



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Report prepared for: Buttercups Kindergarten

Sprays Farm

Calne

Wiltshire

SN11 8QA

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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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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides the results of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal undertaken at Sprays Farm, Calne, Wiltshire SN11 8QA (central Ordnance Survey (OS) Reference SU 02138 68901). Development proposals are described as the construction of a new building and car park which will require the demolition of the existing Children's nursery building.
- 1.2 The findings included in this report are based on a survey undertaken during December 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.
- 1.3 Sprays Farm is located approximately 875 metres south of the A4, between the villages of Calstone and Calstone Wellington. The site location is shown in Fig. 1.
- 1.4 All survey and assessment work was completed in accordance with official assessment guidelines¹ and largely followed that recommended by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)² and follows the British Standard Code of Practice³.

Survey Objectives

- To determine suitability for protected species
- Ascertain evidence of protected species
- Determine potential ecological impacts the proposed development will have on protected species.
- Inform the level of further survey effort that is required.

¹ Collins J (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edn. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

² CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. CIEEM, Winchester.

³ British Standards Institution (2013) BS 42020:2013. Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. British Standards Institution, London.

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 Countryside⁴ (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 Earth⁵ 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 16th December 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)⁶, 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.

Species

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

⁴ Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC). Crown Copyright and database rights [2021]. Ordnance Survey 100022861. Available at: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/>

⁵ https://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/

⁶ UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0. Available at: <https://ukhab.org/>

Bats

- 2.7 Survey effort was completed in line with official assessment guidelines⁷ and largely followed that recommended by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)⁸ and British Standard Code of Practice⁹. 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.
- 2.8 Trees deemed suitable for use by roosting bats were identified at species level, their specific features were photographed, and a GPS recording was mapped. Notable bat roosting features may include:
- Rot holes
 - Woodpecker holes
 - Horizontal and/or vertical cankers in the stems of branches
 - Knot holes
 - Scar crevices
 - Loose/flaking bark
 - Covering of dense ivy
 - Bat boxes
 - Any other features deemed suitable for roosting 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.

⁷ Collins J (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edn. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

⁸ CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing. CIEEM, Winchester.

⁹ British Standards Institution (2013) BS 42020:2013. Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development. British Standards Institution, London.

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

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

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

Dormouse

2.10 Hedgerows, introduced shrub 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

2.11 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, introduced shrub, 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

2.12 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 introduced shrub that is connected to hedgerows and linear tree features was inspected during the assessment.

Nesting Birds

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 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.
- 2.15 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

- 2.16 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.
- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 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.
- 2.19 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).
- 2.20 For Health & Safety purposes the roof of the building was assessed from ground level.
- 2.21 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.

3 RESULTS

Desk Study

Designated sites

- 3.1 According to the MAGIC website, the boundary of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape lies 60 metres to the east of the site and two statutory designated site exist within a 2 km radius (see Table 2 below). No non-statutory designated sites were identified (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.

Table 2: Site Designations

Site Name	Designation	Distance	Direction	Relevant Information
Calstone and Cherhill Downs	SSSI	1.5 km	East	A 128.22-ha site of biological interest, comprised of lowland calcareous grassland.
Morgans Hill	SSSI	1.7 km	South-East	A 12.25-ha site of biological interest, comprised of lowland calcareous grassland.

SSSI = Site of Special Scientific Interest

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

- 3.2 According to the MAGIC website, two EPSLs have been granted within a 2 km radius, these are shown in Table 2 below. No EPS licences have been granted for other protected species and no GCN Class Survey Licence returns or positive Pond Surveys (2017-2019) for GCN were identified.

Table 3: Granted EPSLs within 2km of survey site

Species	Distance	Direction	Year Granted
C-PIP	1.5 km	North	2018
BLE, C-PIP	1.8 km	North-West	2015

BLE = *Plecotus auritus*, C-PIP = *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Surrounding Habitats

- 3.3 The application site is situated within a rural landscape characterised by a patchwork of pastoral and occasional arable fields, bordered intermittently by hedgerows and linear tree cover. Surrounding land use includes scattered low-density residential dwellings and agricultural buildings, with the A4 main road located approximately 875 metres to the north. Approximately 150 metres to the south of the

site, the River Marden flows in an east–west direction. The river is lined in places by mature trees, providing linear connectivity and riparian habitat features within the landscape.

- 3.4 The wider 2 km search area contains a limited number of notable habitats, although several parcels of Priority Habitat are present. The closest block of Deciduous Woodland (Priority Habitat), lies 650 metres to the southeast. Additional wooded habitats include two areas listed on the Ancient Woodland Inventory as Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland: Ranscombe Bottom, located 1.1 km to the southeast, and Blackland Wood, located 1.3 km to the southwest.
- 3.5 A single Traditional Orchard (Priority Habitat) is present 780 metres to the southeast, and a parcel of Woodpasture and Parkland (BAP Priority Habitat) lies 900 metres to the northwest. Several parcels of Lowland Calcareous Grassland (Priority Habitat) are present within the wider landscape, predominantly to the southeast and associated with the notified Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) features in the area. The closest of these parcels lies 1.1 km from the application site. A single area of good quality semi-improved grassland (non-priority habitat) is also recorded 1.8 km to the southeast.

Local waterbodies

- 3.6 Through the use of aerial imagery and the MAGIC website, no ponds were identified within a 250 metre radius of the site, though a single raised ornamental fish pond occurs on a neighbouring property (see Site Images: Photo 11)

Field Survey

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

Table 4: Weather conditions during Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Date	Start	Finish	Temp °C	Wind	Cloud %	Rain	Notes
16/12/2025	10:30	12:00	7	12 km/h	88	Dry	N/A

Onsite Habitats

- 3.8 The application site is situated at the north-eastern edge of a working agricultural holding, which includes a network of agricultural and livestock buildings, a farmhouse, and a children's nursery. The application area itself is confined to the children's nursery parking and recreational grounds and comprises a mixture of managed and semi-natural habitats.
- 3.9 The application boundary comprises a small parcel of regularly maintained amenity grassland. This area is interspersed with a scattering of young, ornamental and native trees, consistent with early-stage landscaping efforts.

- 3.10 The southern and eastern boundaries are defined by hedgerows, which introduce some vertical structure and habitat diversity to the site and a small section of introduced shrub lies adjacent to the nursery's outdoor area. The site is moderately enclosed and forms part of a broader agricultural complex, with limited connectivity to natural or semi-natural habitats in the immediate vicinity.
- 3.11 An existing nursery building, located immediately adjacent to but outside the red line application boundary, is proposed for demolition as part of the wider scheme. Although this structure does not fall within the application boundary, it was included within the scope of the ecological survey to ensure a robust assessment of potential ecological constraints associated with the wider proposals.
- 3.12 No 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 – Developed land; sealed surface

- 3.13 Small timber shelters are located within the play area of the existing amenity grassland and serve as informal playground structures.

u1c – Artificial unsealed, unvegetated surface

- 3.14 A gravelled car park occupies the eastern portion of the application site and provides vehicular access and parking to the nursery. The surface consists of compacted aggregate and is in regular use, showing signs of minor vegetation encroachment at the edges. Areas of bare ground and localised disturbance are evident, particularly around the site margins and access points.

g4 – Modified grassland

- 3.15 A section of managed grassland lies to the west of the car park, forming part of a larger lawned area associated with the nursery. Only the eastern section of this lawn falls within the application boundary. In addition, narrow grass strips border the edges of the gravelled car park. These grassland areas are maintained at a short sward height (typically <10 cm) and are species-poor, indicative of regular mowing. The sward is dominated by perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*, with low cover of forbs such as white clover *Trifolium repens*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, and ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*. Coarser grasses including cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* are more prominent along the northern margin of the car park, where taller growth is permitted, along with some broadleaved ruderal species such as bitter dock *Rumex obtusifolius* and common nettle *Urtica dioica*. Approximately 15% of the grassed area is bare ground, resulting from trampling and vehicle movement, particularly around the car park perimeter.

h2a – Native hedgerow

- 3.16 Hedgerow H1 is a native, species-poor hedgerow situated along the eastern roadside boundary of the car park. It measures approximately 33 metres in length, 2 metres in height, and 1.2 metres in width.

The hedge is well-managed and continuous with no gaps. It is dominated by common hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, with occasional blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, field elm *Ulmus minor*, and field maple *Acer campestre*. Ground flora is largely absent due to dense shading, though some bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and common ivy *Hedera helix* are present within the hedgerow canopy.

h2b – Non-native and ornamental hedgerow

- 3.17 Hedgerow H2 forms the southern boundary of the car park and comprises a 38 metre long, 2 metre high, and 1.2 metre wide linear feature. It is formed entirely of beech *Fagus sylvatica*. The hedge is uniformly clipped and features a single 1.2 metre wide gap allowing access to the adjacent residential car park. No other woody species or understory vegetation is present.

u1 ~ 847 – Introduced shrub

- 3.18 Two individual specimens of dog rose *Rosa canina* are present within the site, planted within an otherwise managed amenity lawn. Although dog rose is a native species, these specimens are clearly the result of deliberate planting rather than natural establishment and are situated within a regularly maintained, artificial landscape context.

Individual trees

- 3.19 12 small native trees are located within the application area. The species assemblage includes silver birch *Betula pendula*, willow species *Salix* spp., field maple, oak *Quercus robur*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, common hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, and crab apple *Malus sylvestris*. All small trees are to be retained as part of the proposed works. In addition, native sapling trees are planted within the existing amenity lawn; these have a diameter at breast height of less than 7.5 cm.

u1b5 – Building

- 3.20 A single-storey, flat-roofed building currently in use as a children's nursery is located adjacent to, but outside, the red line application boundary (SU 02135 68878). Although not within the application site, the building was included within the scope of the ecological survey to inform the assessment of the wider site context. The building is of timber frame construction and clad in shiplap wooden panelling. The flat roof is covered in bitumen and lacks fascia boards or soffits. The structure features modern UPVC windows and doors on both the northern and southern elevations. A lean-to extension projects from the northern elevation, comprising a corrugated metal sheet roof that provides shelter over an external wooden decked area. The building does not contain an internal roof void and instead has a suspended ceiling installed. The structure is well maintained and in active use.

Notable Flora

- 3.21 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

- 3.22 A detailed Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the offsite nursery building was undertaken during the site visit. Externally, the building comprises well-fitted timber shiplap cladding, with no visible crevices, cracks, or damage that could offer roosting opportunities for crevice-dwelling bat species. The flat bitumen roof is well-sealed, with no gaps present at the eaves or along the roofline. UPVC doors and windows were all closed during the assessment, and no potential access points were noted around the window or door frames.
- 3.23 Internally, the building was found to be well-sealed, with a suspended ceiling installed across the structure. No evidence of bats (e.g. droppings, staining, feeding remains, or roosting individuals) was recorded during the internal or external assessments. The internal structure is not considered accessible to bats due to the lack of voids or open roof space.
- 3.24 Although the building lacks roosting potential, the surrounding vegetation, including boundary hedgerows, blocks of introduced shrub, and scattered trees, may offer some localised value to foraging and commuting bat species. These features introduce vertical structure within the landscape and may support low levels of bat activity, particularly from common species.
- 3.25 A ground level tree assessment was undertaken on the onsite trees to identify potential roosting features (PRFs) such as rot holes, broken limbs or flaking bark, however, none of the trees displayed any features that would be considered suitable for roosting bats.

Badger

- 3.26 No field signs of badger were recorded during the site assessment, with no evidence of setts, latrines, snuffle holes, pathways, or hair found within the site or along its immediate boundaries. The application site comprises intensively managed amenity grassland and compacted gravel surfaces, which offer limited value to badgers for foraging or commuting purposes.
- 3.27 Although the grassland may provide limited foraging opportunities, such as invertebrates or earthworms, no signs of active use were detected. The surrounding rural landscape beyond the application boundary offers more suitable habitat for badger activity, including improved pasture and hedgerow networks.

Dormouse

- 3.28 No evidence of hazel dormouse was recorded during the site visit. The habitats within the application boundary are largely unsuitable for this species, consisting of heavily managed grassland, gravelled surfaces, and isolated patches of introduced shrub.

- 3.29 The boundary hedgerows, while native in part, are species-poor and structurally limited due to intensive management. These features lack the plant diversity and complex understorey typically preferred by dormice for foraging and nesting. Additionally, the site is somewhat fragmented and not directly connected to higher-quality habitats such as ancient woodland or extensive species-rich hedgerows.

European Hedgehog

- 3.30 No field signs of European hedgehog, such as footprints, droppings, day nests or foraging evidence, were recorded during the survey. The habitats within the site are of limited suitability due to the dominance of short-sward, species-poor amenity grassland and gravelled surfaces, which lack cover and foraging diversity.

- 3.31 Small patches of introduced shrub and boundary hedgerows may offer minor sheltering potential. However, these are limited in extent and do not provide optimal habitat. More suitable foraging, sheltering, and commuting opportunities are likely to be present in the surrounding rural landscape.

Nesting Birds

- 3.32 The surveyed building was assessed for its potential to support nesting birds. The external elevations are of modern construction and tightly sealed, with no cavities, crevices, or open ledges suitable for nesting. No signs of past or present nesting activity were identified. A small wooden nest box is fixed to the southern elevation, but found to be empty with no evidence of previous use.

- 3.33 The hedgerows, introduced shrub, and scattered trees within the application boundary offer potential nesting, foraging, and perching opportunities for common garden and hedgerow bird species. Despite this potential, no active nests or evidence of nesting was recorded during the survey.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 3.34 The grassland is intensively managed and lacks the structural diversity, refugia, and vegetation cover typically associated with suitable reptile habitat. Gravelled and artificial surfaces dominate the remainder of the site, offering little in the way of shelter or foraging opportunity.
- 3.35 No logs, rubble piles, dense vegetation, or tussocks were present, and no signs of reptile or amphibian activity were recorded.
- 3.36 A small ornamental raised fish pond is present within a neighbouring garden area to the immediate south of the building at national grid reference: SU 02136 68868. This feature is constructed of brick, raised above ground level, and is heavily stocked with fish. It also lacks aquatic vegetation and is surrounded by paving. Due to these factors, the pond is considered unsuitable for breeding amphibians, including GCN. No natural ponds or standing waterbodies were identified within the application boundary.

4 DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Habitats

- 4.1 The application site lies within a rural setting on the edge of a working agricultural yard, with surrounding land comprising pastoral fields, isolated arable parcels, and scattered rural development. The wider landscape supports a mosaic of semi-natural and agricultural habitats of varying ecological value. Notably, several Priority Habitats occur within a 2 km radius, including Deciduous Woodland, Traditional Orchard, and several parcels of Lowland Calcareous Grassland associated with designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) to the southeast. The nearest statutory designated site is located approximately 1.5 km to the east. Due to the distance, nature of the intervening landscape, and the scale of the proposed development, no adverse direct or indirect impacts to designated sites are anticipated. Although the site lies within a Natural England Impact Risk Zone (IRZ), the scale and type of development do not trigger a requirement for consultation.
- 4.2 Although the boundary of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape lies approximately 60 m to the east of the site, this designation is landscape-led rather than ecologically designated, and the small scale and nature of the proposed development are not considered likely to give rise to any ecological impacts relevant to the purposes of the designation.
- 4.3 Onsite habitats are limited in diversity and ecological value and are characteristic of a semi-urban, managed environment. The dominant habitats within the survey boundary include modified grassland of low species richness, a gravelled car park, with no Priority Habitats, such as species-rich hedgerows or traditional orchards, are present within or immediately adjacent to the site.
- 4.4 The proposed development will involve the construction of a new building and associated car park. This will result in the loss of modified grassland, a low number of sapling trees, and the removal of the section of introduced shrub. The native and ornamental hedgerows that line the site boundaries are to be retained in full and should be protected throughout construction to preserve their contribution to site biodiversity and connectivity.
- 4.5 Given the limited scale and low ecological value of the habitats to be lost, and the absence of Priority Habitat onsite, the proposed development is not anticipated to result in any significant adverse effects on local habitat networks. However, the retention of boundary hedgerows and scattered trees will help maintain some level of structural and ecological continuity with the surrounding landscape.
- 4.6 Due to the presence of vegetated boundaries and nearby foraging habitat for nocturnal wildlife (including bats), lighting measures should be carefully considered in the final design.

- 4.7 While the development will lead to the loss of small-scale and relatively low-value habitats, these impacts are not considered ecologically significant in the context of the wider rural landscape. Provided that appropriate mitigation and protection measures are incorporated, the overall impact on habitats is expected to be minimal.

Species

Bats

- 4.8 Two EPSLs have been granted for two species of bats, indicating bat presence within the surrounding environment. In addition, habitats surrounding the site are considered to have a high level of suitability to support roosting, foraging and commuting activity for bats of various species.
- 4.9 The timber-clad nursery building was subject to a detailed Preliminary Roost Assessment, during which no features with potential to support roosting bats were identified. The external structure is well-sealed, with tightly fitted cladding, no gaps at eaves or window frames, and no signs of damage or crevices that could accommodate crevice-dwelling bats. Internally, the structure is considered to be inaccessible to bats and no signs of bat presence (e.g. droppings, staining, feeding remains) were recorded during the inspection. The building is therefore assessed as having negligible roost suitability and no further surveys for roosting bats are considered necessary.
- 4.10 However, all workers should be vigilant and mindful of bats, taking extra care at all times during the demolition of this building. In the unlikely event that bats are discovered, work should cease immediately and Cotswold Environmental should be contacted on: 07557539979. 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.
- 4.11 The site also supports habitats that may offer some localised value for commuting and foraging bats, including sections of introduced shrub, boundary hedgerows and scattered young trees. As such, to minimise potential impacts on commuting and foraging bats, any new external lighting introduced as part of the development should follow best practice guidance.

Nocturnal lighting measures

- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 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 Lighting¹⁰.

4.14 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.
- 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.

4.15 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 bats¹¹.
- All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, fluorescent sources should not be used¹²

Badger

4.16 No evidence of badger activity, including sett entrances, latrines, snuffle holes or pathways, was identified within or immediately adjacent to the application site. The short, species-poor grassland and gravelled surfaces onsite provide minimal suitability for foraging or sett construction, and the site's overall value to this species is considered very low. More suitable habitat is present in the surrounding landscape.

4.17 No further survey effort is considered necessary. However, to safeguard the species should it move through the area during construction, general Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) should be adopted (see Section 5).

Dormouse

¹⁰ <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

¹¹ Stone, E.L. (2013) *Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation*

¹² Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) 2018. *Guidance Note 8: Bats and artificial lighting in the UK*. Bats and the Built Environment Series.

- 4.18 The habitat within the application site is suboptimal for hazel dormouse. The well-maintained, species-poor hedgerows lack structural complexity and floral diversity, and are disconnected from higher-quality woodland habitat in the wider landscape. No evidence of dormouse was recorded during the survey, and the boundary features do not represent suitable nesting or breeding habitat.
- 4.19 The hedgerows are also to be retained, as a result, no adverse impacts to hazel dormouse are anticipated, and no further survey or mitigation is considered necessary for this species.

European Hedgehog

- 4.20 No evidence of European hedgehog, such as tracks, droppings, or nesting sites, was recorded during the field survey. The site offers limited foraging or sheltering habitat due to the dominance of gravelled surfaces and closely mown grassland. A small area of introduced shrub may offer some potential cover; however, the surrounding environment contains more suitable habitat.
- 4.21 No direct impacts are anticipated. Nevertheless, precautionary RAMs should be adopted during site clearance and construction to prevent accidental harm to any individuals that may traverse the site. If new boundary fencing is proposed, the inclusion of regular access gaps (minimum 130 mm x 130 mm) should be included at ground level to allow continued movement through the landscape.

Nesting birds

- 4.22 The building assessed during the survey is not considered suitable for nesting birds due to its sealed construction and lack of accessible cavities or ledges, although a single small nest box is attached to an external wall. No evidence of nesting activity was observed. However, trees, hedgerows and the patch of introduced shrub within the site boundary offer potential nesting opportunities for a range of common bird species.
- 4.23 The removal of the nest box, and clearance of introduced shrub should be scheduled outside of the core bird breeding season (typically February to August inclusive) to avoid disturbance to active nests. If this is not possible, the affected areas must first be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24 hours prior to removal. Irrespective of the time of year, if nesting birds are discovered, an area around the nest site should be protected from disturbance with a suitable fence (not HERAs fencing) that should include an appropriate buffer zone. Work should then be avoided in this area until the nest is no longer in use. Buffer zones in this respect will normally be 5m in diameter, and will be delineated by canes, cordon tape and signage.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 4.24 The application site is dominated by habitats of very low suitability for reptiles and amphibians. The short-mown modified grassland, artificial and gravelled surfaces, and lack of refugia or structural complexity significantly reduce the site's potential to support terrestrial herpetofauna. No ponds are present within the application boundary, and the only nearby waterbody is a small, raised ornamental fish pond within the neighbouring garden area. This pond lacks aquatic vegetation, is surrounded by

hardstanding, and is heavily stocked with fish, rendering it highly unsuitable for breeding amphibians such as GCN.

- 4.25 No records of great crested newt survey licences or confirmed populations were identified within 2 km during the desk study. As such, the presence of amphibians or reptiles within the site is considered highly unlikely, and no impacts to these species groups are anticipated. No further surveys are required. However, standard Reasonable Avoidance Measures should be implemented during site clearance, including careful dismantling of introduced shrub and turf removal, to avoid harm to any individual reptiles or amphibians that may be present.

Biodiversity Enhancement

- 4.26 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 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 Lighting should 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 4.12).
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 All cut vegetation will be removed from the development site and immediate surroundings to avoid use by birds as nesting habitat.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 Should any impacts to protected species be determined during phased development, then all works must cease immediately and a qualified ecologist contacted for further advise. A European Protected Species Licence may be required from Natural England in order to allow works to proceed further.

- 5.8 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 RECORDED¹³

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 meadowgrass	O
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cocks foot	O
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog	O
<i>Taraxacum sp.</i>	Dandelion	R
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup	O
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Common daisy	F
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover	F
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain	O
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Bitter dock	O
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common nettle	O
h2a – Native hedgerow (H1)		
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Common hawthorn	D
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	O
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field maple	O
<i>Ulmus minor</i>	Field elm	O
h2b – Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (H2)		
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech	-
u1~847 - Introduced shrub		
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog rose	D
Individual trees		
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver birch	-
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Oak	-
<i>Salix spp.</i>	Willow	-
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild cherry	-
<i>Carpinus betulus</i>	Common hornbeam	-

¹³ Plant names according to Rose F, O'Reilly C (2006) The Wild Flower Key, Revised Edition. Penguin Books, London.

<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Crab apple	-
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field maple	-

*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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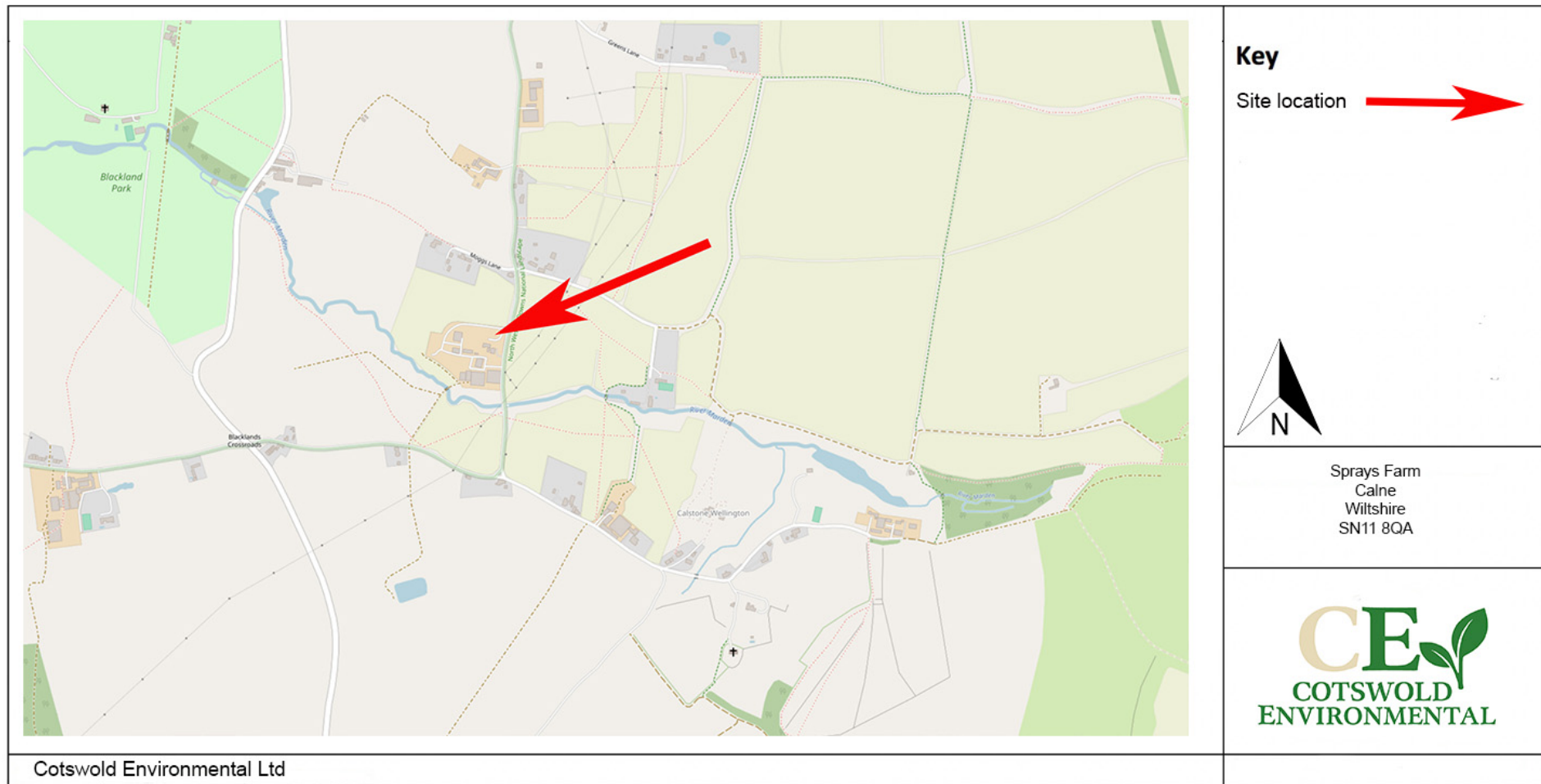


Figure 1: Location Map



Figure 2: Habitat Map



APPENDIX D: SITE IMAGES



Photo 1: The northern elevation of the surveyed building.



Photo 2: The southern elevation of the surveyed building.



Photo 3: The surveyed building and rear decking viewed from the north-west.



Photo 4: An internal view of the surveyed buildings suspended ceiling.



Photo 5: A view of the site entrance and car park from the north-east.



Photo 6: Hedgerow H1 present at eastern site boundary.



Photo 7: Hedgerow H2 present at southern site boundary.



Photo 8: Dog wood present near the centre of the site.



Photo 9: The section of grassland with trees present at the northern boundary.



Photo 10: A view of the amenity lawn and scattered sapling trees present at the western section of the site.



Photo 11: The ornamental fish pond located to the south of the application site.