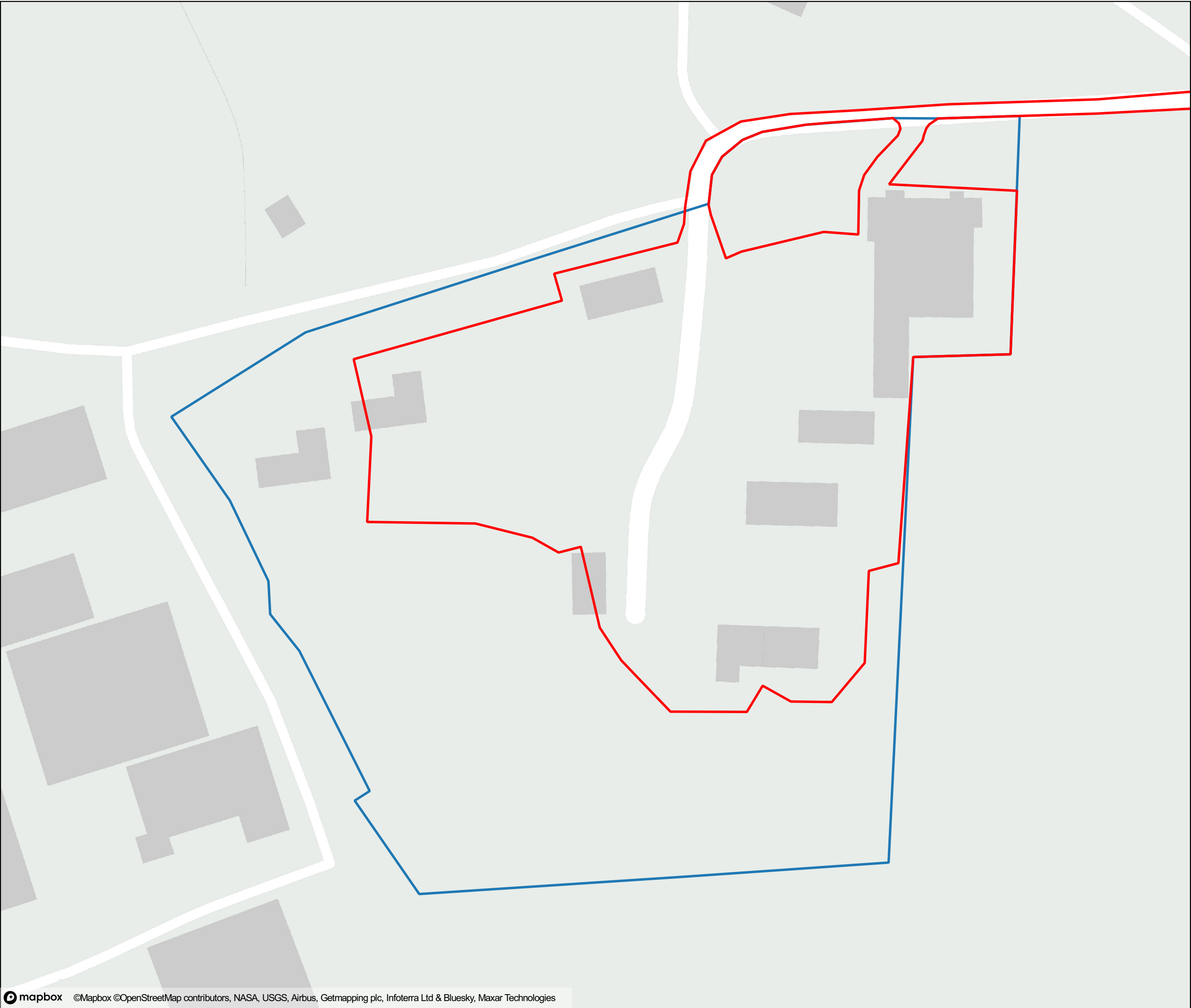
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Map 1 Site Location Plan



**WOODVIEW SCHOOL, INGFIELD
MANOR DRIVE, FIVE OAKS,
BILLINGHURST, RH14 9AX**

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

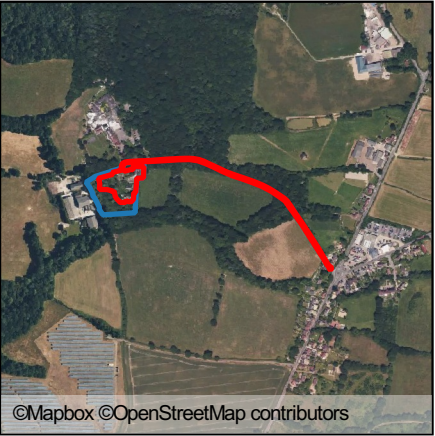
Map 1 - Site Location Plan

Client:	Salutem Shared Services
Date:	December 2025
Status:	Draft

KEY

Site Boundary

Survey Area



Scale at A3 1:632.659316

0 5 10 15 20 m



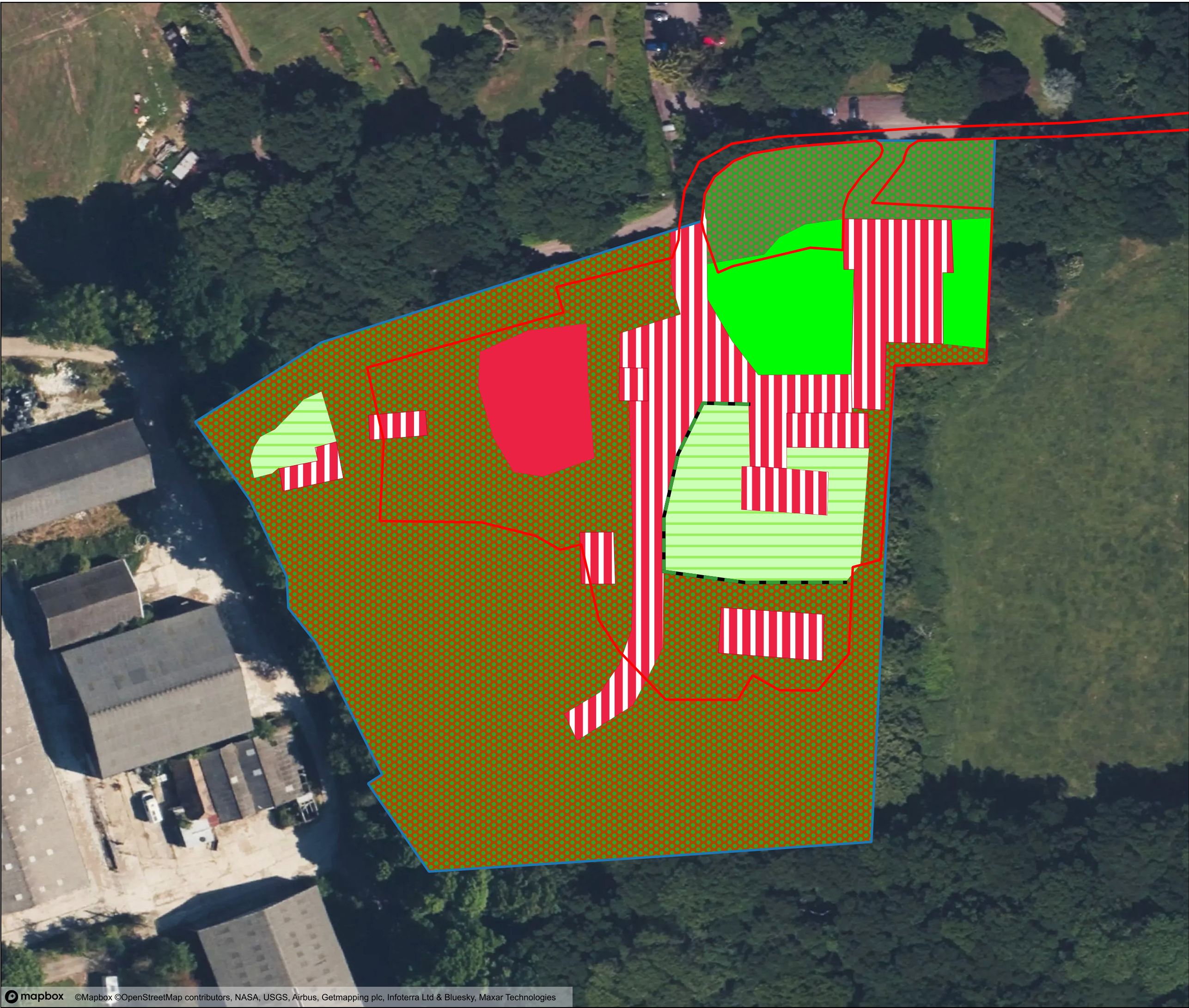
Prepared by: LCC	Date: 041125
Last amended by: FR	Date: 161225

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Map 2 Baseline Habitat Map



**WOODVIEW SCHOOL, INGFIELD
MANOR DRIVE, FIVE OAKS,
BILLINGHURST, RH14 9AX**

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Map 2 - Baseline Habitats

Client:	Salutem Shared Services
Date:	December 2025
Status:	Draft

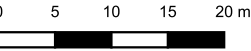
KEY

- Site Boundary
- Survey Area
- UKHab - Habitats**
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Modified grassland
- Other neutral grassland
- Other woodland; broadleaved
- Other woodland; mixed
- Vacant or derelict land

UKHab - Hedgerows

- Line of trees

Scale at A3 1:670.239726



Prepared by: LCC	Date: 041125
Last amended by: FR	Date: 161225



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Map 3 Hazel Dormouse Survey



**WOODVIEW SCHOOL, INGFIELD
MANOR DRIVE, FIVE OAKS,
BILLINGHURST, RH14 9AX**

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Map 3 - Dormouse Survey Results

Client:	Salutem Shared Services
Date:	December 2025
Status:	Draft

KEY

- Site Boundary
- Survey Area
- Dormouse - Tube Locations



Prepared by: LCC	Date: 041125
Last amended by: BL	Date: 191225



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