
Soho Grange Stud, Ashley

Preliminary Ecology Appraisal

August 2025

Client: Arena Global
Management Ltd
Report Ref: SEB3154_01
Author: Kate Hayward
MCIEEM
www.seasonsecology.co.uk



Non-Technical Summary

Site Location	Soho Grange Stud, Ashley, SN13 8AN (central grid reference: ST 81067 68189).
Scope of Works	Preliminary Ecology Appraisal comprising a Habitat Survey and Suitability Assessment for Protected Species, supplemented with a desk study.
Survey Methods	The Habitat Survey was undertaken with reference to UKHab Classification (2023) and CIEEM (2018) and the Suitability Assessment for Protected Species included reference to BCT (2023).
Lead Personnel	Kate Hayward MCIEEM and Emma Shaw
Site Description and Suitability Assessment	The site lies in a rural location on the western edge of the village of Ashley, approximately 1.5km from the village of Box. Arable and pasture fields surround the site on all sides. The site is approximately 3.9 hectares in size and occupies a field unit. It contains a stable, and modified and neutral grassland, with bounding hedgerows and tree lines, a gravelled access track and concrete hardstanding. The boundary hedgerows fulfil the criteria as species-rich Priority Habitat hedgerows. The site lies within the Consultation Zone of the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC. With consideration to protected/notable species: • The stable is assessed as <i>Negligible</i> suitability to roosting bats. Several trees within the bounding hedgerows and tree lines offer suitability to low numbers/individual roosting bats. The hedgerows and trees offer high-quality habitats to foraging and commuting bats. • The boundary hedgerows and trees offer suitable nesting bird habitat. • The site offers suitable commuting, foraging and sett-building habitats for badger with commuting and foraging signs present on site (snuffle holes and mammal runs). • The hedgerow boundaries offer refuge and commuting for common and widespread species of reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. It is considered there is low potential for dormouse and negligible potential for great crested newts to utilise the habitats on site.
The Proposal	The site is the subject of a planning application for an extension to the existing stables and construction of an outdoor riding arena and temporary rural worker's dwelling (mobile home). The outdoor riding arena, and mobile home will be located in the vicinity of the existing stable building in the north-west corner of the site, located on existing modified grassland, and the extensions to the stable building will be located on existing gravel. No loss of hedgerows or trees and no additional external lighting is proposed.
Recommendations	No further surveys are recommended providing there is no loss of hedgerows or trees, or tree management works. An update site walkover to check for badger setts prior to the start of works is recommended. The north and east boundary hedgerows should be protected during the works. Precautionary protection measures have been provided for pre- and during construction, and biodiversity enhancements are recommended.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 In August 2025, Seasons Ecology was instructed by Arena Global Management Ltd, on behalf of the landowner, to undertake a Preliminary Ecology Appraisal of Soho Grange Stud, Ashley SN13 8AN (central grid reference: ST 81067 68189). The site is the subject of a planning application for an extension to the existing stables and construction of an outdoor riding arena and temporary rural worker's dwelling (mobile home).
- 1.1.2 The Preliminary Ecology Appraisal consisted of a Habitat Survey and Suitability Assessment for Protected Species. The survey was supplemented with a desk study.

1.2 Scope and Objectives of Survey

- 1.2.1 The survey was undertaken to identify and record the habitats on site and to assess the potential of the site to support protected/notable species. The purpose of the survey is to make known any ecological constraints or considerations that may be relevant to the proposal and to inform biodiversity enhancements.
- 1.2.2 This report is based on the findings of a survey undertaken on 28th August 2025.
- 1.2.3 The report is supported by the following:
- Annex 1: Summary of Legislation and Planning Policy.
 - Annex 2: Habitat Plan.
 - Annex 3: Site Photographs.

1.3 Personnel

- 1.3.1 The survey was overseen by Principal Ecologist, Kate Hayward, who has produced this report. Kate is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) and has 25 years' experience as a professional consultant advising on development projects and protected species and habitats, including acting as the named ecologist on European Protected Species licences.
- 1.3.2 The survey was led by Emma Shaw, Consultant Ecologist and Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Emma is a Level 1 licensed bat surveyor (Class Licence Registration Number: 2024-11842-CL17-BAT) and has over four years' experience in surveying protected species.

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

- 2.1.1 This report has been compiled with reference to relevant legislation and national planning policies, which protect wildlife. Annex 1 provides a brief summary of this legislation and policy.



3. Desk Study

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 A web-based desk study was undertaken in August 2025 prior to the survey to provide local information that may be relevant to the proposal. The following online resources were consulted:

- The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website¹, to obtain information on:
 - Statutory designations within 2km of the site and within 4km for designations with bats as a primary feature.
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones and Bat Consultation Zones relevant to the site.
 - Habitats on or adjacent to the site listed on the Priority Habitats Inventory.
 - European Protected Species licences issued within 2km.
 - Other species information that may be relevant to the proposal.
- Google Maps², to view aerial photographs, maps and mapnik data, to assess the ecological context of the site.

3.2 Results

Statutory Designations

3.2.1 There are three statutory designations with bats as a primary feature within 4km of the site:

- Box Mine SSSI is located approximately 2km to the north-east of the site.
- Browns Folly SSSI is located approximately 2.2km to the south-west of the site.
- Combe Down and Bathampton Mines SSSI is located approximately 4km to the south-west of the site.

3.2.2 These designations are components of the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC), an area which contains the hibernation sites associated with 15% of the UK greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* population and is selected on the basis of the importance of this exceptionally large overwintering population. Small numbers of Bechstein's bats *Myotis bechsteinii* have also been recorded hibernating in abandoned mines in this area.

3.2.3 The site lies within The Cotswolds National Landscape.

SSSI Impact Risk Zones and Bat Consultation Zones

3.2.4 The site lies within the Impact Risk Zones for nearby SSSIs. Relevant to the proposal, consultation with Natural England may be required for developments outside existing

¹ <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

² <http://acme.com/planimeter/>



settlements that increase lighting or impact habitats such as trees, woodland, waterbodies, rural structures, or linear features. Therefore, consultation may be required.

3.2.5 The site lies within the Consultation Zone of the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC.

Priority Habitats Inventory

3.2.6 There are no Priority Habitats located on or adjacent to the site. Areas of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland are located approximately 100m to the south-east, 450m to the north-east and 500m to the north-west of the site boundary. Four areas of Priority Habitat Traditional Orchard are located approximately 290m, 390m, 475m and 530m to the south-west of the site boundary.

European Protected Species Licences

3.2.7 There are four European Protected Species licences that have been issued within 2km of the site:

- Two licences are for bats for a location approximately 1.2km to the north-east for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, greater horseshoe, Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*, and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, and for a location approximately 1.5km to the east for lesser horseshoe.
- Two licences are for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* for locations approximately 500m and 1.2km to the south-west.

Other Relevant Species Information

3.2.8 The Countryside Stewardship Targeting Area for corn bunting *Emberiza calandra* is located approximately 50m south of the site boundary.

Ecological Context

3.2.9 The site lies in a rural location on the western edge of the small village of Ashley, approximately 1.5km to the west of the larger village of Box. Arable and pasture fields surround the site on all sides, with further arable and pasture fields located in all directions, divided by mature hedgerows, scattered trees and small patches of scattered woodland. The nearest woodland is a band of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland which is located approximately 100m to the south-east of the site.

3.2.10 The By Brook flows approximately 320m to the west of the site at its closest point.

3.2.11 There are no ponds evident within 500m of the site, the closest is located approximately 530m to the south-west, within the grounds of a residential property.



4. Survey

4.1 Method

Habitat Survey

- 4.1.1 A systematic walkover of the site was undertaken on 28th August 2025. Notes were taken on the habitats present, and their suitability to support protected and notable species. Any incidental evidence of protected and notable species was noted. The survey was carried out with reference to UKHab Classification (2023)³, CIEEM 2018⁴ and BS 42020:2013 *Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development* (BSI 2013).

Daytime Bat Walkover and Roost Assessment

- 4.1.2 A Daytime Bat Walkover of the site was carried out to observe, assess and record any habitats suitable for bats to roost, commute and forage both on site and in the surrounding area.
- 4.1.3 The buildings/structures on site were assessed for their suitability to roosting bats. This assessment considered the style, construction and condition of the buildings/structures (missing roof tiles, rotten beams, cracks in stonework and ivy cover, for example) and presence of any suitable access points. Based on these factors, an assessment is made of *Negligible, Low, Moderate or High* suitability to roosting bats.
- 4.1.4 A visual inspection was then undertaken of the internal areas of the buildings/structures to search for signs of bats, such as droppings, staining, scratch marks, feeding remains, and for actual bats. Any signs of nesting birds were also noted. A high-powered torch was used to aid the inspection.
- 4.1.5 Trees on site were subject to a Ground Level Tree Assessment to identify Potential Roosting Features (PRF) on the exterior of trees. The trees are then assessed as follows:
- PRF – I: PRF(s) only suitable for individual bats or a very small number of bats either due to their size or a lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
 - PRF – M: PRF(s) suitable for multiple bats and could be used by a maternity colony.
- 4.1.6 The site is assessed as either having no habitat features, or *Negligible, Low, Moderate or High* suitability to roosting, foraging and commuting bats.
- 4.1.7 The walkover and roost assessments were undertaken with reference to BCT, 2023⁵.

Constraints to Survey

- 4.1.8 The survey is not able to record flora or fauna that may appear on the site at other times of the year and were therefore not evident at the time of the survey.

³ The UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab) (2023). Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J.

⁴ CIEEM (2018) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

⁵ BCT (2023): Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.



4.2 Site Description

- 4.2.1 The site is approximately 3.9 hectares in size and occupies a field unit, separated by electric-post fencing into horse-grazed paddocks. It contains buildings/structures, modified and neutral grassland with mature bounding hedgerows and trees, a gravelled access track and a concrete hardstanding vehicle parking area.
- 4.2.2 Habitats are mapped on the habitat plan at Annex 2. Site photographs are provided at Annex 3. Habitat descriptions are provided below.

4.3 Buildings/Structures

- 4.3.1 *Stables* - One timber-clad stable building is located in the north corner of the site. The stable has a pitched, corrugated metal roof containing six skylights, and there are sliding timber doors on the east and west elevations. Internally, the area is open to the roof, with no roof space present, and the ground-level is separated into stable compartments. The internal area is well-lit, due to the skylight, and cluttered with storage materials associated with its equestrian use. The internal roof structure contains a combination of metal and timber beams.
- 4.3.2 Externally, the timber cladding has a low number of gaps in the cladding allowing access into the interior of the stables across the north-east and south-east elevations (Target Note 1, Annex 2). There are gaps around the two timber sliding doors also providing access into the interior (Target Note 2, Annex 2).
- 4.3.3 No evidence of roosting bats or nesting birds was evident within the stable building.

4.4 Habitat Descriptions

Modified Grassland

- 4.4.1 This is the dominant habitat on site, occupying the majority of the field unit. The grass was horse-grazed and was of varying sward heights at the time of survey and moderate poaching was evident across the grassland. Species include perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Timothy *Phleum pratense*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, goosefoot *Chenopodium* species, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, bristly ox-tongue *Helminthotheca echinoides*, common knotgrass *Polygonum aviculare*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, dandelion *Taraxacum* species, hemp agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, red clover *Trifolium pratense* and white clover *Trifolium repens*.

Neutral Grassland

- 4.4.2 Located in the south corner of the field unit, this area contains the same species and varied sward height as the modified grassland, with the addition of crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, hawkbit *Leontodon* species, an abundance of red bartsia *Odontites vernus*, and mouse-ear hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*.

Hedgerows and Trees

- 4.4.3 The south-west, south-east, east and partial north boundaries are delineated by four hedgerows with trees, the other boundaries (partial north and west) are bounded by lines of trees. The four hedgerows are detailed below:
- Hedgerow H1 is a hedgerow with trees located along the east end of the north boundary. It is approximately 60m in length, 2m in height and 1-1.5m in width. This hedgerow appeared unmanaged at the time of survey with gaps present between the



ground and base of the canopy. Hedgerow species include elder *Sambucus nigra*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, with bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. also present. Tree species include a semi-mature and a mature sycamore, a mature horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* and a mature small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*. The mature trees contain PRF-I features (Target Note 3, Annex 2).

- Hedgerow H2 is a hedgerow with trees located along the east boundary. It is approximately 230m in length, 2.5-3m in height and 2m in width. This hedgerow appeared unmanaged at the time of survey. Hedgerow species include privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, field maple *Acer campestre*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, wayfaring tree *Viburnum lantana*, elder, dogwood, hawthorn and blackthorn, with ivy *Hedera helix*, Traveller's-joy *Clematis vitalba*, black bryony *Dioscorea communis*, hops *Humulus lupulus* and bramble also present. Tree species amongst the hedgerow include three semi-mature sycamore, two semi-mature field maple and one crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, the latter containing PRF-I features (Target Note 3, Annex 2). Badger foraging and commuting activity is evident along this hedgerow in the form of mammal runs and snuffle holes (Target Note 4, Annex 2).
- Hedgerow H3 is a hedgerow with trees located along the south-east boundary. It is approximately 110m in length, 3m in height and 2.5m in width. This hedgerow appeared unmanaged at the time of survey. Hedgerow species include English oak *Quercus robur*, elm *Ulmus* species, privet, field maple, ash, wayfaring tree, hazel, dogwood, and blackthorn, with dog-rose *Rosa canina*, ivy, Traveller's-joy and bramble also present. Tree species amongst the hedgerow include a semi-mature field maple and a mature hawthorn. Badger commuting activity is evident along this hedgerow in the form of one mammal run through the base of the hedgerow (Target Note 4, Annex 2).
- Hedgerow H4 is a hedgerow with trees located along the south-west boundary. It is approximately 135m in length, 2.5-3m in height and 2-2.5m in width. This hedgerow appeared unmanaged at the time of survey. Hedgerow species include elm species (standing deadwood), hazel, blackthorn, hawthorn, crab apple and beech *Fagus sylvatica*, with dog-rose, ivy, Traveller's-joy, black bryony and bramble also present. Tree species amongst the hedgerow include six evenly spaced semi-mature beech along the length.

- 4.4.4 The west boundary comprises a line of black poplar *Populus nigra* trees along the north end, with a line of mature sycamore trees along the south end. The west end of the north boundary supports a tree line comprising two mature small-leaved limes, each containing PRF-I features in the form of dense ivy coverage, five mature horse chestnut trees, each containing PRF-I features, and one beech also containing PRF-I features (all shown at Target Note 3, Annex 2).

Developed Sealed and Unsealed Surfaces

- 4.4.5 A gravelled access track provides access into the site and vehicle parking for the stable building in the north-east corner of the site.
- 4.4.6 The stable building is surrounded by a concrete skirt.



5. Evaluation

- 5.1.1 The site is a moderately-sized field unit, compared with the surrounding arable and pasture fields, and is approximately 3.9 hectares in size. It contains one stable building, modified grassland, other neutral grassland, hedgerows with trees and lines of trees. It supports generally low habitat diversity, elevated by the boundary hedgerows and trees. Modified grassland and other neutral grassland are the dominant habitats, which support a low to moderate diversity of species. The hedgerows are all species-rich and fulfil the criteria for Priority Habitat hedgerows.
- 5.1.2 The site forms part of the wider rural landscape of arable and pasture fields and is typical within this context with no rare or notable habitats recorded on site. The mature hedgerows and trees bordering the site, offer elements of naturalness, permanence and fragility, which is otherwise absent. The hedgerows and trees connect to the wider rural landscape.
- 5.1.3 The site has value beyond the immediate Zone of Influence and is assessed as Local value, provided by the hedgerows and trees, which contribute to the wider network of habitats.

5.2 Statutory Designations

- 5.2.1 There are three statutory designations with bats as a primary feature within 4km of the site, located between 2km and 4.2km away, all of which are components of the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC for which the site lies in the Consultation Zone.

5.3 Habitats

- 5.3.1 All hedgerow boundaries on site fulfil the criteria for Priority Habitat hedgerows. There are Priority Habitats nearby, the nearest being an area of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland located approximately 100m to the south-east. Owing to the small scale of the proposal no impacts are predicted on wider Priority Habitats. There is risk of damage to on-site hedgerows without appropriate protection measures in place.

5.4 Protected and Notable Species

- 5.4.1 The potential for protected and notable species is considered below:
- Flora - Other neutral grassland supports a low to moderate diversity of species, but no notable plant species or communities were recorded on site.
No invasive, non-native species were identified on site.
 - Bats – The stable building on site offers *Negligible* suitability to roosting bats, with a very low number of suitable features identified, either being of unsuitable construction and/or being partially exposed to the weather. Internally, although access is provided through gaps in the cladding and around the doorways, there is no suitable roosting habitat or crevices, and the area is well-lit and experiences frequent disturbance.

There are 12 trees identified on site containing PRF-I features for roosting bats (Target Note 3). These features include rot holes, tear-outs and dense ivy coverage potentially obscuring features, and are assessed suitable to low numbers/individual bats.

The hedgerows and trees partially forming the site boundaries offer high-quality habitats to foraging and commuting bats, and wider habitats including hedgerows and woodlands offer further high-quality foraging and commuting habitats which link to the habitats present on site.



- Birds - The boundary hedgerows and trees offer suitable nesting bird habitat. The stables offer moderate-quality nesting habitat with suitable access to the interior provided by gaps within the timber cladding and surrounding the timber sliding doors.
- Badger – Badger activity was identified on site in the form of snuffle holes and mammal runs, beneath hedgerows H2 and H3, which lead into the adjacent field units (Target Note 4). The site offers a moderate area of suitable foraging and commuting habitats, provided by the grassland and hedgerows, notably the presence of crab apple trees which provide an optimal foraging resource for the species. The boundaries of the site offer suitable sett-building habitat, although no badgers setts were identified on site.
- Other Mammals – The hedgerow boundaries offer refuge, commuting and foraging for small mammals, including hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*.

The hedgerow boundaries offer suitable habitats to dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* with their preferred foodplant, hazel, and other foodplants present and good connectivity to the wider hedgerow network and scattered woodlands across the wider area. There are no known records for this species within 2km of the site, referring to the web-based desk study. It is considered that there is low potential for dormouse to utilise the hedgerows on site.

- Reptiles and Amphibians – The hedgerow boundaries offer refuge and commuting for common and widespread species of reptiles and amphibians, such as common toad *Bufo bufo* and slow worm *Anguis fragilis*. The hedgerows also offer refuge and commuting habitats for great crested newt and, referring to the web-based desk study, there are two records for this species within 2km of the site. However, there are no ponds evident within 500m of the site and barriers between the site and the local records, including Ashley Road, an unnamed road and expanse of open arable and pasture field units. Therefore, it is considered that there is negligible potential for great crested newt to utilise the habitats on site.
- Invertebrates – The site is suitable to support a generally low diversity and abundance of invertebrates, namely the hedgerows, trees and grassland.



6. Recommendations

6.1.1 The site is the subject of a planning application for an extension to the existing stables and construction of an outdoor riding arena and temporary rural worker's dwelling (mobile home). The outdoor riding arena, and mobile home will be located in the vicinity of the existing stable building in the north-west corner of the site, on existing modified grassland, and the extension to the stable building will be located on existing gravel. All hedgerows and trees will be retained. There is no external lighting proposed.

6.1.2 With consideration to the proposal, the following is recommended:

6.2 Further Surveys

6.2.1 No further surveys are recommended providing there is no loss of hedgerows, no management works or felling of trees and no additional external lighting. Should the proposal change and impact on hedgerows and/or trees, then further surveys will be required.

6.3 Badger

6.3.1 An update walkover of the site should be undertaken approximately six weeks in advance of construction works commencing, to ensure there are no badger setts, which may have been dug in the intervening period since the survey.

6.4 Habitat Protection

6.4.1 The north and east boundary hedgerows, and any trees they contain, in the vicinity of the proposed works should be protected with appropriate protection fencing for the duration of the works. The other hedgerow boundary and bordering tree lines are distant from the works and are not at risk from direct or indirect impacts from the proposal.

6.5 Precautionary Protection Measures

- 6.5.1 The following protection measures prior to and during construction should be implemented:
- In the area of the works, maintain the grassland as a short sward up to the commencement of construction.
 - Install protection fencing surrounding hedgerows and trees prior to any works, including bringing construction materials and heavy machinery onto the site.
 - During construction, any trenches left open overnight should include a means of escape for animals. A plank angled from the bottom to the top of the trench, will allow animals (such as hedgehog and badger) to escape.
 - Noisy machinery should cease one hour before sunset to minimise any disturbance to wildlife.
 - In the event of a protected species being discovered at any stage during the works, then works should stop and advice sought from an Ecologist.



6.6 Biodiversity Enhancements

6.6.1 The proposal provides opportunity to enhance biodiversity on the site. The following biodiversity features are considered appropriate to the type and scale of the proposal:

- Roosting bats – Two bat boxes could be attached to, or built-in to the new extension to the stable building. These should be located on a south-east, south-west or south-facing elevation at a height of between 3m and 5m off the ground.
- Nesting birds - Two bird boxes could be attached to, or built-in to the new extension to the stable building. These should be located on a north or east-facing elevation at a height of between 1.5m and 2m off the ground.
- Common and widespread species of reptiles, amphibians and small mammals – Two log piles could be created along the south or west boundary hedgerows to offer refuge and hibernation habitat.
- New habitat creation will be required to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain, and a 30-year Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan implemented for new habitats.



7. Annexes

Annex 1: Legislation and Planning Policy

A summary of relevant legislation and national policy is provided below. For each individual case, it is advised to consult the relevant documents in full and obtain legal advice, where appropriate.

There are several UK legislation tools, which are listed below. European legislation has not been included as it is incorporated in UK legislation by domestic provisions.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit)

In 1992, the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC)⁶ came into force. This provides for the creation of a network of protected wildlife sites across the European Union, known as 'Natura 2000'. This network consists of designated sites, including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC)⁷. These sites form part of a series of measures aimed at conserving important and threatened habitats and species.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 commonly known as 'the Habitat Regulations' transpose the Habitats Directive into national law and set out the provisions for the protection and management of species and habitats of European importance, including Natura 2000 sites. The Regulations have been amended in England in relation to candidate SACs and SPAs. These are sites submitted by the Government for consideration as part of the Natura 2000 network, and are also now defined as European Sites. All European Sites are of national importance and have been notified as SSSIs.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as Amended in Quinquennial Review and by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000⁸

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁹ provides the foundation for much of the statutory wildlife protection in the UK. Part I deals with the protection of plants, birds and other animals and Part II deals with the designation of SSSIs.

The following broad areas are covered by the Act:

Nature Conservation - Protecting those sites which are National Nature Reserves (NNR) and SSSIs.

Wildlife - Listing endangered or rare species in need of protection and creating offences for killing, disturbing or injuring such species. The disturbance of any nesting bird during the breeding season is also noted as an offence.

The Act also makes it an offence to cause to grow in the wild certain plant species or to release certain fauna into the wild. The Act is enforced by local authorities.

⁶ European Commission (1992). Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. European Commission, Brussels.

⁷ European Commission (1979). Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds, European Commission, Brussels.

⁸ Secretary of State, 2000. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

⁹ Secretary of State, 1981. Wildlife and Countryside Act. Her Majesty's Stationery Office.



Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides a new statutory right of access to the countryside and improves upon the rights of way system, providing stronger protection for both wildlife and countryside.

Part III of the Act - Nature Conservation and Wildlife Protection: A number of measures to promote and enhance wildlife conservation are detailed, including improving protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and increasing penalties for deliberate damage to SSSIs. The Act affords statutory protection to Ramsar Sites which are wetlands designated under the International Convention on Wetlands.

National Planning Policy Framework, 2021

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 and revised in July 2021. It sets out the Government's requirements for the planning system and how these are expected to be addressed. The NPPF is a material consideration for the purposes of planning decision-making.

The NPPF places a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The NPPF has an environmental objective to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

The presence of a legally protected species is a material consideration for a local authority dealing with planning applications for any development that would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and geological conservation¹⁰, prepared in support of the former PPS9, is still relevant and provides more guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation.

Biodiversity Action Plans

In 1994, the Government produced the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)¹¹, a national strategy for the conservation of biodiversity. Regional and District/Borough BAPs apply the UK BAP at a local level. The 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' succeeded the UK BAP in July 2012¹². The UK BAP lists of priority species and habitats remain, however, important and valuable reference sources. Notably, they have been used to help draw up statutory lists of priorities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, there are 56 habitats of principal importance and 943 species of principal importance.

¹⁰ ODPM Circular 06/2005 Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Importance within the Planning System.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7692/147570.pdf

¹¹ Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1994. Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan. London.

¹² JNCC and Defra (on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group). 2012. UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework. July 2012. Available from: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-6189>



Species/species group	Legal protection and policy
Flora	A number of plant species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit). It is an offence to deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy these wild plants. It is also an offence for any purpose to possess, sell or exchange such a plant. In addition, a number of plant species are species of principal importance in England (formerly referred to as UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species), LBAP priority species and/or notable species that are a material consideration in planning.
Bats	Bat species in England and Wales are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to: • Deliberately capture, injure or kill bats; • Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; • Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which bats use for shelter or protection; and • Deliberately damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place. Seven of the 18 species of bats occurring in the UK are species of principal importance in England and many are also included in LBAPs.
Badgers	Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1979. Under this legislation it is illegal to kill, injure or take badgers or to interfere with a badger sett in any way.
Otters	Otters in England and Wales are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to: • Deliberately capture, injure or kill an otter; • Intentionally or recklessly disturb otter; • Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which an otter uses for shelter or protection; and • Deliberately damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place. Otter is a species of principal importance in England.
Water voles	Water voles in England and Wales are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to: • Deliberately capture, injure or kill a water vole; • Intentionally disturb water vole in their breeding or resting places; and • Deliberately damage, destroy or obstruct of a breeding site or resting place. Water vole is a species of principal importance in England.



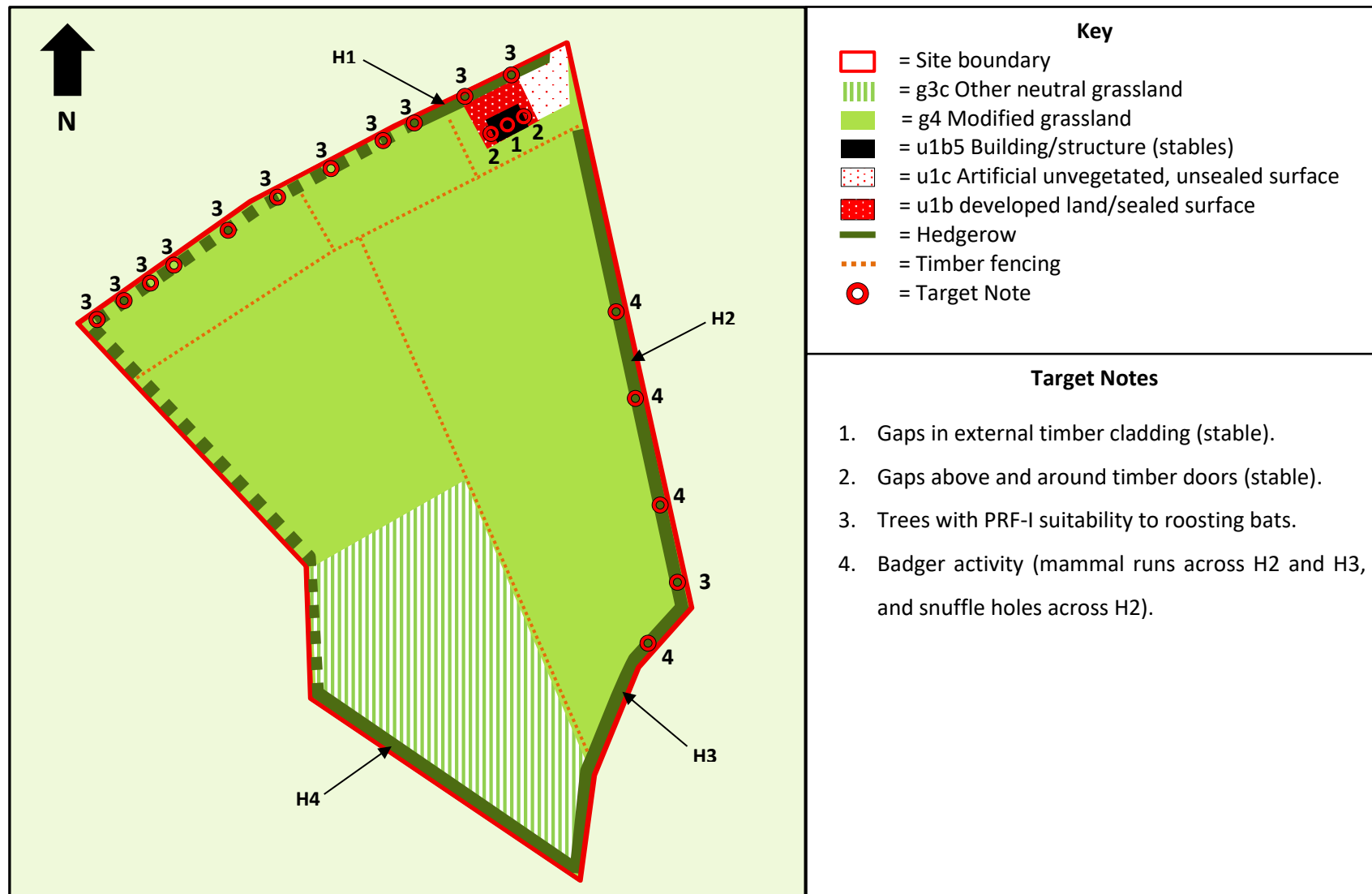
Dormice	Dormice in England and Wales are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to: • Deliberately capture, injure or kill a dormouse; • Intentionally or recklessly disturb dormice; • Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which a dormouse uses for shelter or protection; and • Deliberately damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place. Dormouse is a species of principal importance in England.
Other mammals	Several other species of mammals, whilst not afforded specific legal protection, are of note and consideration to such species is necessary in respect to planning in accordance with national and often local policy. Such species are typically identified as species of principal importance in England and/or LBAPs. Species of principal importance in England include brown hare and hedgehog.
Birds	All wild birds in England and Wales are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (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; and, • Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird. Bird species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act are afforded further protection and it is illegal to disturb such species while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird. A number of bird species are also included as species of principal importance in England and LBAPs.
Reptiles	Smooth snakes and sand lizards in England and Wales are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to: • Deliberately capture, injure or kill a smooth snake or sand lizard; • Intentionally or recklessly disturb a smooth snake or sand lizard; • Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which a smooth snake or sand lizard use for shelter or protection; and • Deliberately damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place. Widespread species of reptile (slow worm, common lizard, grass snake and adder) are protected against killing, injury and sale. Reptile species are also species of principal importance in England and often LBAP species.
Amphibians	Great crested newts and natterjack toads in England and Wales are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to:



	• Deliberately capture, injure or kill a great crested newt or natterjack toad; • Intentionally or recklessly disturb a great crested newt or natterjack toad; • Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place which a great crested newt or natterjack toad use for shelter or protection; and • Deliberately damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place. Great crested newt, pool frog, natterjack toad and common toad are species of principal importance in England. These and other amphibian species are also often included in LBAPs.
Invertebrates	45 species of invertebrate are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is an offence to: • Intentional kill, injure or take such species; • Deliberately damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place used by such species; and, • Disturb such species when occupying such a structure or place. A further 24 species are only afforded partial protection (typically only against sale). Stag beetle for instance is only protected against sale. Eight species and their habitats are also afforded further protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) (EU Exit). 398 species of invertebrate are included as species of principal importance in England and such species are often also included within LBAPs.



Annex 2: Habitat Map (August 2025)



Annex 3: Site Photographs (August 2025)

Photograph 1: The site looking north.



Photograph 2: Hedgerow H2 along the east boundary.



Photograph 3: The neutral grassland in the south-west of the site, showing hedgerow H4 and one semi-mature beech (left), and the line of semi-mature sycamore trees (right).



Photograph 4: The site looking north-east across the horse-grazed grassland.



Photograph 5: Line of black poplar trees along the north end of the west boundary.



Photograph 6: East elevation of the stable building, surrounded by a concrete skirt and gravel.



Photograph 7: Gaps along the top of the timber sliding door (Target Note 2), evident on both east and west elevations.



Photograph 8: Internal area of the stable building.



Photograph 9: South elevation of the stable building, showing the modified grassland to the south.



Photograph 10: Gravel parking area and access track to the east of the stable building, also showing the modified grassland to the south, hedgerow H1 and the mature sycamore tree within it (left) and hedgerow H2 (right).

