



Ecological Appraisal

Truant House,
Froxfield,
Marlborough,
Wiltshire
SN8 3JY

Vo4

October 2025

Doc ref: JGE07824

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Project: Truant House	Date: 8 th October 2025	Project reference: JGE07824
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Revision History

Revision	Date	Amendment
Vo1	15 th August 2025	First version
Vo2	25 th August 2025	Amendments to the redline boundary following client review
Vo3	7 th October 2025	Addition of enhancement location plan
Vo4	8 th October 2025	Amendment to site plan reference

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Executive Summary

Objective	The purpose of this report is to assess the potential ecological impact of the proposed development at land adjacent to Truant House and provide mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures as required.
Surveys	An Ecological Appraisal of the site following UK Habitat Classification methods was undertaken in July 2025.
Findings	The site comprised an area of managed modified grassland with a small orchard, scattered trees and native and ornamental hedgerows. The site was 0.16ha. The site was of low local value to wildlife with the wider retained boundary habitats offering the most ecological value.
Avoidance measures	The site was in a rural area with scattered trees and boundary hedgerows and a watercourse in the wider land ownership; a sensitive lighting scheme should be designed to limit any disturbance to commuting bats, Water Vole and Otter and reduce unnecessary illumination of the surrounding habitats. Vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) or preceded by a nesting bird check by a qualified ecologist. Grass cuttings should be removed by hand outside the hibernation period to avoid impacting terrestrial amphibians, Hedgehogs or reptiles. The orchard and stream should be temporarily fenced off to prevent accidental encroachment. Tree root protection zones should be implemented to protect on and offsite trees.
Further surveys	No further surveys are recommended.
Biodiversity enhancement	The addition of bat and bird boxes, native landscape planting to provide fruiting and flowering species for birds, invertebrates and foraging bats, and log piles for reptiles and Hedgehogs within retained boundary hedgerows will enhance the site complying with Wiltshire's Core Policy 50.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Joanna Graham Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Raw Planning on behalf of their client to carry out an Ecological Appraisal at land adjacent to Truant House, Froxfield, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 3JY (national grid reference: SU 29608 67965). An ecology report has been requested to support a planning application for the development of a self-build residential dwelling and associated garage and landscaping.

1.2 Purpose of Report

The report is designed to inform the client and any stakeholders as to any ecological constraints to the proposed works and to ensure that biodiversity is not impacted by the works. The report outlines recommendations to avoid, mitigate, compensate and enhance the site.

1.3 Site Description

The site was located off Church Road and comprised a grassland paddock, previously used by Alpacas in association with Truant House. The site was comprised of grassland, bare ground, hedgerows, scattered boundary trees and a field shelter. Froxfield Stream flows along the southern boundary of the wider land ownership. The development site was approximately 0.16ha.

Truant House was located to the east, All Saints Church to the north, a grass field to the west and Froxfield Stream and the A4 to the south. Within the wider area the village of Froxfield was to the north and east. Hungerford was located 4km east and Marlborough 9km west. See Section 8, Figure 1 for a location map of the site.

1.4 Proposed Development/Works

The proposed development is for the construction of a single self-build dwelling with an associated garage and landscaping. Included within the application is parking for All Saints Church to the north of the site. The proposed development is situated away from Froxfield Stream and associated flood zone, with all boundary habitats retained. The current development plans (2405-3_102-PROPOSED-Site Plan) involve the partial removal of a Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) hedgerow with the majority of the hedgerow remaining to provide visual screening.

1.5 Personnel

The project was led by Joanna Graham BSc(Hons) MCIEEM who has over 14 years' experience in ecological consultancy conducting ecology surveys including habitat and species surveys. Joanna Graham holds a class 2 bat licence, Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) personal survey licences and has attended the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) Trust Barn Owl Ecology, Surveys and Signs (BOESS) course.

2. Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

A desk study was carried out to identify:

- Internationally designated sites within 7km of the site (extended to 15km for sites designated for bats due to core sustenance zones);
- Nationally designated sites within 5km of the site;
- Non-statutory sites and priority habitats within 2km of the site; and
- Protected and notable species within 2km of the site.

Biological records from a 2km search area were requested to provide the necessary information to inform the report. Records that were relevant to the habitats on site from the past 10 years have been discussed. A larger search area was applied for statutory designated sites due to the potential for disturbance of these typically more sensitive sites.

The following sources were consulted:

- Defra Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (Magic) Map (accessed on 28th July 2025);
- Natural England Great Crested Newt Risk Zone map for Swindon and Wiltshire (accessed 28th July 2025);
- Wiltshire Biological Records Centre (records returned: 4th August 2025); and
- Wiltshire Council planning documents.

2.2 Field Survey

2.2.1 UKHabs

A site visit was undertaken on 31st July 2025, by experienced ecologist Joanna Graham BSc(Hons) MCIEEM using standard techniques and methodologies (CIEEM, 2017) and the nomenclature of Stace (2019). A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey of the site was carried out following the guidance in The UK Habitat Classification V2.0 (UKHab, 2023). Two quadrats were taken across the site to establish the mean number of species present to classify the type of grassland. During the site visit the habitat type was recorded, noting any potential presence of protected species. Any further surveys required are outlined in Section 4, with avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures recommended. The importance of the value of the habitats and species on site has been assessed and defined in a geographical context in line with the guidance set out by CIEEM (2018) and adapted to suit the local circumstances of the site; this is included in Appendix 2 and 3.

2.3 Weather

The weather conditions during the survey were recorded.

Table 1: Weather conditions

Conditions	Detail
Date	31/07/2025
Time	9.00 – 11.30
Cloud	8/8 cc ¹
Rain	Light/moderate rain
Temperature	19°C

2.4 Limitations

The survey was undertaken within the appropriate survey time for habitat surveys of mid-April to September. The majority of the site could be accessed however the land to the south of the Froxfield Stream was not surveyed as it was bound by the stream to the north and a thick hedgerow which ran along the A4.

A small area of the 2km search buffer fell within West Berkshire. Data was not purchased from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre as the extra cost was deemed not proportionate to any extra information provided. Due to the sensitive nature of the requested biological records, some of the returned records were only accurate to a grid reference of four figures.

The report is not designed, nor is it required to present a complete inventory of flora and fauna or NVC surveys. The survey team comprised suitably qualified ecologist(s) with good plant identification skills, these ecologists were not skilled in bryophyte or fungal identification; therefore, these elements were not included within the survey. The report provides details of surveys carried out in July 2025, the ecological interest of a site can change and therefore any delay to the project may require an updated survey.

¹ cloud cover in Oktas: 1 okta represents a cloud amount of 1 eighth or less, but not zero. 7 oktas represents a cloud amount of 7 eighths or more, but not full cloud cover. 8 oktas represents full cloud cover with no breaks.

3. Baseline Ecological Conditions

3.1 Designated Sites

Table 2 below provides details of all internationally designated sites within 7km of the site (extended to 15km for sites designated due to bat core sustenance zones), nationally designated sites within 5km of the site, and non-statutory sites and priority habitats within 2km of the site. According to Defra Magic Map, the site is located within the Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI IRZs) however residential development is not included in the impact list and “therefore the proposed development is unlikely to have a harmful effect on terrestrial Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites that they underpin”.

Table 2: Designated site results

Site Name	Designation	Description	Location
Kennet and Lambourn Floodplain	SAC, SSSI	Annex II species that are a primary reason for site selection: 1016 Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>	2.70km NE
Freeman's Marsh	SSSI	An area of unimproved meadows, marsh and reedbed. An important site for breeding, wintering and passage birds.	2.18km E
Chilton Foliat Meadows	SSSI	Chilton Foliat Meadows comprises an extensive system of wet neutral meadows, watercourses, tall fen vegetation and scrub. The site supports a diverse flora and a variety of birds, the meadows being one of the most important areas in the county for breeding waders.	2.70km NE
River Kennet	SSSI	A chalk river with species rich and diverse flora characteristic of the classic chalk rivers of the south and the oolitic rivers to the north. The river supports a good assemblage of aquatic invertebrates as well as the nationally scarce crane fly <i>Molophilus niger</i> and caddis fly <i>Ylodes conspersus</i> ,	2.70km NE
Savernake Forest	SSSI	An extensive area of ancient woodland supporting rich invertebrate fauna, a diverse assemblage of birds and an exceptional range of fungi.	5.67km W
Froxfield Meadows	LWS	Derelict water meadow with areas of inundation vegetation and semi-improved grassland adjacent to the Froxfield Brook	0.53km E
Almshouse Copse	LWS	Situated on a hilltop with the west end gently sloping. Many good large Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>) standards and old Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>), with well defined shrub and ground flora layers in most places	0.60km SW
Kennet and Avon Canal	LWS	A restored canal much used for recreation	0.74km SE
Frith Copse	LWS	Ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland on a low chalk and greensand ridge	0.86km SE
Cake Wood	LWS	An ancient woodland site planted throughout with Beech and conifer	1.15km NE

Jugg's Wood	LWS	Ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland on a south-east facing slope, mostly on greensand	1.15km SE
Trindledown Copse	LWS	Ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland on a moderately sloping, north-facing chalk site	1.15km SE
Lawn and Bottom Coppice	LWS	Ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland with some broadleaved replanting.	1.50km N
Stype Wood and Catmore Copse	LWS	A large ancient woodland site with semi-natural broadleaved woodland, conifer and broadleaved plantations, wet and scrub woodland and a well established network of rides and glades with acid grassland and bracken	1.51km SE
	Ancient woodland	• Ancient and semi-natural woodland • Ancient replanted woodland	Within 2km
	S41 NERC Priority Habitat	• Wood-pasture and parkland • Traditional orchard • Lowland mixed deciduous woodland • Chalk river • Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Within 2km
LWS = Local Wildlife Site			

3.2 Habitats

Habitats within the site or in the zone of interest (the area immediately surrounding the site) are included on the habitat map in Section 8, Figure 2 included:

- Modified grassland (g4) 27, 32, 106
- Other native hedgerow (h2a6)
- Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (h2b)
- Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface (u1c) 510

3.2.1 Modified grassland (g4)

The north of the site was separated from the churchyard by a metal fence. Scattered trees from the churchyard were overhanging onto the site, including Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), plum species (*Prunus* sp.) and Cherry Plum (*Prunus cerasifera*).

The majority of the site comprised of modified grassland. Two quadrats were taken within the grassland to determine the habitat type. Across the quadrats the mean number of species was 6.5 species per m². Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) were all abundant with frequent White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), occasionally occurring Perennial Ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), and rare forbs such as Common Mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), Cut-leaved Crane's-bill (*Geranium dissectum*) and Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*). Forb cover was low across the grassland with a noticeably lush green area to the south of the site, highlighting the Froxfield Streams' flood zone. The grassland was managed by mowing (secondary code 106).

To the west of the site was an area of planted fruit trees. There were over five trees so this has been classed as a traditional orchard (secondary code 27). However, the ground flora had not developed into a species rich grassland and was managed as modified grassland along with the majority of the site.

Along the east of the site was a wooden field shelter. Grass cuttings (target note 1) were present around the western site boundary. The western site boundary included scattered trees (secondary code 32) such as willow species (*Salix* sp.).

3.2.2 Other native hedgerow (h2a6)

A managed hedgerow bound the northwest of the site separating the site and the church. The hedgerow comprised Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) with rose species. Along the southeast of the site was an offsite hedgerow dominated by Hawthorn with abundant Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), occasional Hazel and rare Wayfaring Tree (*Viburnum lantana*). The hedgerow was separated from the site by a post and wire fence.

3.2.3 Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (h2b)

A hedgerow dominated by Laurel with rarely occurring Sycamore, Elder and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) bisected the site to the north, separating an area of unvegetated land with the grassland on site. To the northeast of the site, an offsite Beech hedgerow was present.

3.2.4 Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface (u1c)

Within the northern part of the site was an area of bare ground (secondary code 510) managed by spot spraying. There was evidence of regrowth by opportunistic plant species including Field Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), Smooth Sowthistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), Groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Annual Meadowgrass (*Poa annua*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Fat Hen (*Chenopodium album*).

An existing area of the site was used for parking and comprised gravel, with patches of modified grassland (included in section 3.2.1).

3.2.5 Habitat Summary

The majority of the habitats on site were common and widespread therefore the site was classed as of low local value.

3.3 Species

The information below is based on the desk study information, field survey data and an assessment of the likely value of the habitats for each species present.

3.3.1 Plants

The majority of plant records were historic. There were records of Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) from woodlands within 2km and records of the nationally scarce Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum pyrenaicum*) from Trindledown Copse LWS. As well as the following county notable species: Smooth Brome (*Bromus racemosus*), Spreading Meadow-grass (*Poa humilis*), Buck's-horn Plantain (*Plantago coronopus*), Great Lettuce (*Lactuca virosa*) and Dwarf Elder (*Sambucus ebulus*). The habitat on site did not support any protected plants.

There were no records of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) and no INNS were present on site.

3.3.2 Invertebrates

There were only six records of invertebrates within 2km of the site, four of which were historic. There were recent records of Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*) from a withheld location as well as a record of Cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*) from Hungerford. Purple Emperor tend to prefer the tree canopies of Oak woodland, the habitats on site provided limited suitability. The site did provide a variety of habitats including grassland, hedgerows and trees which offered suitability for more commonly occurring invertebrates including Cinnabar.

3.3.3 Amphibians

There were historic records of Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*) and Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*) from gardens within Froxfield as well as the Kennet and Avon Canal bank. There were no recent records of any amphibians and no historic or recent records of Great Crested Newts.

Defra Magic Map did not show any ponds within 500m of the site. There were also no Great Crested Newt licence return records within 2km. Natural England's Great Crested Newt Risk Zone dataset for Swindon and Wiltshire was consulted to determine the site's Great Crested Newt Risk Zone. The site was within the green zone. According to Natural England "*Green zones contain sparsely distributed Great Crested Newts and are less likely to contain important pathways of connecting habitat for this species*".

The majority of the managed grassland habitat on site provided limited suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians however the hedgerow bases provided foraging, resting and hibernating opportunities. Given the lack of records, no ponds within 500m and limited habitat suitability, Great Crested Newts have not been considered further.

3.3.4 Reptiles

The boundary habitats including the hedgerows provided some suitability for reptiles. Piles of grass cuttings as well as the hedgerow bases provided resting, foraging and hibernating opportunities. There were records of Slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) from gardens within Froxfield. There were also historic records of Grass Snake (*Natrix helvetica*) and Adder (*Vipera berus*) within 2km.

3.3.5 Birds

There were records of species listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act including House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*), Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), and Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*). There were also records of Swifts (*Apus apus*). The hedgerows and scattered trees provided suitable habitat for common nesting garden birds such as House Sparrow, however the grassland provided limited suitability for ground nesting species such as Lapwing and Skylark. During the survey Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Swift, Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) were all heard.

There were records of the following raptors: Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*), Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*), Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*), Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and Barn Owl. A Barn Owl box was present on a tree within the churchyard to the north of the site. The managed nature of the grassland on site limited the foraging opportunities for Barn Owl.

There were records of Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) and Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) both protected under the Birds Directive within 2km. There were also records of Cetti's Warbler (*Cettia cetti*) and Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*) both Schedule 1 species listed under Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Froxfield Stream located along the southern boundary of the wider land ownership provided habitat for commuting Kingfisher, however the shallow banks were not suitable for nesting Kingfisher. The Willow scrub around Froxfield Stream provided suitable habitat for Cetti's Warbler however the shaded nature reduced the suitability for Green Sandpiper.

Records of wintering Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 1 species included Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*), Brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*) and Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*). The boundary hedgerows provided fruiting species providing opportunities for foraging overwinter species on site.

3.3.6 Bats

The habitats within the wider landownership including the boundary hedgerows, stream, orchard and scattered trees potentially provided suitable foraging habitats for bats. The grassland was managed as a short sward which provided limited foraging opportunities. Bats may use the site to commute over but the grassland was unlikely to provide high levels of invertebrates for foraging bats. The boundary trees on site may provide roosting potential, however no Preliminary Roosting Features were recorded and all trees will remain as part of the development. The wooden field shelter on site was open on the eastern elevation with no suitability for roosting bats.

Within 2km of the site there were records of a bat species, Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), myotis species (*Myotis* sp.), Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus* sp.), Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), long-eared bat species (*Plecotus* sp.) and Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*). The records of roosting sites were confidential and kept to four figure grid references.

There were no European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) applications within 2km of the site.

3.3.7 Hazel Dormouse

There were no records of Hazel Dormouse within 2km. The hedgerows provided limited opportunity for foraging and nesting Hazel Dormouse, furthermore the site was not connected to any other hedgerows or woodland in the surrounding area and therefore Hazel Dormouse have not been considered further.

3.3.8 Badger

No signs of Badger (*Meles meles*) were present on site. There were six records of Badger within 2km of the site. The site provided limited foraging opportunities for Badger and therefore Badger has not been considered further.

3.3.9 Other mammals

There were records of Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) a priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act with the closest record 110m to the east. The hedgerows on site provided suitable habitat for foraging, commuting, resting and hibernating Hedgehog.

There were records of Brown Hare (*Lepus europaeus*) within 2km, the managed nature of the grassland limited foraging and resting opportunities for Brown Hare, with the arable land in the wider landscape much more suitable.

There were historic records of Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) from the River Dun, Kennet and Avon Canal and Froxfield Stream. The Froxfield Stream records were from 1998 and 2001. There was one recent record from Froxfield Water Meadow from 2019. The stream to the south of the site was heavily shaded with shallow banks and provided limited suitability for Water Vole, however if sections of the stream to the east and west provided foraging and burrowing opportunities Water Vole may use the site to pass through.

There were eight recent records of Otter (*Lutra lutra*) from the River Dun and the Kennet and Avon Canal. Otters may use Froxfield stream to commute along the watercourse corridor however there were no opportunities for holt creation.

3.3.10 Species Summary

The managed nature of the grassland limited the suitability to support different species. The hedgerow, tree and stream boundaries provided habitat for Hedgehog, commuting and foraging bats, small mammals, terrestrial amphibians, commuting Otter and Water Vole and reptiles. The overall value of the site for species was assessed as low local value.

4. Ecological Constraints and Opportunities

4.1 Key Constraints to Design

The site was of low ecological interest due to its current use as a managed grassland with the retained boundaries providing the most ecological value to the site. The stream within the wider land ownership provides potentially suitable habitat for commuting Otter, Water Vole and foraging and commuting bats. Furthermore, the scattered trees surrounding the site provided potentially suitable roosting opportunities. Bat night-time walkover surveys have not been recommended as the site was a very small area with all valuable habitat retained. It is likely that findings will show similar species to those recorded locally commuting across the site. To protect the retained boundary habitats, a sensitive lighting strategy for the development is required following industry standard guidance (BCT & ILP, 2023) to ensure no commuting, foraging or roosting bats are disturbed by the new lighting. During construction, a minimum of a 8-10m buffer should be maintained from the stream to protect the stream riparian zone from incidental encroachment such as material storage and maintain a corridor for commuting Water Vole and Otter. The scrub around the stream may provide habitat for nesting Cetti's Warbler, however the buffer will provide additional protection. The Laurel hedgerow may support nesting birds and therefore vegetation should be cleared outside nesting birds' season (March to August inclusive) or preceded by a nesting bird check by a qualified ecologist. Grass cuttings and the Laurel hedgerow provide opportunities for terrestrial amphibians, small mammals including Hedgehogs and reptiles. If these require removal, they should be hand removed during the active season (March to October) to avoid impacting any hibernating species.

The site boundaries provided opportunities for common species of reptile. The site should be maintained as a short grass sward; any vegetation clearance of ruderal habitat should be completed directionally to allow reptiles to disperse into the surrounding retained habitat. The development should maintain an appropriate buffer from boundary trees implementing Tree Root Protection Zones to ensure roots of scattered boundary trees are protected. Table 3 summarises the mitigation proposed.

The orchard and the stream will not be directly impacted and should be fenced off using a temporary fence to prevent accidental encroachment. The site does not fall within the impact risk zone of any statutory designated sites and therefore it is unlikely that any statutory or non-statutory designated sites will be impacted by the proposal.

Table 3: Mitigation proposed

Habitats	Potential Impact	Recommendation
Priority habitats: orchard/ chalk stream	Encroachment causing direct destruction of habitat	During construction use temporary fencing to prevent accidental encroachment. Follow a pollution prevention plan to prevent indirect/direct pollution of stream.
Scattered trees	Impact to roots	Tree Root Protection Zones should be implemented to any on or offsite trees to ensure roots are protected from development.
Species	Potential Impact	Recommendation
Foraging and commuting bats	Disturbance by lighting	A sensitive lighting scheme should be designed following best practice industry standard lighting guidance to avoid illuminating the boundary trees, hedgerows and stream corridor.

Nesting birds	Damage nests during any vegetation clearance	Carry out vegetation clearance outside nesting bird period (March to August inclusive). If this is not possible, a qualified person should complete a nesting bird check immediately before works proceed. If any nests are found a 5m buffer should be implemented until the chicks fledge.
Reptiles and common amphibians	Killing or injuring	Clear vegetation directionally starting from the north of the site towards the south to allow any reptiles to make their own way into the unaffected areas of the site. Hand remove piles of grass cuttings, avoiding hibernation period of November to February.
Water Vole and Otter	Killing or injuring, disturbance of commuting corridor	Ensure an 8-10m buffer remains between the development site and Froxfield Stream. Follow lighting strategy for bats to avoid illuminating the watercourse.
Badgers and small mammals including Hedgehog, common amphibians	Entrapment	Ensure all excavations are covered overnight or a means of exit is provided.

4.2 Sensitive Lighting Scheme

If exterior lighting is to be installed it should be kept to a minimum and follow the industry standard guidance (BCT & ILP, 2023).

- No exterior lighting, including during construction, will be directed at key habitat features such as the hedgerows, watercourse and trees that bound the site;
- Red spectrum lighting to be considered in place of white lighting as bats are more sensitive to white light compared to red light;
- Luminaires will face downwards and mounted horizontally, with no light output above 90° and no upward tilt.
- Security lighting will be set on motion sensors and set to a short timer. For residential purposes, a 1 or 2 minute timer is likely to be appropriate;
- All luminaires will lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, compact fluorescent sources should not be used.
- LED luminaires will be used where possible due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.
- A warm white light source (2700Kelvin or lower) will be adopted to reduce blue light components.

4.3 Opportunities for Enhancement

At least two bird boxes of varied sized nest holes and types should be included on the north/northeast aspect of the building/garage or on mature boundary trees to provide increased habitat for species such as House Sparrow, which have been locally recorded, see Appendices 5 and 6. The bird boxes should be installed near vegetation and at a minimum of 2m above ground. Current plans show these to be located on the western elevation of the garage, which although is not optimum, the boxes will be protected from prevailing winds and direct sunlight by the surrounding boundary habitat. An additional nest box on a boundary mature tree will increase nesting opportunities.

To provide enhancement to bats on site, it is recommended that one bat box should be incorporated into the design, see Appendices 5 and 6. The bat feature should be installed at least 3m above ground, facing south/southwest towards the adjacent habitat to provide immediate flight paths to the wider landscape. No artificial lighting should illuminate any new bat roosting opportunities. Current plans show the bat box on the western elevation of the garage which provides optimum flight paths to the wider landscape.

The landscape design should include native species of local provenance to attract invertebrates for foraging bats. The inclusion of log piles along the hedgerow boundaries will provide enhanced habitat for invertebrates, Hedgehogs as well as foraging and hibernating reptiles.

There is an opportunity to seed the remaining grassland within the flood zone with a seed mix suitable for seasonally wet soils such as Emorsgate EM8F Wild Flowers for Wetlands. The Emorsgate sowing and maintenance guide should be followed to ensure successful establishment. The western boundary and Laurel hedgerow could be enhanced with the addition of native hedgerow species such as Hazel, Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*), Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), Blackthorn and Hawthorn which will provide fruit and flower for foraging wildlife.

Core Policy 50 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity of Wiltshire’s Core Strategy states that development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and should incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats. The proposal is for a single self-build dwelling which will avoid and retain all boundary habitat and will be further protected by a suitable buffer from the development. Lighting (if required) will be directional and will also avoid the boundary features. The policy states that the development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. The inclusion of bird and bat boxes as well as native planting will enhance the site for a wide range of species.

5. Biodiversity Net Gain

The Environment Act (2021) (through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) requires all planning permissions in England (subject to exemptions) to be granted subject to a new general pre-commencement condition that requires approval of a biodiversity gain plan. The planning authority will only approve the biodiversity gain plan if a minimum of 10% net gain is achieved, this is known as the 'biodiversity gain objective'. Some developments are exempt from the BNG rules which include:

- A development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat or 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows;
- Householder applications;
- Self builds which are less than nine dwellings, 0.5ha or less and are exclusively self-build dwellings.

A Biodiversity Net Gain assessment is not required for the land adjacent to Truant House as the development proposal is for a self-build dwelling and therefore exempt.

6. Conclusions

An Ecological Appraisal was carried out on 31st July 2025 on the land adjacent to Truant House. The proposed development included the construction of a single self-build residential dwelling with an associated garage and landscaping. The managed grassland on site had low local value for wildlife however the orchard, scattered trees and hedgerows as well as the stream within the wider land ownership may be used by commuting, foraging and roosting bats, nesting birds, terrestrial amphibians, resting and hibernating reptiles, commuting Water Vole and Otter and small mammals such as Hedgehogs.

To ensure any roosting, commuting and foraging bats are not disturbed by the proposed development and associated lighting, it is recommended that a sensitive lighting strategy for bats is followed. Vegetation clearance should be undertaken directionally from the north of the site south towards the retained boundary habitats. Vegetation should be removed outside the bird nesting season or preceded by a nesting bird check of any suitable habitat. Grass cuttings should be removed outside the hibernation season to avoid impacting hibernating Hedgehogs, terrestrial amphibians and reptiles. Although the stream and orchard habitats will not be impacted, a buffer should be implemented to protect the stream and orchard on site from incidental impacts such as material storage, this in turn will allow Water Vole and Otter to continue to use the stream for commuting.

To enhance the site for bats, birds, reptiles, Hedgehogs and invertebrates it is recommended that the landscape design includes native flowering and fruiting species that will provide fruit for overwintering bird species, flowering plants for invertebrates and in turn bats. Two bird boxes and one bat box have also been recommended to enhance the site for nesting birds and roosting bats as well as the inclusion of log piles along the hedgerow boundaries for invertebrates, Hedgehogs and reptiles. There are opportunities to enhance the boundary habitats with new hedgerow species and sow the retained grassland with a specific seed mix suitable for seasonally wet soils. Although the site is exempt from a BNG assessment, the enhancements above will ensure the development complies with Core Policy 50 for biodiversity. The inclusion of a sensitive lighting strategy will ensure the proposed development does not unnecessarily illuminate the surrounding scattered trees, stream and boundary habitats. Furthermore, the inclusion of bird and bat boxes and log piles within the development plan will enhance the site for locally recorded species.

7. References

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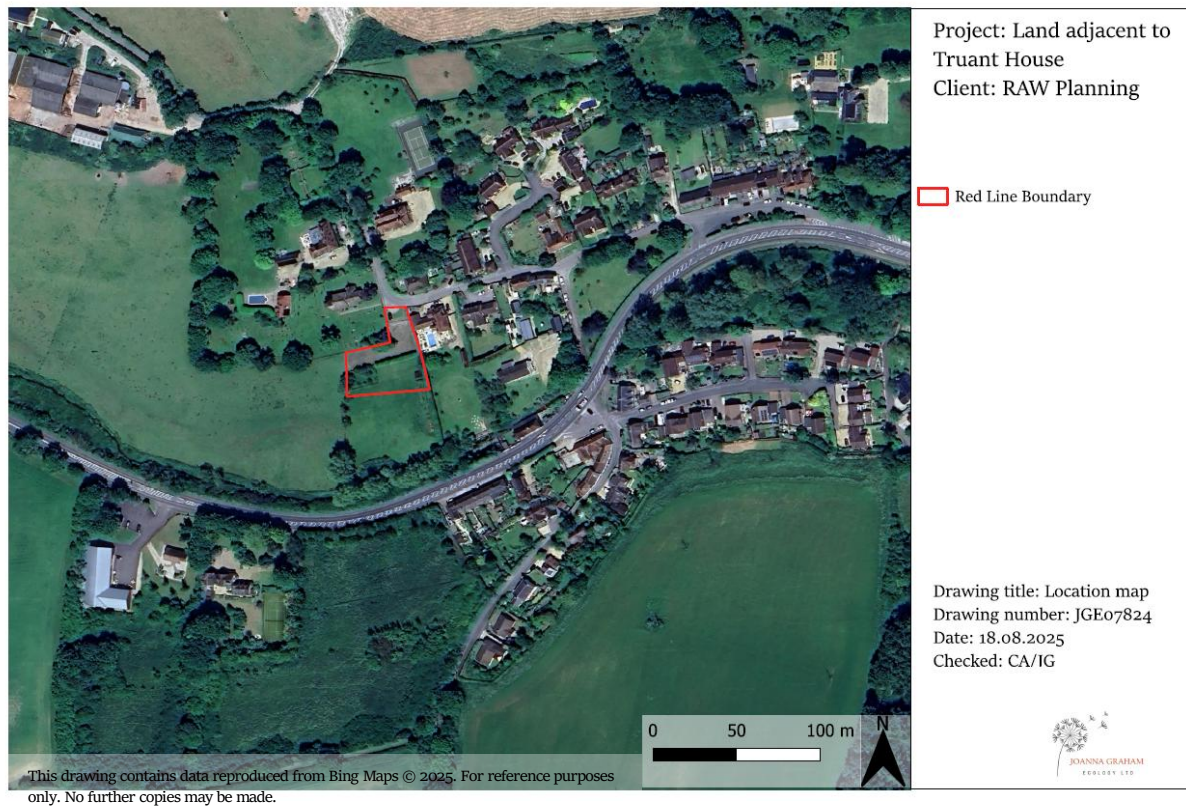
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8. Figures

8.1 Location Map



8.2 Habitat Map



Appendices

Doc ref: JGE07824

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Appendix 1 Planning Policy and Legislation

In England, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), section 15, paragraphs 187 to 201 emphasises the importance of conserving nature and achieving net gains for biodiversity, for full details please see [National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/).

Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment:	
Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:	• Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value, and soils. • Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland. • Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate. • Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs. • Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans. • Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate
Planning Approaches:	• Plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national, and locally designated sites. • They should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework. • Take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure. • Plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.
Protected Areas:	• Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads, and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. • The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas. • When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the

	development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of: (a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy; (b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and (c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.
Habitats and Biodiversity:	
To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:	• Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation. • Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
Planning determination:	• If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. • Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest. • Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. • 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.
Protected sites:	• The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites: ○ Potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation. ○ Listed or proposed Ramsar sites. ○ Sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

	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.
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Local Planning Policy

Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy includes Core Policy 50 for Biodiversity.

Policy	Description
Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and geodiversity	Protection Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Where it has been demonstrated that such features cannot be retained, removal or damage shall only be acceptable in circumstances where the anticipated ecological impacts have been mitigated as far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures can be secured to ensure no net loss of the local biodiversity resource, and secure the integrity of local ecological networks and provision of ecosystem services. All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development. Any development potentially affecting a Natura 2000 site must provide avoidance measures in accordance with the strategic plans or guidance set out in paragraphs 6.75-6.77 above where possible, otherwise bespoke measures must be provided to demonstrate that the proposals would have no adverse effect upon the Natura 2000 network. Any development that would have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European nature conservation site will not be in accordance with the Core Strategy. Biodiversity enhancement All development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Major development in particular must include measures to deliver biodiversity gains through opportunities to restore, enhance and create valuable habitats, ecological networks and ecosystem services. Such enhancement measures will contribute to the objectives and targets of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or River Basin/Catchment Management Plan, particularly through landscape scale projects, and be relevant to the local landscape character. Local sites Sustainable development will avoid direct and indirect impacts upon local sites through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment. Damage or disturbance to local sites will generally be unacceptable, other than in exceptional circumstances where it has been demonstrated that such impacts: - cannot reasonably be avoided - are reduced as far as possible - are outweighed by other planning considerations in the public interest - where appropriate compensation measures can be secured through planning obligations or agreements. Development proposals affecting local sites must make a reasonable contribution to their favourable management in the long-term.

Legislation

National Legislation

The following legislation is relevant to development within England:

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 is a set of regulations in the UK that address the protection and conservation of natural habitats and species.

These regulations provide provisions for the selection, designation, registration, and notification of sites to be protected under the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora. The regulations cover the conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species in European sites. These sites include Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas designated under the EU Directive. The regulations outline procedures for site selection, classification, and management agreements for these sites.

The regulations address the protection of both animals and plants. They define offences related to capturing or killing wild animals and certain wild plants. European protected species of animals and plants are specifically covered.

The regulations also consider nature conservation policy in planning contexts.

The Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 (the Act), received royal assent and became law on 9 November 2021. This Act sets clear statutory targets for the recovery of the natural world in four priority areas: air quality, biodiversity, water and waste, and includes an important new target to reverse the decline in species abundance by the end of 2030.

The Act (through the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) requires all planning permissions in England (subject to exemptions) to be granted subject to a new general pre-commencement condition that requires approval of a biodiversity gain plan. The planning authority will only approve the biodiversity gain plan if a minimum of 10% net gain is achieved, this is known as the 'biodiversity gain objective'.

The biodiversity plan must set out the steps taken to achieve the 'biodiversity gain objective'. The development should identify the pre and post development onsite biodiversity value, then the biodiversity hierarchy should be followed: firstly minimise the adverse effects on habitats onsite, before sourcing registered offsite biodiversity units to allocate to the development and finally purchasing biodiversity credits.

Both onsite and offsite enhancements must be maintained for at least 30 years after completion of a development. Onsite enhancements must be secured by planning condition, s106 obligation or a conservation covenant, which is a written agreement that is registrable as a local land charge, between a landowner and a 'responsible body' that binds a landowner and its successors to do/not do something on the land for a conservation purpose. Offsite enhancements must be secured under either a s106 agreement or a conservation covenant and be registered on the biodiversity gain site register.

For full details please see [Environment Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

This legislation makes it an offence to deliberately take, kill or injure a protected wild animal, or to intentionally, or recklessly, disturb such an animal in its place of shelter, or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to its place of shelter. It is also an offence to be in possession of a protected animal, live or dead.

The act contains four parts and 17 schedules, which cover:

Part 1: Wildlife (includes protection of birds, animals and plants; and measures to prevent the establishment of non-native species which may be detrimental to native wildlife).

Part 2: Nature conservation, the countryside and National Parks (including the designation of protected areas).

Part 3: Public rights of way.

Part 4: Miscellaneous provisions of the act.

Other legislative Acts affording protection to wildlife and their habitats include:

- Deer Act 1991;
- Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992;
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

Species Specific Legislation

Bats

Bats and their roosts are protected by UK legislation.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take a bat;
- possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a bat;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a bat; and
- intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

Additionally, The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) make it an offence to:

- deliberately capture or kill a bat;
- deliberately disturb a bat;
- damage or destroy a breeding site or a resting place of a bat; and
- keep, transport, sell or exchange or offer for sale or exchange a live or dead bat or any part of a bat.

Birds

Breeding wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, a wild bird is defined as any bird of a species that is resident in or is a visitor to the European Territory of any member state in a wild state. Game birds however are not included in this definition (except for limited parts of the Act). They are covered by the Game Acts, which fully protect them during the closed season.

All birds, their nests and eggs are protected and it is thus an offence, with certain exceptions to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built;
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird;
- have in one's possession or control any wild bird, dead or alive, or any part of a wild bird, which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954;
- have in one's possession or control any egg or part of an egg which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954;
- use traps or similar items to kill, injure or take wild birds; and
- have in one's possession or control any bird of a species occurring on Schedule 4 of the Act unless registered, and in most cases ringed, in accordance with the Secretary of State's regulations.

Additionally, for some species listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb the adults while they are in and around their nest or intentionally or recklessly disturb their dependent young.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Slow Worm, Grass Snake, Adder, Common Lizard, Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) and Palmate Newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to:

- intentionally kill or injure them.

Additionally. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) make it an offence to impact Smooth Snake (*Coronella austriaca*), Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*), Pool Frog (*Pelophylax lessonae*), Natterjack Toad (*Epidalea calamita*) and Great Crested Newt by:

- deliberate capturing, injuring or killing;
- deliberate disturbance; disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely- (i) to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce or to rear or nurture their young; or (ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or (iii) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- deliberate taking or destroying the eggs of such an animal;
- damaging or destroying a breeding site or resting place;

- intentionally or recklessly - (i) disturbing an animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; or (ii) obstructing access to any structure or place which an animal uses for shelter or protection;
- possession, control, transporting, selling or exchanging, or offering for sale or exchange.

Appendix 2 Definitions of Habitat Value Level

Geographical Context	Examples
International and European	Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas, Biosphere Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation. Sites supporting populations of internationally important species.
National	SSSIs or non-designated Sites meeting SSSI selection criteria, NNRs, Marine Nature Reserves, NCR Grade 1 Sites. Sites containing viable areas of key habitats identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.
Regional	Sites containing viable areas of threatened habitats listed in a Regional BAP (or some Natural Areas), comfortably exceeding SINC criteria, but not exceeding SSSI criteria.
County / Metropolitan	Sites meeting the criteria for county or metropolitan designation (SINC, CWS, etc.). Ancient semi-natural woodland, LNRs or viable areas of key habitat types listed in county BAPs/Natural Areas.
Local	Undesignated Sites or features considered to appreciably enrich the habitat resource in the local area or within a zone of influence.
Negligible	Low grade or widespread habitats.

Appendix 3 Definitions of Species Value Level

Geographical Context	Examples
International and European	Any regularly occurring population of an internationally important species, which is threatened or rare in the UK. i.e. it is a UK Red Data Book species or listed as occurring in 15 or fewer 10km squares in the UK (categories 1 and 2 in the UK BAP) or of uncertain conservation status or of global conservation concern in the UK BAP. A regularly occurring, nationally significant population/number of any internationally important species.
National	Any regularly occurring population of a nationally important species which is threatened or rare in the region or county (see local BAP). A regularly occurring, regionally or county significant population/number of any nationally important species.
Regional	Any regularly occurring, locally significant population of a species listed as being nationally scarce which occurs in 16-100 10km squares in the UK or in a Regional BAP or relevant Natural Area on account of its regional rarity or localisation; A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a regionally important species.
County / Metropolitan	Any regularly occurring, locally significant population of a species which is listed in a County/Metropolitan “red data book” or BAP on account of its regional rarity or localisation; A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a County/Metropolitan important species.
Local	A population of a species that is listed in a local BAP because of its rarity in the locality or in the relevant Natural Area profile because of its regional rarity or localisation; A regularly occurring, locally significant number of a locally important species during a critical phase of its life cycle.
Negligible	Common or widespread species.

Appendix 4 Photographs

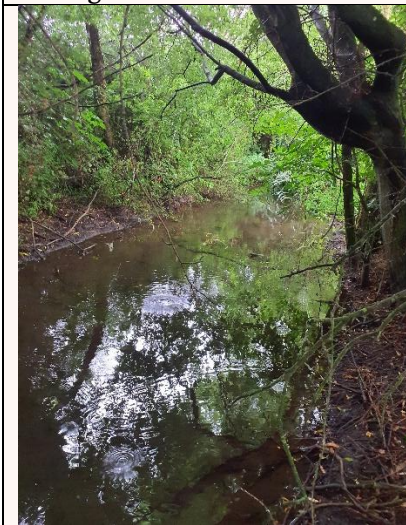
	
Photograph 1: Northern part of the site	Photograph 2: Church parking area
	
Photograph 3: Bare ground	Photograph 4: Central Laurel hedgerow
	
Photograph 5: Orchard	Photograph 6: Grass cuttings



Photograph 7: Site facing south with 'lusher' high water ground level



Photograph 8: Inside field shelter



Photograph 9: Froxfield Stream



Photograph 10: Western boundary

Appendix 5 Enhancement Options

	
Bat box: Beaumaris WoodStone Bat Box	Integrated bat box: Vivara Pro UK Build-in WoodStone® Bat Box
	
Bird box: Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow nest box	Integrated type 24 Schwegler Brick Nest Box: suitable for House and Tree Sparrow as well as Great Tits, Blue Tits, Nuthatch

Appendix 6 Enhancement Locations

