



Bitham House, Cutting Hill, Ham, Wiltshire, RG17
0RW

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal



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The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken by All Ecology are representative at the time of surveying.

Every endeavour has been made to identify the presence of protected species on site, where this falls within the agreed scope of works.

The flora and fauna detailed within this report are those noted during the field survey and from anecdotal evidence. It should not be viewed as a complete list of flora and fauna species that may frequent or exist on site at other times of the year.

Up to date standard methodologies have been used, which are accepted by Natural England and other statutory conservation bodies. No responsibility will be accepted where these methodologies fail to identify all species on-site.

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Summary

In February 2026, All Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site within the gardens of Bitham House, Cutting Hill, Ham, Wiltshire, RG17 0RW.

The site is the subject of a planning application for the erection of a single storey store and workshop building with creation of gravel access. The new building will be located at the southeast corner of the site.

Designated sites located within the surrounding 1 km is limited to a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and a Protected Road Verge (PRV). These sites are well separated from the application site and no significant impacts to sites in the local or wider area are predicted.

The effect of the development has been considered and key constraints identified. The habitats present on site are of low – moderate ecological value in terms of their vegetation. Hedgerows are of moderate value and are expected to be retained. The loss of grassland and potential loss of small trees is not deemed significant and re-landscaping is expected to provide some limited ecological value.

The habitats on site have limited potential to support protected or notable species. The following species/groups are either present, potentially present, or could be encouraged onto the site and the recommended actions are as follows:

- Bats – There are no buildings on site and no suitable roosting features were recorded in trees and therefore roosting bats are absent. The site is dominated by short grassland which is poor foraging habitat but small trees and field boundary hedgerows provide potential for foraging. The loss of low value habitat in the form of grassland and removal of a low number of small trees is not deemed significant. Boundary habitats may provide potential flight lines for bats; provided that lighting of the hedgerows and trees is avoided, no impact is predicted and no further surveys for bats are required.
- Badgers and other mammals – The grassland which dominates the site is of low value and no evidence of presence was limited to Rabbit droppings. Precautionary methods of working are advised.
- Birds – Nesting opportunities in field boundary hedgerows and trees. Any works to suitable nesting habitat to be carried out outside the bird nesting season of March – August unless a nesting bird survey confirms absence.

Suggestions for enhancement are given.

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1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 In February 2026, All Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site at Bitham House, Cutting Hill, Ham, Wiltshire, RG17 0RW. The site occupies part of the garden of the property comprising of lawn grassland shrubs and trees partially bound by hedgerow. The is in a rural location with the local area being dominated by a mosaic of predominately large arable and grassland fields with an associated network of field boundary hedgerows.
- 1.2 The site is the subject of a planning application for the erection of a single storey store and workshop building with creation of gravel access. The new building will be located at the south east corner of the site.

Objectives and Aim

- 1.3 The main objectives and aim of the survey were to identify features of ecological interest, undertake a basic search of habitats present for evidence of use, or potential use, by protected species, and to identify any other possible ecological constraints to the proposed redevelopment.

Site Location



Figure 1: Site location plan.

Aerial Photograph



Figure 2: Aerial view of the Bitham House site (survey area indicated).

2.0 Methodology

Personnel

- 2.1 The survey was carried out by Daniel Roberts BSc Hons ACIEEM, an experienced consultant ecologist, and was overseen by James Godbeer BSc Hons MCIEEM, an ecologist with over 18 years' experience working as a consultant. James has extensive experience of managing environmental contracts, and particular experience in surveying, assessment and mitigation for rare and protected species. He has considerable knowledge of the development and planning process including Ecological Impact Assessments, sustainable ecological design and he has completed ecology chapters of Environmental Statements. James holds a number of protected species licences including bats (all species, all counties, Class Licence Registration No. 2015-12313-CLS-CLS), and Great Crested Newts (Class Licence Registration No. 2019-44282-CLS-CLS). He has successfully obtained European Protected Species mitigation licences for a number of bat species including Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Serotine, Brown Long-eared, Common Pipistrelle and Natterer's bats, for a number of roost types including maternity and hibernation sites.

Desk Survey

- 2.2 In order to compile background information on the site and immediate surroundings Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC) was contacted.
- 2.3 Information requested was as follows:
- Statutory site designations on or within 1 km of the site.
 - Non-statutory site designations on or within 1 km of the site.
 - Records of protected species within the 1 km of the site.
 - Records of rare or notable species within the 1 km of the site.
- 2.4 Online OS maps and aerial photographs were inspected for the presence of ponds in the surrounding area. Additionally, MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside, 2025) was used to establish the distance and direction of any statutory designated sites within the search area.

Field Survey

Habitats

- 2.5 The site was visited on the 6th February 2026 and surveyed in accordance with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase I Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential that might warrant further study.

Fauna

- 2.6 The habitats present on the site were searched for signs of animal activity. The trees were assessed for their potential to support bat roosts by visually inspecting them from the ground

using binoculars and high-powered torches where appropriate. Potential roosting features such as gaps, holes, cavities or splits were recorded and then inspected where possible for signs of bats, which including grease/urine stains, scratch marks, droppings or the bats themselves.

- 2.7 The site and surroundings, for a minimum distance of 30 m where access was available, were searched for signs of Badgers. These include setts, latrines, dung pits, snuffle marks or hairs caught in hedges or on fencing. A casual search for any signs of Dormice such as gnawed nuts, or nests was also carried out.
- 2.8 Incidental observations of invertebrates and birds were recorded and a search made for any signs of previous nesting.
- 2.9 Any refuges where present on site such as logs or other debris were lifted and inspected for reptiles and amphibians. In regards to Great Crested Newts, there are no ponds within 500 m of the application site and therefore a pond survey was not required.

Equipment

- 2.10 Equipment used to aid the survey included a high-powered torch, ladder, binoculars and a camera.

Valuation of Ecological Features

- 2.11 The valuation process used in this report follows the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018).
- 2.12 The presence of injurious and legally controlled weeds has also been taken into account.

Nomenclature

- 2.13 The English name only of flora and fauna species is given in the main text of this report; however, scientific names are used for invertebrates where no English name is available. Vascular plants and charophytes follow the nomenclature of The Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) 2007 database (BSBI, 2007) with all other flora and fauna following the Nameserver facility of the National Biodiversity Network Species Dictionary (<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nbn/>), which is managed by the Natural History Museum.

Limitations

- 2.14 The site itself was fully accessible with no limitations to undertaking the survey in accordance with the stated methodology.

3.0 Results

Desk Survey

3.1 There are no statutory designated sites within 1 km of the application site; however, WSBRC provided the following record of non-statutory designated sites within the search area as follows:

- Kiln Copse (LWS) is located approximately 800m to the northeast. This site is an open Oak wood with some coppice; bracken dominates in the ground flora. Wood straddles county border with Berkshire.
- Shalbourne Verge (PRV) is located approximately 700m to the northwest.

3.2 WSBRC provided the following notable and protected species records within 1 km of the site:

- **Plants** – Scots Pine, Shepard's-needle, Spreading Hedge-parsley, Green-winged Orchid, Bluebell, Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem, Stinking Chamomile, Hound's-tongue, Box, Good-King-Henry, Corn Spurrey, Yellow Vetchling, Sainfoin, Green Figwort, Galingale, Mousetail, Pond Water-crowfoot, Bastard-toadflax & Wood Horsetail.
- **Mammals** – Polecat, Ferret, Hedgehog, Water Shrew, Brown Hare, Rabbit & Water Vole.
- **Mammals (Bats)** – Unidentified bat & Brown Long-eared bat.
- **Birds** – Red Kite, Mallard, Gadwall, Lapwing, Coot, Yellowhammer, Grey Wagtail, Bullfinch, Redwing, Song Thrush, Fieldfare, Mistle Thrush & Barn Owl.
- **Amphibians** – Great Crested Newt, Common Toad, Common Frog.
- **Reptile** – Slow-worm.
- **Fish** – Grayling, Bullhead & Brook Lamprey.

Field Survey

3.3 The following table presents a description of the habitats present.

Table 1: Details of habitats present on and bordering the site.

Habitats	Description
g4: Modified grassland	The application site occupies part of the gardens of Bitham House. The site is dominated by lawn grassland which has a very short sward and appears to be regularly mown as well as grazed by Rabbits. This habitat has abundant Cock's-foot with frequent Fescue sp. and occasional Perennial Rye-grass as well as rare occurrences of Meadow-grass sp. and Crested Dog's-tail. Forbs within the sward comprised of frequent Creeping Buttercup and Daisy, locally frequent White Clover, occasional Yarrow and rare Ribwort Plantain, Creeping Thistle, Dove's-foot Crane's-bill, Ground-ivy, Broad-leaved Dock, Burnet Saxifrage, Devil's-bit Scabious, Common Nettle and Vetch sp. Moss was found to be dominant locally.
Individual Trees	There are multiple small and recently planted trees across the site including both native broad-leaved and conifer species and occasional shrub. Species recorded included Pedunculate Oak, Hazel, Hawthorn, Yew, Beech, Scot's Pine, Silver Birch and Acer sp. Blackthorn, Holly as well as some ornamental garden species.

h3a: Blackthorn Scrub	There is a small pocket of Blackthorn dominated scrub adjacent to the east boundary of the site.
Hedgerows: h2a5: Species-rich native hedgerow, h2a: Native Hedgerow & h2b: Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	There are hedgerows on the south and east boundaries of the site as well as short sections of hedge either side of the gated access. The east road facing boundary hedge is a native species-rich hedge of approximately 2 m height and 1.5 – 2m wide and appeared to be recently cut with a post and wire fence adjacent within the site. This hedge is formed of frequent Blackthorn and Wild Privet with occasional Hazel, Field Maple and rare occurrences of Holly, Hawthorn, Dogwood, Yew and bramble. The south boundary hedge is less managed and has an average height of approximately 3 – 4 m and is approximately 3 m wide with a wider triangular section at its east end where it adjoins the road facing hedge. This hedge is species-poor formed of Frequent Wild Privet and Hazel with rare Hawthorn. Adjacent to the existing field gate are short section of Beech hedge.
ub1: Developed land; sealed surface	Access to the application site is currently provided via a short section of asphalt drive off Cutting Hill leading to a field gate south of the main access to Bitham House.



1: General view of the site dominated by short lawn grassland.



2: Approximate location of the proposed building.



3: Group of small trees.



4: Existing gate access to the site surrounded by beech hedge.



5: Road facing hedge.



6: Hedge extending away from the road to the west along the south boundary of the site.



7: Hedgerow along the south boundary with adjacent Hazel.



8: Existing access.

Fauna

3.4 The following table assesses the potential for other protected species to be present.

Table 2: Protected Species Assessment

Fauna	Description
Bats	Records: WSBRC provided three records all of which are of bat roosts including one of Brown Long-eared bat and two of unidentified bat species. Records of bat roosts are classified as sensitive and therefore exact roost locations are not provided. Habitats (roosting): No buildings on site. Trees were inspected for potential roosting features of which none were recorded. Roosting bats are expected to be absent. Habitats (foraging/commuting): The grassland provides sub-optimal foraging habitat and although small trees will likely attract invertebrates therefore provide some limited foraging opportunity for bats but the majority of bat activity on site is expected to be associated with boundary hedgerows. Site hedgerows are connected to other linear habitats in the local area and provide potential flight lines for bats. The site is expected to be utilised by a range of common species but the potential for more notable species would appear to be limited.

Badgers	Records: None provided. Habitats: The grassland provides good foraging habitat with the hedgerows providing cover and therefore areas of higher potential for the construction of setts. Presence/absence: No evidence of presence recorded. Badgers will be generally absent with potential currently limited to passing individual Badgers.
Dormice	Records: None provided. Habitats: The field hedgerows provide potential for Dormouse but the site itself which is dominated by grassland with scattered small trees is generally unsuitable. Hedgerows connect to other field boundary hedgerows in the local area although site habitats are not connected to significant areas of optimum habitat such as woodland. Presence/absence: No evidence of presence. Presence/absence unknown but likely absence given the lack of local records and limited connectivity of habitats to optimum habitats in the wider area.
Otters, Water Voles and Water Shrew	Records: No records of Otter provided within 1 km of the application site but 13 records of Water Vole within the search radius and one record of Water Shrew. Records indicate that Water Voles were known to be present on The River Shalbourne in 1999; however, more recent data was not provided. The River Shalbourne is located over 500m from the boundary of the application site. Habitats: None present. Presence/absence: Absent.
Other Mammals	Records: Other mammals that have been recorded in the surrounding 1 km include Hedgehog, Rabbit, Brown Hare, Ferret and Polecat. Habitats: The proposed location for the building has generally poor habitat for mammals being entirely short grassland; however, this grassland provides foraging habitat for Rabbits and evidence of presence was recorded. Hedgerows on the boundaries of the field provide cover for common small mammals and Hedgehogs could cross the site. Small piles of hedge cuttings if left on site may provide refuge for small mammals; however, the property owner indicated these are a result of very recent work and would be cleared from the site promptly. Presence/absence: No evidence was recorded of mammals. Common mammals may pass through the site occasionally but notable species are expected to be absent.
Birds	Records: WSBRC provided multiple bird records including Lapwing and Barn Owl. Foraging Habitats: The grassland provides a limited foraging resource but field hedgerows and small trees provide more optimal foraging opportunities. Nesting Habitats: Hedgerows and trees provide nesting opportunities. The site is small the lawn grassland is unsuitable for ground nesting birds. Presence/absence: Bird nests were recorded in the south boundary hedge and within the branches of a small tree. Birds are expected to nest in hedgerows and trees in future during the active nesting season.

	 9: Bird nest.
Reptiles	Records: WSBRC provided an individual reptile record comprising of a Slow-worm recorded in 1968 approximately 1km to the west. Habitats: The grassland which dominates the site is short with poor structure for reptiles and therefore unsuitable. Piles of hedge cuttings provide temporary cover but these are expected to be removed from the site shortly after the survey. Hedgerows provide limited cover but this was associated with short grassland which is poor. The site is poor for reptiles. Presence/absence: Expected to be absent.
Amphibian	Records: WSBRC provided three amphibian records comprising of Common Toad and Common Frog. Terrestrial Habitats: The grassland on the site is short and therefore poor terrestrial habitat. Hedgerows provide cover and foraging opportunities. Aquatic Habitats: None present on site and none within 500 m. Presence/absence: Amphibians including Great Crested Newts are expected to be absent.
Invertebrates	Records: None provided. Habitats: The short, species-poor grassland is low value habitat but the hedges and trees provide limited areas of interest. Presence/absence: Small assemblages of common invertebrates are expected to be present in limited numbers. The potential for notable species to be present is minimal.

4.0 Development Constraints and Recommendations

Development Proposals

- 4.1 The site is the subject of a planning application for the erection of a single storey store and workshop building with creation of gravel access. The new building will be located at the south east corner of the site.

Habitats

- 4.2 The grassland on site was identified as modified grassland and although this was not surveyed during the optimal period for grassland surveys, it was evidently this habitat type. In order to qualify as a NERC Priority Habitat, grassland typically has to be unimproved (good semi-improved grassland can also qualify) and would have to be examples of grasslands such as lowland calcareous grassland or lowland dry acid grassland, habitats not found on site. Any impacts as a result of loss/changes to the grassland on site are considered to be negligible. Trees are of low - moderate value. The erection of a new building will result in the loss of a small area of grassland a potentially a small number of trees. No significance is associated with habitat loss.
- 4.3 NERC Priority Habitats include all hedgerows with at least 80% cover of at least one woody UK native species (JNCC, 2017). Boundary hedgerows had at least 80% cover of native species and as such qualify as NERC Priority Habitat. Hedgerows will be retained and therefore a hedgerow assessment is to determine if hedgerow is classified as 'important' under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 will not be required.
- 4.4 A number of trees will be removed to allow for the development. Site trees were noted to be generally small and of low ecological value. A BNG assessment of the site will evaluate the significance of tree removal and other habitat loss; however, loss of habitat value is expected to be minimal.
- 4.5 Where new trees or shrubs are to be planted, native tree and shrub species should be used as these are most beneficial to invertebrates, and many also produce seeds, nuts and berries that are food for native mammals and birds. Planting of non-native plant species should be limited to those that are not invasive and should prioritise those that provide a good source of nectar for invertebrates.

Fauna

Bats

- 4.6 There are no buildings on site and no roosting features were recorded in trees; roosting bats are deemed to be absent from the site. The site provides potential bat foraging habitat largely associated with field boundary hedgerows. The development will result in the loss of grassland habitat which is of low value and no significant impact to the value of the site is associated with loss of a small number of small or recently planted trees. Hedgerows will be retained and given that the proposed building is a store/workshop which will not be permanently occupied and a dark buffer at least 5 m will be maintained between boundary hedges and windows. Impacts to bats through lighting is not expected provided any potential exterior lighting avoids illuminating hedgerows no impact to foraging bats is expected and boundaries will continue to be potential

flight lines. In this case impacts to bats will be generally avoided and a bat activity survey will not be required.

- 4.7 The site is unlikely to be important to bats but as stated above lighting should be considered and retained boundary hedgerows should remain unlit. In general, measures should include the use of lighting only where absolutely necessary utilising highly directional warm white LED lighting, an example being down spots at 2.5 m high using warm white (2700 K) 8W LED lamps, 550 lumens, 35 degree beam angle. These could be individually activated by PIR sensors on a 1 minute cut off to further reduce their impacts. These will assist in lighting only the areas where lighting is required and minimising light spill either directly or through reflected light.
- 4.8 Habitat creation such as planting of trees or enhancement of existing grassland habitats could be considered to enhance the site for bats. The new building provides an opportunity to enhance the site for roosting bats by incorporating a roost into the new building. There are many ways that a building could be enhanced for crevice-dwelling bat species (virtually all UK bat species) without inconveniencing prospective occupants or requiring any significant design considerations. Bat tubes, panels, shelters or boxes can be installed on the new building or bat boxes can be in the larger retained trees within the wider site. A variety of aspects can increase the likelihood of colonisation.

Badgers and other mammals

- 4.9 Badgers will be generally absent with potential currently limited to passing individuals. Rabbits are known to be present on occasion and Hedgehogs and other common mammals may also pass through the site. No impact to mammals is predicted as a result of lawn clearance and potential removal of small trees provided works are carried out following precautionary methods.
- 4.10 In order to prevent trapping mammals that may cross the site, it is recommended that during the construction phase of the project any trenches and other excavations are back-filled before nightfall or a ramp left to allow animals to easily exit, and any open pipes larger than 150 mm should be capped off overnight. It is advised that any new garden fences or walls should incorporate hedgehog access points to allow access for this species on and off site.

Birds

- 4.11 Hedgerows and trees provide opportunities for nesting and foraging and the grassland provides some limited foraging opportunities. Bird nesting material was recorded in hedge and trees and it is expected that birds will nest in hedgerows and trees in future.
- 4.12 Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments). Hedgerows and trees will be largely retained with nesting habitat clearance likely to be limited to removal a low number of small trees. Any works affecting nesting habitat should take place outside the nesting season of March to August unless a pre-works nesting survey carried out by a suitably experience ecologist concludes absence.
- 4.13 It is recommended that any planting should concentrate on species that are native to the area and ideally produce a range of seeds and berries at varying times of the year. Nectar rich plants could also be used encourage invertebrates on to the site, which in turn provide food for birds as well as other species such as bats.

- 4.14 New bird nesting opportunities should be considered by incorporating build-in nest boxes into new buildings or by installing nest boxes in trees providing potential nesting sites for common garden species.

Invertebrates

- 4.15 The habitats on site are generally poor but will support a limited variety of common invertebrate species focussed around boundary hedges and trees; however, potential for more notable species is negligible. Enhancement for invertebrates should be considered by incorporating insect features on site such log piles.

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