



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Report prepared for: Mr Paul Aaron

Crows Nest Farm

Cleverton

Wiltshire

SN15 5BS

December 2025

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Methods used to prepare this report, including those carried out in the field followed The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct.

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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	METHODOLOGY	5
3	RESULTS	8
4	DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS	14
5	REASONABLE AVOIDANCE MEASURES.....	19
	APPENDIX A: PLANTS RECORDED	20
	APPENDIX B: LEGISLATION SUMMARY	21
	APPENDIX C: MAPS & SITE PLANS.....	25
	APPENDIX D: SITE IMAGES	28

TABLES

Table 1: Guidelines summary for assessing potential bat roost suitability	6
Table 2: Pond Locations within a 250 m radius.....	10
Table 3: Weather conditions during PEA.....	10
Table 4: Habitat Suitability Index Assessment Scores.....	14
Table 5: Indicative Plant list recorded on site.....	21

SITE PLANS & MAPS

Figure 1: Location Map	26
Figure 2: Habitat Map	27

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides the results of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal undertaken at Crows Nest Farm, Cleverton, Wiltshire SN15 5BS (central Ordnance Survey (OS) Reference: ST 97511 85309).
- 1.2 A planning application will be submitted to Wiltshire Council in due course. Development proposals are described as the construction of a new dwelling and ancillary outbuilding on a plot of land that includes a defunct equine menage to the north of the existing farmhouse. The existing outbuilding is to be converted to garaging and other ancillary uses.
- 1.3 The findings included in this report are based on a survey undertaken during November 2025 by Cotswold Environmental Ltd. The purpose of the survey was to undertake an appraisal of the site for its potential ecological value to notable and protected wildlife, and to look for evidence of such species. The survey results provide information to determine the likely ecological impact the proposed development will have on wildlife species, and to inform the level of further survey effort and mitigation required to comply with relevant nature conservation policies and legislation. The evaluation and findings in this report can be used by Wiltshire Council in their view of a planning application. Survey results detailed within this report should be considered valid for a period of 18 months from the survey date.
- 1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024) sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, is of particular relevance to this report as it relates to ecology and biodiversity¹. The Government Circular 06/2005, which is referred to by the NPPF, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.
- 1.5 Crows Nest Farm is located between the villages of Little Somerford and Cleverton, approximately 210 metres north of the B4042. The site location is shown in Fig. 1.
- 1.6 All survey and assessment work was completed in accordance with official assessment guidelines² and largely followed that recommended by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)³ and follows the British Standard Code of Practice⁴.

Survey Objectives

- To determine suitability for protected species
- Ascertain evidence of protected species

¹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

² Collins J (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edn. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

³ CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. CIEEM, Winchester.

⁴ British Standards Institution (2013) BS 42020:2013. Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. British Standards Institution, London.

- Determine potential ecological impacts the proposed development will have on protected species.
- Inform the level of further survey effort that is required.

2 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 2.1 A records search was undertaken using freely available desktop resources such as the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside⁵ (MAGIC) website. MAGIC was used to search for records of designated sites, habitats and granted European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) within a 2km radius. Google Earth⁶ was also used to study the nearby landscape.

Field Survey

- 2.2 Ecological consultant Jason Skinner (NE Class 2 Bat Survey licence 2025-86057-CL18-BAT, NE Barn Owl licence number 2025-13085-CL29-OWL) carried out a field visit on Tuesday 25th November 2025.

Relevant surveyor experience

- 2.3 Jason Skinner has nine years professional ecological experience, primarily involved with bats and reptiles through consultancy and assisting on research projects. Experienced with small-scale and large-scale development projects and involvement in the management and supervision on multiple bat mitigation licences. Co-author of peer-reviewed research papers on reptiles and amphibians. Member, BBCARG and Wiltshire Bat Group.
- 2.4 The field visit involved a walkover using visual encounter survey techniques. The dominant vegetation structure was assessed, allowing habitats on site to be valued for their ecological importance to protected wildlife. Habitats were classified using the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab V2)⁷, which provides a standardised framework for describing habitat types in the UK.
- 2.5 Binoculars were also used to scan for features likely to support protected species. All protected species were considered during the assessment and all wildlife species were recorded. The work was completed largely following methodologies set out by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and British Standard Code of Practice.

⁵ Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC). Crown Copyright and database rights [2025]. Ordnance Survey 100022861. Available at: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/>

⁶ https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/

⁷ UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0. Available at: <https://ukhab.org/>

Species

- 2.6 All protected species were considered during the survey. Only those considered likely to utilise the site are mentioned in this report.

Bats

- 2.7 Survey effort was completed in line with official assessment guidelines⁸ and largely followed that recommended by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)⁹ and British Standard Code of Practice¹⁰. The assessment followed the standard methodology. The site was searched using visual encounter survey techniques. Potential bat movement corridors and movement barriers were assessed and noted. During the site visit, where possible, all suitable areas were examined for evidence of bats.

Table 1: Guidelines summary for assessing potential bat roost suitability

Suitability	Description of building, tree or structure
None	The building, tree, or structure has no features with the potential to support roosting bats and is entirely unsuitable. This includes structures that are fully sealed, modern, well-lit, and/or in exposed locations with no access points, no internal voids, and high levels of human disturbance.
Negligible	The building or tree has minimal features (e.g. small gaps or cracks), but these are assessed as highly unlikely to be used by bats due to their condition, location, or lack of access to suitable internal voids.
Low	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, potential roost sites not suitable for larger numbers or regular use (i.e. maternity or hibernation).
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time.
Confirmed roost	Evidence of bats or use by bats found.

Badger

- 2.8 All habitats within the site boundary were inspected for badger *Meles meles* activity. Whilst on site, the search included evidence of:

⁸ Collins J (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edn. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

⁹ CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. CIEEM, Winchester.

¹⁰ British Standards Institution (2013) BS 42020:2013. Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. British Standards Institution, London.

- Scratching posts
- Faeces
- Latrines
- Guard-hairs
- Paw prints
- Trackways

Dormouse

- 2.9 Hedgerows, scrub and treelines within and bordering the surveyed site were assessed for their suitability to support breeding populations of hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius*, as well as suitability to provide connectivity to nearby suitable breeding habitats.

European Hedgehog

- 2.10 The site was assessed for its suitability to support European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, a UK Biodiversity Action Plan species and Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. Features such as hedgerows, scrub, dense vegetation, log piles, and gaps under fencing were checked for signs of hedgehog activity, including droppings, tracks, or nests. Habitat connectivity with surrounding green spaces was also considered to assess the site's value for hedgehog movement.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 2.11 Habitats were assessed for their potential to support reptiles and amphibians, including great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN). Waterbodies typical of those utilised for breeding and foraging activity, and terrestrial refugia suited to sheltering and basking such as waste heaps and plastic/metal/timber sheeting were noted if present (see limitations). In addition, any dense vegetation including tall ruderal and scrub that is connected to hedgerows and linear tree features was inspected during the assessment.

Nesting Birds

- 2.12 The survey also included an internal and external inspection of the surveyed building for evidence of common nesting birds as well as notable and protected species. Inside the building, artificial light was used to search for birds, dead birds, dead chicks, nesting material and eggs.
- 2.13 All accessible elements of the surveyed building containing nesting potential were checked to see if the development would have any adverse effects on nesting birds. The active nests of all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). An active nest is one that is being built, containing eggs or chicks, or on which fledged chicks are still dependent. Birds within Schedule 1, such as barn owl *Tyto alba*, are also protected from disturbance during the nesting period.

- 2.14 The presence of notable and protected bird species and any signs indicative of their past and present use was taken into consideration during the inspection of the building. Likely perches and nesting locations were checked, and all ledges and cavities were examined for nesting debris where accessible.

Limitations

- 2.15 The survey was conducted outside the recognised optimal season for plant identification. Grasses and wildflower develop at varying periods during the year, making identification of some plant species present on site difficult. Subsequently, it is likely that not all plant species present onsite were recorded.
- 2.16 The absence of evidence for a particular species does not confirm its absence from the site. Wildlife, including protected species, can be elusive or transient, and may use habitats or structures intermittently, meaning they can go undetected during a single visit.
- 2.17 Evidence of bat activity, such as droppings or feeding remains, can degrade quickly due to weathering or be removed by wind or rain, particularly around external building features. Therefore, the absence of such signs should not be taken as confirmation that bats are not present.
- 2.18 Many UK bat species are crevice-dwellers and can roost in small or concealed spaces such as gaps under roof tiles, behind fascia boards, or within wall cavities. These features are often inaccessible and cannot always be fully inspected during a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA).
- 2.19 For Health & Safety purposes the roof of the building was assessed from ground level.
- 2.20 Biological records were not obtained. Given the modest scale and scope of the proposed development, the lack of data from the Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) is not considered likely to materially affect the conclusions drawn in this report.
- 2.21 No further limitations are associated with the ecological survey.

3 RESULTS

Desk Study

Designated sites

- 3.1 According to the MAGIC website, no statutory or non-statutory designated sites exist within a 2 km radius (see limitations) and no internationally designated sites, such as special areas of conservation (SACs) designated for their bat populations, exist within a 10 km radius of the site.

Granted European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) within a 2km radius

- 3.2 According to the MAGIC website, a single EPSL was granted in 2017 for GCN at a site located 1.3 km to the south-west of Crows Nest Farm. In addition, six GCN Class Survey Licence returns have been submitted from four locations, the closest located 1.1 km to the south-west and two positive Pond Surveys (2017-2019) for GCN were identified, the closest located 570 metres to the south-east.

Surrounding Habitats

- 3.3 The application site is situated on the edge of a rural village and is surrounded by a patchwork of pastoral fields enclosed by mature hedgerows, rows of scattered trees, and occasional copses. The immediate landscape reflects traditional lowland farmland, with grazing land dominating the surroundings and a small number of arable fields located further afield. The B4042, a main route running east-west, is situated approximately 250 metres to the south of the site.
- 3.4 Within the 2 km search radius, the landscape is generally poorly wooded, though it does include a low number of scattered broadleaved woodland parcels. The closest Deciduous Woodland (Priority Habitat), identified through the Priority Habitat Inventory, comprises a narrow linear block situated approximately 550 metres to the south-east, beyond the B4042. In addition, a plantation of young trees lies approximately 90 metres north of the site boundary.
- 3.5 Three small parcels of Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland, listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, occur within the wider landscape, the nearest of which is located at Lea Wood, approximately 1.3 km to the west. Several scattered Traditional Orchards (also a Priority Habitat) are present within the surrounding countryside, the closest located 380 metres to the north-east. Notable grassland habitats in the area consist of an area of Floodplain Grazing Marsh (Priority Habitat), associated with Brinkworth Brook, located approximately 1.3 km to the south-east of the site.
- 3.6 The broader 2 km search area was reviewed for the presence of additional Priority Habitats, though no further significant or sensitive habitat features were identified.

Local waterbodies

- 3.7 Through the use of aerial imagery and the MAGIC website, three ponds were identified within a 250 m radius of the site boundary, see Table 2 below.

Table 2: Pond Locations within a 250 m radius

Pond	Distance from Site (Metres)	Direction	Grid Reference	Notes
1	77	South-West	ST 97476 85239	Accessed for HSI assessment – See Table 4
2	125	South	ST 97498 85179	Accessed for HSI assessment – See Table 4
3	200	North-West	ST 97353 85455	Accessed for HSI assessment –

				See Table 4
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Field Survey

- 3.8 Weather conditions during the daytime assessment are shown in the below table. Temperatures were recorded onsite using an Elitech RC-51 Temperature Logger.

Table 3: Weather conditions during Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Date	Start	Finish	Temp °C	Wind	Cloud %	Rain	Notes
25/11/2025	10:30	12:00	7	10 km/h	8	Dry	N/A

Onsite Habitats

- 3.9 The application site is located within the curtilage of Crows Nest Farm, occupying land immediately to the north of the principal residential dwelling. The surveyed area encompasses a range of managed and developed habitats characteristic of a residential-farmstead. The eastern portion of the site includes a single outbuilding, two small sections of short mown amenity lawn, a grow house, and plant beds. These features are bordered by hard standing.
- 3.10 The western section of the site comprises a rectangular riding menage surfaced with an artificial aggregate, along with an adjoining area of graveled surface, both of which offer no vegetation cover. The entire plot is enclosed by a timber post and rail fence, providing an open boundary with adjacent land.
- 3.11 Access is gained via a brick-paved driveway leading from the south. Beyond the eastern site boundary, but not included within the application area, lies a native but species-poor hedgerow dominated by common hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, which is accompanied by a ditch. This hedgerow is interspersed with two mature pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* trees, which contribute to the local landscape structure but are outside the survey boundary and will not be directly affected by the proposals.
- 3.12 No ponds or priority habitats exist within the survey area and no ponds are to be destroyed or impacted by the proposed works. The individual habitat types recorded at the site are described under the sub-headings below, using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) framework, with the location and extent of each illustrated in the Habitat Map in Figure 2.

u1b5 – Buildings

- 3.13 A single building is present within the survey boundary, comprising a concrete block-built structure with a pitched roof supported by a steel frame. The roof is clad in cement fibre sheeting and includes a small number of transparent panels to allow light into the interior. A mono-pitched extension projects

from the southern gable end. Wooden doors are located at both gable ends, and each side elevation features three windows. The structure includes rain gutters and wooden gutter boards but lacks soffits or bargeboards. No enclosed roof voids or internal compartments are present. The building is in sound condition and currently used for storage, with frequent human activity. Doors and windows are generally kept closed. The structure is proposed for conversion to garaging and associated ancillary use.

- 3.14 Several linear hard landscape features are present within the survey boundary. A low brick wall demarcates the edge of the paved driveway at the front of the building. In the eastern section of the site, a network of paved paths connects a series of plant beds and a greenhouse.

u1c – Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface

- 3.15 The western portion of the site includes a riding menage surfaced with an artificial substrate and enclosed by timber post and rail fencing. Adjacent to this is an area of gravelled hardstanding featuring ornamental planters, including *Cordyline australis*. Additionally, a bark chip-covered footpath runs behind the building along the eastern edge of the site.

g4 – Modified grassland

- 3.16 Two distinct areas of short mown amenity lawn are located in the eastern portion of the site. These are maintained at a sward height of less than 5 cm and are dominated by perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*. A limited number of forb species were noted, including white clover *Trifolium repens*, common daisy *Bellis perennis*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, and common dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg. Localised disturbance was observed in the north-western corner of the lawn, where a previous bonfire has resulted in bare ground. Additionally, a section of lawn in the south-east appears degraded, with poor-quality turf and a frequent presence of springy turf moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

u1~847 - Introduced shrubs

- 3.17 The eastern portion of the site includes a series of managed plant beds, some of which are uncovered and others located within a grow house or covered with bird protection mesh. The beds are bordered with timber sleepers and currently support a range of edible crops including strawberry *Fragaria × ananassa*, leek *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *porrum*, and broccoli *Brassica oleracea*.

Individual trees

- 3.18 Six broadleaved tree whips (DBH < 7.5 cm) have been planted within the north-eastern section of the amenity lawn, including oak *Quercus robur* and sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*. The trees are currently of limited structural or ecological value due to their size but would contribute to the vertical complexity and biodiversity of the site as they mature.

Notable Flora

- 3.19 No notable plant species were identified during the survey and no Schedule 8 or 9 plant species of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were identified on site (see limitations). An indicative plant species list is provided in Table 5: Plant Species Recorded Onsite. Site habitats are shown in Fig 2: Site Map.

Species

Bats

- 3.20 A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the onsite building was conducted to identify any Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) for bats. The building is a single-storey concrete block-built structure with a pitched roof clad in cement fibre sheeting. Externally, the structure was found to be well sealed, with intact mortar throughout the blockwork and no visible gaps or crevices suitable for crevice-dwelling bat species. Gutters and wooden gutter boards were securely fixed, and the eaves had been sealed with mortar, preventing access. No gaps were noted between overlapping roof sheets, and all window and door frames were tightly fitted, with no signs of potential ingress points.
- 3.21 Internally, the structure is well lit due to the presence of transparent roof panels and lacks enclosed roof voids or any internal compartments. The walls are constructed without cavity insulation, and no lining or insulation was observed beneath the roofing sheets. The internal space was clean, dry, and undisturbed, with no bat droppings, feeding remains, or other evidence of use by bats for night roosting.
- 3.22 No features suitable for either crevice-dwelling or void-dwelling species were recorded, and no evidence of bat activity was found during internal or external inspections. Overall, the structure is considered unsuitable for supporting bat roosts. Habitats within the application boundary hold low suitability for commuting or foraging bats due to the predominance of open, intensively managed surfaces; however, the native hedgerow and mature trees immediately east of the site may offer limited foraging and commuting opportunities in the wider landscape.

Badger

- 3.23 The site was searched for signs of badger, including setts, latrines, snuffle holes, paths, and hairs. No evidence of badger activity was recorded within the application boundary or within the accessible adjacent land during the walkover survey.
- 3.24 The plot itself comprises predominantly short-mown amenity grassland and areas of hardstanding, offering limited suitability for sett creation or significant foraging. Although the managed grassland may occasionally support opportunistic foraging activity, no snuffle holes or foraging signs were identified. Surrounding pastoral land and hedgerows beyond the application boundary are more suitable for badger movement and foraging. No active setts or signs of local use were found within or immediately adjacent to the site.

European Hedgehog

- 3.25 No evidence of European hedgehog, such as tracks, droppings, or day nests, was recorded during the field survey. The onsite habitats—namely, the short-mown, species-poor grassland and gravelled areas—provide minimal shelter or foraging resources. No dense vegetation, scrub, or hedgerows are present within the survey boundary to offer suitable refuge or hibernation opportunities.
- 3.26 The building lacks suitable access points or internal refuges and is unlikely to be used by hedgehogs. While the plot itself is suboptimal, surrounding offsite habitats such as hedgerows and field margins may offer more suitable sheltering and foraging habitat.

Nesting Birds

- 3.27 The building was assessed for its potential to support nesting birds. Due to its sealed structure, lack of ledges, crevices, or suitable entry points, it was found to offer negligible opportunities for nesting. The absence of access precludes use by species such as barn swallow *Hirundo rustica* or barn owl. No nesting material or evidence of bird activity was observed internally or externally.
- 3.28 Limited vegetation cover within the site further reduces the suitability of the plot for ground-nesting or shrub-nesting species. No active or disused nests were recorded during the survey.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 3.29 The habitats within the application site were assessed for their potential to support reptiles and amphibians. The site is dominated by short-managed grassland, artificial surfacing (including a riding menage and gravelled hardstanding), and well managed vegetable patches. These features lack the vegetation structure, refugia, or connectivity typically associated with suitable reptile or amphibian habitat. No tussocky grass, log piles, compost heaps, or other potential hibernacula were observed.
- 3.30 A ditch located outside the eastern boundary, associated with the hedgerow, was recorded as largely dry at the time of survey and appears to hold water only intermittently, likely as agricultural runoff. While it may provide occasional hydrological function, it is not considered to be suitable amphibian breeding habitat.
- 3.31 Three ponds were identified within 250 m of the site and were subject to Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment. The results of these assessments are presented in Table 4 below. No ponds are located within the application boundary.

Table 4: Habitat Suitability Index Assessment Scores

	Pond Name	Pond 1	Pond 2	Pond 3
HSI No	SI Description	SI Value		
1	Geographic location	1	1	1
2	Pond area	0.05	0.2	0.1

3	Pond permanence	0.9	0.1	0.1
4	Water quality	0.67	0.33	0.33
5	Shade	1	0.6	0.6
6	Water fowl effect	1	1	1
7	Fish presence	1	1	1
8	Pond Density	1	1	1
9	Terrestrial habitat	0.33	0.33	0.33
10	Macrophyte cover	0.6	0.3	0.3
HSI Score		0.60	0.46	0.44
Pond suitability		Average	Poor	Poor

4 DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposals

- 4.1 The proposals are for the construction of a new dwelling and ancillary outbuilding on land located to the north of the principal residential dwelling at Crows Nest Farm. A planning application shall be submitted to Wiltshire Council in due course. The purpose of the survey was to undertake an appraisal of the site for its potential ecological value to notable and protected wildlife, and to look for evidence of such species. The survey results provide information to determine the likely ecological impact the proposed development will have on wildlife species, and to inform the level of further survey effort and mitigation required to comply with relevant nature conservation policies and legislation.

Habitats

- 4.2 The application site lies within a rural edge-of-village setting and comprises a collection of habitats typical of residential curtilage, including modified grassland, artificial surfaces, ornamental/vegetable planting, and a concrete block-built structure. The surrounding environment is characterised by pastoral farmland enclosed by hedgerows, occasional tree lines, and small copses, with scattered Priority Habitats including Floodplain Grazing Marsh, Traditional Orchards, and Deciduous Woodland located within a 2 km radius.
- 4.3 No statutory or non-statutory designated nature conservation sites are present within a 2 km radius of the site. The site falls within a Natural England Impact Risk Zone (IRZ); however, a small-scale residential development typically falls below IRZ consultation thresholds.
- 4.4 Onsite habitats are limited in both extent and ecological quality. The dominant habitats within the survey boundary include two sections of short-mown modified grassland and an artificial surface

associated with a riding menage. Additional features include paved footpaths, low brick borders, a grow house, and cultivated plant beds containing vegetable crops. Six broadleaved tree whips have recently been planted in the north-eastern lawn, but these are young and of limited current ecological value. No mature trees or hedgerows are present within the red line boundary.

- 4.5 Proposals for the site include the conversion of the existing structure, the construction of a new dwelling, and an ancillary outbuilding. These works will result in the loss of an as-yet undetermined portion of modified grassland and plant beds. However, as none of the habitats within the application boundary are classed as Priority Habitat, and given their low intrinsic ecological value, these losses are not considered significant in the local context. No habitats of principal importance will be directly impacted, and the site lacks connectivity to nearby Priority Habitats due to intervening infrastructure and land use.
- 4.6 The proposed works are not expected to result in any direct or indirect impacts on surrounding high-value habitats, which lie at sufficient distance to avoid disturbance. Nonetheless, the introduction of external lighting associated with residential development may result in increased nocturnal light spill, which could affect the functionality of boundary habitats, particularly the hedgerow and mature trees immediately outside the eastern boundary. As such, sensitive lighting design should be incorporated into the scheme, in accordance with current best practice guidance.
- 4.7 In summary, the site supports a limited range of managed and artificial habitats of low ecological value. No significant adverse effects on local habitats or wider ecological networks are anticipated as a result of the proposed development.

Species

Bats

- 4.8 No EPSLs have been granted for bats within a 2 km radius, although habitats surrounding the site are considered to have a moderate level of suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting activity for bats of various species.
- 4.9 The building was found to be well-sealed and maintained, with intact concrete blockwork, no gaps at eaves or around window frames, and no crevice-forming defects suitable for crevice-dwelling bat species. Internally, the structure lacks an enclosed roof void, insulation or wall cavities and lacks the entry points typically used by void-dwelling bats. The interior is also reasonably well-lit due to translucent roof panels. No droppings, feeding remains or staining indicative of past or present bat use were recorded.
- 4.10 As such, the building is assessed as holding negligible bat roosting potential and no further survey effort on this building is recommended. However, all workers should be vigilant and mindful of bats,

taking extra care at all times during works on this building. In the unlikely event that bats are discovered, work should cease immediately and Cotswold Environmental should be contacted on:

██████████

- 4.11 It should be noted that further works would not be able to lawfully proceed without confirmation from Natural England, and bats should not be handled at any time for legal reasons. If bats are discovered during works, Natural England will potentially restrict development until further surveys have been completed and a full mitigation and compensation strategy has been designed. It is likely that, if bats are discovered, a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) will be required from Natural England.
- 4.12 No mature trees are present within the application boundary and therefore no arboricultural PRFs are at risk of impact. Habitats immediately outside the application boundary, including a native hedgerow with mature trees to the east, provide suitable foraging and commuting habitat for local bat populations. To avoid unnecessary disturbance and maintain dark corridors, lighting associated with development should adopt bat-sensitive design, to avoid illumination of boundary vegetation.

Nocturnal lighting measures

- 4.13 The insensitive use of external lighting within the proposed development could have a negative impact upon bats using the site for foraging and commuting activity.
- 4.14 As suitable bat habitat occurs within the nearby surrounding environment, low-level lighting measures should be implemented to avoid indirect disturbance to bats and other nocturnal animal species that may exploit local habitats. Measures must be taken to ensure nocturnal animals are safeguarded from inappropriate use of light and noise throughout the hours of night during the construction period, as well as to protect important commuting corridors for bats. Any external lighting installed as part of the development must be used in accordance with Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting¹¹.
- 4.15 Sensitive lighting strategy measures during the construction period are as follows:
- Works must not be carried out after dusk and must not commence until after dawn where possible.
 - Generators and machinery that emit significant noise levels must not be left to run after dusk.
 - LED lighting sources must be used, which generally have a narrower and more directional beam.
 - Light spill must be controlled and if lighting is required at night, hooded shields must be fitted to prevent spill onto nearby habitats that are likely to support wildlife, including nearby trees and hedgerows.
 - Lighting must not be directed towards any bat or bird compensation features.

¹¹ <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

4.16 In addition to the above, when selecting appropriate external lighting, the following specifications should be taken into consideration:

- Any external lighting incorporated into the proposed development should be LED luminaires due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.
- Luminaires should feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats¹².
- All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, fluorescent sources should not be used¹³

Badger

4.17 Whilst no evidence of badgers or sett building was found within the survey boundary or in adjacent habitats within 30 m of the zone of impact, it is possible that the site is used for commuting purposes, and individuals may occasionally access the survey area to forage for earthworms and other prey.

4.18 No badger setts, latrines, snuffle holes or paths were recorded during the survey, and no signs of activity were noted within or immediately adjacent to the application boundary. The short-mown grassland and frequently used gravel surfaces offer limited foraging value, and more favourable habitat exists within surrounding farmland beyond the site. Badgers may occasionally pass through the wider grounds, but regular use of the development footprint is considered unlikely, and no impacts to this species are anticipated.

4.19 Taking into consideration the lack of evidence, no further survey effort is required. Nonetheless, as a general safeguard, Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) should be followed during construction.

European Hedgehog

4.20 No evidence of hedgehog activity was recorded. The application area is predominantly managed grassland, hardstanding and gravel with limited connectivity to sheltering features, and lacks vegetative cover suitable for nesting or hibernation. More suitable habitat is present outside the application boundary within hedgerows and garden vegetation. Hedgehog presence within the site is therefore considered unlikely and no negative impacts are expected.

4.21 However, as hedgehogs may occasionally traverse garden environments, RAMs should be adopted, to further safeguard the species during works. Should new boundary fencing be installed, consideration should be given to incorporating occasional ground-level access gaps (130 mm x 130 mm) to maintain permeability for small mammals.

Nesting birds

¹² Stone, E.L. (2013) *Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation*

¹³ Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) 2023. *Guidance Note 08: Bats and artificial lighting in the UK*. Bats and the Built Environment Series.

- 4.22 No active nests were identified during the survey. The building lacks ledges, cavities or sheltered areas suitable for nesting birds, and the application boundary contains no trees, hedgerows or dense scrub. Nesting use of the building is considered unlikely, and no direct impacts to breeding birds are anticipated.
- 4.23 However, if at any point nesting birds are discovered utilising the building, without appropriate mitigation, these may be impacted by the development proposals. Impacts to nesting birds can be avoided by timing works outside the bird nesting season which generally runs between February-August, or by ensuring a site visit is carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist ahead of works commencing. In the event that any nesting birds or suspected nesting activity is discovered prior to works commencing, works must cease and Cotswold Environmental Ltd contacted for further advice.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 4.24 Although desk records confirm GCN within the wider landscape, with a single EPSL identified 1.3 km to the south-west and multiple licence returns 1.1 km from site, habitat within the application boundary comprises short-mown grassland, gravelled areas and artificial surfaces offering negligible shelter or foraging opportunities and no ponds occur within the development footprint. Three ponds were identified within 250 m and subject to HSI assessment, returning poor to average suitability for GCN. The nearest pond (77 m south-west) is isolated from the site by residential buildings and hard landscaping, significantly limiting terrestrial dispersal potential.
- 4.25 Given the lack of suitable terrestrial habitat, disturbed ground conditions and barrier features preventing ingress, impacts on reptiles and amphibians are unlikely and no further survey or licensing is required. As a precaution, RAMs should be implemented during site works. Should GCN be encountered during works, operations must stop and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted immediately for advice.

Biodiversity Enhancement

- 4.26 As a self-build application the scheme is exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain. However, the NPPF (2024) outlines obligations of Local Planning Authorities to promote Biodiversity Net Gain where possible. A suitable option with regards to biodiversity enhancement on site is the planting of a species rich hedge comprising a minimum of six native woody species to feature as part of the proposed plans.
- 4.27 Hedge plants should be approximately 0.5m transplants of locally common native species and of British provenance (preferably local) and should comply to British Standard 3936. A diverse mixture of species is recommended to enhance the wildlife value of the hedgerow and provide a good feeding resource for both pollinating insects and birds. Recommended species composition is 10% Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), 60% Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), 10% Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), 5%

Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), 10% Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), 5% Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*) with the addition of Wayfaring Tree (*Viburnum lantana*) and/or Guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) with no less than six species in total.

Bats

- 4.28 An option to increase biodiversity relating to bats on site would be to affix one or more bat boxes to mature trees within the site boundary, ideally using either Schwegler 1FF boxes (or similar) or Schwegler 2F boxes (or similar). Alternatively, they may also be pole-mounted in an appropriate position or fixed to the walls of buildings. Bat boxes must be positioned no lower than 4m above ground level and they must not face in a northerly direction.

Nesting Birds

- 4.29 Ways to enhance the site value with regards to bird nesting would be to fit nest boxes to existing trees or buildings. Options include close-hole boxes and open-fronted boxes which would then provide opportunity for a variety of bird species. We recommended that one external bird nest box (Schwegler 1B or similar) is installed onsite. For maximum success, our recommendations are as follows:
- Bird boxes must be positioned away from busy areas where disturbance would be more likely.
 - Following British Ornithology Trust guidelines, bird boxes must be positioned no lower than 2m from ground level and preferably above 3 m to prevent possible predation.
 - The proposed placement of the bird nest boxes must allow for a clear flight path, without obstruction to the nest box entrance.
 - Avoid installing nest boxes in a south-westerly facing direction in order to offer protection from prevailing winds and rain.
 - The nest box should ideally be slightly tilted in a downwards position to offer further weather protection.

5 REASONABLE AVOIDANCE MEASURES

- 5.1 Vehicles will use existing tracks onto and within the construction zone where possible.
- 5.2 It is advisable that only building products to be used on the day are brought and stored on the site. If building products need to be stored onsite (e.g. overnight or for more than one day), they will be stored on pallets or retained in bags on pallets to ensure that refuges are not created that may attract animals. Building products will be placed on existing hard standing if possible.
- 5.3 All holes created during the construction period will be filled in and finalised on the same day so as not to leave any pitfall traps. If this is unavoidable, they will be left with a sloping end or ramp to allow animals that may fall in to escape.

- 5.4 Use of external lighting must be carefully considered during the construction phase and post-development. If lighting must be used at night, it will not be allowed to spill over habitats beyond the site boundaries or nearby sensitive features that may be used by nocturnal wildlife and it will only be used when absolutely necessary (see Nocturnal Lighting Measures point 4.13).
- 5.5 Any spoil resulting from excavations will either be spread and compacted within the area on the same day or be removed from the construction area on the same day. It will not be left in loose heaps overnight.
- 5.6 All cut vegetation will be removed from the development site and immediate surroundings to avoid use by birds as nesting habitat.
- 5.7 Vegetation within the zone of impact should be cut and maintained at a height of 15 cm or below throughout the development to discourage wildlife from taking refuge within the site boundary.
- 5.8 Should any impacts to protected species be determined during phased development, then all works must cease immediately and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted for further advice. A European Protected Species Licence may be required from Natural England in order to allow works to proceed further.
- 5.9 Should onsite habitats become significantly overgrown, a new mitigation plan may be required in the form of a site specific Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) which will contain more stringent RAMs.

APPENDIX A: PLANTS RECORDED¹⁴

Table 5: Indicative plant list recorded on site

Scientific Name	Common Name	DAFOR*
g4 - Modified grassland		
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial ryegrass	D
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadow grass	O
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue	O
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cocks foot	R
<i>Taraxacum sp.</i>	Dandelion	F
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup	O
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Common daisy	O

¹⁴ Plant names according to Rose F, O'Reilly C (2006) The Wild Flower Key, Revised Edition. Penguin Books, London.

<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover	F
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle	O
<i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>	Springy turf moss	O
Plant beds		
<i>Fragaria x ananassa</i>	Strawberry	-
<i>Allium ampeloprasum</i> var. <i>porrum</i>	Leek	-
<i>Brassica oleracea</i>	Broccoli	-
Individual trees		
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Oak	-
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet chestnut	-

*D = Dominant, A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare

APPENDIX B: LEGISLATION SUMMARY

Habitats Directive

Species listed in the Habitats Directive 1992 (transposed into UK law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and subsequently 2017 as amended) for which it is illegal to deliberately capture, kill or disturb any individual, or deliberately damage or destroy a breeding site or resting site. In 2007 and 2009, the Habitats Regulations were amended to define illegal disturbance as that which would affect the ability of a significant group of animals of a European Protected Species to survive, breed or to rear or nurture their young, or to hibernate or migrate, or to affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

The act to makes provision about bodies concerned with the natural environment and rural communities; to make provision in connection with wildlife, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Parks and the Broads; to amend the law relating to rights of way; to make provision as to the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council; to provide for flexible administrative arrangements in connection with functions relating to the environment and rural affairs and certain other functions; and for connected purposes.

Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000

The CRoW applies to England and Wales only, enforcing a statutory policy for biodiversity conservation. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) provides the framework for fulfilling the UK's responsibilities towards the Convention on Biological Diversity. The CRoW Act is compliant with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, requiring consultation where the rights of the individual may be affected by these measures.

The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitat Regulations) (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) consolidate the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 with subsequent amendments. The Regulations transpose Council Directive 92/43/EEC, on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (EC Habitats Directive), into national law. They also transpose elements of the EU Wild Birds Directive in England and Wales. The Regulations came into force on 30th November 2017 and extend to England and Wales (including the adjacent territorial sea) and to a limited extent in Scotland (reserved matters) and Northern Ireland (excepted matters). In Scotland, the Habitats Directive is transposed through a combination of the Habitats Regulations 2010 (in relation to reserved matters) and the and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994. The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 (as amended) transpose the Habitats Directive in relation to Northern Ireland.

Bats

In England and Wales, bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Taken together, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture (or take), injure or kill a bat
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a group of bats where the disturbance is likely to significantly affect the ability of the animals to survive, breed, or nurture their young or likely to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species whether in a roost or not
- Damage or destroy the breeding or resting place of a bat
- Possess a bat (alive or dead) or any part of a bat
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost
- Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats (alive or dead) or parts of bats

A roost is defined as being 'any structure or place that is used for shelter or protection' and since bats regularly move roost site throughout the year, a roost retains such designation whether or not bats are present at the time.

Reptiles

All native British species of reptile (of which there are six) are listed in Schedule Five of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and as such are protected from deliberate killing, injury or trade. Therefore, where development is permitted and there will be a significant change in land use, a reasonable effort must be undertaken to remove reptiles off site to avoid committing an offence. The same act makes the trading of native reptile species a criminal offence without an appropriate licence.

Great Crested Newts

Great crested newts and their habitats receive protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This species is also afforded full protection under the

Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under such legislation it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a great crested newt;
- Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt;
- Intentionally or recklessly* damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a great crested newt; and
- Intentionally or recklessly* disturb a great crested newt while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.
- Sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale great crested newts or parts of them.

*Reckless offences were added by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which applies only to England and Wales.

Badger

Badger is protected in Britain under the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992* and *Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended).

The legislation affords protection to Badgers and Badger setts and makes it a criminal offence to:

- wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a Badger, or to attempt to do so;
- interfere with a sett by damaging or destroying it;
- to obstruct access to, or any entrance of, a Badger sett; or
- to disturb a Badger when it is occupying a sett.

Dormouse

The dormouse has undergone substantial declines in recent years as a result of habitat loss, deterioration and fragmentation and is consequently protected as a 'European Protected Species' under the 2017 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, which implements the EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC in the United Kingdom. In relation to European Protected Species (EPS), the 2017 Regulations make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a EPS;
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species, in particular any disturbance which is likely to:
 - (i) impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or to hibernate or migrate or (ii) affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal; and/or

- To (a) be in possession of, or to control; (b) to transport any live or dead animal or any part of an animal; (c) to sell or exchange or (d) offer for sale or exchange any live or dead animal or part of an animal of an EPS.

In addition, Dormice are protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended).

Dormice are listed on Schedule 5 of the Act and are subject to the provisions of Sections 9.4b and 9.4c, which make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a Dormouse while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; and/or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a Dormouse.

Birds

All common wild birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended).

Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird

Certain rare breeding birds are listed on Schedule 1 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and as amended). Under this legislation they are afforded the same protection as common wild birds and are also protected against disturbance whilst building a nest or on or near a nest containing eggs/unfledged young.

APPENDIX C: MAPS & SITE PLANS

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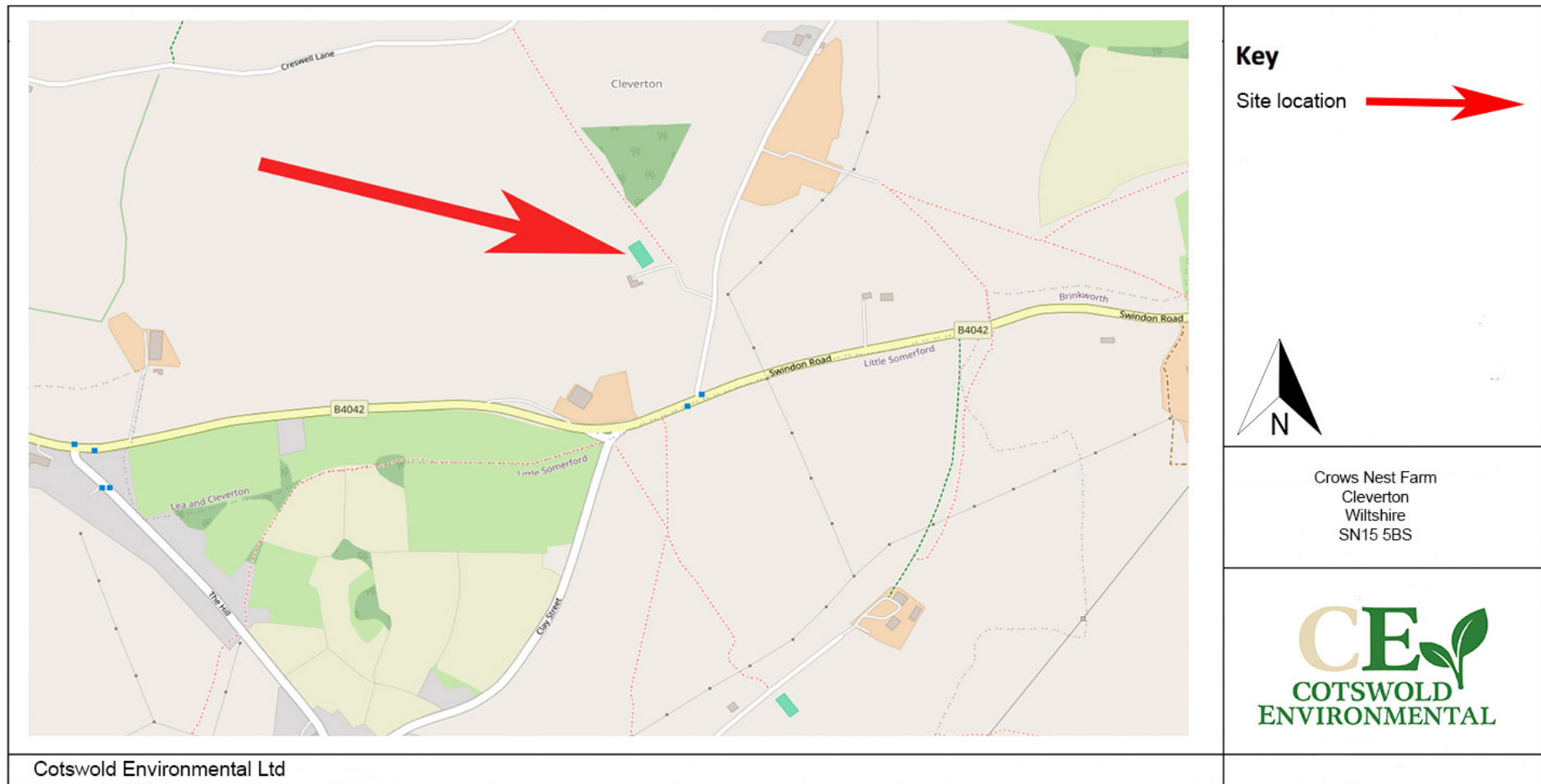
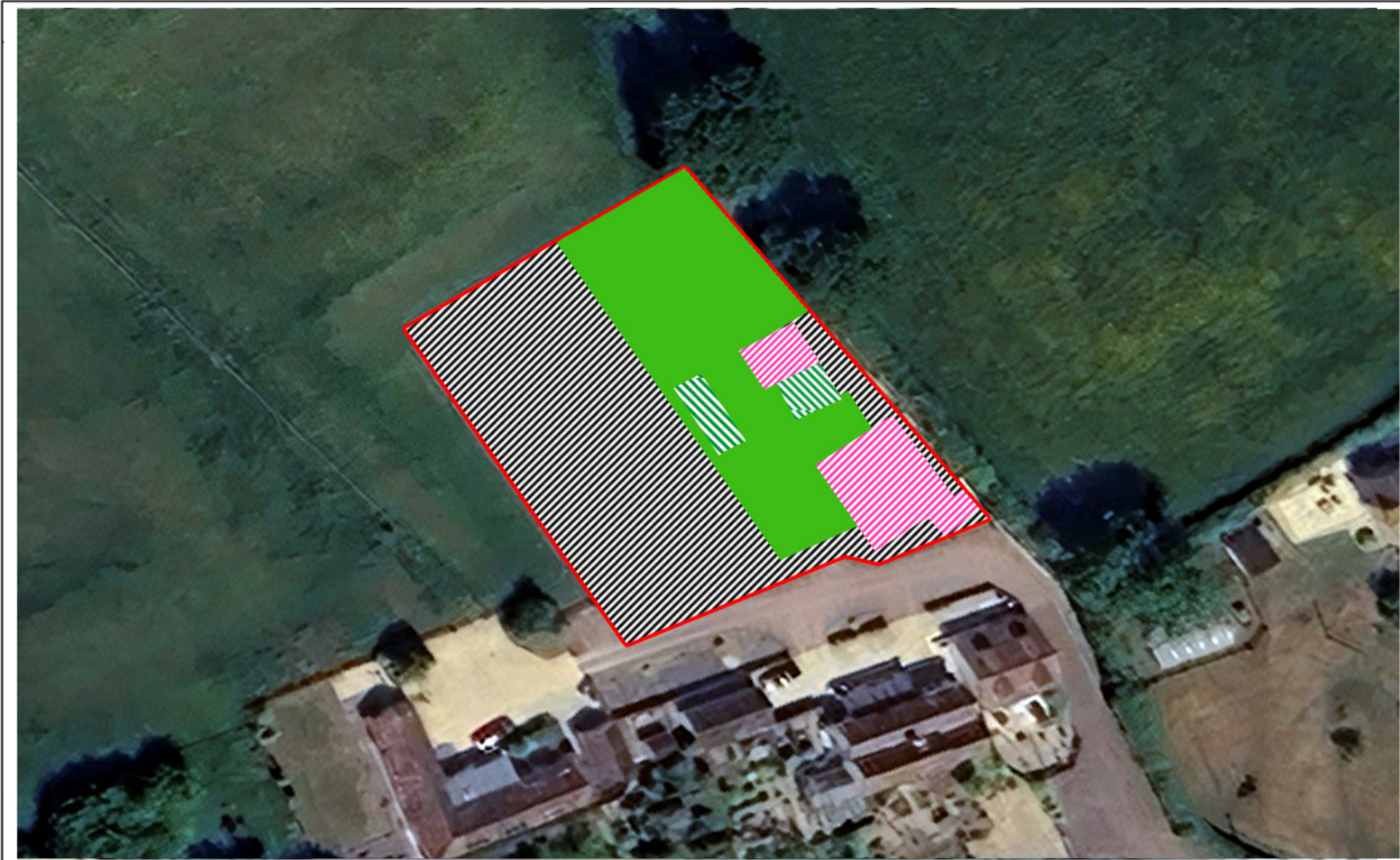


Figure 1: Location Map



Key

- Survey boundary 
- g4 - Modified Grassland 
- u1b - Developed Land/Sealed Surface 
- u1c - Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface 
- u1~847 - Introduced shrub 

Crows Nest Farm
Cleverton
Wiltshire
SN15 5BS



Cotswold Environmental Ltd

Figure 2: Habitat Map

APPENDIX D: SITE IMAGES



Photo 1: A view of the building and access driveway at the south of the site.



Photo 2: A general view of the site from the south-west.



Photo 3: The equine menage viewed from the south.



Photo 4: A view of the eastern extent of the site.



Photo 5: Short mown amenity grassland dominating the eastern extent of the site.



Photo 6: Plant beds located within the eastern extent of the site.



Photo 7: View of the surveyed building from the south.



Photo 8: View of the surveyed building from the north-west.



Photo 9: Well fitted gutter boards located at the eaves of the side elevations.



Photo 10: An internal view of the surveyed building.



Photo 11: Junction between roofing sheets at the eaves filled with mortar.



Photo 12: A view of the adjacent species poor native hedgerow and associated ditch, occurring outside the application boundary to the east.



Photo 13: View of Pond 1 which lies 77 metres south-west



Photo 14: View of Pond 2 which lies 125 metres south.



Photo 15: View of Pond 3 which lies 200 metres north-west.