



EXTENDED PHASE 1 ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

THE GRANGE, HURDCOTT, WINTERBOURN,
WILTSHIRE, SP4 6HD

FINAL REPORT

March 2026

Report conditions

<i>Report title</i>	Extended Phase 1 Ecological Assessment – The Grange, Hurdcott, Winterbourne, Wiltshire, SP4 6HD.		
<i>Client</i>	D.S. Equine Ltd. <i>on behalf of the client</i>		
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<i>Written by</i>	Elizabeth Emery <i>ACIEEM PCAQT</i>	<i>Date</i>	11/03/2026
<i>Reviewed by</i>	Daniel Hawthorn <i>MRSB ACIEEM</i>	<i>Date</i>	16/03/2026
<i>Amended by</i>	Elizabeth Emery <i>ACIEEM PCAQT</i>	<i>Date</i>	20/03/2026

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Executive Summary

- An Extended Phase 1 Ecological Assessment of the application site was undertaken on the 03rd March 2026 by Elizabeth Emery *ACIEEM PCAQT* of Phillips Ecology.
- The survey area comprised the entire site within the red line boundary and immediate surrounds. A data search extended to a 2 km radius for Statutory Designated Sites and 1 km radius for Priority Habitats and European Protected Species.
- The application site consists of a periodically-managed grassland which becomes seasonally waterlogged. Patched of scrub border the grassland along the western and southern boundaries, and a wet ditch is situated along the eastern boundary, adjacent to the river Bourne.
- The site is considered to have potential for protected and priority species including bats (foraging / commuting), hedgehogs, badgers, transient reptiles, GCN, common amphibians, dispersing hazel dormice, breeding birds, and riparian mammals.
- With the implementation of precautionary methods of work and reasonable avoidance measures, impacts on protected and priority species will be avoided.
- Information regarding the length of time the findings from this report are valid for can be found in section 14.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Report purpose

This Extended Phase 1 Ecological Assessment report has been prepared in order to support a planning application at the Grange, Hurdcott, Winterbourne, Wiltshire, SP4 6DH, (centroid grid reference: SU 17200 34600).

1.2 Description of proposal

The proposals are for the construction of a wildlife pond with associated soft landscaping requiring the re-profiling of a field. The established boundary vegetation and adjacent river are scheduled to be retained. More information can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

1.3 Report context

Phillips Ecology have been instructed by D.S. Equine Ltd. on behalf of the applicant to carry out a Phase 1 ecological survey at the site.

1.4 Scope of assessment

An Extended Phase 1 Ecological Assessment was carried out on the 3rd March 2026. The survey consisted of a field survey and desktop study to identify notable or protected sites, habitats, or species that potentially could be affected by the proposals.

1.5 Survey area

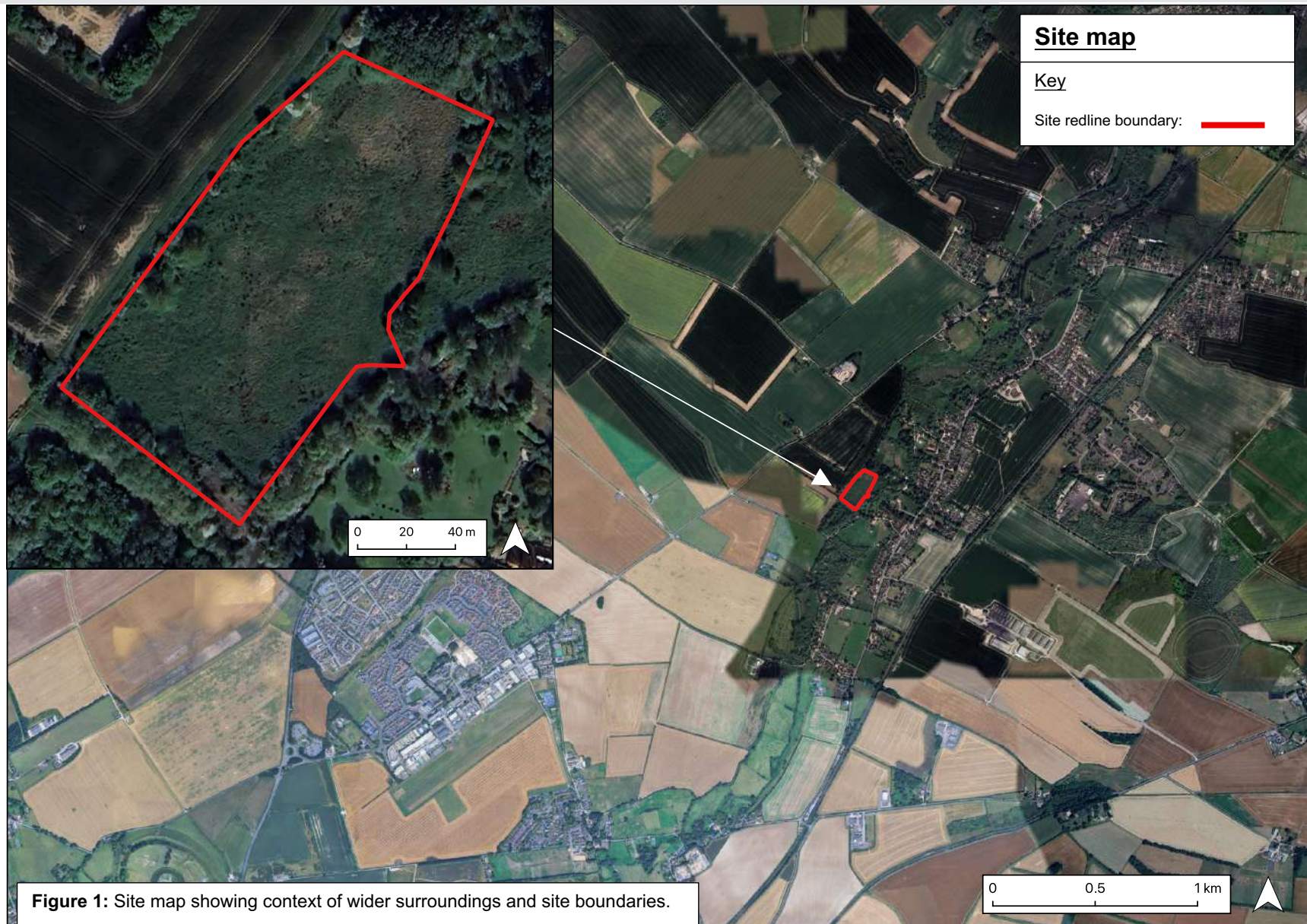
The survey area comprised the entirety within the red line boundary (see Figure 1) and also adjacent habitats where they were considered to fall within the potential Zone of Influence of the proposed works. A data search, extended to a 2 km radius for Statutory Designated Sites and 1 km radius for Priority Habitats and European Protected Species, was also undertaken (via Magic Maps).

1.6 Survey conditions

Weather conditions during the survey were dry, with a 40% cloud cover, a light southerly breeze, and a temperature of 15°C.

1.7 Limitations

Limitations which are specific to each phase of the assessment are provided in the relevant sections, below.



2. Data search

2.1 Methodology

The desk-based assessment was undertaken using the Government's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) to access records of Statutory Designated Sites within a 2 km radius of the site and Priority Habitats and European Protected Species within a 1 km radius.

2.2 Limitations

The data search results are bound by the following statement contained within MAGIC's general disclaimer: "The materials contained on this website are of a general, informational, nature. We have used reasonable endeavours to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the contents of the pages on this site but the information does not constitute advice and must not be relied on as such".

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Statutory Designated Sites

Five Statutory Designated Sites were identified within 2 km of the site. These were identified as the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (SAC), River Avon System Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Porton Meadows SSSI, Figsbury Ring SSSI, and Bracknell Croft SSSI. Further details are available in **Table 1** and **Figure 2** below.

The site is also within 3 km of the Porton Down Special Area of Protection (SPA), and the Salisbury Plain SAC, which is within the 6.5 km 'Critical Recreational Buffer Zone'.

Table 1: Details of Statutory designated sites within a 2 km radius of the site

<i>Site Name</i>	<i>Approx. distance and direction from the site</i>	<i>Reason for designation</i>
River Avon SAC / River Avon System SSSI	0.2 km SW	The River Avon and its tributaries are of national and international importance for their wildlife communities. The Avon is richer and more varied than in most chalk streams with over 180 species of aquatic plant having been recorded, one of the most diverse fish faunas in Britain and a wide range of aquatic invertebrates. It rises in the Pewsey Vale as a network of clay streams fed by chalk springs. These converge to a chalk river running through Salisbury Plain. At Salisbury this is joined by the main Wiltshire tributaries and develops into a large calcareous river flowing over more acid sands and clay as it passes the New Forest and the Dorset Heaths. The site includes the Dockens Water, a largely unmodified acid stream draining New Forest heathlands.

Site Name	Approx. distance and direction from the site	Reason for designation
Porton Meadows SSSI	1.2 km NE	Porton Meadows is an area of botanically rich unimproved neutral grassland lying on the floodplain of the River Bourne. The complex of small summer grazed pastures was formerly under water meadow management; whereby controlled flooding increased the sward growth rate. Today this approach has been abandoned, but it has been replaced by largely traditional farming methods rather than by modern intensive agricultural practices. Such management history is extremely uncommon in Britain. The site also includes small, wooded areas and a stretch of the River Bourne.
Figsbury Ring SSSI	1.6 km SE	Figsbury Ring is an iron-age hill fort with botanically diverse chalk grassland, representative of that found on the south and south-west chalk. It supports nationally restricted plant and animal species as well as large populations of orchids. Such floristically rich downland areas are valuable remnants of a habitat which has been much reduced by agricultural intensification.
Bracknell Croft SSSI	1.7 km SE	Bracknell Croft is a mosaic of botanically-rich chalk grassland and developing juniper <i>Juniperus communis</i> scrub. More than 300 juniper bushes are scattered over the downland which has a diverse flora characteristic of the south and south-west chalk. Such areas are remnants of a habitat which has become increasingly scarce with the intensification of modern agriculture.
Salisbury Plain SAC	2.3 km E	Salisbury Plain is designated for its extensive chalk grassland. Supporting nationally rare insects, and bird species such as stone curlew <i>Burhinus oedipnemus</i> . The 21,465-hectare site is owned by the Ministry of Defense (MOD).
Porton Down SPA	2.3 km E	Porton Down is an extensive area of grassland, scrub and woodland on the Wiltshire-Hampshire border. It constitutes one of the largest uninterrupted tracts of semi-natural chalk grassland in Britain, a habitat which has declined by more than 80% in the last 50 years, largely through agricultural intensification. It supports rare grassland and scrub communities, together with significant populations of uncommon plants, invertebrates and birds.

2.3.2 Ancient Woodlands

Parcells of Ancient Woodland are not located within 1 km of the application site. The closest is located 2.92 km east and known as Thorny Bushes woodland, Firsdwn.

2.3.3 Priority habitats

Five Priority Habitats are located within a 1 km radius of the site; these are listed below with the closest location to and direction from the site in brackets.

- Deciduous woodland (Immediately adjacent to sites northern boundary).
- Chalk river (Immediately adjacent to sites southeastern boundary).
- Lowland Fens (0.33 km S)
- Traditional Orchards (0.45 km NE)
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh (0.63 km S)

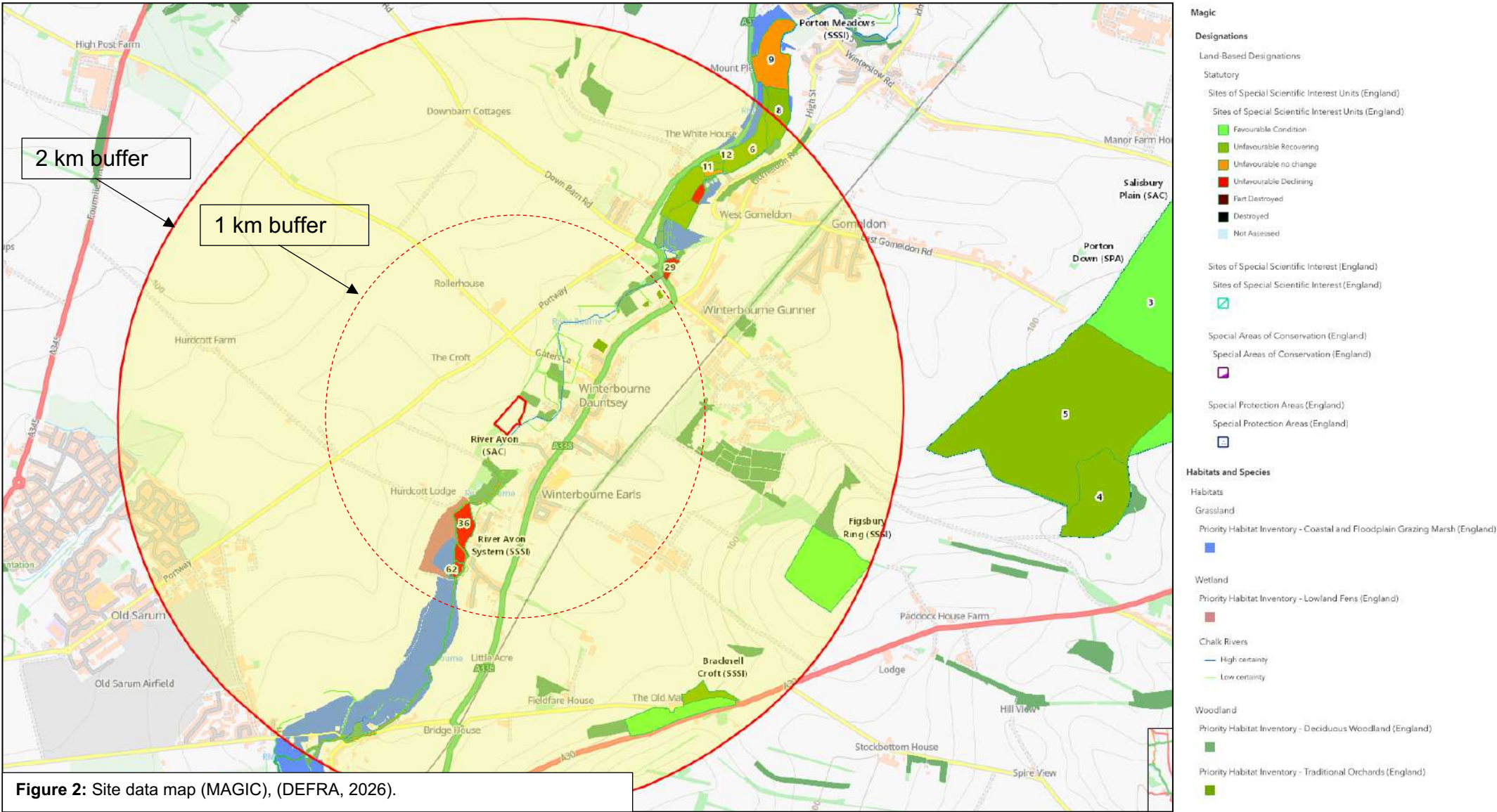
2.3.4 Protected species

European Protected Species (EPS) Mitigation licences or EPS survey licences returns are not held for within a 1 km radius of the site (MAGIC, 2026).

Utilising other freely available data, individual records to the following protected species were returned within a 1 km radius of the site. Species, distance and direction are listed in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Details of protected species records within a 1 km radius of the site

<i>Species</i>	<i>Protection / designation</i>	<i>Approx. distance and direction from the site</i>
European water vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> (historical; pre-2000)	Protected Species & Priority Species	0.10 km E
Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	European Protected Species & Protected Species	0.10 km N
European otter <i>Lutra lutra</i>	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	0.28 km SW
Grass snake <i>Natrix helvetica</i>	Protected Species & Priority Species	0.34 km SSE
Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Protected Species	0.41 km N
Common frog <i>Rana temporaria</i>	Protected Species (against sale)	0.45 km NW
Common Toad <i>Bufo bufo</i>	Protected Species (against sale) & Priority Species	0.45 km NW
Eurasian badger <i>Meles meles</i>	Badgers act (1992)	0.47 km NW
Great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i>	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	0.78 km NE
White-clawed crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (historical; pre-2000)	European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species	0.89km SW



3. Habitats

3.1 Methodology

The field survey comprised a walkover inspection of the land and covered all accessible parts of the site, including boundary features. Habitats were classified and mapped using QGIS or similar software in line with UKHabs methodology, to level 4 where possible, utilising Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (UKHabs Ltd., 2023). Aerial photography and OS maps were evaluated to aid in the assessment of boundary features and habitat boundaries.

3.2 Limitations

The survey was conducted during a prolonged period of continuous rainfall, which heavily saturated areas of the site. This created waterlogged areas in which there was poor drainage. As such, some areas of vegetation were visually obscured due to being submerged.

The survey was undertaken during early March, which may have diminished the chance of recording species more visible during other times of the year. This is true of both flora and fauna.

Variations within and between seasons may result in changes of species composition or population levels. Additionally, some species may take leave of the site and others may arrive at any given time. Therefore, results within this document represent habitats and species recorded during the survey only.

3.3 Existing records

The data search revealed two Priority Habitats within a 1 km radius of the site, including Lowland Calcareous Grassland and Deciduous Woodland. However, Priority Habitats were not identified within or adjacent to the redline boundary.

3.4 Results

The site itself comprises a periodically managed grassland, prone to seasonal waterlogging. Areas of the grassland were completely submerged at the time of the survey, at an average approximate depth of 30 cm. The grassland is immediately adjacent to the River Bourne, which is situated parallel to the eastern boundary. There is a connected wet ditch following a treeline, which demarcates the sites eastern boundary. Patches of linear scrub border the western and southern site boundaries.

The site is located within the Winterbourne suburbs of Salisbury. The immediate surrounding landscape is rural, with large expanse of grassland pasture, arable cropland and woodland parcels. Linear condensed residential areas follow the 'A338', which serves as the main access road across the area. A network of hedgerows and treelines serve as a green corridor throughout the landscape, with only small residential roads which may act as barriers to habitat connectivity or animal dispersal through fragmentation.

Wider infrastructure includes the presence of the 'BAE1', 'LAV', and 'RTJ2' rail lines, which serves as a key route through Salisbury. The closest is the 'BAE1', which is situated 490

m southeast of the site. Presence of rail lines within the local area should be noted, as they potentially serve as a critical uninterrupted ecological corridor, which could aid the dispersal behaviours of multiple protected species.

The following UKhabitat types were recorded within the survey site.

3.4.1 Other neutral grassland, tall forbs, seasonally waterlogged (g3c, 16, 502)

The grassland structure was varied across the site, with some areas remaining dry, whilst others were waterlogged. This is also reflected in the grassland species composition, with common riparian vegetative species occurring within the waterlogged areas. Sward height was varied, ranging between 40 – 50 mm and 900 – 1000 mm. Tall forbs were dominant throughout, occurring both in dry and waterlogged areas (**Figure 3 – 6**).

Grasses included Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, fescue *Festuca* sp., annual meadow-grass *Poa annua*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and sweet grass *Hierochloa odorata*. Forbs included greater willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, docks *Rumex* spp., creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, tormentil *Potentilla erecta*, silverweed *Potentilla anserina*, forget-me-not *Myosotis* sp., creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, lesser celandine *Ficaria verna*, comfrey *Symphytum* sp., common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica*, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, ragwort (*Senecio* sp.) white dead-nettle *Lamium album*, and bindweed *Convolvulus* sp., with common reed *Phragmites* sp., horsetail *Equisetaceae* sp., sedge *Carex* sp., hard rush *Juncus inflexus*, hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, water mint *Mentha aquatica*, common reed *Phragmites australis*, and soft rush *Juncus effusus* in the wetter areas.



Figure 3. Grassland, facing southeast.



Figure 4. Grassland, facing south.



Figure 5. Grassland, facing east.



Figure 6. Grassland, facing southwest.

3.4.2 Bramble scrub (h3d) / Mixed scrub (h3h)

Linear parcels of intermittent bramble scrub and mixed scrub followed the western and southern borders of the grassland. No clear boundaries were observed between the habitats, as the two merged continuously. Species recorded including bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., hazel *Corylus avellana*, field maple *Acer campestre*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, rose *Rosa* sp. and elder *Sambucus nigra* (Figure 7 – 10).



Figure 7. Strip of bramble scrub, facing north.



Figure 8. Strip of mixed and bramble scrub, facing south.



Figure 9. Mixed scrub area, with waterlogging, facing south.



Figure 10. Strip of mixed and bramble scrub, facing south.

3.4.3 Aquatic marginal vegetation (f2d) / Wet ditch (50)

A wet ditch on the eastern boundary of the site is present that is connected with the adjacent river, identified as the River Bourne. There was only a shallow depth of water present at the time of the survey (c. 20 cm deep).

Species recorded along the ditch included meadowsweet *Filipendula* sp., yellow iris *Iris pseudacorus*, brooklime *Veronica beccabunga*, fool's-water-cress *Apium nodiflorum*, speedwell *Veronica* sp., mint *Mentha* sp., hemp-agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum*, ragged robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*, willow herb *Epilobium* sp., guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*, and gypsywort *Lycopus europaeus*, with willow (*Salix* sp.) and alder *Alnus glutinosa* trees and saplings also present (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Aquatic marginal vegetation with wet ditch along the eastern boundary, facing north.

3.5 **Assessment**

The grassland undisturbed functional habitat, due to the variety of sward length, mixture of wet and dry areas, and vegetative species composition. The periodic management is intended to minimise anthropogenic disturbance, to encourage species utilising the adjacent river habitats to disperse into the grassland.

The scattered scrub has foraging and sheltering potential for a range of common species including bird nesting opportunities.

The aquatic marginal vegetation and wet ditch provides an alternative habitat and will support a range of species, acting as a wildlife corridor and being used for commuting and foraging.

Overall, the habitats on site are of high ecological value. As such, the uncompensated removal of these habitats would result in a net loss of biodiversity at the site, which would be contrary to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

4. Protected and notable species assessment

The scope of works, data search, and habitat assessment have informed this protected and notable species assessment. The protected and priority species that have been considered further within this report are detailed below.

- Bats
- Badger
- Hazel dormice
- European Hedgehog
- Common reptiles
- Great Crested Newt
- Other common amphibians
- Breeding birds
- Riparian mammals
- White-clawed crayfish

The surveyed site has been assessed for its potential to support the above-named protected species/species groups based upon the criteria in Table 2.

Table 2: Protected species grading criteria

Grading criteria	Justification
<i>Negligible</i>	Site is entirely unsuitable for species. Presence of species highly unlikely.
<i>Low</i>	Minimal suitable habitat present or, if present, highly degraded/fragmented. Minimal linkage to suitable habitat beyond site. Presence of species unlikely.
<i>Moderate</i>	Presence of some suitable habitat features for species. Surveyed site within/close to known range or known occurrence but factors such as isolation/fragmentation may reduce potential. Presence of species is more likely than not.
<i>High</i>	Presence of optimal habitat features for species. Surveyed site within known range/close to known occurrence. Excellent connectivity to optimal habitat. No justification for discounting presence of species.
<i>Confirmed presence</i>	Species confirmed on site through direct sighting, presence of field signs (e.g. scat, hair, prints, nest, eggs, habitation etc.) or through desk-based assessment.

5 Bats

5.1 Methodology

There are no buildings or suitable trees located on the site, and therefore an assessment of the Site for bat potential considered the suitability of on-site habitats for foraging and commuting only. This involved assessing the structure of the habitats and their perceived value to foraging bats. Potential offsite foraging habitats were also assessed for suitability and connectivity to the Site.

5.2 Assessment methodology

An assessment was made of the site's suitability to support foraging and commuting bats in accordance with the BCT Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition) (Table 4).

Table 4: Bat foraging suitability assessment guidelines

<i>Suitability</i>	<i>Description of Foraging/Commuting Habitats</i>
<i>Negligible</i>	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
<i>Low</i>	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or un-vegetated stream but isolated i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitats. Suitable but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
<i>Moderate</i>	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such tree, scrub, grassland or water.
<i>High</i>	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of tree and woodland edge. High quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

5.3 Limitations

The waterlogged condition of the site prohibited access to some of the bordering trees. As such, the assessment was conducted from a distance, utilising binoculars. Due to this, not all aspects of the trees were visible at the time of the survey.

5.4 Results

All trees on site were semi-mature, measuring approx. 10 cm in diameter at breast height, lowering the suitability for crevice dwelling bat species such as barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*. No discernible potential roosting features were recorded on the visible aspects of the trees at the time of the survey.

The bordering linear scrub provides a suitable corridor for foraging and flight path networks, which provides connectivity to the surrounding landscape.

The wet ditch / aquatic marginal vegetation within the semi-mature trees, provides suitable habitat for insect larvae, thus increasing prey biomass. Similar can be said about the waterlogged nature of the grassland, with large areas remaining submerged throughout winter and early spring. Whilst the wet ditch / aquatic marginal vegetation habitat is comparatively closed, due to the surrounding semi-mature trees, bat species are known to forage in both open habitats such as grasslands, and closed habitats such as dense woodlands.

5.5 Assessment

Due to the presence of multiple suitable insect habitats, the site has high potential for foraging and commuting bats. No roosting features were recorded within the trees on site.

6. Badger

6.1 Methodology

The survey involved a detailed investigation of the site to identify evidence of badger *Meles meles* activity, following the methodology outlined by Harris et al. (1989). Evidence of badger sought includes the presence of setts and set creation activities, with field signs such as latrines, feeding remains, badger remains, foraging evidence, trails, guard hairs, and sett entrances. In line with guidance from Natural England (2011), the survey area comprises of the Site and land within 30 meters of the site boundary (where access is not hindered).

6.2 Limitations

No limitations were encountered during the course of the survey.

6.3 Results

No evidence of badger residence (active or disused sett), or territorial activity (such as a latrine) was recorded during the survey. However, there is potential for badger to be present in the local area, due to the typically favoured habitat and attractants likely present due to the rural context of the site. Therefore, there is the potential for individuals to pass through the site for example when foraging or moving between foraging areas.

6.4 Assessment

Badger setts were not recorded during the survey. However, while the site does not have any evidence or potential opportunities for resident badger, and likely does not have the carrying capacity for resident badger, due to the rural context there is moderate potential for badger to utilise the site.

7 Hazel dormice

7.1 Methodology

An assessment was made of the suitability of habitat on site to support hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* in accordance with the guidelines provided in the Dormouse Conservation Handbook, Bullion et al, 2025. Key habitats are typically considered to be woodland, scrub and hedgerows, particularly where these offer dense vegetation within which to nest/hibernate, and have key resources such as hazel nuts, fruiting/nectar-rich plants (e.g. hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, bramble *Rubus spp*) and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* (for nesting material). Connectivity to wider habitats, such as hedgerows are fundamental for dormouse presence where small scale or sub-optimal habitats are recorded within a site.

7.2 Limitations

Low detections rates are associated with evidence of hazel dormice activity; therefore, absence of evidence does not confirm the absence of these species. For this reason, the assessment of the likely presence/absence of hazel dormice has largely been informed by the species' local distribution and the habitats within the site and local area.

7.3 Results

The linear scrub habitats within the site contains a mix of key food source species for hazel dormice. These linear habitats also display some arboreal connectivity to wider habitats. Fragmentation could be present due to the presence of small residential road networks. However, dormice have been known to use isolated sections of suitable habitat. As such, the presence of these road networks are not considered as a substantial land-barrier to dispersal.

If hazel dormice are present in the local area, the linear scrub habitats could be used by the species for both foraging and nesting. Furthermore, the proximity of the site to a rail line increases percentage chance for dispersal, as rail lines are known to be key linear feature habitats for hazel dormice.

7.4 Assessment

The linear scrub habitats are considered to have moderate potential for hazel dormouse, should the species prove to be present in the local area.

8 Hedgehog

8.1 Methodology

The site was assessed for its suitability to support European hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus* based on the presence / absence of typically favoured habitats such as woodland edges, hedgerows, grasslands, and suburban areas.

Hedgehogs can be present within gardens, parks, and amenity land close to or within human settlements. They are generally scarce in areas of coniferous woodland, marshes, and moorland, most likely due to lack of suitable sites and materials for the construction of winter nests (Morris, 2006). Any evidence of hedgehog activity such as prints or droppings spotted on the survey are recorded.

8.2 Limitations

Low detections rates are associated with evidence of hedgehog activity; therefore, absence of evidence does not confirm the absence of hedgehogs. For this reason, the assessment of the likely presence/absence of hedgehogs has largely been informed by the species' local distribution and the habitats within the site and local area.

8.3 Results

Whilst no evidence of hedgehog activity was recorded at the time of the survey, given the rural location of the site, and the presence of residential areas, there is potential for hedgehog to be present on site. The semi-mature trees and linear scrub habitats have structural cover typically suitable for foraging and commuting activities. The presence of broadleaved deciduous trees increases leaf-fall and deadwood within the site, which could create suitable hibernation features if left undisturbed. With the grassland remaining waterlogged throughout winter and early spring, hedgehog may defer from utilising the site within these seasons. However, as the grassland naturally dries, this opens passage for commuting and foraging behaviours.

8.4 Assessment

The site is considered to have moderate potential for hedgehog.

9 Reptile

9.1 Methodology

An assessment was made of the site's suitability to support reptile populations. Key habitat features include tussocky/patchy grassland, scrub edge, linear watercourses, ponds, compost heaps, brash piles and rubble/soil heaps. Linkage to suitable habitat within the surrounding landscape will increase the potential for reptiles to occur, although populations can occur within isolated/fragmented habitats even within urban areas.

9.2 Limitations

There is potential for cryptic features or other resting places to be hidden. This is not unusual in undertaking such surveys and therefore, with justification, does not pose a significant limitation within the scope of the survey.

9.3 Results

The grassland on site displays the typical characteristics sought by widespread reptile species, primarily due to the minimal disturbance management style, which increases the variability of the sward structure and species assemblage. It should be noted that large areas of the grassland remain widely unsuitable for most reptile during the winter and spring seasons, due to seasonal waterlogging. However, suitability is thought to increase during the summer months, as the grassland naturally drains and dries.

A suitable basking feature was recorded along the western boundary, towards the northwestern corner. This feature consists of a grassy bank, which has formed over historically discarded hardcore. This bank faces southeast, increasing sun exposure, thus suitability for basking (**Figure 12**).

The semi-mature trees and linear scrub habitats on site have further opportunities for cover. The interface between the grassland and the linear scrub habitats, could have potential for widespread reptile species such as slow-worm.

Furthermore, the presence of the River Bourne and associated ditch / drain networks, increases the suitability for aquatic feeding reptile such as grass snake *Natrix helvetica*.



Figure 12. View from top of grass bank, facing south.

9.4 Assessment

The habitat within the redline boundary are considered to have high potential for widespread reptile species.

10 Great crested newts

10.1 Methodology

Great-crested newts *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) are generally present in their breeding ponds during the spring and early summer – for the rest of the year, they typically disperse across the surrounding area, usually in grassland, scrub, woodland and hedgerows, but they may also be found in gardens and brownfield sites. They can travel some distance from their breeding ponds, and as a general rule, developments within 500m of such a pond may have the potential to have an impact on GCN, although to a certain extent, this does depend on any intervening habitat or barriers to dispersal.

Waterbodies within 250m (when present) of the proposed site boundary are assessed for their potential for GCN through a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment, using the methods described by ARG UK (2010) and Oldham et al. (2000). A score is assigned to ten suitability indices which are then used to achieve the overall score between zero (poor suitability) and 1 (excellent suitability). Habitats from 250m up to 500m have not been assessed through the HSI but their suitability is still considered as per ARG UK (2010) and Natural England (2022).

10.2 Limitations

There is potential for cryptic features or other resting places, to be hidden. This is not unusual in undertaking such surveys and therefore, with justification, does not pose a significant limitation within the scope of the survey.

When a direct physical assessment of a water body is hindered by access restrictions, a desktop GCN HSI score is conducted. This is completed to obtain an approximate understanding of habitat suitability for GCN through a desktop evaluation. HSI scores can only be assumed and are not definitive when undertaking an aerial imagery HSI assessment of a pond habitat for GCN. The scores do not define the potential for GCN to be present. On occasion, ponds are located beneath tree canopies and dense vegetation and cannot be observed using aerial imagery, therefore an HSI will not be performed in this instance.

The HSI for great crested newts is a measure of habitat suitability. In general, ponds with high HSI scores are more likely to support great crested newts than those with low scores. However, in isolation, the system is not sufficiently precise to allow the conclusion that any particular pond with a high score will support newts, or that any pond with a low score will not do so (Oldham et al., 2000).

10.3 Results

A single waterbody was recorded within 500 m of the site, located 300 m south-southwest, within the Hurdcott Farm estate. A review of aerial imagery shows this waterbody to be within a woodland. As such, the tree canopy obscures view. Multiple wet ditches, drain networks and fords were recorded within 500 m, all in association with the River Bourne.

The grassland has the typical characteristics often used by GCN. This is due to the minimal disturbance management style, which increases the variability of the sward

structure and species assemblage. It should be noted that this grassland is subject to seasonal waterlogging. However, this would not be suitable breeding habitat due to the water-levels' draining and drying in summer.

The linear scrub habitats within the site, displays suitable vegetative structure to potentially support transient GCN. Furthermore, the presence of connected or functionally linked habitat such as wet ditches, increase overall suitability.

While the wet ditch / aquatic marginal vegetation does not provide suitable breeding habitats due to the natural fluctuations in water-levels, these habitats provide a suitable connective aquatic corridor, to other potential suitable habitats.

A single GCN record was returned within 1 km of the site, dated 2021, located 0.78 km northeast, within woodland bordering the Winterbourne Cricket Club (grid reference: SU 17728 35224). A single-track road is situated between the site and the location of the record. However, this is not considered a substantial land-barrier for dispersal.

10.4 **Assessment**

The habitat within the redline boundary is considered have moderate potential for GCN.

11 Other common amphibians

11.1 **Methodology**

The site has been assessed for its potential to support other common amphibians, including species such as common frog *Rana temporaria* and common toad *Bufo bufo*. Amphibian habitats are assessed according to current best practice guidelines (English Nature, 2001; Baker et al., 2011) with both terrestrial and aquatic habitats evaluated for suitability.

11.2 **Limitations**

There is potential for cryptic features or other resting places, to be hidden. This is not unusual in undertaking such surveys and therefore, with justification, does not pose a significant limitation within the scope of the survey.

11.3 **Results**

The grassland on site displays the typical characteristics sought by common amphibian species, primarily due to the minimal disturbance management style, which increases the variability of the sward structure and species assemblage. Furthermore, the grassland is subject to seasonal waterlogging, which may provide early breeding habitats. As such, the grassland is considered to support common amphibians. The linear scrub habitats could offer some refuge opportunities for common amphibians.

11.4 **Assessment**

The habitat within the redline boundary is considered have moderate potential for common amphibians.

12 Breeding birds

12.1 **Methodology**

An assessment was made of the site's suitability potential for breeding birds. Birds will use a broad range of habitats, including built structures, trees, scrub, isolated shrubs, dense herbaceous vegetation (terrestrial and aquatic) and open grassland to nest within.

12.2 **Limitations**

The survey was undertaken outside of bird nesting season. Therefore, there is the potential for unrecorded species to use the site during other times of the year.

12.3 **Results**

No bird nests were recorded during the survey. However, the site has the potential for bird species to be present within the trees, and linear scrub habitats. These could also, provide food sources, nesting sites, and habitat stability with a comparatively low-level of disturbance. The varied sward length and undisturbed nature of the grassland could also provide suitable habitat for ground nesting birds. However, the grassland is widely unsuitable during winter and early spring due to seasonal waterlogging.

12.4 **Assessment**

The site is considered to have high potential for nesting birds.

13 Riparian mammals

13.1 **Methodology**

Otter (*Lutra lutra*) are a large riparian mammal protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The Site has been appraised for its potential to support otter, adhering to current survey guidelines (Chanin, 2003). This evaluation includes an examination of accessible riverine habitats within 30 m of the site. For areas that are not readily accessible, aerial imagery (Google Earth Pro, 2026) is used for assessment.

Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) are a small to medium sized species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They burrow in riverbanks and leave distinctive field signs such as feeding evidence, latrines, and closely nibbled 'Lawns' around burrows. An assessment has been made of the Site's suitability for supporting water vole following best practice guidelines (Strachan et al., 2011; Dean et al., 2016). Water courses within 10 m of the site are evaluated where accessible. Inaccessible areas are assessed using aerial imagery (Google Earth Pro, 2026).

13.2 Limitations

Due to heavy waterlogging, some areas of the wet ditch / aquatic marginal vegetation were not accessible. Furthermore, due to high seasonal water-levels, the River Bourne was not safely accessible, and so the riverbanks could not be fully assessed.

13.3 Results

A wet ditch was recorded following the site's eastern boundary, which shares direct connectivity to the River Bourne. These watercourses have favourable characteristics for both water voles and otters, such as a slow rate of flow and well layered associated vegetation that offers potential habitat features for these species. Field evidence of these species was not recorded during the walkover survey. However, access was reduced in part due to the density of the scrub and seasonal waterlogging, meaning there is potential for cryptic features to have not been recorded as a result.

Records of both otter and water vole, dated 2021, were returned within 1 km of the site, all associated with the River Bourne.

13.4 Assessment

With the site sharing direct connectivity to the River Bourne, which holds local records for both water vole and otter, the site is considered to hold moderate potential for riparian mammal.

14 White-clawed crayfish

14.1 Methodology

The survey involved an initial walkover, with a habitat assessment of the watercourses. The walkover including an assessment of channel substrate, potential for refuges and water quality, noting features that are of particular importance to crayfish such as, slow-flowing sections of river with a stony substrate, submerged tree roots, debris dams, crevices in old or damaged submerged brickwork, stonework, cracked concrete or rotten wooden structures.

14.2 Limitations

The survey was undertaken during the early spring months, following a prolonged period of heavy rainfall. As such, the high water-levels were not deemed safe for entry during the survey. The increased water levels also effected turbidity, sediment deposits and bank erosion. The survey was taken from two bridge points, allowing for safe viewing of the riverbanks. These points included the main river and a connected tributary, (grid references: SU 17418 34819 and SU 17281 34851), sample points can be seen in **Figure 19**.

14.3 Results

The tributary section flows through semi-natural broadleaved woodland with shallow banks overshadowed by dense trees and scrub. The channel is approx. 2 m – 3 m wide, with water approx. 60cm deep. The substrate is pebbly overlying silt, varying between the pools (silty) and the riffles (pebbly). The earth banks are gently sloping, with frequent rocks embedded in the bottom of the banks. The section contains two suitable crayfish habitat patches with rubble, boulders and cobbles in the watercourse, but generally crayfish potential habitat is limited (**Figure 13 – 14**).

The main river section flows through a residential property, with bordering deciduous woodland along the downstream bank, and artificial bank reinforcements along the upstream bank. The channel is approx. 5 m wide, with water approx. 80 cm deep. The substrate is pebbly, with small areas of settled silt along the outer flow areas. A higher flow-rate was noted within this section, due to the lack of meanders and in-channel features, such as toes or vegetated bars, which also signifies a lack of sheltered areas, lowering crayfish suitability (**Figure 15 – 16**).

14.4 Assessment

Overall, the areas of watercourses surveyed provide limited suitability for crayfish. While it should be noted that there are historical records of white-clawed crayfish associated with the River Bourne, these are dated circa 1970's, with the average life span of crayfish reaching up to a maximum of 15 years. As such, the site can be considered to hold negligible potential for white-clawed crayfish.



Figure 15. Tributary section of River Bourne, facing west (upstream).



Figure 16. Tributary section of River Bourne, facing east (downstream).



Figure 17. Main section of River Bourne, facing north (upstream).



Figure 18. Main section of River Bourne, facing south (downstream).

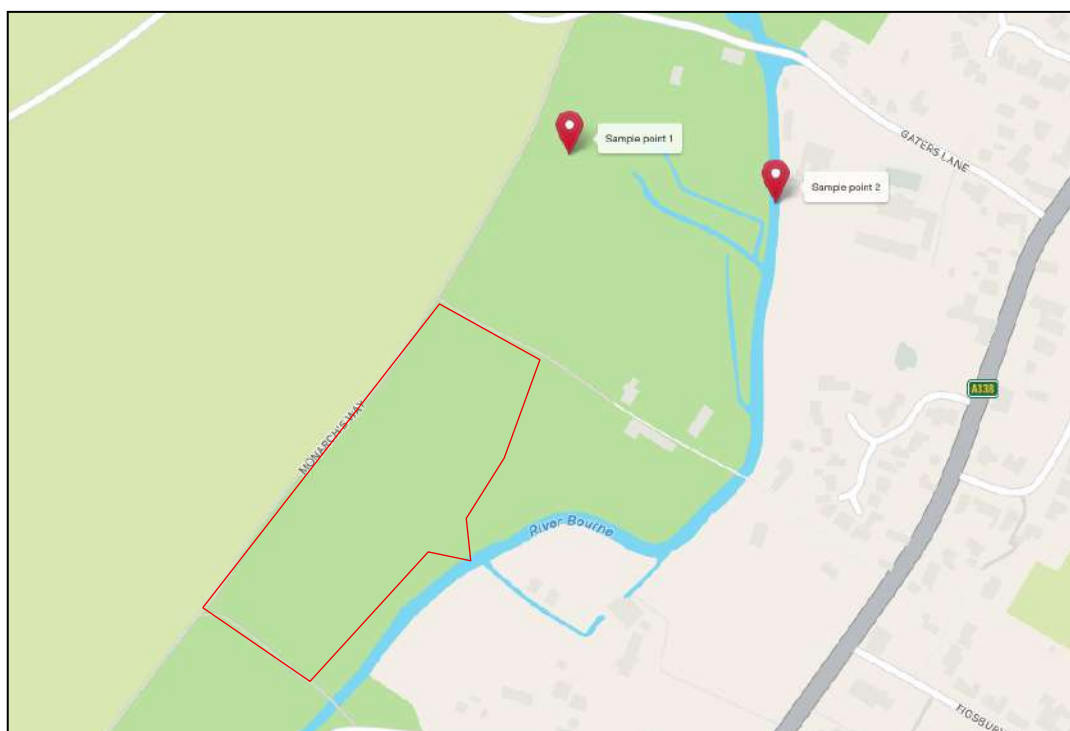


Figure 19. River habitat sample points, site demarcated by red line (Google earth, 2026).

15 Discussion and Assessment of Impacts

15.1 Relevant legislation and policy

Circular 06/2005 identifies that Applicants should not be required to provide information on protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood that they will be present and affected by the proposed development. The site is considered to support habitats with suitability and potential for protected species, and these may be affected by the proposed development. Therefore, the proposal triggers 'reasonable likelihood' under the Circular.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (commonly referred to as the Habitats Regulations) may apply should protected species be confirmed on site.

In the case that a European Protected Species (EPS) is found to be present and impacted by the proposal, the local planning authority will be required to engage with the Habitat Regulations. Permission will be granted unless:

- a) the development is likely to result in a breach of the Habitats Regulations, and
- b) is unlikely to be granted an EPS licence from Natural England to allow the development to proceed under a derogation from the law (under licence).

When considering whether Natural England would not be unlikely to grant a licence for the identified impact, the local planning authority must consider the three tests which are set out in the Habitat Regulations:

1. the consented operation must be for 'preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social

or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment' (Regulation 53(2)(e));

2. there must be 'no satisfactory alternative' (Regulation 53(9)(a)); and
3. the action authorised 'will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range' (Regulation 53(9)(b)).

Natural England will grant a licence if the development proposal is able to meet the three tests.

15.2 Habitats

The proposals are for the construction of a wildlife pond with associated soft landscaping requiring the re-profiling of a field. The established trees, boundary vegetation, wet ditch and adjacent river are scheduled to be retained and protected during the works.

The facilitation of these works include the removal of an area of other neutral grassland, to make way for the proposed wildlife pond. The uncompensated removal of this habitat would result in a net loss of biodiversity at the site which would be contrary to National Planning Policy Frame-work (NPPF).

Due to the proximity of the proposals to the retained trees and scrub habitats, root protection zones should be considered. There is the potential for damage to occur to any exposed roots during the process of construction. Therefore, mitigation will be required to address construction impacts on tree Root Protection Zones (PRZ) in regard to the following aspects:

- Excavation
 - o Any excavation close to a tree, even topsoil stripping, will potentially sever roots and may impact water supply to the tree, immediately affecting the foliage. While minor root loss may not affect the tree, greater loss will result in dieback. If the excavation is over 1.0 m deep, the anchorage and stability of the tree may be affected.
- Compaction
 - o Soil compaction can arise from construction traffic operating directly over the ground or as a result of surcharge from new construction. Tree roots need oxygen to survive. Without it, the roots cannot function. If starved of oxygen for several days, the roots will begin to die back. The supply of oxygen to the root system relies on pores between soil particles. Compaction of the soil from construction activity will reduce porosity of the soil and restrict the oxygen supply. Any activity causing soil compaction within an RPZ must therefore be avoided or mitigated.

In order to protect any vegetation to be retained, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. The retention of these features will maintain existing commuting/foraging routes currently utilised by local wildlife.

The adjacent River Bourne is of ecological value and there is the potential for site works to cause adverse impact through run-off and siltation.

15.3 **Bats**

There are no structures or suitable trees on site. However, the site is considered have potential for foraging and commuting bats due to presence of connected habitat features. Therefore, increasing lighting could impact this behaviour which would indirectly impact roosts. However, no lighting is currently part of the scheme, therefore there will be no change from the current situation.

15.4 **Badger**

Badgers are considered to be absent from the site, although there is potential for them to pass through. Therefore, impacts could occur during the construction period, such as if excavations are left open overnight or any fencing is used. As no setts were recorded during the survey, loss or damage to badger setts is not anticipated.

15.5 **Hazel dormice**

The trees and linear scrub habitats are considered to have potential for hazel dormice, if present within the wider area. While these habitats are to be retained, the proximity of the habitats to the proposed works could impact vegetation rooting zones, risking habitat degradation. This could cause potential adverse effects to any populations of dormice if present.

15.6 **Reptile, GCN and other common amphibians**

The habitats present on site have features such as sheltering opportunities, for reptiles, GCN and other common amphibians. There is the potential for common species to use the site opportunistically. Therefore, there is the potential for the works to impacts to these species.

15.7 **Hedgehog**

No evidence of hedgehog was recorded, but should hedgehogs be present in the wider area, there is the potential that they could pass through the site. Impacts on hedgehogs are associated with any deep excavations that are left uncovered during the construction phase.

15.8 **Breeding birds**

The trees and linear scrub habitats within the site is considered to have high potential for nesting birds. These habitats are to be retained. However, the proximity of the habitats to the proposed works could affect vegetation rooting zones, risking habitat degradation. This could have an indirect adverse impact to nesting birds.

15.9 Riparian Mammals

The site is within the terrestrial ranges of both otter and water vole, of which have been recorded locally. As such, if present, there is the potential for adverse effects during works.

16 Requirement for further surveys

Further surveys are required where there is a reasonable likelihood that a protected species will be present and impacted by the proposed development. An assessment into the requirement for further surveys is presented below, however in summary, no further surveys are considered necessary.

It is important that planning decisions are informed by the most up-to-date ecological survey information. As a result, there is a limited time frame that phase 1 and phase 2 surveys are valid before becoming outdated. This time frame can vary depending on any changes to the proposed project plans, but it is generally considered that phase 1 ecological surveys are valid for a period of 18 months (CIEEM, 2019). Where projects run for a longer period than 18 months, there may be the requirement to carry out further ecological surveys to ensure planning authorities have the most up-to-date survey information in order that they can make well informed, evidence-based decisions.

16.1 Designated Sites

No further surveys are considered necessary in respect of designated sites.

16.2 Habitats

To avoid impacts on the root protection zones during the construction phase of the works, mitigation measures are outlined in Section 17.

16.3 Bats

No further surveys are considered necessary.

16.4 Badger

To avoid impacts on the species during the construction phase of the works, mitigation measures are outlined in Section 17.

16.5 Hazel dormice

Precautionary mitigation measures have been outlined in Section 17, to ensure the rooting zones of the retained suitable habitats are protected.

16.6 Reptile, GCN and other common amphibians

Further reptile surveys are recommended to understand the population levels within the site.

For GCN and amphibians, specific surveys are not considered necessary. However, the potential for these species to be present must still be considered. As such, mitigation measures are outlined in Section 17.

16.7 Hedgehog

Subject to the mitigation measures set out in Section 17, no further surveys are considered necessary.

16.8 Riparian mammals

Subject to the mitigation measures set out in Section 17.

17 Mitigation recommendations

Introduction

The overarching aim of the ecological survey and assessment work carried out at the site is to inform the planning proposals in order to demonstrate how the development can proceed whilst avoiding or mitigating impacts on ecological receptors. The 'mitigation hierarchy' is an accepted approach which guides this process. The first consideration should always be to design a scheme that avoids the identified impact. Where this is not possible the next step should be to mitigate any impacts that cannot be avoided. The third, which should be used as a last resort, is compensation: this should only be used to off-set any unavoidable impacts.

17.2 Habitats

Root Protection Zones

Root protection zones of the retained habitats should be observed to safeguard against degradation.

- A minimum exclusion / buffer zone of 2 m for scrub habitats, and 10 m for trees should be observed during ground works.
- The incorporation of a 'Geoweb®' or 'Geogrid®' root protection barrier system during ground works would minimise adverse impacts on critical root zones.

Aquatic habitats

The adjacent River Bourne is of ecological value and site works will be carried out following best practice and guidance provided by Environment Agency's Pollution Prevention Guidelines to ensure that there is no pollution of this sensitive receptor. In addition, an 8 m ecological buffer zone will be retained to protect the river.

17.3 Badgers

In order to avoid harm to badgers during construction works, any trenches will require to be either covered at night or fitted with a soil or plank ramp to enable escape.

17.4 Reptile

Further surveys are recommended along the peripheral areas of suitable habitat. However, it is recommended that a precautionary approach to the removal of all tall ruderal/ephemeral grassland habitat is adopted. This is detailed as follows.

Pre-construction

Any tall vegetation within the footprint of the development will be cut to ground level in a two-stage process. These habitats will be strimmed to 15 cm and then cut to ground level the next day. Cutting the vegetation in this manner is consistent with the typical management of the site and will ensure that any reptiles are persuaded into adjacent habitats prior to commencement of the development.

Construction phase

No accumulations of brash or rubble should be stored within the building footprint or works area, to prevent reptiles from using them for basking and/or egg laying. All waste shall be placed directly into a skip so that rubble piles and therefore potential hibernation areas are not created in areas which will subsequently be disturbed by site works.

Piles of loose sand or other granular materials into which reptiles could bury are not to be left around the site. All such materials will ideally be delivered in bags and kept in such bags until required for use. Bags should be stored on pallets. If it is essential that they are delivered loose, they should only be dug into by hand. Materials must be stored on unvegetated areas of the site, and not the wider site, where suitable reptile habitats will be retained.

All trenches will be left covered at night. They must be checked in the morning before they are filled in. No bonfires will be made or lit on site.

Should works take place during winter months (September-March, inclusive, weather and temperature dependent) (Edgar et al, 2010), all associated works (including tracking heavy machinery etc) must avoid impacts to potential refugia.

17.5 GCN and other common amphibians

Works are recommended to proceed once all full ecological checks are complete and under a full ecological 'Watching Brief' by a suitably qualified or experienced ecologist. It is recommended that an ecologist is present per group of works and be present for the duration of the works.

In areas with potential to support these species, (including plant access, lay-down areas, or storage), all works will proceed under precautionary measures, these are to include;

- A two-stage cut will be implemented. The first cut will reduce vegetation to 150mm (with arisings removed where possible). A second check (possibly a fingertip search if safe to do so) will then be undertaken by the ecologist, preceding the secondary cut to ground-level. This cut will take place in one direction towards retained habitat.
- All vegetation clearance will follow detailed ecological checks including fingertip searches by a suitably qualified or experienced ecologist prior to works and arisings removed from site or used to develop habitat piles in agreed retained areas.
- Any vegetation clearance should be undertaken during the spring months, above 12°C, when amphibians and reptile are more mobile.
- Use of secure and clearly identified barrier fencing to prevent accidental encroachment of work activities onto retained/adjacent areas.
- Clear identification of access routes into and through the construction site, maximising the use of existing access roads and other hard standing if present.

- It is recommended that a 2 m buffer is retained where possible to maintain suitable habitat for provide some shelter within the development boundary.
- If common reptile or amphibians are found, they must be captured and moved to suitable habitat outside the working area, as agreed with the ecologist.
- If INNS species are found, works must pause immediately, and the ecologist will engage with Natural England / DEFRA.

Should works take place during winter months (September-March, inclusive, weather and temperature dependent) (Edgar et al, 2010), all associated works (including tracking heavy machinery etc) must avoid impacts to potential refugia.

17.6 Hedgehogs

In order to avoid harm to hedgehogs during construction works the following precautionary measures will be employed:

- Any trenches will either be covered at night or fitted with a soil or plank ramp to enable any hedgehogs that fall in to leave of their own accord.
- Any leaf litter or garden waste piles will be dismantled by hand in a sensitive and careful manner.
- No bonfires will be made or lit on site.
- If hedgehogs are found, they must be captured and moved to suitable habitat outside the working area, as agreed with the ecologist.

17.7 Breeding birds

Care should be taken that the development does not disturb breeding birds. The bird nesting season is typically considered to be March to August (inclusive, weather and temperature dependent).

Any removal/relocation of potential nest habitat, will either need to be undertaken outside of this period or else checked by an experienced ecologist to ensure that no nesting birds are present.

If active nests are present or nearby (within 10 m), they must be left alone with a suitable buffer of undisturbed vegetation (ca. minimum 5 m radius, depending on species) until nestlings have fledged.

Further checks may be required of any materials that are stored on site for a prolonged period as there may be the potential for birds to nest within them.

17.8 Riparian mammals

It is recommended that works commence under a full ecological 'Watching Brief' which will include all personnel on site to receive a Toolbox Talk, to understand the potential presence and legislation of riparian mammal.

18 Enhancements

The delivery of biodiversity enhancement on development sites is promoted by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Where opportunities exist it is best practice to provide enhancement features which encourage greater biodiversity within development sites in accordance with the NPPF and Local Planning Authority's responsibilities under the NERC Act.

Enhancement measures should look to build on the ecological features of the site and local area, thereby providing additional habitat for species that are already present in the local area.

There are opportunities for ecological enhancements at the site, some examples are detailed below:

- The pond margins should be left to colonise naturally, however, where any new planting is proposed, it should aim to use native species, but where this is not practicable then species of known value for wildlife can be used. In particular, flowering plants will be of benefit to invertebrate species and shrubs and trees may provide nesting opportunities for birds once they become established.
- Any new boundary treatment should be designed to promote permeability of the site to minimise fragmentation and allow free movement of wildlife throughout the site, for example by strengthening/enhancing the existing boundary vegetation, planting up a series of new hedgerows and/or installing post and rail fences.
- The site could be further enhanced by providing roosting and nesting opportunities for bats and birds by installing a series of bat and bird boxes in suitable locations on the retained trees. Also, a Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* bank could be incorporated into the design of the new pond at a high enough level to avoid any flooding. Any boxes installed should be positioned in accordance with good practice.

19 Conclusion

The Extended Phase 1 Ecological Assessment has confirmed that the site has potential for protected species, namely, bats (foraging / commuting), transient reptiles, dispersing hazel dormice, badger, hedgehogs, GCN, common amphibians, breeding birds, and riparian mammals.

Further reptile surveys are recommended in the form of a presence / absence survey, to further understand the population levels within the suitable marginal habitats on site.

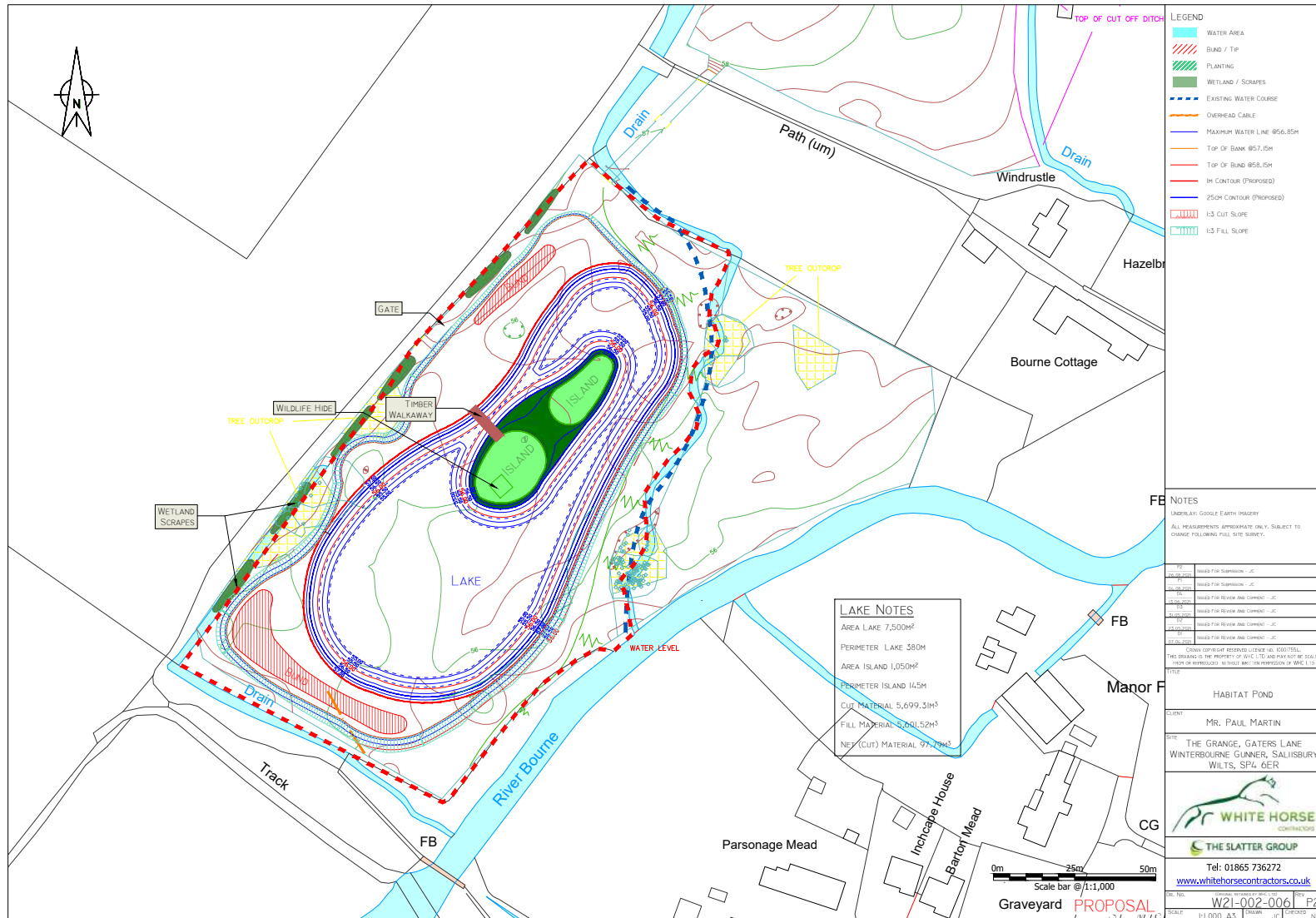
Given the scale of the proposal, it is possible to deliver the scheme with a range of measures which avoid impacts on the majority of the other identified protected and priority species. These include sensitive timing of the works and careful vegetation removal.

Opportunities for ecological enhancement have been suggested for the site.

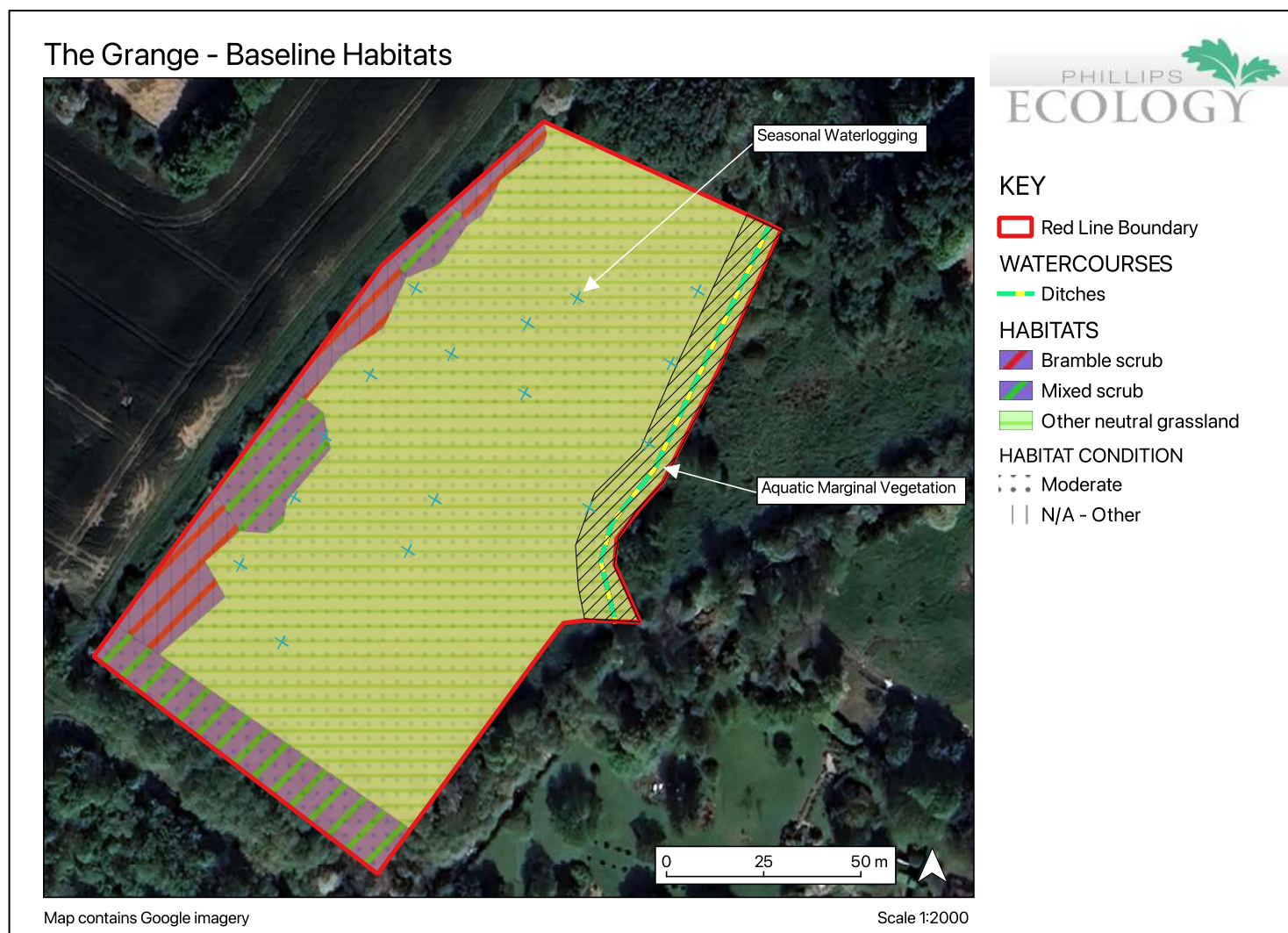
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Appendix 1 – Site Plans



Appendix 2 – UKHabs Baseline Map





07760 208562

info@phillipsecology.co.uk

www.phillipsecology.co.uk

Hampshire office:
Clifton Cottage
Bucks Head Hill
Meonstoke
Hampshire
SO323NA