

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Equestrian Cottage, Manton Estate, Marlborough, Wiltshire

March 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Icon Ecology was commissioned by Manton Park Farms in January 2025 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in respect of the proposed development of an equestrian workers cottage, set within the Manton Estate, Marlborough, Wiltshire, centred at SU 17388 70104, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The methodology, results and evaluation of this survey work are detailed below along with recommended safeguards and enhancements.

Executive Summary Table		
Item	Information	Action
Statutory & Non-Statutory Designations	None on-site or adjacent to site	None
Priority Habitats, Ancient Woodland & Notable trees	None on-site, Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland adjacent to the north of the site	Precautionary safeguards recommended, see Section 10
Habitats	Site comprises species-poor grassland which does not constitute an important ecological feature	None
Fauna	The site is unlikely to support or contain any protected and notable fauna, habitat adjacent site is suitable for small mammals	Precautionary safeguards recommended, see Section 10
Mandatory BNG	Mandatory BNG considered to apply to the proposals	See Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment metric and report
Enhancements	Recommendation for the provision of bat and bird boxes as well as new habitat creation, see Section 11	

2. Site Overview and Proposals

- 2.1. The site is set within a rural context within the Manton Estate, located to the north-west of the market town of Marlborough. The site (built-footprint) comprises an area of grassland, bound by woodland to the north, a wooded area to the south, with a treeline to the east. The proposals are for the creation of an equestrian workers cottage, with associated amenity garden, accessed via an existing tarmac track. A proportion of another grassland field, within the wider land holding, to the east and south of the built foot-print, is proposed for biodiversity enhancements.

3. Purpose of the Report

- 3.1. This report documents the methods and findings of the baseline ecology surveys and desktop study undertaken in order to establish the existing ecological interest of the site and subsequently provides an appraisal of the likely ecological effects of the proposals. The importance of the habitats and species present are evaluated. Where

necessary, avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures are proposed so as to safeguard any significant existing ecological interest within the site and where appropriate, opportunities for ecological enhancement are identified with reference to national conservation priorities and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) as appropriate.

4. Surveyor and Author's Experience

- 4.1. The surveyor and author is Jack Crump (Ref: IE/JC). Jack Crump is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM), with over 18 years of relevant experience within a consultancy setting and is therefore suitably authoritative to assess these proposals. As well as an experienced flora, fauna and habitat surveyor, Jack Crump holds a Natural England survey licence for Great Crested Newt; is Bat Level 2 Licenced and is a Badger Class Licence holder and has held or been named on numerous Natural England mitigation licences for these species. Jack Crump has been undertaking and advising on Biodiversity Net Gain since 2012, and is therefore suitably authoritative to assess these proposals. As such, the findings and assessments detailed within this report can be relied upon to inform the application.

5. Environment Act 2021

- 5.1. Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements are considered to apply to this project. Please refer to the accompanying Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment metric and report.

6. Methodology

Desk Study

- 6.1. In order to compile background information on the site and its immediate surroundings the Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC) was contacted in February 2025, with data requested on the basis of a search radius of 1km. A search to 1km of the land surrounding the site for ecologically relevant information (e.g. statutory designations, protected species information [e.g. bats and Great Crested Newt] and Priority Habitats) was undertaken using the online Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database, which utilises data provided by Natural England. The Woodland Trust¹ database was searched for any records of ancient, veteran or notable trees within or adjacent to the site.

Habitat Survey

- 6.2. The site was surveyed on 24th January 2025 by a suitably qualified ecologist (Ref: IE/JC) in order to ascertain the general ecological value of the land contained within the boundaries of the site and to identify the main habitats and ecological features present. The site was surveyed based on standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology², whereby the habitat types present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. This technique provides an

¹ <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/tree-search/>

² Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010, as amended) *'Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit.'*

inventory of the habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential which may require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail as required through Phase 2 surveys. This method was extended, in line with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal³ to record details on the actual or potential presence of any notable or protected species or habitats. A UKHabs condition assessment of relevant habitats associated with the site was also undertaken.

- 6.3. Using the above method, the site was classified into areas of similar botanical community types, with a representative species list compiled for each habitat identified. The nomenclature used for plant species is based on the Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora database.⁴

Faunal Surveys

- 6.4. General faunal activity, such as mammals or birds observed visually or by call during the course of the surveys was recorded. Attention was also paid to the potential presence of any protected, rare or notable species, with specific consideration given to Great Crested Newt as described below.

Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus) - Habitat Suitability Index (HSI)

- 6.5. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) study was undertaken of accessible known waterbodies within 250m of the site boundary (based on a review of Ordnance Survey mapping and satellite imagery).
- 6.6. An HSI study is used to assess the potential of waterbodies to support Great Crested Newt. It is undertaken by attributing a score to ten factors that can affect the presence or absence of this species. The overall suitability of the waterbody is then determined by entering these factors into an equation devised by Oldham *et al.* (2000). The suitability of waterbodies is classed into one of five categories, either 'poor', 'below average', 'average', 'good' or 'excellent'.
- 6.7. The HSI study was undertaken by a suitably qualified and experience surveyor (Ref: IE/JC) on 24th January 2025, in line with the guidelines developed by Oldham *et al.* and subsequently adapted by ARG UK⁵ (2010).

7. Survey Constraints and Limitations

- 7.1. All of the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detectable during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent during different seasons. The Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken outside the optimal season⁶, albeit the nature of the habitats within the site allowed for the

3 Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2013) '*Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*'

4 Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora: www.brc.ac.uk/plantatlas/

5 Amphibian and Reptile Groups of UK

6 Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010) '*Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A technique for environmental audit*'

broad habitat types to be identified and for an adequate assessment of the intrinsic ecological interest of the site to be made.

- 7.2. Attention was paid to the presence of any invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). However, the detectability of such species varies due to a number of factors, e.g. time of year, site management, etc., and therefore the absence of invasive species should not be assumed even if no such species were detected during the Phase 1 survey.

8. Ecological Evaluation Methodology

- 8.1. The evaluation of ecological features and resources is based on professional judgement whilst also drawing on the latest available industry guidance and research. The approach taken in this report is based on that described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018)⁷, which involves identifying 'important ecological features' within a defined geographical context (i.e. international, national, regional, county, district, local or site importance). For full details refer to Appendix 1097/1.

9. Results & Evaluation

Statutory & Non-Statutory Designations, Priority Habitats, Ancient Woodland and Notable Trees

- 9.1. No statutory designations or any non-statutory designations are located on site. No statutory designations are located within 1km of the site. A single Local Wildlife Site (LWS) is located within 1km of the site. Barton Copse LWS is located ~0.2km to the south of the site. Barton Copse LWS is a relatively small area of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland.
- 9.2. Natural England has developed Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) as an initial tool to help assess the risk of developments adversely affecting SSSIs. The proposals are for the development of an equestrian workers cottage within the existing estate grounds and will not affect any trees, woodland, waterbodies, rural buildings / structures or any linear landscape features such as hedgerows, streams or rivers. New external lighting is to be minimised and avoided. Accordingly, although the site sits within a number of IRZ's, given the nature and scale of the proposals, the IRZ tool states that Natural England does not need to be consulted regarding this proposed development.
- 9.3. The MAGIC database identifies no areas of known ancient woodland adjacent to the site and no Priority Habitats are located within the built footprint. The MAGIC database identifies the woodland adjacent to the north of the site as the Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland. There are no records of any notable or veteran trees within or adjacent to the site.

⁷ CIEEM (2018) 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine', ver. 1.1, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

- 9.4. **Summary:** Overall, the site itself is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations and all such statutory designations in the surrounding area are well removed from the site.
- 9.5. Although a Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland is located adjacent to the north of the site, the proposals are to retain this woodland in full, as well as provide additional buffer planning, therefore, the proposals are highly unlikely to affect this adjacent Priority Habitat. Accordingly, given the nature and scale of the proposals it is considered highly unlikely that the proposals would have any adverse affect on any statutory or non-statutory designations, or any local Priority Habitats as identified in the Magic database. Nonetheless, as a precautionary measure, during the construction phase, it is recommended that temporary fencing be installed to prevent plant machinery from entering the adjacent woodland and to safeguard root protection areas. The adjacent woodland should not be used for the storage of building materials and stockpiling etc. This will prevent machinery from rutting or compacting the woodland (see Section 10).

Habitats and Ecological Features

- 9.6. The habitats and ecological features present within and associated with the site are described below and are evaluated in terms of whether they constitute an important ecological feature. The level of value for an important ecological feature is also assessed, taking into account the status of habitat types and the presence of rare plant communities or individual plant species of elevated interest. The likely effects of the proposals on the habitats and ecological features are then assessed.
- 9.7. No specific records (within the last 20 years) of any protected, rare or notable plant species from within or immediately adjacent to the site are included within the information returned from the Local Records Centre. No evidence for the presence of any protected, rare or notable plant species within the site was recorded during the survey work undertaken.
- 9.8. **Grassland.** The vast majority of the site, including the area of the proposed new equestrian workers cottage comprise grassland (see Photographs 1 & 2). The grassland is routinely maintained via mechanical cut, with a relatively uniform sward height of ~10cm. Species recorded include Cock's Foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Smooth Meadow-grass *Poa pratensis*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* sp., Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* with White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Red Dead-nettle *Lamium purpureum*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Greater Plantain *Plantago major*, Ground-ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Woundwort *Stachys* sp., Ragwort *Senecio* sp., Dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., Thistle *Cirsium* sp., Hemlock *Conium maculatum*, Small Nettle *Urtica urens*, and Moss spp. also present. A number of Molehills along with discreet areas where a higher proportion of bare earth was present along with a higher ratio of herbs to grasses were also noted.
- 9.9. Overall, the grassland supports a low diversity of common and widespread species and spot checks found species richness to be on average of less than 8 species per m². Accordingly, based on the type and abundance of species present, this grassland can

be classified as species-poor improved grassland⁸, and as such does not constitute an important ecological feature.

- 9.10. **Hard-surfacing.** The existing access track associated with the site comprises of well maintained tarmac and is devoid of vegetation (see Photograph 3).
- 9.11. **Woodland and Wooded Area.** A linear belt of plantation woodland is associated with the northern boundary of the site (off-site) (see Photograph 4). The canopy is predominantly comprised of semi-mature Beech *Fagus sylvatica* with some young Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris* also present. The wood is devoid of an understorey layer, with a sparse ground flora and much leaf litter present. Species include frequent Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, as well as Hemlock *Conium maculatum*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Cock's-foot and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. Occasional brash and deadwood piles were also noted.
- 9.12. The linear belt of plantation woodland, comprise young to semi-mature trees of native varieties. The ground flora is relatively species-poor with an absent understorey. The woodland may potentially meet the definition of the Priority Habitat 'Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland', although the woodland would not represent a good example of this habitat type. This woodland is mapped in the MAGIC database as the Priority Habitat 'Deciduous Woodland'. The linear belt of plantation woodland is considered to form an important ecological feature at the local level. This area of woodland is to be fully retained under the proposals, and it is highly unlikely that this habitat will be adversely affected by the proposals, subject to implementation of the safeguards set out in Section 10 below.
- 9.13. A discrete rectangular wooded plantation area, is associated to the south of the site (off-site) (see Photograph 5). The canopy predominantly comprised of young to semi-mature Pine with occasional stands of semi-mature Beech also present. No understorey species are present with much leaf litter present. The ground flora is dominated by Common Nettle and also includes Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Hemlock, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Ground-ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Small Nettle and Bramble. Occasional deadwood piles and standing deadwood was also noted.
- 9.14. The discrete rectangular wooded plantation area is small in extent (~0.1Ha), comprising young to semi-mature trees of native varieties. Nonetheless, the wooded area may potentially meet the definition of the Priority Habitat 'Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland' (although is not currently mapped as such in the MAGIC database), and would not represent a good example of this habitat type. Overall, given the small size of the wooded area and its lack of understorey, it is considered to form an important ecological feature at the site level only. This wooded area is to be fully retained under the proposals, and it is highly unlikely that this habitat will be adversely affected by the proposals, subject to implementation of the safeguards set out in Section 10 below.
- 9.15. **Tree Lines.** Two tree lines are associated with the site, albeit outside of the proposed built footprint and garden curtilage. Tree line (TL1) is located to the north of the site

8 Natural England (2010) 'Higher Level Stewardship – Farm Environment Plan (FEP) Manual', 3rd Edition

and bounds the western edge of the linear belt of plantation woodland. Tree line (TL2) is located to the east of the site, linking the linear belt of plantation woodland to the north with the discrete rectangular wooded plantation area to the south. These features are described in more detail in Table 9.1 below.

Table 9.1. Tree Line descriptions.

No.	H	Woody species	Avg. per 30m*	Ground flora & climbers	Associated features	Comments (including structure / management)	Likely to qualify [#]
TL1	8m	Western Red Cedar	1	Nettle	-	No regular management, some gaps	N
TL2	8m	Western Red Cedar (D), <u>Beech</u> , Scots Pine	3	Nettle, Cow Parsley, Ivy	-	No regular management,	N

Woody species (as listed under Schedule 3 of the Hedgerows Regulations 1997) and woodland ground flora species (as listed under Schedule 2 of the Hedgerows Regulations 1997) underlined, y = young, sm = semi-mature, m = mature, pv = possible veteran, B = bank, W = wall, br = bridleway, f/p = footpath, b/w = byway, (D) = dominant species

* estimated average number of woody species (as listed under Schedule 3 of the Hedgerows Regulations 1997) in any one 30m stretch

[#] likely to qualify – as ‘important’ under the wildlife and landscape criteria of the Hedgerows Regulations 1997

- 9.16. None of the linear features (i.e. TL1 & TL2) associated with the site are considered to be species-rich,⁹ and none would qualify as ecologically ‘important’ under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. Furthermore, neither of the linear features (i.e. TL1 & TL2) associated with the site would qualify as a Priority Habitat, based on the standard definition,¹⁰ which includes all hedgerows (>20m long and <5m wide) consisting predominantly (≥80%) of at least one native woody species¹⁰. Accordingly, the tree lines TL1 & TL2 associated with the site are not considered to form important ecological features.
- 9.17. The proposals include the retention all of the linear features associated with the site (TL1 & TL2). The retained linear features will be protected during the construction phase as per the recommendations included in Section 10 below.
- 9.18. ***Summary:*** No habitats within the site which are to be affected by the proposals (i.e. species-poor grassland and hard-surfacing) form important ecological features, are not considered to qualify as Priority Habitats and are of inherently low ecological value. The loss of a discreet area of species-poor grassland to facilitate the proposals is of negligible ecological significance. The off-site and adjacent habitat, namely the woodland to the north of the site and the wooded area to the south of the site, are considered to form important ecological features and are to be fully retained and safeguarded as part of the proposals.

⁹ i.e. five or more native woody species within a 30m length (or four or more in Northern England) – FEP Manual

¹⁰ Based on: Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group (2011) ‘UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat Descriptions’, ed. Ant Maddock

Fauna

- 9.19. **Bats.** No specific¹¹ or recent¹² records of bats from within or adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. The MAGIC database identifies no records for Natural England European Protected Species Licence for bats within 1km of the site.
- 9.20. The site which comprises species-poor grassland and hard-surfacing is of only limited value to foraging / commuting bats. No trees suitable for bat roosting are associated with the site and therefore any local roosting bats would be unaffected by the scheme. The proposals afford the opportunity to provide enhanced roosting and foraging opportunities for local bats via the provision of a number of bat boxes and via new tree planting. A sensitive lighting scheme is recommended in-order to avoid illumination of retained adjacent habitat of elevated suitability to foraging and commuting bats e.g. woodland and trees.
- 9.21. Accordingly, subject to the implementation of a sensitive lighting scheme, see Section 10 below, along with other ecological enhancements, it is considered that the conservation status of local bat populations will be fully safeguarded under the proposals.
- 9.22. **Other Mammals.** No specific¹¹ or recent¹² records for other protected mammals from within or adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. A single recent¹² record of Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* was returned from the surrounding search area, located approximately 0.6km east of the site, dated 2022. A small number of records of Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* (Priority Species) were returned from within the search area, including a record dated from 2015, located 0.1km south of the site. A small number of Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus* (Priority Species) records were returned, with the closest such specific¹¹ and recent¹² record, dated to 2013, located 0.3km south of the site.
- 9.23. No evidence of any other protected, rare or notable mammal species was recorded within the site. The nearest known population of Dormouse is well removed from the site, being located in Savernake Forest SSSI, ~2.6km to the south-west of the site. Potentially suitable habitat for Dormouse is present adjacent to the site, namely the woodland and wooded areas. No evidence of Dormouse was recorded during the survey work undertaken, and the proposals do not require the removal of any of the woodland and wooded areas. The woodland and wooded areas are not of elevated suitability for Dormice, given their poor species diversity and poor structure. It is therefore highly unlikely that this species is present within or adjacent to the site. As the proposals do not require the removal of any potentially suitable habitat and given the known local distribution of Dormouse, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposals would impact this species. The habitats within and adjacent to the site are unsuitable for Water Vole.

11 A specific record is considered to be a record with location resolution of equal to or above 100m², e.g. a six figure grid reference or greater (a record with a four figure grid reference is to a resolution of 1km²).

12 A recent record is considered to be a record recorded within the last 20 years.

- 9.24. The desktop study returned background records of the Priority Species Hedgehog within the surrounding area, a species which remains common and widespread in England. The habitats directly adjacent to the site (namely the woodland and wooded area) offers potential opportunities for Hedgehog, although these habitats are unlikely to be of importance in a local context and these habitats are to be retained in their entirety as part of the proposals. In any event, abundant similar opportunities are present within the local area and there is no evidence to suggest the proposals will significantly affect local populations of this species. The desktop study returned a small number of records for the Priority Species Brown Hare from within 1km of the site. Brown Hare is a widespread species in England. The site affords very limited opportunities for Brown Hare, and the site is highly unlikely to be of importance in a local context for this species. In any event, abundant similar opportunities are present within the local area and there is no evidence to suggest the proposals will significantly affect local populations of this species.
- 9.25. Overall, no evidence of other protected, rare or notable mammal species was recorded within the site and the habitats within the site are of limited suitability for protected mammals, albeit species such as Hedgehog could make use of habitats within or adjacent to the site on an *ad hoc* basis. Accordingly, precautionary safeguards are recommended below (see Section 10), to safeguard individual small mammals during the construction phase.
- 9.26. **Amphibians.** No recent¹² records for Great Crested Newt (nor any other amphibian species), from within or adjacent to the site or from the surrounding area were returned from the desktop study. The MAGIC database identifies no records for Natural England European Protected Species Licence for Great Crested Newt, nor any records for Great Crested Newt (presence or absence survey data) within 1km of the site.
- 9.27. No ponds are present on-site, although there is one off-site pond present within 250m of the site (250m is the typical maximum migratory range for Great Crested Newt)¹³. One pond (P1) is located approximately 150m to the south-west of the proposed built footprint, located at central grid reference SU 17176 70113 (see Photograph 6). Pond P1 is a relatively large, plastic lined, rectangular shaped pond, which likely functions as a balancing feature for the buildings and hard-surfacing adjacent to the west of this feature. The pond banks are relatively steep and trees line its perimeter. Much green algal growth was noted at the time of survey. No other ponds are known to be present within 250m of the site.
- 9.28. An initial appraisal of the pond P1 was undertaken using the HSI system to identify potential suitability to support Great Crested Newt, see Table 9.2, below.

13 English Nature (2004) 'An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value of different habitats for the great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*'. English Nature Research Report 576

Table 9.2. HSI survey result of ponds within 250m of site

Reference	Distance from proposals	Suitability Indices										HSI Score	Suitability
		SI 1 Location	SI 2 Pond Area	SI 3 Pond Drying	SI 4 Water Quality	SI 5 Shade	SI 6 Water Fowl	SI 7 Fish	SI 8 Ponds	SI 9 Terrestrial Habitat	SI 10 Macrophytes		
P1	150m	1.0	0.88	0.9	0.01	0.7	1.0	1.0	0.1	0.67	0.3	0.40	<i>Poor</i>

- 9.29. In summary, pond (P1) is of 'Poor' suitability for Great Crested Newt and therefore this species is unlikely to breed within this waterbody. The proposals will result in the loss of a relatively small area of short sward species-poor grassland, with other areas of habitat affected by the proposals comprising hard-surfacing. Overall, the site, provides sub-optimal terrestrial opportunities for Great Crested Newt. The lack of records returned from the desktop study and records from within the MAGIC database for this species locally to the site (within 1km), also indicates a reduced likelihood of Great Crested Newt presence within the local vicinity of the site.
- 9.30. Accordingly, it is considered that the site is of no more than negligible value to local amphibian populations and it is therefore highly unlikely that amphibians would be adversely affected by the proposals. Accordingly, no specific reasonable avoidance measures, or a licenced mitigation strategy are required.
- 9.31. **Reptiles.** No recent¹² records for any reptile species, from within or adjacent to the site or from the surrounding area were returned from the desktop study. The short sward species-poor grassland and hard-surfacing and within and adjacent to the site provide few opportunities for reptiles. Furthermore, the site is not connected to any high-quality terrestrial habitat within the local area for local reptiles. Accordingly, it is considered that the site is highly unlikely to support a population of reptiles. Overall, the site is of no more than negligible value to any local reptile populations and the proposals are therefore highly unlikely to adversely affect any reptiles.
- 9.32. **Birds.** Information from the data search included records for several bird species in the vicinity of the site, with data predominately provided to 1km resolution, the majority of records could therefore potentially originate from within the site. These included a number of Schedule 1 species such as Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* (also Red List), Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Merlin *Falco columbarius* (also Red List), Quail *Coturnix coturnix* (also Amber List), Redwing *T. iliacus* (also Amber List), Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and Red Kite *Milvus milvus*. Further to these records, the following Red List and Priority Species were also returned for within 1km of the site; Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, Linnet *Linaria cannabina*, Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Tree Sparrow *P. montanus*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*.
- 9.33. A small number of birds were observed in proximity to the site during the survey including Rook *Corvus frugilegus* (which is not listed as having any special conservation

status). The habitats present on-site are of no more than limited value to local birds and are common in the surrounding area. There is no evidence to suggest the site is of elevated value at a local level for birds. The proposals will not result in the loss of any potential nesting habitat. No safeguards in respect of nesting birds are therefore required. The habitat adjacent to the site, namely woodland and trees, provides potential opportunities for nesting birds and is to be fully retained and protected as part of the proposals. In the long-term the scheme shall provide new opportunities for local birds, via the provision of two bird boxes and new tree planting.

- 9.34. **Invertebrates.** No specific¹¹ recent¹² records of invertebrates were returned from the local records centre for within nor adjacent to the site. The majority of records returned were to more than 1km resolution. The nearest specific record returned, for within the last 20 years was for Wall *Lasiommata megera* butterfly (Priority Species), located ~0.4km north-west of the site, dated to 2020.
- 9.35. Given the habitat composition of the site, its relatively small scale and lack of adjacent ecological designations selected for significant invertebrate interest, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposals will result in significant harm to any protected, rare or notable invertebrate populations, and the site is not considered to support an important invertebrate assemblage.
- 9.36. **Summary:** No Priority Species nor evidence as to their presence was recorded within the site. Given the habitat composition of the site and its small scale, the site is highly unlikely to support or contain any protected and notable fauna and no specific mitigation or licencing is required. Nonetheless, the habitat adjacent to the site provide potential opportunities for small mammals. It is therefore recommended that precautionary safeguards are put in place to minimise the risk of harm to small mammals, in the event they are present within the site during the construction phase, as well as the implementation of a sensitive lighting scheme to avoid impacts to nocturnal fauna during the operational phase (see Section 10 below).

10. Ecological Safeguards

- 10.1. Based on the habitats, ecological features and associated fauna identified within / adjacent to the site, it is proposed that the following safeguards be implemented under the proposals.
- 10.2. **Tree Protection.** The adjacent woodland and trees to be retained and shall be protected during construction in line with standard arboriculturalist best practice (BS 5837:2012) or as otherwise directed by a suitably competent arboriculturalist. This may involve the use of protective fencing or other methods appropriate to safeguard the root protection areas of the retained woodland and trees.
- 10.3. **Construction Safeguards.** In order to safeguard Hedgehog, as well as any other small mammals, should they enter the site during construction works, the following measures are recommended:
- Any trenches or deep pits within the site that are to be left open overnight will be provided with a means of escape should any animal enter. This could simply

be in the form of a roughened plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp to the surface. This is particularly important if the trench fills with water.

- Any temporarily exposed open pipes (>150mm outside diameter) should be blanked off at the end of each working day so as to prevent mammals gaining access as may happen when contractors are off-site;
- Any trenches/pits will be inspected each morning to ensure no animals have become trapped overnight;
- The storage of any chemicals at the site will be contained in such a way that they cannot be accessed or knocked over by any roaming mammals;
- Unsecured food and litter will not be left within the working area overnight;
- Any material to be disposed of by burning, should not be left piled on site for more than 24 hours in order to minimise the risk of Hedgehogs occupying the pile. If this cannot be avoided, material should be stored within a container such as a skip to prevent animals from gaining access. Any material which has been stored on the ground overnight should be moved prior to burning to allow a thorough check for any animals which may be occupying the pile;
- In the event that an injured Hedgehog is found, the animal should be wrapped carefully in a towel, the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) phoned (01584 890 801) and the Hedgehog taken to a local vet immediately.

10.4. **Sensitive Lighting.** Light-spill onto retained habitat and newly created habitat, in particular the woodland and newly planted trees, will be minimised and avoided in accordance with good practice guidance¹⁴ to reduce potential impacts on light-sensitive bats (and other nocturnal fauna). This may be achieved through sensitive design as well as (but not limited to) use of directional lighting, reduced wattage lamps and fitting lighting shields etc.

11. Ecological Enhancements

11.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages new developments to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity through incorporation of enhancement measures. The proposals present the opportunity to deliver ecological enhancements at the site for the benefit of local biodiversity, thereby making a positive contribution towards the broad objectives of national conservation priorities.

11.2. **New Trees & Hedgerow.** It is recommended that where practicable, new tree and hedge planting within the site be comprised of native species of local provenance, appropriate to the local area. Native trees and shrubs of particular benefit could include fruit / nut bearing species which would provide additional food for wildlife, e.g. Beech, Apple, Cherry, Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Hazel.

¹⁴ Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (2023) 'Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and artificial lighting at night'; Stone, E.L. (2013) 'Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation guidance.'; ILP (2011) 'Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light' Institution of Lighting Professionals, GN01:2011.

- 11.3. **Faunal Boxes.** It is recommended that two bat boxes and two bird next boxes be provided as part of the scheme to afford new roosting opportunities for bats and new nesting opportunities for birds.
- The bat boxes could be installed either on an existing tree within the wider land holding, or on the new structure once associated works have been completed. The bat boxes should be installed ~3m-5m high and sited in an area that is exposed to the sun for part of the day, facing a south-easterly or south-westerly direction and with a clear flight path (e.g. not obstructed by branches or adjacent structures).
 - The bird boxes could be installed either on an existing tree within the wider land holding, or on the new structure once associated works have been completed. The bird boxes should be installed ~3m high or more and sited in a sheltered wind-free area, facing a northerly direction, or in a shaded location.

12. Summary and Conclusion

- 12.1. Icon Ecology has carried out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the proposed development, based on the results of a desktop study, Phase 1 Habitat survey and a number of detailed protected species surveys.
- 12.2. Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements are considered to apply to this project. Please refer to the accompanying Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment metric and report.
- 12.3. The available information confirms that no statutory or non statutory nature conservation designations are present within or adjacent to the site, and none of the designations within the surrounding area are likely to be adversely affected by the proposals.
- 12.4. The Phase 1 Habitat survey has established that the site comprises habitats not considered to be of ecological importance. Habitats of elevated value adjacent to the site are to be fully retained and protected as part of the proposals.
- 12.5. The habitats within the site are small scale and afford negligible opportunities for protected species. Nonetheless, small mammals may utilise the grassland within the built footprint on an *ad hoc* basis and bats may forage and commute within the woodland adjacent to the site. Accordingly, proportionate safeguards have been proposed to minimise the risk of harm to protected species. Subject to the implementation of the recommended safeguards, the proposals are highly unlikely to adversely affect any protected or notable species
- 12.6. In conclusion, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposals will result in significant harm to biodiversity. On the contrary, the proposals present an opportunity to provide a number of net gains for biodiversity.

Enclosed:

Photographs 1 – 6

Appendix 1097/1 Evaluation Methodology

Appendix 1097/2 Legislation Summary

Appendix 1097/3 Relevant Planning Policy

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Photographs:

Photograph 1: Grassland



Photograph 2: Grassland



Photograph 3: Hard-surfaced access track



Photograph 4: Woodland to north of site



Photograph 5: Wooded area to south of site



Photograph 6: Pond P1 (off-site)



Appendix 1097/1

Evaluation Methodology

1. The evaluation of ecological features and resources is based on professional judgement whilst also drawing on the latest available industry guidance and research. The approach taken in this report is based on that described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland' (2018)¹.

Importance of Ecological Features

2. Ecological features within the site/study area have been evaluated in terms of whether they qualify as 'important ecological features'. In this regard, CIEEM guidance states that *"it is not necessary to carry out detailed assessment of features that are sufficiently widespread, unthreatened and resilient to project impacts and will remain viable and sustainable"*.
3. Various characteristics contribute to the importance of ecological features, including:
 - Naturalness;
 - Animal or plant species, sub-species or varieties that are rare or uncommon, either internationally, nationally or more locally, including those that may be seasonally transient;
 - Ecosystems and their component parts, which provide the habitats required by important species, populations and/or assemblages;
 - Endemic species or locally distinct sub-populations of a species;
 - Habitat diversity;
 - Habitat connectivity and/or synergistic associations;
 - Habitats and species in decline;
 - Rich assemblages of plants and animals;
 - Large populations of species or concentrations of species considered uncommon or threatened in a wider context;
 - Plant communities (and their associated animals) that are considered to be typical of valued natural/semi-natural vegetation types, including examples of naturally species- poor communities; and
 - Species on the edge of their range, particularly where their distribution is changing as a result of global trends and climate change.
4. As an objective starting point for identifying important ecological features, European, national and local governments have identified sites, habitats and species which form

¹ CIEEM (2018) 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine', Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

a key focus for biodiversity conservation in the UK, supported by policy and legislation. These are summarised by CIEEM guidance as follows:

Designated Sites

- Statutory sites designated or classified under international conventions or European legislation, for example World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA);
- Statutory sites designated under national legislation, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR);
- Locally designated wildlife sites, e.g. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Biodiversity Lists

- Habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales (largely drawn from UK BAP priority habitats and priority species), often referred to simply as Priority Habitats / Species;
- Local BAP priority species and habitats.

Red Listed, Rare, Legally Protected Species

- Species of conservation concern, Red Data Book (RDB) species;
- Birds of Conservation Concern;
- Nationally rare and nationally scarce species;
- Legally protected species.

5. In addition to this list, other features may be considered to be of importance on the basis of local rarity, where they enable effective conservation of other important features, or play a key functional role in the landscape.

Assigning Level of Importance

6. The importance of an ecological feature should then be considered within a defined geographical context. Based on CIEEM guidance, the following frame of reference is used:
- International (European);
 - National;
 - Regional;
 - County;
 - District;
 - Local (e.g. Parish or Neighbourhood);
 - Site (not of importance beyond the immediate context of the site).

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7. Features of 'local' importance are those considered to be below a district level of importance, but are considered to appreciably enrich the nature conservation resource or are of elevated importance beyond the context of the site.
 8. Where features are identified as 'important' based on the list of key sites, habitats and species set out above, but are very limited in extent or quality (in terms of habitat resource or species population) and do not appreciably contribute to the biodiversity interest beyond the context of the site, they are considered to be of 'site' importance.
 9. In terms of assigning the level of importance, the following considerations are relevant:

Designated Sites

10. For designated sites, importance should reflect the geographical context of the designation (e.g. SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites are designated at the international level whereas SSSIs are designated at the national level). Consideration should be given to multiple designations as appropriate (where an area is subject to differing levels of nature conservation designations).

Habitats

11. In certain cases, the value of a habitat can be measured against known selection criteria, e.g. SAC selection criteria, 'Guidelines for the selection of biological SSSIs' and the Hedgerows Regulations 1997. However, for the majority of commonly encountered sites, the most relevant habitat evaluation will be at a more localised level and based on relevant factors such as antiquity, size, species-diversity, potential, naturalness, rarity, fragility and typicalness (Ratcliffe, 1977). The ability to restore or re-create the habitat is also an important consideration, for example in the case of ancient woodland.
12. Whether habitats are listed as priorities for conservation at a national level in accordance with Sections 41 and 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, so called 'Habitats of Principal Importance' or 'Priority Habitats', or within regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) is also relevant, albeit the listing of a particular habitat under a BAP does not in itself imply any specific level of importance.
13. Habitat inventories (such as habitat mapping on the MAGIC database) or information relating to the status of particular habitats within a district, county or region can also assist in determining the appropriate scale at which a habitat is of importance.

Species

14. Deciding the importance of species populations should make use of existing criteria where available. For example, there are established criteria for defining nationally and internationally important populations of waterfowl. The scale within which importance is determined could also relate to a particular population, e.g. the breeding population of common toads within a suite of ponds or an otter population within a catchment.

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15. When determining the importance of a species population, contextual information about distribution and abundance is fundamental, including trends based on historical records. For example, a species could be considered particularly important if it is rare and its population is in decline. With respect to rarity, this can apply across the geographic frame of reference and particular regard is given to populations where the UK holds a large or significant proportion of the international population of a species.
 16. Whether species are listed as priorities for conservation at a national level in accordance with Sections 41 and 42 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, so called 'Species of Principal Importance' or 'Priority Species', or within regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) is also relevant, albeit the listing of a particular species under a BAP does not in itself imply any specific level of importance.
 17. Species populations should also be considered in terms of the potential zone of influence of the proposals, i.e. if the entire species population within the site and surrounding area were to be affected by the proposed development, would this be of significance at a local, district, county or wider scale? This should also consider the foraging and territory ranges of individual species (e.g. bats roosting some distance from site may forage within site whereas other species such as invertebrates may be more sedentary).

Appendix 1097 /2

Legislation Summary

1. In England and Wales primary legislation is made by the UK Parliament, and in Scotland by the Scottish Parliament, in the form of Acts. The main piece of legislation relating to nature conservation in the UK is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
2. Acts of Parliament confer powers on Ministers to make more detailed orders, rules or regulations by means of secondary legislation in the form of statutory instruments. Statutory instruments are used to provide the necessary detail that would be too complex to include in an Act itself¹. The provisions of an Act of Parliament can also be enforced, amended or updated by secondary legislation.
3. In summary, the key pieces of legislation relating to nature conservation in the UK are:
 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - Protection of Badgers Act 1992
 - Hedgerows Regulations 1997
 - Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act for England and Wales 2000
 - Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
 - Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
 - Environment Act 2021
4. A brief summary of the relevant legislation is provided below. The original Acts and instruments should be referred to for the full and most up to date text of the legislation.
5. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The WCA Act provides for the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) identified for their flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features. The Act contains strict measures for the protection and management of SSSIs.
6. The Act also refers to the treatment of UK wildlife including protected species listed under Schedules 1 (birds), 5 (mammals, herpetofauna, fish, invertebrates) and 8 (plants).
7. Under Section 1(1) of the Act, all wild birds are protected such that it is an offence to intentionally:
 - Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst in use* or being built;
 - Take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

* The nests of birds that re-use their nests as listed under Schedule ZA1, e.g.

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/bills-and-legislation/secondary-legislation/statutory-instruments/>

Golden Eagle, are protected against taking, damage or destruction irrespective of whether they are in use or not.

8. Offences in respect of Schedule 1 birds are subject to special, i.e. higher, penalties. Schedule 1 birds also receive greater protection such that it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
 - Disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or while it is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young;
 - Disturb dependent young of such a bird.
9. Under Section 9(1) of the Act, it is an offence to:
 - Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal included in Schedule 5.
10. In addition, under Section 9(4) it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
 - Obstruct access to, any structure or place which any wild animal included in Schedule 5 uses for shelter or protection; or
 - Disturb any wild animal included in Schedule 5 while occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
11. Under Section 13(1) it is an offence:
 - To intentionally pick, uproot or destroy any wild plant listed in Schedule 8; or
 - Unless the authorised person, to intentionally uproot any wild plant not included in Schedule 8.
12. The Act also contains measures (S.14) for preventing the establishment of non-native species that may be detrimental to native wildlife, prohibiting the introduction into the wild of animals (releases or allows to escape) and plants (plants or causes to grow) listed under Schedule 9.
13. Protection of Badgers Act 1992. The Act aims to protect the species from persecution, rather than being a response to an unfavorable conservation status, as the species is in fact common over most of Britain. It should be noted that the legislation is not intended to prevent properly authorised development. Under the Act it is an offence to:
 - Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat* a Badger, or attempt to do so;
 - To intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett# (this includes disturbing Badgers whilst they are occupying a sett, as well as damaging or destroying a sett or obstructing access to it).

* the intentional elimination of sufficient foraging area to support a known social group of Badgers may, in certain circumstances, be construed as an offence

A sett is defined as "any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a Badger". Natural England advice (June 2009) is that a sett is protected so long as such signs remain present, which in practice could potentially be for some time after the last actual occupation by Badger.

Interference with a sett includes blocking tunnels or damaging the sett in any way.

14. Licences can be obtained from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) for development activities that would otherwise be unlawful under the legislation, provided there is suitable justification. The SNCO for England is Natural England.
15. Hedgerows Regulations 1997. 'Important' hedgerows (as defined by the Regulations) are protected from removal (up-rooting or otherwise destroying). Various criteria specified in the Regulations are employed to identify 'important' hedgerows for wildlife, landscape or historical reasons.
16. Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act for England and Wales 2000. The CROW Act provides increased measures for the management and protection of SSSIs and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation. Schedule 12 of the Act amends the species provisions of the WCA 1981, strengthening the legal protection for threatened species. The Act also introduced a duty on Government to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity and maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity.
17. Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as local planning authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when exercising their normal functions. 56 habitats and 943 species of principal importance are included on the S41 list. These are all the habitats and species in England that were identified as requiring action in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
18. Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Regulations enact the European Union's Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in the UK. The Habitats Directive was designed to contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity within member states through the conservation of sites, known in the UK as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), containing habitats and species selected as being of EC importance (as listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive respectively). Member states are required to take measures to maintain or restore these natural and semi-natural habitats and wild species at a favorable conservation status.
19. The Regulations also require the compilation and maintenance of a register of European sites, to include SACs and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)² classified under Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive). These sites constitute the Natura 2000 network. The Regulations impose restrictions on planning decisions likely to significantly affect SPAs or SACs.

² Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) (aka the Birds Directive), which came into force in April 1979. SPAs are classified for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed on Annex I of the Directive), and for regularly occurring migratory species.

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20. The Regulations also provide protection to European Protected Species of animals that largely overlaps with the WCA 1981, albeit the provisions are generally stricter. Under Regulation 43 it is an offence, inter alia, to:
- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European Protected Species;
 - Deliberately disturb any wild animals of any such species, including in particular any disturbance likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture their young, to hibernate or migrate, or which is likely to affect significantly their local distribution or abundance;
 - Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.
21. Similar protection is afforded to European Protected Species of plants, as detailed under Regulation 47.
22. The Regulations do provide a licensing system that permits otherwise illegal activities in relation to European Protected Species, subject to certain tests being fulfilled.
23. The Environment Act 2021, aims to place nature recovery at the center of political decision making at both the national (England) and local level. A principle element of the Environment Act 2021 is the requirement, through Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021), that developers must deliver a mandatory 10% net gain for biodiversity (subject to certain exemptions).
24. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tool must be used to calculate biodiversity net gain. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved by creating biodiversity either on-site or off-site, which may be achieved via the purchase of biodiversity units. Biodiversity net gain must be secured for at least 30 years.

Appendix 1097/3

Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (Biodiversity)

- 1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ describes the Government's national policies on 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment' (Chapter 15). NPPF is accompanied by Planning Practice Guidance on 'Biodiversity, ecosystems and green infrastructure' and ODPM Circular 06/2005².
- 1.2 NPPF takes forward the Government's strategic objective to halt overall biodiversity loss³, as set out at Paragraph 187, which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- d) *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures*

- 1.3 The approach to dealing with biodiversity in the context of planning applications is set out at Paragraph 193:

'When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) *if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- b) *development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
- c) *development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- d) *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially*

¹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (December 2023) 'National Planning Policy Framework'

² ODPM (2006) 'Circular 06/2005: Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – A Guide to Good Practice'

³ DEFRA (2011) 'Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services'

where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.'

1.4 The above approach encapsulates the 'mitigation hierarchy' described in British Standard BS 42020:2019⁴, which involves the following step-wise process:

- **Avoidance** – avoiding adverse effects through good design;
- **Mitigation** – where it is unavoidable, mitigation measures should be employed to minimise adverse effects;
- **Compensation** – where residual effects remain after mitigation it may be necessary to provide compensation to offset any harm; and
- **Enhancement** – planning decisions often present the opportunity to deliver benefits for biodiversity, which can also be explored alongside the above measures to resolve potential adverse effects.

1.5 The measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development (BS 42020:2019, section 5.5).

Local Policy

2.1 The site is situated within the administrative area of Wiltshire Council. The Wiltshire Core Strategy ('the plan') was adopted 20th January 2015 and provides an overarching planning policy framework for Wiltshire up to 2026.

Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015

2.2 **CP50 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity:**

***"Protection** Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Where it has been demonstrated that such features cannot be retained, removal or damage shall only be acceptable in circumstances where the anticipated ecological impacts have been mitigated as far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures can be secured to ensure no net loss of the local biodiversity resource, and secure the integrity of local ecological networks and provision of ecosystem services.*

All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.

Any development potentially affecting a Natura 2000 site must provide avoidance measures in accordance with the strategic plans or guidance set out in paragraphs 6.75-6.77 above where possible, otherwise bespoke measures must be provided to demonstrate that the proposals would have no adverse effect upon the Natura 2000

⁴ British Standards Institution (2013) 'Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development', BS 42020:2019

network. Any development that would have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European nature conservation site will not be in accordance with the Core Strategy.

Biodiversity enhancement All development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Major development in particular must include measures to deliver biodiversity gains through opportunities to restore, enhance and create valuable habitats, ecological networks and ecosystem services. Such enhancement measures will contribute to the objectives and targets of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or River Basin/Catchment Management Plan, particularly through landscape scale projects, and be relevant to the local landscape character.

Local sites Sustainable development will avoid direct and indirect impacts upon local sites through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment. Damage or disturbance to local sites will generally be unacceptable, other than in exceptional circumstances where it has been demonstrated that such impacts:

- i. cannot reasonably be avoided*
- ii. are reduced as far as possible*
- iii. are outweighed by other planning considerations in the public interest*
- iv. where appropriate compensation measures can be secured through planning obligations or agreements.*

Development proposals affecting local sites must make a reasonable contribution to their favourable management in the long-term."

Wiltshire Local Plan Review

- 2.3 The Wiltshire Core Strategy is currently under review, termed the 'Local Plan Review'. This will set out the vision for the future of Wiltshire for the period to 2038, providing a framework for addressing housing needs as well as other economic, social and environmental priorities. The Local Plan review is set for submission to the Secretary of State within the second quarter of 2024, with the first stage of hearings held on 24 June 2025, with Stage 2 set to commence 11th November 2025. Until the adoption of the new Local Plan, the existing 2015 Wiltshire Core Strategy remains the key local planning document.