



West Country

E C O L O G Y

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Noon Trees, Hilmarton
November 2025

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All survey work and reporting have been undertaken in line with current professional standards and with reference to the Code of Professional Conduct issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report presents the results of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) undertaken at Noon Trees, Beacon Hill, Hilmarton, Calne SN11 9HT (Ordnance Survey central grid reference: SU 01163 76578).
- 1.2 The appraisal was commissioned by Stephen and Georgina Fenna to inform a forthcoming planning application to Wiltshire Council. The proposed works are described as the construction of a two storey extension to the east facing elevation of the residential dwelling.
- 1.3 The site survey was carried out by West Country Ecology in October 2025. The purpose of the appraisal was to assess the ecological value of the site, identify any evidence of protected or notable species, and determine the site's potential to support such species. The findings provide the basis for evaluating potential ecological impacts arising from the proposed development and for identifying any need for additional surveys, mitigation or enhancement measures. The results are intended to assist Wiltshire Council in their consideration of the planning application. The contents of this report remain valid for a period of up to 18 months from the date of survey.
- 1.4 This assessment has been prepared with reference to the relevant national planning policy and legislation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and the manner in which they should be applied. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment is particularly relevant to ecological assessment and biodiversity¹. Further guidance is provided in Government Circular 06/2005, which clarifies statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation within the planning system.
- 1.5 All survey and assessment work followed recognised professional standards and current best practice guidelines², including the methodologies outlined by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)³ and the British Standard for Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development⁴. The objectives of the appraisal were to evaluate the site's suitability to support protected and notable species, identify any direct or indirect evidence of their presence, and assess potential ecological impacts associated with the proposed development. The assessment also

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

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

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

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

aimed to establish the scope and level of further survey or mitigation work required to ensure the proposals comply with relevant legislation and planning policy.

Site Context

- 1.6 The application site is located in a rural setting between the villages of Hilmarton and Goatacre, approximately 675 metres west of the A3102. It lies at the southern edge of Haygrove Wood County Wildlife Site (CWS), a locally designated site recognised for its ecological value.
- 1.7 To the west of the site lies an area of grazed pasture, while a minor watercourse is located approximately 170 metres to the north-east. Beyond these features, the wider landscape is characterised by a mosaic of pastoral and arable farmland, interspersed with mature hedgerows and narrow bands of linear woodland. Further blocks of deciduous woodland are scattered throughout the 2 km study radius, several of which are mapped as Priority Habitat under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. The location of the site is shown in Figure 1.

2 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 2.1 A preliminary desk-based review was undertaken using freely available online resources, including the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside⁵ (MAGIC) website. The search identified statutory and non-statutory designated sites, priority habitats, and granted European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) within a 2 km radius of the site. In addition, aerial imagery from Google Earth⁶ was reviewed to provide context on surrounding land use, landscape connectivity and standing water bodies/ponds within a 250 metre radius of the site boundary.

Field Survey

- 2.2 A field survey was carried out by Jason Skinner (Natural England Class 2 Bat Licence No. 2020-50774-CLS-CLS; Barn Owl Licence No. 2025-13085-CL29-OWL) on Wednesday 8th October 2025.

⁵ Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC). Crown Copyright and database rights [2021]. Ordnance Survey 100022861. Available at: <http://www.magic.gov.uk/>

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

Surveyor Expertise

- 2.3 Jason Skinner has nine years of professional ecological experience, specialising in bat and reptile ecology through consultancy and research. His work has encompassed both small- and large-scale development projects, including the management and supervision of multiple bat mitigation licences. He is the co-author of peer-reviewed research papers on reptiles and amphibians and an active member of the BBCARG and Wiltshire Bat Group.
- 2.4 The field assessment comprised a systematic walkover survey employing visual encounter techniques. Habitat types were mapped and classified according to the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab V2)⁷ providing a consistent framework for describing vegetation and habitat structure across the site. This enabled habitats to be evaluated for their potential to support protected and notable species.
- 2.5 The site was also inspected for the presence of invasive plant species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), such as Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, and *Rhododendron ponticum*.
- 2.6 Binoculars were used to aid the identification of key habitat features that could support protected fauna. All wildlife observed during the visit was recorded, and habitats were evaluated for their ecological value. Survey methods followed current best practice and were undertaken in accordance with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and the British Standard for Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.

Fauna

- 2.7 All protected and notable species were considered as part of the appraisal. However, only those species with a realistic likelihood of utilising the site are discussed in this report.

Bats

- 2.8 The assessment was undertaken in line with current CIEEM guidance and official assessment guidelines⁸. The site was systematically searched for potential bat roosting features and evidence of bat presence. Habitats and structures were evaluated for their suitability to support roosting, commuting, or foraging bats, and potential movement corridors were identified and mapped.

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

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

2.9 During the internal inspection, any suspected bat droppings were carefully collected from within the loft void using clean disposable gloves and sterile tools to prevent cross-contamination. Samples were placed in sterile, clearly labelled containers and stored in a cool, dry environment prior to submission for DNA analysis by an accredited laboratory.

2.10 Trees and other features with potential to provide roosting opportunities were identified to species level, photographed, and their locations recorded using GPS. Typical roosting features considered included:

- Rot holes;
- Woodpecker holes;
- Horizontal or vertical cankers in stems or branches;
- Knot holes;
- Scar crevices;
- Loose or flaking bark;
- Dense ivy cover;
- Bat boxes; and
- Any other features offering suitable roosting opportunities.

Table 1: Guidelines summary for assessing potential bat roost suitability

Suitability	Description of building, tree or structure
None	Structure offers no access points or features suitable for roosting bats and is entirely unsuitable (e.g. modern, fully sealed, well-lit, highly disturbed).
Negligible	Structure has very limited features which are highly unlikely to be used by bats due to their condition, size or location.
Low	One or more features that could be used opportunistically by individual bats, but unsuitable for larger numbers or regular use (i.e. maternity or hibernation roosts).
Moderate	Features present that could be used by bats more regularly, though unlikely to support a roost of high conservation significance.
High	Obvious potential for regular use by larger numbers of bats or maternity/hibernation roosts.
Confirmed roost	Direct evidence of bats recorded, confirming use of the site.

Badger

- 2.11 All habitats within the site were inspected for signs of badger (*Meles meles*) activity, including: scratching posts, latrines, footprints, guard hairs, and active or disused setts. Trackways and foraging signs were also noted where visible.

Hazel Dormouse

- 2.12 Hedgerows, scrub, and treelines within and adjoining the site were assessed for their potential to support breeding populations of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* and for their value as foraging and dispersal habitat. The inspection focused on identifying field signs such as gnawed hazel shells, woven nests within dense vegetation, and feeding remains on berries or fruit. Vegetation structure, species diversity, and canopy connectivity were also evaluated to determine habitat quality and potential links to nearby woodlands or hedgerows.

European Hedgehog

- 2.13 The site was assessed for its potential to support European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, a Priority Species under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. Habitats such as dense vegetation, hedgerows, scrub, and log piles were inspected for signs of hedgehog activity, including footprints, droppings, and nests. Connectivity with adjacent green spaces was also considered to assess habitat suitability for foraging and dispersal.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 2.14 Habitats were evaluated for their potential to support reptiles and amphibians, including great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN). Features such as ponds, damp depressions, and terrestrial refugia (e.g., rubble, timber sheets, or dense vegetation) were recorded where present. Scrub, grassland, and hedgerows were also assessed for their potential to provide basking, foraging, or commuting habitat.

Nesting Birds

- 2.15 Buildings and structures within the site were inspected for evidence of nesting birds, including both common and specially protected species. Internal and external features were checked using a torch to identify signs such as nesting material, droppings, feathers, or eggshells.
- 2.16 All accessible areas with nesting potential were assessed to determine whether the proposed works might affect active nests. The nests of all wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to take, damage, or destroy an active nest or its contents. Schedule 1 species, such as barn owl *Tyto alba*, are additionally protected from disturbance while breeding.

- 2.17 Evidence of past or current nesting activity, including perches, droppings, and nesting debris, was recorded where observed.

Limitations

- 2.18 The absence of evidence for a particular species should not be interpreted as confirmation of absence. Wildlife is inherently mobile, and many species may utilise a site intermittently or seasonally, meaning they may not be detected during a single visit.
- 2.19 Signs of bat activity such as droppings or feeding remains can degrade rapidly through weathering, particularly on external surfaces, and may therefore go undetected.
- 2.20 Several UK bat species are crevice dwellers and can roost in small or concealed features such as gaps beneath tiles or behind fascias, which may be inaccessible during a preliminary inspection.
- 2.21 For health and safety reasons, roofs were assessed from ground level using binoculars and telephoto lenses.
- 2.22 Two ponds were identified within 250 m of the site; however, access to one of these waterbodies was not possible due to its location on private land. Given the limited extent of suitable terrestrial habitat within the site, this constraint is not considered to materially affect the conclusions drawn in this report.
- 2.23 Biological records were not obtained. Due to the modest scale of the proposed development, the absence of Local Environmental Records Centre (LERC) data is not considered likely to alter the overall conclusions.
- 2.24 No additional limitations were encountered during the survey.

3 RESULTS

Desk Study

Designated sites

- 3.1 A consultation of the MAGIC online database confirmed that there are no statutory nature conservation designations within a 2 km radius of the application site, however, one non-statutory nature conservation designation was identified (see limitations); Haygrove Wood County Wildlife Site (CWS), a 4.35 hectare area of deciduous woodland which forms a continuous boundary along the northern and eastern edges of the site, providing mature canopy cover and likely contributing significantly to local biodiversity.
- 3.2 No internationally designated sites, such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) established for the protection of bat populations, were recorded within a 10 km radius.

Notable Habitats

- 3.3 Priority Habitats within a 2 km radius of the site boundary are detailed below. No Priority Habitats exist within the site boundary.

Table 2: Priority Habitats

Priority Description	Habitat	Information
Deciduous Woodland		Haygrove Wood (CWS) lies at the boundary of the site, includes Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland. Further notable surrounding woodland includes; Beacon Hill Brow (Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland) 280 metres north-east. Sheriffs Clump 310 metres south-east. Catcombe Wood (Ancient and Semi-Natural/Ancient Replanted Woodland) 1 km north-west. Jubilee Plantation/Nine Acre Wood 1.5 km south.
Traditional Orchard		Two pockets identified 1.5 km north-west.
Woodpasture and Parkland		Single parcel identified 1.8 km south-east.
Floodplain Marsh	Grazing	Associated with minor watercourses located 1.7 km west.

Protected/Notable Species

Bats

- 3.4 A search of the MAGIC database identified a single EPSL granted for brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus* and serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* bats in 2018 at a site located 1.4 km to the south-east of Noon Trees.

Amphibians

- 3.5 No other EPS licences relating to additional protected species were identified, and there were no Great Crested Newt (GCN) Class Survey Licence returns or positive Pond Surveys (2017–2019) within the 2 km search area.
- 3.6 Two ponds were identified within a 250 m radius of the site using aerial imagery accessed via Google Earth and the MAGIC website. One pond is located within the property grounds, approximately 25 m north-east of the residential dwelling at National Grid Reference: SU 01188 76590. This pond was assessed and is discussed in Section 3.29.
- 3.7 A second pond is located approximately 220 m southeast of the property at National Grid Reference: SU 01355 76334. Access to this second pond was not possible during the survey, and therefore a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment could not be undertaken (see Limitations, Section 2.22).

Field Survey

- 3.8 Weather conditions recorded during the field survey are shown in Table 3. On-site measurements were taken using an Elitech RC-51 Temperature Logger.

Table 3: Weather conditions during the field survey

Date	Start	Finish	Temp °C	Wind	Cloud	Rain	Notes
8/10/2025	10:30	12:00	14	10 km/h	84 %	Dry	N/A

Habitats

- 3.9 The habitat types recorded within the site are described below, using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) framework.

- 3.10 The site comprises a residential property within a well-maintained garden plot. The dwelling is accessed via a gated entrance along the southern roadside boundary. The grounds are primarily composed of short-mown amenity lawn, classified as *g4 – Modified grassland*, with a low diversity sward maintained through regular mowing. A gravelled parking area (*u1c – Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface*) is present to the south-east of the dwelling, providing vehicular access and parking space.
- 3.11 Three sections of *h2b – Non-native and ornamental hedgerow*, comprised solely of cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, are present. One defines the southern roadside boundary, while a second, shorter section separates the lawn from the gravelled parking area. An ornamental pond is located approximately 25 metres north-east of the residential building, flanked by two mature apple *Malus domestica* trees and further enclosed by laurel hedging.
- 3.12 The eastern and western boundaries are defined by timber post and rail fencing, allowing partial permeability to the surrounding landscape. The proposed development area lies on the east-facing elevation of the dwelling and includes a section of lawn and adjacent hardstanding path. Two young goat willow *Salix caprea* specimens grow near the southern hedge but lie outside the anticipated zone of impact and are to be retained.
- 3.13 No priority habitats exist within the property grounds and no ponds are to be destroyed or impacted by the proposed works.

Notable Flora

- 3.14 No notable, legally protected, or invasive plant species were recorded during the site survey. In particular, no species listed under Schedules 8 or 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) were identified. An indicative list of plant species recorded is provided in Table 5.

Development Area (Zone of Impact)

- 3.15 The individual habitat types recorded within the proposed development footprint where the extension is proposed are described under the sub-headings below, with the location and extent of each illustrated in the Site Map in Figure 2.

u1b5 – Building

- 3.16 The primary built feature within the application site is a detached residential dwelling. The main structure comprises a two-storey section with rendered walls and a pitched roof clad in slate tiles, featuring a centrally located brick chimney stack. A single-storey extension adjoins the northern gable end of the building and includes a sheltered entrance porch on the eastern elevation. This extension is similarly roofed in slate tiles. Fenestration throughout consists of modern UPVC-framed windows and doors.
- 3.17 Two separate loft voids are located within the pitched roof of the main dwelling, each accessed via internal ceiling hatches. The single-storey extension contains a vaulted ceiling with no enclosed roof space. Timber barge boards are present at both gable ends of the main building, while gutter boards with slight eaves overhangs and plastic guttering are also present. The extension features UPVC soffit boxing at the eaves and timber cladding on the eastern gable of the entrance porch.

u1b – Developed land, sealed surface

- 3.18 A small section of hardstanding path is located immediately adjacent to the eastern elevation of the residential dwelling. This is a sealed, impermeable surface and is included within the proposed development footprint. It comprises a smooth, compacted finish that provides access around the property. No vegetation was observed on or immediately adjacent to the surface.

g4 – Modified grassland

- 3.19 The dominant habitat within the application site is regularly maintained amenity grassland, classified as modified grassland. The sward is short and tightly mown, with an average height of less than 5 cm. The turf appears healthy and continuous, with no significant bare patches or erosion. The grassland is dominated by perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, with low floral diversity. Species recorded during the survey include white clover *Trifolium repens*, common daisy *Bellis perennis*, and dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg. This habitat extends across the eastern portion of the property and surrounds the existing area of hardstanding where the proposed extension will be located.

Fauna*Bats*

- 3.20 A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA) was undertaken on the residential dwelling. Externally, the rendered walls were found to be in good condition, with no cracks, flaking render, or crevices that might provide potential roosting opportunities. The slate roof tiles, soffit boxes, and timber cladding

associated with the single-storey extension were also well-fitted and sealed, with no gaps, lifted tiles, or deterioration observed.

- 3.21 A number of Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) were, however, identified on the two-storey section of the dwelling. These comprised minor damage to the southern gable-end barge board, gaps beneath roof tiles at the verge of the same elevation, a single gap beneath a ridge tile caused by failed bedding mortar near the southern end of the roof, and approximately six missing tiles along the western roof slope. All windows and doors were closed at the time of survey, and no evidence of bats such as droppings, staining, or feeding remains was observed externally.
- 3.22 Internal inspection of the two loft voids revealed exposed timber rafters and purlins with a bitumen felt underlining in good condition. The southern loft void contained a partially boarded floor, where a concentration of medium-sized bat droppings was discovered between sections of the boarding. A single potential entry point was noted in this loft at the eaves along the east-facing elevation where daylight ingress was visible. The northern loft void was found to be sealed, with no daylight ingress or evidence of bats recorded. No bats were observed during the internal inspection.
- 3.23 The nearby Haygrove Wood, located immediately to the north and east of the property, provides high-quality foraging and commuting habitat for a range of local bat species, as well as potential roosting opportunities within mature trees.

Badger

- 3.24 The property offers limited suitability for badger activity, consisting largely of short, intensively managed grassland with low structural and foraging diversity. The garden area is enclosed and disturbed regularly due to residential use. No evidence of badger presence—such as setts, latrines, foraging pits, hairs, or pathways—was identified during the survey, either within the site or in accessible land within a 30 m radius. Surrounding habitats, including the adjacent woodland and pasture, are considered more suitable for foraging and sett construction.

Dormouse

- 3.25 No evidence of hazel dormouse was recorded during the survey. The on-site ornamental laurel hedgerows lack the native species composition, dense structure, and fruiting/flowering diversity typically required by dormice for nesting, foraging, and dispersal. The nearby Haygrove Wood provides the closest potential habitat for dormouse; however, there is no connective vegetation or

hedgerow corridor linking it directly to the survey area. The zone of proposed works, consisting of short-mown grassland and hardstanding, is considered unsuitable for the species.

European Hedgehog

- 3.26 No direct evidence of hedgehogs, such as tracks, nests, or droppings, was observed during the field survey. The intensively managed lawn and sealed surfaces across the site offer minimal shelter or foraging opportunities. However, the ornamental laurel hedgerows and areas of denser vegetation could provide limited foraging and commuting habitat for hedgehogs moving through the wider garden network.

Nesting Birds

- 3.27 No evidence of nesting birds was identified within the residential building during inspection. The structure lacks suitable ledges, cavities, or sheltered entry points that might support nesting species such as house sparrow *Passer domesticus*. The onsite laurel hedgerows and ornamental shrubs offer a limited number of potential nesting and perching opportunities for small passerine birds, though these are restricted in extent and are not within the direct development footprint. The proposed development area, consisting of short-mown lawn and hardstanding path, does not provide suitable nesting habitat.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 3.28 The habitats within the survey area are considered to be of low suitability for reptiles and amphibians. The garden is dominated by short, species-poor amenity grassland and hardstanding, which lack the structural diversity and refugia typically required by these species. The base of the laurel hedgerows may provide marginal cover or foraging habitat for common reptiles such as slow worm *Anguis fragilis* or grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and for amphibians such as common frog *Rana temporaria*, should they access the site. However, no suitable refuges such as log piles, stone heaps, or dense tussocky vegetation were observed.
- 3.29 A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment was undertaken on the ornamental pond located approximately 25 metres north-east of the dwelling. The pond was classified as having Poor suitability for breeding amphibians. Limiting factors included poor water quality due to fallen and decomposing apples and the general absence of submerged or emergent vegetation (See Table 4 below).

- 3.30 While the nearby edge of Haygrove Wood may provide more suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians and reptiles, the maintained garden environment offers minimal opportunities for reptiles or for amphibians during the terrestrial phase of their lifecycle.

Table 4: Habitat Suitability Index Assessment Scores

	Pond Name	Onsite Pond
HSI No	SI Description	SI Value
1	Geographic location	1
2	Pond area	0.05
3	Pond permanence	0.9
4	Water quality	0.01
5	Shade	1
6	Water fowl effect	1
7	Fish presence	1
8	Pond Density	0.9
9	Terrestrial habitat	0.67
10	Macrophyte cover	0.3
HSI Score		0.39
Pond suitability		Poor Suitability

4 DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken at Noon Trees, Hilmarton, Wiltshire, to assess the site's ecological value and its potential to support protected and notable species. The proposals involve the construction of a two-storey extension to the east-facing elevation of the existing residential dwelling, within an area currently comprising short-mown amenity grassland and a section of hardstanding path.
- 4.2 The assessment evaluates the site in the context of the adjacent Haygrove Wood County Wildlife Site (CWS) and the surrounding rural landscape. This section provides an overview of the ecological baseline, summarises the key findings of the appraisal, and identifies potential impacts to ecological features, along with any further survey requirements, mitigation, and enhancement measures necessary to ensure compliance with relevant wildlife legislation and planning policy.
- 4.3 The application site comprises a residential garden plot located at the western edge of a rural property. The site is characterised by a small number of managed, low-diversity habitats dominated by

short-mown amenity grassland classified as *g4 – Modified grassland*, which comprises the principal habitat within the survey boundary. The modified grassland is closely cropped (<5 cm), species-poor, and regularly maintained, offering limited ecological value within both a local and wider context.

- 4.4 Other onsite habitats include a sealed surface path (*u1b*), and a detached residential dwelling (*u1b5*). A two-storey extension is proposed for the east-facing elevation of the dwelling. This will result in the loss of a small, as yet undefined area of modified grassland, which is considered to be of low ecological value. All other habitats onsite—including ornamental hedgerows, trees and pond—will be retained and are located outside the zone of impact. Vehicular access will be via an existing gravelled parking area, and no new access infrastructure is proposed.
- 4.5 While the site itself does not support any Priority Habitats or notable ecological features, it is located immediately adjacent to the Haygrove Wood County Wildlife Site (CWS), which borders the property to the north and east. Haygrove Wood is designated for its ancient and semi-natural woodland, which is also recognised as Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat, serving as a crucial local wildlife corridor within the wider ecological network and providing habitat for a variety of species.
- 4.6 No statutory designated sites are located within a 2 km radius of the property. Although the site falls within a Natural England Impact Risk Zone (IRZ), the nature and scale of the proposed development fall below thresholds that would trigger the requirement for consultation with Natural England.
- 4.7 Overall, the site comprises a limited range of low-value habitats typical of residential garden environments, which are common and widespread throughout the local landscape. No adverse impacts on Priority Habitats or designated sites are anticipated, provided the development is implemented in accordance with the recommendations outlined below in Potential Impacts and Recommended Mitigation/Further Survey.

Potential Impacts and Recommended Mitigation/Further Survey

Haygrove Wood CWS

- 4.8 No direct impacts on Haygrove Wood CWS are anticipated, as the proposed development will remain entirely within the residential curtilage and will not extend toward or into the boundary of the designated site. Nevertheless, due to the proximity of this sensitive habitat, it is recommended that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is prepared and implemented as part of the development.

- 4.9 The CEMP must outline appropriate best practice construction measures to avoid and minimise potential environmental impacts during the build phase, including the safe storage of materials and chemicals, dust suppression techniques, and the avoidance or mitigation of unnecessary artificial lighting to reduce light spill into the adjacent woodland.

Fauna

Badger

- 4.10 No evidence of badger activity, including setts, latrines, or foraging signs, was observed within or immediately adjacent to the site during the survey. The intensively managed modified grassland and ornamental boundaries within the application site offer limited foraging value and are considered suboptimal for sett construction. Although badger may occasionally traverse the wider property, the zone of impact itself is unlikely to be used with regularity. No further survey effort is recommended.

Bats

- 4.11 A single EPSL has been granted for two species of bats within a 2 km radius. 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.
- 4.12 During the Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PBRA), a concentration of medium-sized bat droppings was discovered within the southern loft void, confirming that the building is being utilised by roosting bats. The southern loft features exposed timber beams and bitumen felt underlining, with at least one area of daylight ingress observed, indicating a potential access point. In addition, several Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) were identified externally on the two-storey section of the building, including missing roof tiles, a defective ridge tile, and gaps beneath tiles at the southern gable end.
- 4.13 The construction of the proposed extension will involve alterations to the existing roof structure and loft void, as well as the loss or disturbance of external PRFs. In the absence of appropriate mitigation or licensing, the works pose a risk of disturbing, injuring, or killing bats, and of damaging or destroying their roosts, contrary to the legal protection afforded to all bat species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 4.14 The building has been identified as a confirmed bat roost, therefore, the proposals cannot lawfully proceed until a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) has been obtained from Natural England.

In order to characterise the roost and inform mitigation, it is recommended that three dusk emergence surveys be undertaken. At least two of these surveys should be completed during the optimal survey period between May and August. A minimum of two surveyors will be required to provide adequate visual coverage of all roof elevations during each survey.

- 4.15 It is recommended that the bat droppings collected within the southern loft void are submitted for DNA analysis. This will enable accurate identification of the species present and assist in determining the ecological function of the roost.
- 4.16 Beyond the building itself, the nearby Haygrove Wood provides high-quality foraging and commuting habitat and is likely to support a diverse bat assemblage. While the proposed extension is modest in scale and limited to the eastern elevation of the building, the introduction of lighting during construction and operation may pose a risk of disturbance to locally foraging bats. Consequently, any proposed lighting scheme must be designed in accordance with current guidance (BCT, 2023), ensuring that light spill is minimised, and dark corridors are retained, particularly along vegetated boundaries and toward the adjacent woodland.
- 4.17 Sensitive lighting measures will be detailed within the CEMP to avoid unnecessary artificial lighting during the construction period and to reduce light spill into the adjacent woodland.
- 4.18 In addition to the above, the following specifications must be considered when selecting and installing external lighting post-construction, in order to minimise ecological impacts:
- Any external lighting incorporated into the proposed development must be LED luminaires due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.
 - Luminaires must feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats⁹.
 - All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, fluorescent sources must not be used¹⁰

⁹ Stone, E.L. (2013) *Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation*

¹⁰ 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.

Dormouse

- 4.19 The site is considered to be unsuitable for hazel dormouse, due to a lack of suitable habitat within the zone of impact and the absence of connectivity to surrounding woodland. The ornamental laurel hedgerows present on site lack floristic diversity and structural complexity, offering negligible foraging or nesting value. No evidence of dormouse activity was recorded during the survey. Dormice are therefore considered absent from the site and no further survey or mitigation is recommended.

European Hedgehog

- 4.20 The site offers limited habitat value to European hedgehog, with the short-mown grassland unlikely to provide suitable foraging or nesting resources. Nonetheless, the boundary hedgerows may offer some limited foraging and commuting potential, although no evidence of hedgehog activity was recorded during the field survey.
- 4.21 No impacts to hedgehogs are anticipated as a result of the proposed development. However, any fencing installed as part of the development should include gaps of at least 130 mm x 130 mm at the base to allow free movement of hedgehogs across the landscape.

Nesting Birds

- 4.22 No evidence of nesting birds was recorded during the internal or external inspection of the dwelling. The building is considered to offer limited potential for nesting, and is not suitable for barn owl. The ornamental laurel hedgerows present within the property provide limited nesting habitat for common garden bird species, although these are to be retained. As such, impacts to nesting birds as a result of the proposals are considered to be unlikely.
- 4.23 If at any point nesting birds are discovered utilising the building, without appropriate mitigation, these may be impacted by the development proposals. Impacts to nesting birds can be avoided by timing works outside the bird nesting season which generally runs between February-August, or by ensuring a site visit is carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist ahead of works commencing. If active nests are found, works must cease until young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

Reptiles and Amphibians

- 4.24 The habitats within the zone of impact are assessed as having negligible suitability for reptiles and amphibians. The short-mown, intensively managed grassland lacks structural diversity, cover, or suitable refugia. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment was undertaken for the ornamental pond

located approximately 25 m north-east of the dwelling, which returned a score indicating *Poor* suitability for breeding amphibians. The pond lacks emergent and submerged vegetation and has poor water quality.

- 4.25 No evidence of reptiles or amphibians was recorded during the site visit, and the onsite pond will not be impacted by the proposals. The site is surrounded by higher-quality offsite habitat, particularly along the woodland edge. As such, no impacts to herpetofauna are anticipated as a result of the proposals and no further surveys are recommended.
- 4.26 Although impacts to the above species (excluding bats) are considered unlikely due to the limited suitability of onsite habitats and the small scale of the proposed works, precautionary measures will be implemented to further safeguard any individuals that may traverse or utilise habitats within or adjacent to the site.
- 4.27 These Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) will be detailed within the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) recommended in this report. The CEMP will provide clear guidance to contractors and site personnel to ensure compliance with relevant wildlife legislation during all phases of the development.

Biodiversity Enhancement

- 4.28 The proposed development involves the construction of a two-storey extension to the existing residential dwelling and is categorised as a householder application. As such, the proposal is exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), however, it is recommended that biodiversity enhancement measures are incorporated within the design to provide a net positive contribution to local wildlife.

Bats

- 4.29 In addition to any mitigation that may be required, an option to increase biodiversity relating to bats on site would be to install at least one bat box, such as a Schwegler 1FF or 2F (or equivalent), fixed to a mature tree, pole-mounted, or positioned on the building at least 4 m above ground level, facing south-east to south-west. Boxes must avoid northerly aspects and be positioned to allow a clear flight path.

Nesting Birds

- 4.30 Fit one or more bird nest boxes (e.g. Schwegler 1B or open-fronted equivalents) to suitable trees or building walls. Boxes must be placed above 2 m, ideally 3 m, away from windows/doors and with a clear flight line. Avoid south-westerly aspects and tilt boxes slightly forward to reduce exposure to prevailing weather.

APPENDIX A: PLANTS RECORDED¹¹

Table 5: Indicative plant list recorded on site

Scientific Name	Common Name	DAFOR*
<i>g4 - Modified grassland</i>		
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial ryegrass	D
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadowgrass	O
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue	R
<i>Taraxacum sp.</i>	Dandelion	O
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup	O
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Common daisy	F
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover	A

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

¹¹ Plant names according to Rose F, O'Reilly C (2006) The Wild Flower Key, Revised Edition. Penguin Books, London.

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 ^[SEP]crested newt;
- Intentionally or recklessly* damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or ^[SEP]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 ^[SEP]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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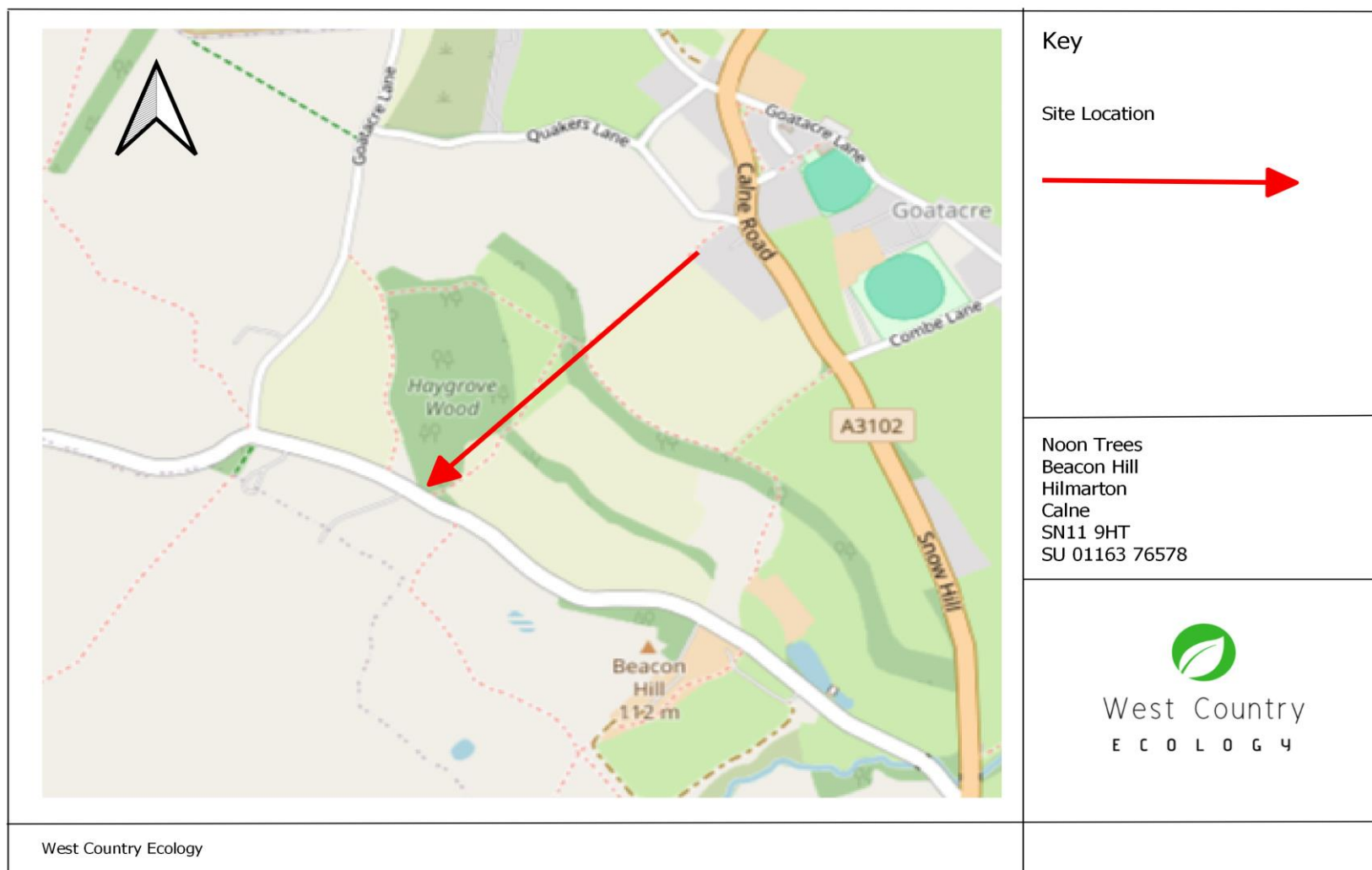


Figure 1: Location Map



Figure 2: Habitat Map

APPENDIX D: SITE IMAGES



Photo 1: Gated entrance at south-eastern extent of property boundary.



Photo 2: The east facing elevations of the residential dwelling.



Photo 3: The west facing elevations of the residential dwelling.



Photo 4: Damaged bargeboard at the south facing gable end.



Photo 5: Gap beneath ridge tile at the southern extent of the roof.



Photo 6: Missing tiles on the west facing roof slope.



Photo 7: Internal view of southern loft void.



Photo 8: Daylight ingress at the eaves within southern loft void.



Photo 9: Concentration of bat droppings discovered within southern loft void.



Photo 10: Internal view of northern loft void.



Photo 11: View of the development area/zone of impact.



Photo 12: Onsite pond located 25m to the north-east.



**Photo 13: A view of Haygrove Wood (CWS),
located at the boundary of the property.**