

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment

Survey site:

Cedar Cottage, Sandygate Lane, Lower Beeding, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 6LR

Client:

BlackOnyx Becketts Ltd.

Survey date:

11th April 2025

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Horsham District Council. The proposal is described as:

The construction of ~25 dwellings.

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.

Site Location and Context

The site is located in Lower Beeding, Horsham at the National Grid Reference TQ 21872 27174 and has an area of approximately 0.9ha, comprising one building, hardstanding, an artificial access road and a field of modified grassland with scattered trees. The site is surrounded by residential dwellings, pockets of woodland and arable land. The wider landscape includes further woodland, arable land and watercourses. A site location plan is provided in appendix 2.

Survey Details

The site survey was undertaken by Anna Dolby, BSc (Hons) (Accredited Agent: Natural England Protected Species Licence Numbers: [Bats] (2018-33540-CLS-CLS)

Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
11/04/2025	14	66	0	0.1	None

Executive Summary

Bats

Any additional trees identified for removal will require a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) to evaluate their suitability as potential bat roosting habitats.

Birds

Any building or tree removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged.

Amphibians

Environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys will be required for the four ponds (P1-P4) within 250m of the site (where accessible) to determine the presence or absence of great crested newts.

However, once the proposed plan has been obtained, the results of this survey will need to be updated to provide the suitable mitigation methods for each protected species.

Survey limitations

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the baseline conditions within the survey area, and evaluate these features, this report does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species being present. This is based on suitability of the habitats on the site and in the wider landscape, the ecology and biology of species as currently understood, and the known distribution of species as recovered during the searches of historical biological records.

A search of biological records has not been conducted for this report. However, prior to any additional required surveys at the site, a biological records search can be carried out, and this report subsequently updated to include the findings.

Due to seasonal limitations, further survey within the optimal season for surveying vegetation would normally be required to obtain accurate habitat classification and condition assessment data.

In the interests of proportionality, this assessment should be realistic. Precautionary classification is drawn from analysis of the overwintering assemblage alongside information gathered during the desk study regarding geology, soils, hydrology, history, current and historic management, wider landscape context, assemblages present in local designated sites (and any other relevant factors). An estimation is made of how the site may differ in its condition variables between summer and winter.

Ecological Survey Factor	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, pond location map in appendix 3, proposal plan in appendix 4 and photos in appendix 5). Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i> <i>(UKHab codes used)</i>	The site does not contain any habitats listed as a habitat of principle importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). <i>On Site Habitats</i> • Buildings (u1b5) • Developed land, sealed surface (u1b) • Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c) • Vegetated garden (u1 – 828) • Modified grassland (g4) • Ornamental pond (r1 - 46) • Scattered trees (32) <u>Buildings (shown in photo 1)</u> There is one building within the site boundary, B1 is a single-story stable.

	<u>Developed land, sealed surface (shown in photo 1)</u> There are areas of hardstanding surrounding the buildings onsite. <u>Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (shown in photo 8)</u> A gravel access road is present within the northern area of the site, which provides vehicle access to the site. <u>Vegetated garden</u> Private garden is present within the northern area of the site comprising modified grass lawn and introduced shrubs. The grass lawn is subject to frequent management, with a short homogenous sward. The composition of the lawn is similar to the modified grassland. <u>Modified grassland (shown in photo 9)</u> The majority of the site comprises species poor modified grassland, currently grazed by lambs. The grassland has a short homogenous sward (~5cm). Species include: D: Perennial ryegrass <i>Lolium perenne</i> F: Cypress leaved plaitmoss <i>Hypnum cupressiforme</i>, ground ivy <i>Glechoma hederacea</i> O: Common selfheal <i>Prunella vulgaris</i>, dandelion <i>Taraxacum officinale</i>, common foxglove <i>Digitalis purpurea</i>, common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> R: Daffodil <i>Narcissus pseudonarcissus</i>, spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> Grassland condition indication:
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	There are ~3-4 vascular plant species per m² present, with a homogenous sward. No scrub or bracken is present. Physical damage is evident in more than 5% of the total grassland area. Cover of bare ground is less than 10%. No invasive species were identified during the survey. Therefore, the grassland is assessed to be in poor condition. <u>Ornamental pond (shown in photo 16)</u> There is one pond present within the vegetated garden, decorated with surrounding stones. It was heavily shaded by offsite and onsite trees. Pond condition indication: The pond has moderate water quality, with no sign of pollution. The pond is surrounded by vegetated garden, with no semi-natural habitat present. >10% of the water surface was covered by duckweed. The pond is not artificially connected to other waterbodies, and the water levels can fluctuate naturally. No invasive species were observed. No fish were present. Plant coverage was <50%. >50% of the pond was shaded by trees. Therefore, the pond is assessed to be in poor condition. <u>Scattered trees (shown in photos 10-11)</u> There are three trees within the field and the six trees within the vegetated garden. Species include oak <i>Quercus robur</i>, common hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> and English walnut <i>Juglans regia</i>. Individual tree condition indication:
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	2 out of 3 trees are of native species, with a predominantly continuous canopy. More than 50% of the trees are mature. There is no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities. Natural ecological niches are present for vertebrates and more than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath. Therefore, the trees are assessed to be in good condition. <i>Assessment of Conservation Value at the Geographical Level and Magnitude of Impact</i> The development contains habitats which are predicted to be of Local importance to conservation, including modified grassland and scattered trees. <i>The Wider Landscape</i> Although there are no notable habitats on site, there are notable habitats within a 2km radius of the site boundary, the closest being ancient and deciduous woodland ~0.095km east. Other notable habitats include lowland heathland, traditional orchard, woodpasture and parkland.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	<i>On Site</i> Grassland will be removed to facilitate the proposed developed, this is likely to contribute to net losses in biodiversity at the local level. <i>The Wider Landscape</i> Due to the low value of the grassland onsite, no direct impacts are anticipated, however due to the proximity of the ancient woodland indirect impacts such as pollution may occur.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>On Site</i>

	The development will be required to demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain through use of the latest Defra Biodiversity Metric as to comply with legislation (Environmental Act 2021). It is noted that the development is not exempt from demonstrating a biodiversity net gain, as per current Natural England Guidance: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments Suggested biodiversity enhancements to help achieve a 10% net gain include: • Retain trees, where possible • Creation of other neutral grassland (i.e. wildflower planting) • Creation of green roof • Creation of green wall (e.g. surrounding fencing/walls or elevations of new buildings) <i>The Wider Landscape</i> Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution affecting the nearby deciduous/ancient woodland must be implemented during construction. A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) may be required for this.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<i>On Site</i> The site is not subject to any statutory designation. <i>The Wider Landscape</i> There are two statutory sites within a 2km radius of the site: <u>High Weald Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) ~0.087km east</u>

	High Weald comprises diverse habitats, including ancient woodlands, grassland, hedgerows and ponds. Notable species include hazel dormice, the pearl bordered fritillary and the black-headed cardinal beetle. <u>St. Leonards Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) ~1.82km north</u> The site includes the remnants of a formerly more extensive woodland on the Tunbridge Wells Sands, 3km east of Horsham. Examples of high forest remain, with varied ground flora and streams throughout. It has a varied population of birds and supports an assemblage of insects, including butterflies. The site lies within the impact risk zone for St. Leonards Forest SSSI. Proposed development type is not listed as a possible high risk with regard to this designation. The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km cannot be established without biological records data from the Local Biological Records Centre.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Due to the low value of the grassland onsite, no direct impacts are anticipated, however due to the proximity of the AONB indirect impacts such as pollution may occur.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution must be implemented during construction including dust control measures and suitable drainage plans to reduce surface run-off adversely impacting habitats outside of the site boundary. Retained trees should be protected in line with the measures outlined in the British Standard "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2012).
Invasive / Non-native species	

<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	N/A
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys but remain vigilant.
Invertebrates	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No habitat for protected or notable invertebrates is found on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys. <u>Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities:</u> The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for invertebrates: • Wildflower planting for pollinating species
Bats	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Desk Study A search of the magic database returned no European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) for bats within a 2km radius. On Site Foraging and commuting bats

	Habitats on site are assessed to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for bats in the form of modified grassland and trees. These habitats are likely to attract invertebrate prey species. However, due to the general managed nature of habitats on site and presence of more extensive habitats locally, the site is not assessed to represent a significant resource for foraging and commuting bats. Buildings There are three buildings within the site boundary: a stable (B1), a residential dwelling, and a garage. The dwelling and garage were not assessed during the site visit; however, a separate PRA was completed by Arbtech in June 2025. This report should be read in conjunction with the present assessment. B1: <u>External inspection (shown in photos 1-3)</u> B1 is a single-story stable with three sections within, it is comprised of wooden panel walls with a cross gable corrugated metal roof. There are four stable doors present on the southern elevation, likely kept open for long periods of time, for access purposes. No features for roosting bats were identified on any of the elevations. <u>Internal inspection (shown in photos 4-7)</u> Internally, B1 comprises concrete flooring, wooden panel walls and a corrugates metal roof supported by wooden beams. No suitable roosting crevices were found during the inspection, with no cavity walls present. Each internal section is either used for storage or as shelter for the llamas. Each section is likely subject to a
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	large amount of light, due to the open stable doors and metal barred windows within. No evidence of roosting bats was identified within this building. Suitability assessment: B1 is assessed to provide negligible suitability for roosting bats, with no suitable roosting features identified. Scattered trees At the time of the visit, there were three trees within the onsite field, including a very large mature oak (T1), small common hazel (T2) and small English walnut tree (T3). T1 had one PRF on the southern elevation, however, it has since been removed. T2 and T3 have a notable absence of structural features typically utilised by roosting bats, such as rot holes, linear faults, branch wounds, and woodpecker holes. Furthermore, due to the size of the tree, the whole trunk could be visible observed. Along the northern boundary, there is a fallen tree (shown in photos 14 and 15), with a large linear wound. This provides a suitable roosting feature for bats. There are six more trees within the vegetated garden, which were not subject to a ground level tree assessment (GLTA), due to the unknown nature of tree removal during the site visit. These trees will require an assessment before removal.
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	Suitability assessment: In accordance with current guidance (Collins, 2023), the trees onsite are categorised as follows: T2 and T3 categorised as PRF-None. As such, it is assessed to provide negligible value to support roosting bats.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Bats are very unlikely to be using B1 for roosting habitat and no trees are currently set to be removed to facilitate the proposed plan. There are not any anticipated impacts on roosting bats as a result of the demolition of B1. The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats. This may disturb commuting bats.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Foraging and Commuting Bats</i> No further surveys required. <i>Roosting bats</i> Buildings No further surveys required. A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors. Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website:

	https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting Trees and Deadwood <u>Trees:</u> Any additional trees identified for removal will require a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) to evaluate their suitability as potential bat roosting habitats. <u>Deadwood:</u> If the fallen tree requires removing, this should be moved carefully to a new location. The features should not be changed in anyway, with the linear fault left uncovered. <u>Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities:</u> A three bat boxes are recommended to enhance roosting opportunities at the site for bats. Use of a bat brick integrated into the fabric of new buildings is favourable, but a surface mounted external bat box will also provide suitable enhancement. Bat box type will be confirmed post-planning approval and will be targeted at providing roost provision for priority species listed on Schedule 41 of the NERC Act. Bat boxes must be placed at least 4m from ground level, sheltered from strong winds and access to sunlight throughout the day, this is typically south, southeast or southwest.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	An inactive swallow nest was found within B1. Birds could also use the scattered trees for nesting.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Any building or tree removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged. <u>Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities:</u> The installation of two bird boxes on mature trees or the retained building will provide additional nesting habitat for birds e.g. Schwegler No 17 Swift Nest Box (buildings), Bark Boxes Blue Tit 25mm (trees), Schwegler 10 Swallow Nest (Buildings), Woodstone Nest Box (buildings or trees), or a similar alternative brand.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Desk Study A search of the magic database returned no EPSLs for reptiles within a 2km radius of site. On Site

	Habitats on site provide suitable opportunities for basking, hibernating and commuting reptiles in the form of grassland and piles of brash and rubble (shown in photos 13 and 14). However, due to frequent management and grazing, the grassland onsite is homogenous with a sward height of ~5cm, which lacks suitable refuge for commuting reptiles. <i>The Wider Landscape</i> The site has connection to woodland and arable land.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Grassland and brash piles will be removed to facilitate the construction of the new dwellings, this is unlikely to be significant for the local reptile population, due to the presence of extensive habitat in the surrounding locality. However, there is a low risk that a low number of reptiles could be present in the vicinity of the works. These could be injured or killed without mitigation.
<i>Recommendations</i>	A precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles during construction, including the following measures: • Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage reptiles. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations.

	• If any reptiles are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. • In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. <u>Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities:</u> The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for reptiles: • Creation of native scrub • Planting native hedgerow • Creation of log piles						
Amphibians							
Summary of Survey Findings	Desk Study A search of the magic database returned two EPSLs for amphibians within a 2km radius of site. <i>Table 1. Great crested newt EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site.</i> <table> <tr> <th>EPSL Licence</th><th>Pond records</th></tr> <tr> <td>2017-29260-EPS-MIT ~1.65km northwest</td><td>Damage and destruction of a resting place</td></tr> <tr> <td>2015-18331-EPS-MIT-1 ~1.8km south</td><td>Damage and destruction of a resting place and breeding place</td></tr> </table>	EPSL Licence	Pond records	2017-29260-EPS-MIT ~1.65km northwest	Damage and destruction of a resting place	2015-18331-EPS-MIT-1 ~1.8km south	Damage and destruction of a resting place and breeding place
EPSL Licence	Pond records						
2017-29260-EPS-MIT ~1.65km northwest	Damage and destruction of a resting place						
2015-18331-EPS-MIT-1 ~1.8km south	Damage and destruction of a resting place and breeding place						

On Site

There is one pond on site (P1) and aerial imagery and magic.gov.uk database indicates that there are ten ponds within a 500m radius of site. All ten ponds are connected to the site, with woodland, arable land, sparse buildings and roads between, none of which representing a physical barrier. A location plan for each pond is provided in appendix 3.

P1 was subject to an HSI, the results of which are provided below.

Table 2. HSI results for P1.

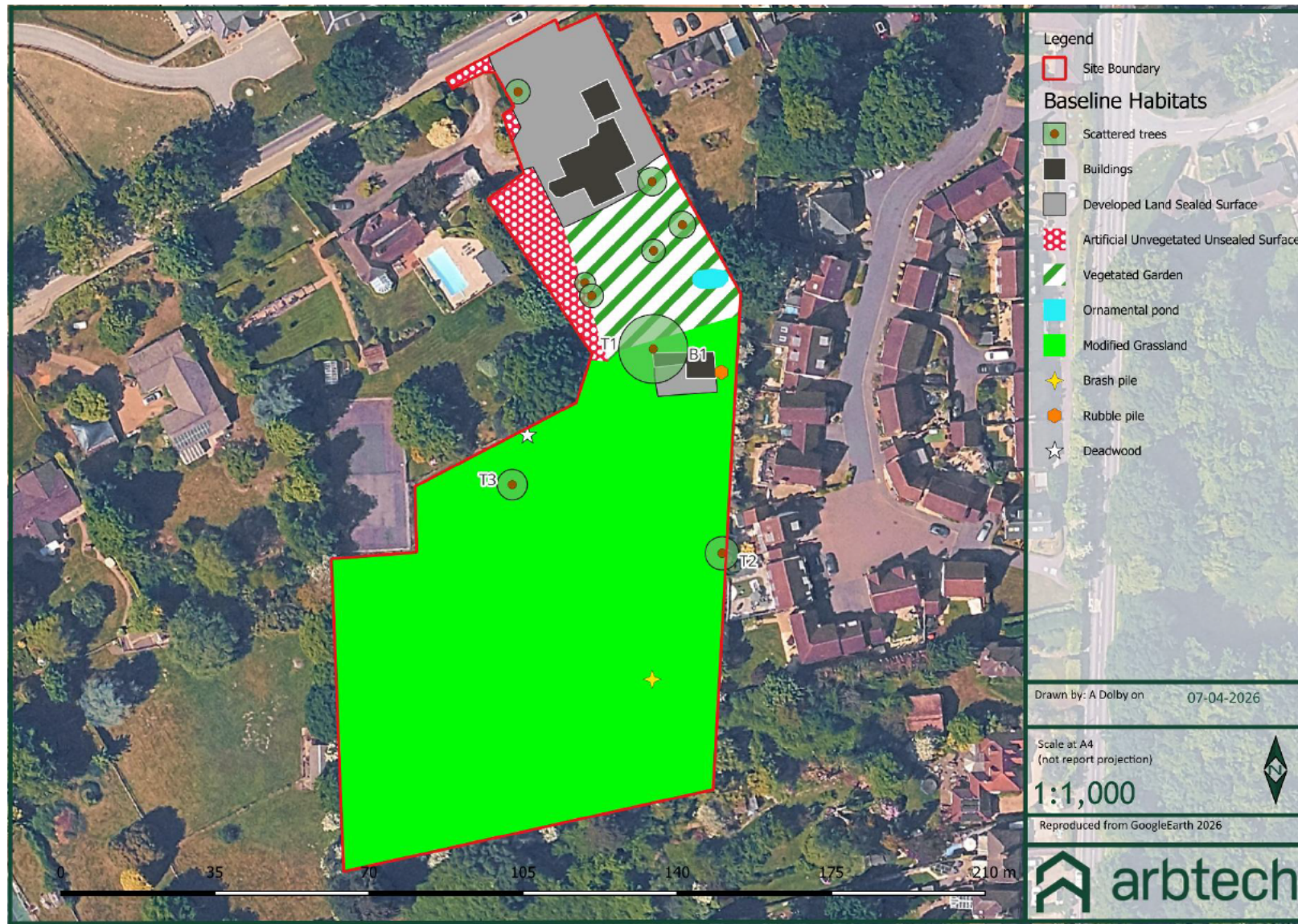
HSI Description	P1 HSI Value
Geographic location	1
Pond Area	0.05
Pond Permanence	0.1
Water Quality	0.67
Shade	0.4
Waterfowl Effect	1
Fish Presence	1
Pond Density	1
Terrestrial Habitat	0.33
Macrophyte Cover	0.45
HSI Score	0.43

	<table> <tr> <td>HSI Category</td><td>Poor</td></tr> </table> Habitats on site provide suitable terrestrial habitats for great crested newts and other common amphibians, with other suitable habitat in the locality (i.e. dense woodland). However, due to frequent management and grazing, the grassland onsite is homogenous with a sward height of ~5cm, which lacks suitable refuge for commuting amphibians.	HSI Category	Poor
HSI Category	Poor		
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The pond onsite will be removed to facilitate the proposed development. Furthermore, if great crested newts are present within the ponds within 500m of the site, when completing the rapid risk assessment published by Natural England (Natural England 2015), the proposed development produces a Red risk score , which states: Offence Highly Likely .		
<i>Recommendations</i>	Environmental DNA (eDNA) surveys will be required for the four ponds (P1-P4) on and within 250m of the site (where accessible) to determine the presence or absence of great crested newts. This will comprise collecting water samples and sending them off for laboratory analysis and such surveys must be undertaken between mid-April and June, in accordance with current survey guidelines (Biggs et al, 2014). However, since there is currently no proposed development plan, the amount of land clearance may change the result.		

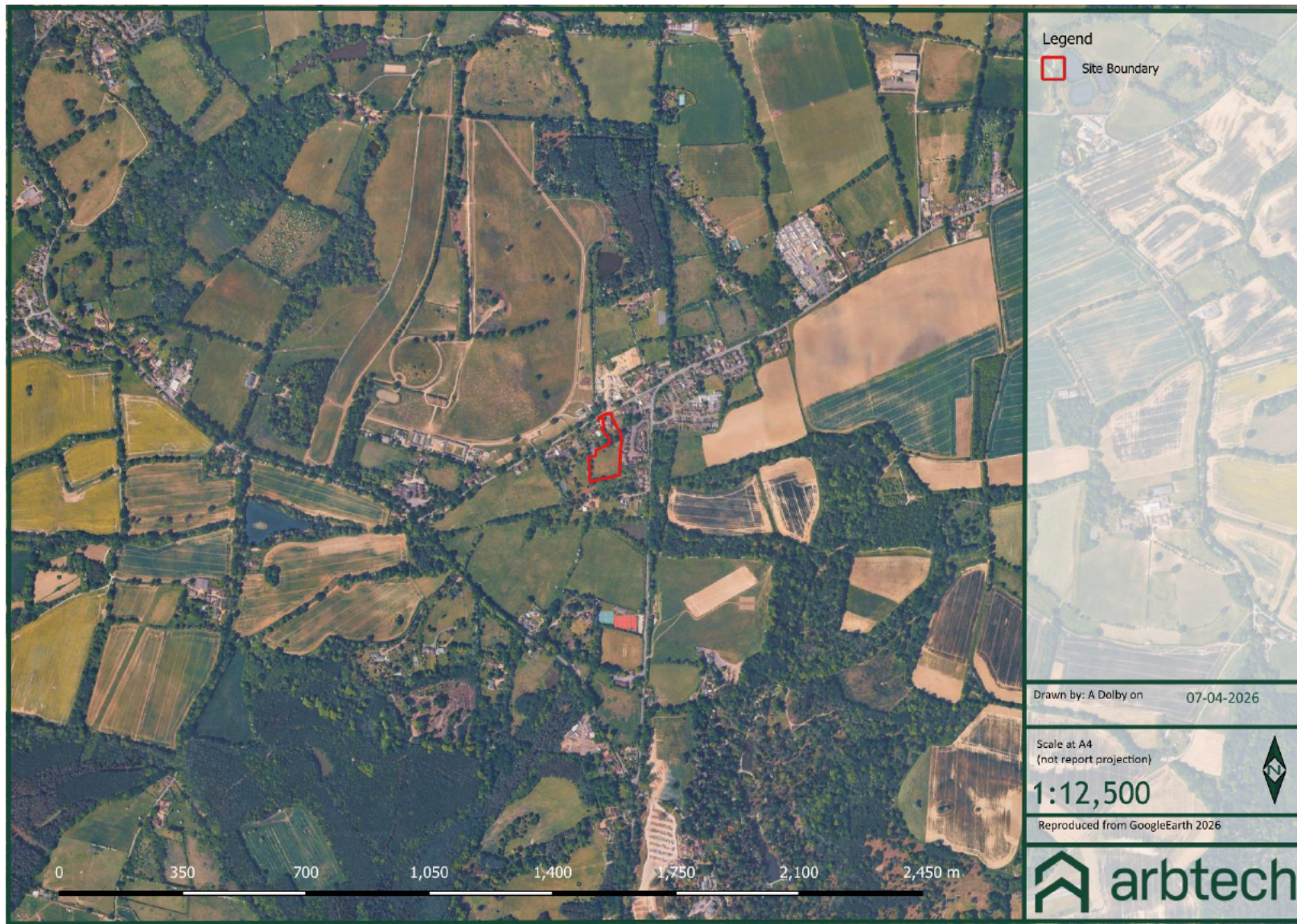
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are no watercourses on or connected to the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys required.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Desk Study A search of the magic database returned no EPSLs for hazel dormice within a 2km radius of site. On Site

	Habitats recorded on site provide limited suitable opportunities for nesting, commuting and foraging hazel dormice in the form of scattered trees. However, the trees onsite are sparse and separated by grassland. Grassland can be considered suitable for dormice, however, the grassland present onsite is homogenous with a short sward height (~5cm), providing no refuge opportunities for commuting dormice. Dormice typically utilise a three-dimensional habitat structure as to commute between feeding and breeding sites whilst avoiding predation; there is no hedgerow or woodland on site to support this structure. Although there is woodland within the wider landscape, there is a lack of connection to the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys required. <u>Biodiversity Enhancement Opportunities:</u> The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for hazel dormice: Planting of native hedgerow with connection to the wider landscape
Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Habitats on site provide suitable opportunities for hibernating, foraging and commuting hedgehogs, in the form of grassland and brash piles, with other suitable habitat within the surrounding locality (i.e. woodland).
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Grassland will be removed to facilitate the construction of new dwellings, this is unlikely to be significant for the local hedgehog community, due to the low value and presence of extensive woodland in the surrounding locality. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	██████████, a precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures:

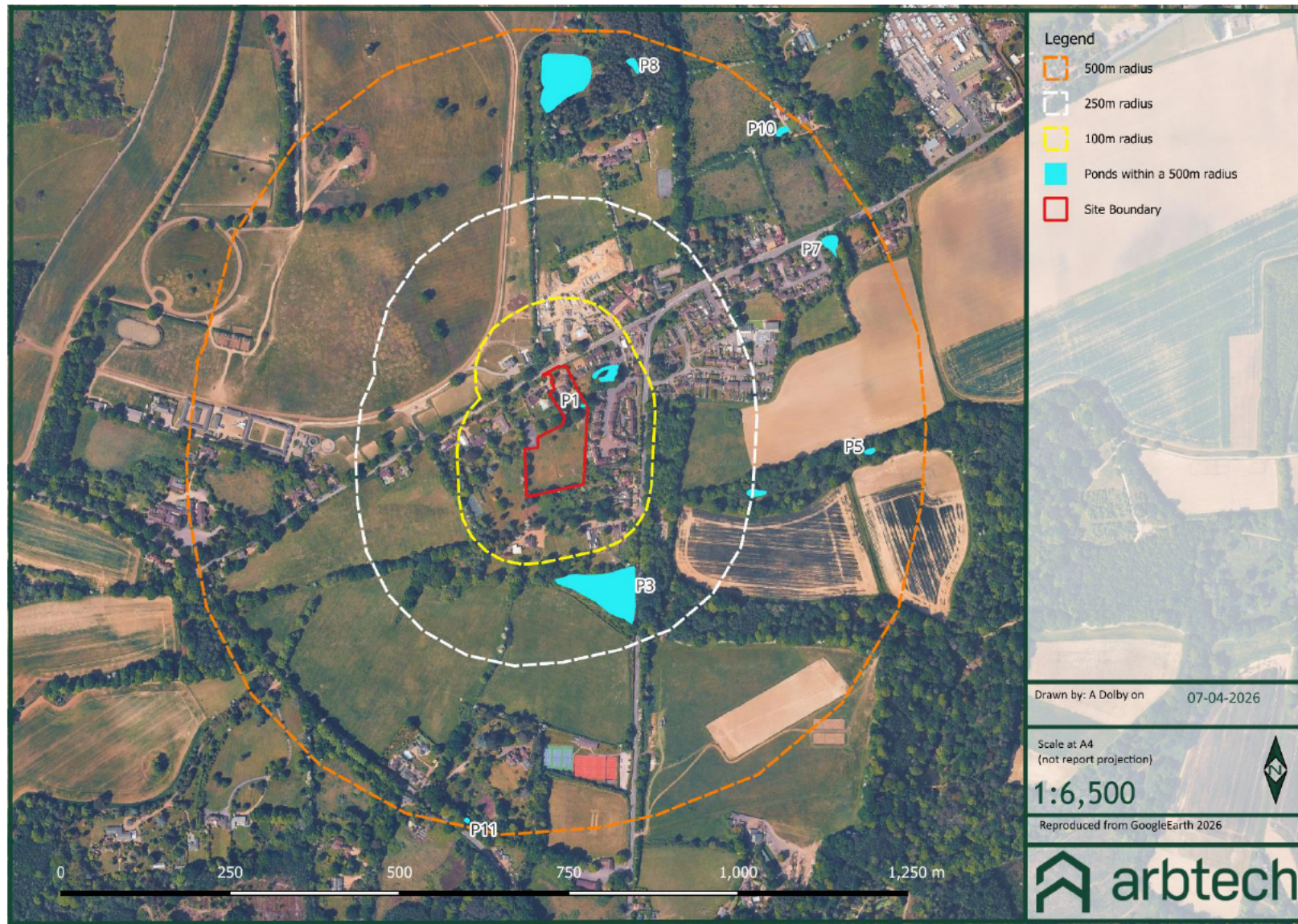
	• Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.
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Appendix 1: Survey/Habitat map

Appendix 2: Location map



Appendix 3: Pond location map



Appendix 4: Proposed plan



Appendix 5: Photos

Photo 1: Showing the southern elevation of B1, with surrounding hardstanding.



Photo 2: Showing the northern and eastern elevations of B1.



Photo 3: Showing the western elevation of B1.



Photo 4: Showing the western internal section of B1.



Photo 5: Showing the central internal area of B1.



Photo 6: Showing the eastern internal area of B1.



Photo 7: Showing a inactive swallow nest found within B1.



Photo 8: Showing the artificial access road.



Photo 9: Showing the modified grassland, looking northeast, from the southwestern corner of the site.



Photo 10: Showing T1, north of B1.

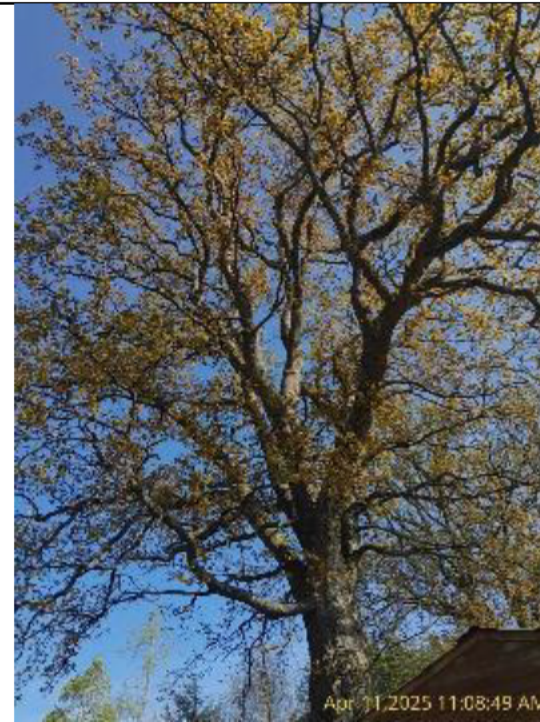


Photo 11: Showing the English walnut tree (T3).



Photo 12: Showing a rubble pile, south of B1.



Photo 13: Showing a brash pile.



Photo 14: Deadwood found along the northern boundary.



Photo 15: Suitable crevice found in the deadwood.



Photo 16: Pond (P1).



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Version control			
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Draft	0.1	Anna Dolby, BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist	16/04/2025
Final	1.0	Anna Dolby, BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist	18/04/2025
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Amended	2.1	Anna Dolby, BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist	16/04/2026