

Land at Home Farm, Warminster, Wiltshire

Ecological Impact Assessment

Prepared on behalf of

Bellway Homes Limited

Final Report

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Ecological Impact Assessment

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Ecological Impact Assessment

Executive Summary

Ecological Planning & Research Ltd (EPR) was commissioned by Bellway Homes Limited to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) in relation to a proposed residential development in Warminster. The scheme includes the construction of 135 new homes with associated gardens, access roads and public open space.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the Site was carried out in 2023. This included a survey of baseline habitats and the potential for the Site to support protected species. Further targeted habitat and protected species surveys were recommended and have been carried out during 2025.

The Site is comprised of grass leys, herbal leys and permanent pasture, with field margins and hedgerow boundaries. The majority of the habitats are considered to be of value within the zone of influence only, with the exception of hedgerows and veteran trees. The latter of which were carried through to impact assessment. Impacts will be managed within the proposals through the retention and buffering of most hedgerows and all veteran trees. A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) will include measures to ensure Important Ecological Features (IEF's) are protected. A Biodiversity Enhancements Plan will include measures to enhance retained habitats.

Overall the surveys have found that the breeding bird assemblage and reptile assemblage is of local-district importance, and the bat assemblage is of regional importance. Mitigation measures have been outlined to ensure legal compliance with respect to these species.

The following report sets out an EclA of the proposals with regards to these IEF's and includes measures to avoid, mitigate, and, if necessary, compensate for significant residual effects.

Subject to implementation of the proposed measures within this EclA, the proposals will not result in any significant negative effects IEF's within the zone of influence. The Site will deliver ecological enhancement through the delivery of a Biodiversity Enhancements Plan.

Where ecological measures identified in this report are implemented the proposals will be able to proceed in accordance with applicable nature conservation related legislation and policy.

Land at Home Farm, Warminster, Wiltshire

Ecological Impact Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Brief

- 1.1 Ecological Planning & Research Limited (EPR) was commissioned by Bellway Homes Limited to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) to assess the potential for ecological impacts to arise from the proposed development for Home Farm, Warminster, Wiltshire (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference ST89464437); hereafter referred to as 'the Site'.
- 1.2 This report describes the assessment methodology, baseline conditions within the application site and its surroundings, likely significant ecological impacts of the proposed development, mitigation measures to prevent, reduce, or offset any significant negative impacts, and the likely residual impacts after these measures have been employed.

Outline of the Proposed Development

- 1.3 Full planning permission is sought for the development of Home Farm, Warminster. The proposals for the Site include the construction of 135 new homes with associated gardens and driveways. A new access road will be constructed from Boreham Road to serve the new housing development which will mainly lie within the north-western part of the Site. The proposals also include a large area of natural greenspace to the south as well as LEAP and LAP play areas in the north and south of the Site. The natural boundaries of the Site will be retained and buffered. **Appendix 1** includes the Site Layout.

Site Location and Context

- 1.4 The Site is situated on the eastern edge of Warminster. Located within the farmland bordering the town the Site is comprised largely of agricultural leys and fields bounded by hedgerows. Refer to **Figure 1a and 1b** for Site location. The surrounding area is comprised of a mix of semi-rural and urban habitats. The immediate habitats surrounding the Site comprise of moderate density housing located to the west on the eastern edge of Warminster, MoD land located to the west and north, mixed agricultural land to the north and east which are surrounded by belts of deciduous woodland, parkland associated with Bishopstrow House an Spa located to the east of the Site; and to the south the Site is bound by residential housing and the B3414 Borham Road.
- 1.5 The Site is situated within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 132: Salisbury Plain and the West Wiltshire Downs. Salisbury Plain and the West Wiltshire Downs are characterised by large areas of chalk downland. Land within the profile is predominantly agricultural and most of the profile is located within the county of Wiltshire.
- 1.6 Salisbury Plain, located approximately 800m to the north of the Site is designated as both a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), as well as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), notably for the populations of Stone Curlew and Hen Harrier,

and for the chalk grassland habitat, one of the largest remaining areas of calcareous grassland in north-western Europe.

- 1.7 To the south of the Site is the River Avon SAC and SSSI.
- 1.8 In the landscape surrounding the Site there are deciduous woodland belts, parkland and wood pasture, and a patchwork of mixed farming, largely arable.

Relevant Legislation, Policy and Guidance

- 1.9 The following articles of nature conservation legislation and planning policy that are likely to be of relevance to the proposals, and have been considered as part of this appraisal are:
- The Environment Act 2021;
 - The Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations (various);
 - The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
 - The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000;
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
 - The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- 1.10 Planning policy documents of primary relevance to this report include:
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024);
 - The Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015);
 - The Warminster Neighbourhood Plan (2016); and
 - Warminster Town Council Biodiversity Policy (2025).
- 1.11 In addition to the above, biodiversity objectives detailed in the following documents have been considered:
- Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services;
 - The 25 Year Environment Plan;
 - The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (Wiltshire Biodiversity Partnership, 2008); and
 - The emerging Wiltshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust),
- 1.12 Various forms of published guidance have also been taken into account and are referenced where appropriate throughout this report.
- 1.13 Further information on the above is provided in **Appendix 2**.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Introduction

- 2.1 The approach to Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) taken in this report accords with guidance presented in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.2 (CIEEM, 2018, updated September 2024).
- 2.2 In summary, EPR takes the following step-wise approach to EcIA:
- Prediction of the activities associated with a proposed scheme that are likely to generate biophysical changes which may lead to significant effects (either positive or negative) upon Important Ecological Features (IEFs);
 - Identification of the likely Zone of Influence (Zol) of those activities;
 - Scoping to select the ecological features (habitats, species, ecosystems and their functions/processes) that are likely to fall within the predicted Zols and be affected by the activities;
 - Evaluation of IEFs likely to be affected – both negatively and positively;
 - Identification of likely impacts (positive and negative) on IEFs, together with an assessment of the geographic level at which effects are likely to be significant;
 - Application of the mitigation hierarchy - refinement of the proposed scheme to incorporate impact avoidance and/or mitigation measures for negative effects on IEFs, and enhancements in order to deliver net gains;
 - Assessment of the significance of residual effects and identification of any policy drivers for additional mitigation or compensation in the event of residual significant negative effects; and
 - Advice on conformance with policy and legislation.
- 2.3 Further information regarding the methods for ecological evaluation and impact assessment are provided in **Appendix 2**.

Likely Biophysical Changes and Zone of Influence

- 2.4 The activities associated with the Proposed Development which are likely to lead to biophysical changes, and could accordingly give rise to ecological impacts, are set out in **Table 2.1** below, which is drawn from Box 9 of the EcIA Guidelines (CIEEM, 2018).
- 2.5 The Zone of Influence (Zol) of a proposed development is defined by the EcIA Guidelines as *“... the area(s) over which ecological features may be affected by the biophysical changes caused by the proposed project and associated activities”*.
- 2.6 In this case, the Zol of the Proposed Development will encompass different areas, and thus potentially impact upon different ecological receptors, depending upon the spatial extent of the

relevant biophysical change (e.g. light, noise, habitat loss, recreational disturbance). The Zol(s) relevant to this assessment are summarised in **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1: Activities and Biophysical Changes associated with the Proposed Development which may give rise to ecological impacts, and associated Zone(s) of Influence.

Activity	Potential Impact	Zone of Influence
Site Clearance and Construction Phase		
Access and travel on / off site	Noise / visual / lighting disturbance of vulnerable species	Site and immediate surround
Assembly and storage areas for machines and materials; construction compounds	Loss of habitats Noise / visual / lighting disturbance to vulnerable species	Site and immediate surrounds
Vegetation clearance, groundwork, excavations, demolition, and structural works	Loss of habitats	Site
Lighting of work areas	Disturbance to vulnerable species	Site and immediate surrounds
Drainage	Change of Groundwater flows Change of water quality in groundwater Change in habitats fed by groundwater flows	Site and immediate surrounds
Landscaping	Loss of habitats Fragmentation Creation of new habitat and resources for wildlife	Site and immediate surrounds
Operational Phase		
Access and travel on / off Site	Noise / visual / lighting disturbance to vulnerable species	Site and immediate surrounds
Occupation of new houses: urban effects	Noise / visual / lighting disturbance to vulnerable species Loss and fragmentation of habitats by trampling Increased risk of cat predation Degradation and pollution of vulnerable habitats through urban effects (such as fly tipping, introduction of non-native species, arson)	Site and immediate surrounds
Increase in Nutrients from Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW)	Increase in nutrients entering sensitive watercourses	River Avon SAC catchment downstream of WWTW and DS of the Site

Increase in recreational pressure	Disturbance to vulnerable species Trampling of sensitive habitats	Up to around 5km from new housing.
Increase in artificial lighting and light spill	Disturbance to vulnerable species	Site and immediate surrounds

3. ECOLOGICAL BASELINE

Overview

- 3.1 The ecological baseline has been compiled following the programme of surveys set out in **Table 3.1** below. Further information regarding the survey work carried out, including methodologies and metadata is provided in **Appendix 3**.

Table 3.1: Overview of ecological survey programme.

Survey Type	Month	Year
Data search from the local biological record centre	March	2023
Ecological Appraisal	February	2023
Update Ecological Appraisal and Daytime Inspection of the Buildings for Bats – Including update of biological records	May	2025
Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) for Bat Roost Potential	April	2025
Badger Survey	April	2025
Vegetation Walkover Survey	July	2025
Breeding Bird Survey	March-July	2025
Reptile Survey	March-June	2025
Monthly Static Bat Detector Surveys	March-October	2025
Three Dusk Transect and Vantage Point Bat Surveys	March-October	2025
Update data search from the local biological record centre	October	2025

Desktop Study

- 3.2 A desk study was carried out in order to gather and refer to existing biodiversity and contextual information with respect to the zone of influence and the wider area. This involved interrogation of online resources such as the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) web tool, aerial photos, current Ordnance Survey maps and historical maps. Old maps dating back to the early 1800s were consulted for information on the landscape and ecological history of the Application Site. Reference was also made to local planning policies, strategies and initiatives relating to biodiversity. Information on the geology of the area was obtained from the British Geological Survey.
- 3.3 A request was made in 2023 and 2025 to Wiltshire and Swindon Biodiversity Records Centre (WSBRC) for existing biological records in their database. The local records search and other desktop research was over a 2km radius for protected and notable species, habitats and locally designated sites. A 5km search radius was used when searching for potentially sensitive Nationally and Internationally designated sites, to reflect the predicted Zone of Influence.

Ecological Appraisal

- 3.4 The ecological appraisal was the starting point for determining the ecological features potentially needing to be considered within an EclA. In 2023 and during the update Ecological Appraisal 2025 the Site was comprised of a complex of fields with a mix of arable and cattle grazed pasture. Field uses have changed between 2023 and 2025 with arable areas currently being used as

cattle grazed pasture highlighting the changeable nature of the vegetation communities within the Site. Field boundaries include a mix of native hedgerows and tree lines with some areas of dense Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* scrub.

- 3.5 The Ecological Appraisal recorded no habitats of any intrinsic nature conservation value within or adjacent to the Site boundary although habitats within and on the Site boundary were considered to have potential to support protected species. Further targeted surveys for breeding birds, Badger *Meles meles*, bats, reptiles and Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* were commissioned. In addition, more detailed assessment of the habitats present was undertaken at an optimal time of year to inform both this EcIA and a BNG Assessment.

Designated Sites

- 3.6 **Figures 1a and 1b** show local-level nature conservation designations up to 2km from the Site and up to 5km for National and International sites of nature conservation designations.

Statutory Designated Sites

Internationally Designated Sites

- 3.7 The largest internationally designated nature conservation site within 5km is Salisbury Plain which is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Special Protected Area (SPA) as well as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 800m to the north of the Site. Salisbury Plain supports the largest known expanse of unimproved chalk downland in northwest Europe and represents 41% of Britain's remaining area of this rich wildlife habitat (English Nature 1993). Due to Salisbury Plain being acquired by the MoD for military training the land has not been subject to agricultural intensification or significant amounts of recreational pressure and therefore the habitats have been largely conserved.
- 3.8 The SSSI designation is as a result of the habitats present that supports 13 species of nationally rare and scarce plants, 67 species of rare and scarce invertebrates as well as the importance of the Site for birds. The primary reason for designation of an SPA is due to the presence of Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedipnemos* and Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*. The Annex 1 habitats that are the primary reason for the designation of Salisbury Plain as an SAC include Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands, there are extensive areas of seminatural dry grassland and chalk heath; as well as semi natural dry grassland and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates. Annex II species that are the primary selection of Salisbury Plain as a SAC include the presence of Marsh Fritillary Butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia* which breeds on dry calcareous grassland.
- 3.9 The River Avon SAC and SSSI is the closest designated nature conservation site at approximately 85m to the south. The River Avon and its tributaries are of national and international importance for their wildlife communities. The river is richer and more varied than most chalk streams, passing through contrasting geologies and supporting a diverse assemblage of flora and fauna.
- 3.10 The Site does not lie within any of the buffer zones for Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC.

Nationally Designated Sites

- 3.11 In addition to Salisbury Plain SSSI and the River Avon SSSI two other SSSI's are located within 5km of the Site. Scratchbury and Cotley Hills SSSI is located approximately 1.4km to the east of the Site. This SSSI is notified due to the presence of chalk grassland located on south and west facing slopes, as well as on the earthworks of the Iron Age Scratchbury Hillfort. In addition to the diverse botanical assemblage on the site which includes plants with nationally restricted distribution, the Site is of entomological interest supporting 29 resident butterfly species.
- 3.12 Upton Cow Down SSSI is located approximately 4.7km to the northwest of the Site similarly notified as it is an area of botanically rich chalk grassland located at the extreme western end of Salisbury Plain.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 3.13 The closest designated nature conservation to the Site is the River Wylfe Local Nature Reserve (LNR) located approximately 600m to the west of the Site and on the southern edge of Warminster. This Site overlaps with Smallbrook Meadows Local Wildlife Site (LWS) which also covers Smallbrook Meadows LNR located further west. The sites include a complex of six water meadows, wet woodland, marsh, ponds, chalk rivers, hedgerows and ditches. The Site is owned by Wiltshire Council and managed by the Wildlife Trust. Located on the southern edge of the town the wildlife site is popular with visitors and is well set up with trails, car parks and bird hides.
- 3.14 To the south of the Smallbrook Meadows complex is Eastleigh Farm Meadows LWS. South of this is Eastleigh Wood LWS which includes an area of Ancient Woodland.
- 3.15 Approximately 1.8km to the southwest of the Site is Norton Bavant Meadow LWS located within the River Wylfe Valley. Further north of this is Scratchbury Coombe LWS that overlaps with the Scratchbury and Cotley Hills SSSI.
- 3.16 Located approximately 1.7km to the northwest of the Site is Cop Heap LWS.

Habitats and Vegetation

- 3.17 The distribution of broad habitat types (using the UK Habitat Classification) and features noted during the field visit are presented on **Figure 2** and are described further below.
- 3.18 The site comprises grass leys, herbal leys and permanent pasture, with field margins and hedgerow boundaries. The habitats are described below and shown at **Figure 2** and Photos 1-24 in **Appendix 4**. A species list is provided at **Appendix 5**.
- 3.19 The majority of the site and immediate surrounds are on sandstone bedrock, being on the Boyne Hollow Chert Member and Melbury Sandstone Member. This grades into chalk bedrock at the northern end of the site, being on the West Melbury Marly Chalk Formation. No superficial deposits were recorded on the British Geological Society Mapping (www.bgs.ac.uk).

Arable and Horticulture (c1)

- 3.20 The northern field (2) on site has been recently reseeded with Italian Rye grass *Lolium multiflorum* with a few other grasses noted including Rye-grass *L. perenne*, Soft Brome *Bromus hordeaceus*, and Timothy *Phleum pratense*. Herb diversity and density is low with occasional

to locally frequent White Clover *Trifolium repens*, occasional to locally frequent Scented Mayweed *Matricaria chamomilla*, and rarely Smooth Sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*. (**Photo 1**). The habitat present can be described as Rye-grass and clover ley (c1b5).

- 3.1 The north-western field (1) and south-western field (3) on site have been recently seeded with a herb-rich ley seed mix. This includes a few grasses with abundant Fescues *Festuca rubra* and *Festuca* spp., and some Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, False Oat Grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Annual Meadow Grass *Poa annua*. Herb diversity was moderate and density was high, with either native or non-native fodder/agricultural varieties, and including: abundant Ox-eye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, as well as Common Birds-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*, White Clover, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*, Red Campion *Silene dioica*, White Campion *Silene latifolia*, Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Sanfoin *Onobrychis viciifolia*, Musk Mallow *Malva moschata*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Hedge Bedstraw *Galium mollugo*, Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*, and arable species likely already in the seed bank including Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, Scented Mayweed, Field Forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis*, Docks *Rumex obtusifolia* and *R. crispus*, Greater Plantain *Plantago major*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, and Nettle *Urtica dioica*.
- 3.2 The southern field was more diverse than the northern field, but both are considered likely to have been re-seeded in the last 12 months. Both fields support a herb-rich ley (c1b7).

Neutral grassland (g3)

Other neutral grassland (g3c)

- 3.3 Three fields (7, 8 & 11 on **Figure 2**) of permanent pasture on site are considered to be a species poor neutral grassland, which contain non-agricultural grasses, and abundance of Rye-grass and White Clover is low to locally moderate. They are likely to have received agricultural improvements, and the two northern fields have developed from arable over a period of c10 years but retain some limited semi-natural diversity.
- 3.4 The southeastern field (field 11 on **Figure 2**) is a small strip of grassland that was lightly grazed by two sheep during some of the survey period. It had low-moderate diversity with around 9 species per square metre, and the grassland strip along the access track is grouped in this habitat. It contains locally abundant Red Fescue, Yorkshire Fog, occasional Rye-grass, locally frequent Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, locally frequent Meadow Grass *Poa* spp., and occasional Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and False Oat Grass. Species diversity is moderate and herb density is over 20%. Herbs include: Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*, Lesser Trefoil *Trifolium dubium*, Common Vetch *Vicia sativa*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., Cut-leaved Cranesbill *Geranium dissectum*, Goat's-beard *Tragopogon pratensis*, Common Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, Smooth Hawk's-beard *Crepis capillaris*, and Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*.
- 3.5 Above this field is a larger meadow (field 8) that was used as silage/haylage production during the survey period. It contains frequent to locally abundant Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, Yorkshire Fog, Rye-grass and occasional Meadow Foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* and Soft Brome. Some Bent grass *Agrostis* sp. and Meadow grass *Poa* sp. was also present. Herb density was around 20% but with relatively low diversity, including frequent to locally abundant

Buttercups *Ranunculus acris* & *R. repens*, and Red & White Clover, Common Mouse-ear, Dandelion, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, and Curled Dock.

- 3.6 The third field is a small paddock (field 7) that was ungrazed during the survey period. It contains very locally dominant False Oat Grass, very locally abundant Yorkshire Fog, locally frequent Sweet Vernal Grass, Common Bent, and Rough Meadow Grass *Poa trivialis*, occasional to frequent Cock's-foot, Meadow Foxtail and Rye-grass and rarely Soft Brome and Meadow Fescue *Schedonorus pratensis*. Species diversity is around 9 species per square metre, and herb density is moderate, but with much of that being White Clover, which is locally abundant to dominant. Other herbs include: Creeping Buttercup, Red Clover, Ribwort Plantain, Common Mouse-ear, Cut-leaved Cranesbill, Common Ragwort, Docks, and some Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and Nettles around the boundaries.

- 3.7 Give the species composition of the three fields they do not support the priority habitat neutral grasslands and are therefore described as other neutral grassland (g3c).

(2) *Arrhenatherum* neutral grassland (g3c5)

- 3.8 Species poor False Oat Grass grassland is present along road verge at the south/eastern edge of the site. The grasslands are mostly dominated by False Oat Grass, with some additional grasses sometimes present, including Yorkshire Fog, Cock's-foot, Meadow Foxtail and Crested Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*. Species diversity and density is generally low. At level 4 of UK Habs classification system this is categorised as other neutral grassland (as indicated on **Figure 2**).

Modified grassland (g4)

- 3.9 The field edge grasslands (4, 5 & 6 **Figure 2**) are likely to have established from arable disturbance and are assessed as one unit. They comprise recently established species poor grassland dominated by False Oat Grass, Cock's-foot and Yorkshire Fog.

Tall Forbs

- 3.10 Around the field boundaries, this habitat grades into tall forb and Bramble scrub dominated sections, and the mapping is approximate based on the dominant vegetation type on a section of field margin.
- 3.11 The tall forb habitat may not have developed from a neutral grassland, but from ruderal vegetation on the edge of disturbed arable production. However, the most appropriate ruderal habitats associated with arable in UKhab (secondary code 81) do not allow for a dominance of tall herb species such as Nettles, Thistles and Docks, so this field margin habitat is listed here, and can be referred to in BNG as tall forb habitat. It grades into False Oat Grass dominated grassland margins in places. The habitat is dominated by Nettles, Cleavers *Galium aparine* and Creeping Thistle, with a few other species also present in places, including, Bramble, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Hogweed *Heracleum spondylium*, Comfrey *Symphytum* sp., Common Ragwort, Spear Thistle, Lesser Burdock *Arctium minus*, Ground Elder *Aegopodium podagraria*, Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*, White Bryony *Bryonia dioica*, Hemp Agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum* and Ivy *Hedera helix*.

Dense scrub (h3)

- 3.12 One patches of mixed scrub is present on site (h3d) on the southern boundary of the north west field and contains patches of mature shrubs with Dogwood *Cornus sanguineus*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Elm *Ulmus* sp., Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Bramble.
- 3.13 Some of the arable margins have become Bramble dominated scrub (h3d). This habitat is often adjacent to woody boundary features, or woody habitats off site. It also occasionally contains scattered woody shrubs including Roses *Rosa* sp. Elder *Sambucus nigra*, and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*. One section had been recently cut prior to survey, but is still listed as this habitat type.

Hedgerows (h2)

- 3.14 The site contains a number of field boundary hedges. These are either native hedgerows and can be described as species-rich native hedgerow (h2a5) or Other native hedgerow (h2a6) or Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (h2b). The secondary code 11: Hedgerow with trees is used where the hedge meets the criteria for this secondary code. They are described in **Table 3.1** below and referenced on **Figure 2**.

Table 3.1: Linear Hedge Features on Site

Hedge	UKHab	Description
H1	h2a6	5m x 4m. Unmanaged gappy remnant hedge of Holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> , Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> , Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> . Ground flora tall forbs.
H2	h2a6 (11)	5m x 4m wide with Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> , Beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> , Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , and Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> . Some Ivy <i>Hedera helix</i> present. At least 2 Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> are trees. Evidence of Ash, dieback. Hedge unmanaged and becoming gappy outgrown. Ground flora herb poor tall forb.
H3	h2a6 (11)	Outgrown hedge with mature Lime <i>Tilia × europaea</i> , Sweet Chestnut <i>Cryphonectria parasitica</i> , and Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> . Hedge shrubs include Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , Dog-rose <i>Rosa canina</i> , Elm <i>Ulmus procera</i> , and Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> . Evidence of Ash dieback. Ground flora herb poor with extensive Bramble scrub
H4	h2a6	Outgrown and bordering gardens to north. Remnant hedge with Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , Elm <i>Ulmus</i> sp, Holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> , Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> and some Cherry Laurel <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> (<20%). Adjacent to Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> scrub.
H5	h2a5 (11) (204)	8m x 5m wide, with 3 large and 1 medium Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> . The hedge contains, dominant Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , and Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> , Dog-rose <i>Rosa canina</i> , Cherry Plum <i>Prunus cerasifera</i> with 5 species per 30m length. Ground flora herb poor. Four mature Ash trees in this boundary are of veteran status.
H6	h2a6 (11)	A line of young Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , with dieback and a gappy hedge with Dogwood <i>Cornus sanguineus</i> , Elm <i>Ulmus</i> sp., Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> , Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> and Roses <i>Rosa</i> sp. Ground flora herb poor tall forb.
H7	h2a5	3m x 3m wide managed. The hedge contains abundant Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , Frequent Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> , locally abundant Elm <i>Ulmus</i> sp, occasional Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> and Roses <i>Rosa</i> sp, and

Hedge	UKHab	Description
		rare Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> . A single 30m stretch contained 5 woody species. Ground flora is herb poor.
H8	h2a6	2m x 1m wide. A short stretch (55m long) of hedge on the west side of a PROW. The hedge contains Hawthorn, Elm <i>Ulmus sp</i> , Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> and some Ivy <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> . Ground flora is herb poor with False Oat Grass and Nettles.
H9	h2a6	10m x 5m wide. On a bank. A Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , Elm <i>Ulmus Sp</i> and Rose hedge, with some Black Bryony. Ivy present. Ground flora herb poor.
H10	h2a6	10 x 5m wide. As H7 but no bank and Yew <i>Taxus baccata</i> as rare.
H11	h2a6	3m x 4m wide managed. A native hedge with Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , Elm <i>Ulmus sp</i> , Dog-rose <i>Rosa canina</i> , Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> and some Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> . Black bryony is present. A single 5m gap is also present. Ground flora is herb poor with tall forbs.
H12	h2a6	1.5m x 1.2m wide. A managed Beech and Sycamore hedge on the boundary fence of the yard. Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , Rose and Bracken is also present. Ground flora is species poor.
H14	h2a6	5m x 2m tall managed Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> dominated hedge on boundary, some Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> . Ground flora species poor
H15	h2b	Various treatment ornamental hedges of Honeysuckle <i>Lonicera</i> , Cherry Laurel <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> and Lawson's Cypress <i>Chamaecyparis lawsoniana</i> .

Built up areas and gardens u1

- 3.15 A gravel/broken concrete track is present along part of the southern boundary. The grass strips associated with this feature are included with G1 (see above).

Individual Trees ([u1 & h2] secondary code 200, 204)

- 3.16 Away from hedgerows and woody habitats off site are a small number of trees on the site. These are either associated with the gravel track, where there are a number of small to medium Ash trees, or associated with the farm yard, where there is a medium size Beech tree, a small Ash and two small conifers. The numbering follows the Arboricultural report (Aspect Arboriculture, 2025), apart from those in the farmyard, which are additional. Trees in the arboricultural report not included here are those predominantly outside the red line boundary, or those within hedgerow features, which have been included as part of the hedgerow, with the exception of Veteran Trees, which are individually described and assessed in addition to the hedgerow feature.

Evaluation

- 3.17 This section provides an evaluation of each identified habitat on site

Cropland (C)

- 3.18 The arable habitats comprise recently seeded leys, including herbal lays. In terms of habitat and vegetation value these are recently created and with low naturalness and are therefore of low value and considered to be only of value within the **zone of influence**.

Grasslands (G)

- 3.19 Overall, the grassland fields on site are of value within the **zone of influence** as they contain common and widespread species and habitats of relatively low diversity and of relatively recent origin.
- 3.20 The marginal Arrhenatherum grassland on site is considered to be species poor and with low herb density. The grasslands on the verges are managed by occasional summer cutting, but the cuttings are left to rot in situ providing poor conditions for herb diversity. The grasslands fail the representative habitat type as they are not considered good examples of this habitat and are all assessed as being in poor condition.
- 3.21 Overall, the grasslands are of value within the **zone of influence** as they contain common and widespread species and habitats of relatively low diversity and of relatively recent origin
- 3.22 All modified grassland is considered to be species poor and with low herb density. The grasslands on the margins of the fields are of recent establishment and are lacking in any management. They are considered to be of value in the **zone of influence**.
- 3.23 The tall ruderal dominated vegetation has been assessed under habitat condition criteria and is considered to be in poor condition passing only one criterion for lack of presence of detrimental species. The habitat is considered to be of value in the **zone of influence** as a common and widespread habitat of high nutrient farmed environments, mostly of value as supporting habitat to other ecological features.

Heathland and Shrub (H)

- 3.24 The two sections of mixed scrub habitat on site are relatively recently established and relatively species poor containing a small number of common species. The habitats are considered to be of value within the **zone of influence**.
- 3.25 The Bramble scrub habitats on site are of value as a supporting habitat to other ecological features and contain some variation in structure, and contain some native Bramble species. They are considered to be of value within the **zone of influence**. (3) Hedgerows (h2a and h2b)
- 3.26 The native hedgerows on site are all considered to be of **local value** (H1-10). H13 and H15 are considered to be of value within the **zone of influence** on account of it being a non-native line of conifers.
- 3.27 Four veteran trees are present in H3. They are considered to be of **local - district value**.

Urban (u)

- 3.28 The track is **negligible value** due to the lack any semi-natural vegetation. (3) Ruderal or ephemeral (secondary code 81)

Rural/Urban Trees (secondary code 200, 204)

- 3.29 The native individual trees outside of hedgerow linear features are considered to be of **local value**. The small native trees and non-native trees are considered to be of **value in the zone of influence**. The four veteran trees are assessed above in the Hedgerow section and are of **local-district value**.

Flora

- 3.30 No rare or notable species were recorded on site. The UK BAP species Cornflower was recorded in the herbal leys, however, this is as the result of introduction through the seed mixes used rather than a long-standing population within the seedbank.
- 3.31 Salad Burnet has been recently listed as Vulnerable in the UK Red List of threatened plants (Stroh *et al.* 2025) and is present on site as a recently introduced species in the herbal ley. It was considered a relatively robust form that may not represent the native subspecies in the UK. Given these two factors populations on site are therefore of no real conservation value.

Fauna

Breeding Birds

Records Search

- 3.32 The following data is from a desktop review of local bird records. Within 1km of the site there are records of: Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, Swift *Apus apus*, and Swallow *Hirundo rustica*; as well as farmland birds including Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Linnet *Linaria cannabina*, and Corn Bunting *Emberiza calandra*.
- 3.33 Records from WSBRC for birds identified Barn Owl on the Site most likely utilising field margins for foraging. Other species recorded within and adjacent to the Site boundary include Cuckoo *Cuculuc canorus*, with a number of records mainly on the southern half of the Site, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* is noted within 100m quadrat that includes part of the Site in the north eastern corner, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Green Finch *Chloris chloris* are all noted within the Site or adjacent habitats.

Habitats

- 3.34 The site is a mixture of agricultural leys, herbal leys and permanent pasture. The fields are bounded by managed hedgerows and suburban gardens and woody strip and small block of woodland outside the eastern boundary. The site is linked to extensive arable farmland to the north, with some areas of calcareous grassland on the nearby hills, which are part of Salisbury Plain. Farmland bird species present in the wider local area may use this network of habitats.

Breeding Bird Survey Visit Data

- 3.35 **Table 3.3** below sets out the survey information collected for each survey visit, including weather details and timings.

Table 3.3: Survey Visit Information

Visit	Date	Obs	Start	End	Temp	Cloud	Wind	Rain
Dawn BBS	29/03/2025	GK	06:00	08:00	1c-12c	2/8	none	0
Dawn BBS	14/04/2025	GK	06:00	08:00	2c-7c	3-5/8	SW1	0
Dawn BBS	26/04/2025	GK	06:30	08:30	8c-14c	7/8	SE1	0
Dawn BBS	13/05/2025	GK	06:20	08:00	12c-14.5c	8/8	none	0
Dawn BBS	27/05/2025	GK	05:30	07:30	9c-14c	7/8	SW2-3	0

Visit	Date	Obs	Start	End	Temp	Cloud	Wind	Rain
Dusk BBS	10/06/2025	GK	18:30	23:20	22c-19c	3-1/8	SW1	0

Key: BBS – Breeding bird survey; Obs – Observer; Temp = Temperature in Celsius; Cloud = Cloud cover measured in Oktas (1-8); Wind = speed and direction measured using Beaufort Scale (0-12)

Bird Survey Results

- 3.36 A total of 53 species was recorded during the current survey on site and in the immediate local area.
- 3.37 The total species list for the site and immediate surrounds includes 1 species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), 11 Biodiversity Action Plan species (See JNCC, 2007), 11 Red Listed and 13 Amber Listed Birds of Conservation Concern (see Stanbury et al., 2021). This includes 20 confirmed breeding species, 18 probable breeding species, and 8 possible breeding species. The full results are provided in **Table 3.4**. **Figure 3**, shows confirmed and probable breeding locations for notable species.

Table 3.4: Breeding Bird Survey Results

Category	British (English) vernacular name	Scientific name	Breeding Status	Sch1	BAP	BoCC Red	BoCC Amber	BoCC Green	Notes
AC2E*	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	P						flyover
C1E*	Mandarin Duck	<i>Aix galericulata</i>	PO						Flyover east of site on one visit
AC2C4E*	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	PO				1		Flyover
C1E*	Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	PR						
C1E*	Red-legged Partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>	PR						
A	Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	PR			1			Likely to breed in wider zone of influence
A	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	P		1	1			Distant bird heard well east of site in May
AC4E*	Rock Dove/Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	PR					1	
A	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	PR				1		Likely to breed in wider zone of influence 2-3 territories adjacent to site, feeding on site
A	Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	C				1		
A	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	P		1	1			flyover
A	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	P				1		flyover
A	Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	PO				1		one sighting May
AC3E*	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	PO	1				1	One sighting in May overflying the site, may breed in wider area
AE*	Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	PO					1	Recorded in wider zone of influence

Category	British (English) vernacular name	Scientific name	Breeding Status	Sch1	BAP	BoCC Red	BoCC Amber	BoCC Green	Notes
A	Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	C				1		Recorded on western boundary, and fledged young heard in woodland north of site by railway
A	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	C					1	
A	Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	PR					1	
A	Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	P				1		Recorded in June well north of site
A	Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	PO					1	
A	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	C					1	
A	Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	C					1	
A	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	C				1		
A	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	C					1	
A	Coal Tit	<i>Periparus ater</i>	C					1	
A	Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	C					1	
A	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	C					1	
A	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	P		1	1			Not breeding on site, but recorded in wider zone of influence on only one early visit. Breeds in arable further north
AE	Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	PR					1	Regularly present around the site, likely to breed around site boundaries
A	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	PR			1			Regularly present around the site, likely to breed around site boundaries
A	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>	C					1	

Category	British (English) vernacular name	Scientific name	Breeding Status	Sch1	BAP	BoCC Red	BoCC Amber	BoCC Green	Notes
A	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	PR					1	
A	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	PR					1	
A	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>	P					1	Migrant bird singing on one visit in late April
A	Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	PR				1		One probable territory on site
A	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	PR					1	
A	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	C		1		1		
A	Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	C					1	
A	Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	PR					1	
A	Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	C		1	1			Fledged young noted on site, likely to breed off site locally
A	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	PR		1		1		4-5 probable territories around the edges of the site
A	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	C			1			Fledged young noted south of the site, two territories likely south of site
A	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	C					1	
A	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	C					1	
A	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	C		1	1			Regularly present around the site, likely to breed around site boundaries in adjacent houses
A	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	C		1		1		9 territories present around site boundaries
A	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	PO					1	
AE	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	PR					1	

Category	British (English) vernacular name	Scientific name	Breeding Status	Sch1	BAP	BoCC Red	BoCC Amber	BoCC Green	Notes
A	Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	PO		1		1		Recorded in mature woody garden west of the site on one occasion
AE	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	PR			1			3 probable and 1 possible territory around the site
A	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	PR		1	1			1 probable territory, plus regular feeding on north west field. March survey included late winter flock of 63 birds in this field, 32 in early April.
A	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	C					1	
A	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	PR		1	1			1 probable breeding territory in north west field boundary
			53	1	11	11	13	25	

Key:

Category – category of the British List (BOU)

Nomenclature follows International Ornithological Congress (IOC).

Breeding Status in Zone of Influence (site and immediate surrounds): C = Confirmed Breeding; PR = Probable Breeding; PO = Possible Breeding; P = Present but non-breeding

References: The British List (BOU) = British Ornithologists' Union. 2013. The British List: A Checklist of Birds of Britain (8th edition). Ibis 155: 635-676; Sch1 WCA = Schedule 1 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1377>; BAP = Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species - <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5163>; BoCC = Birds of Conservation Concern : (Stanbury et al, 2021).

Evaluation

- 3.38 The evaluation of bird assemblages and habitats is undertaken according to the criteria set out in **Appendix 3**.
- 3.39 The habitats present include small agricultural fields and some deciduous woodland at the extremities. The species present are representative of these habitats with small numbers of farmland bird species, and presence of woodland/woodland edge and suburban edge species.
- 3.40 The total number of confirmed to possible breeding species in 2025 on site and immediate environs (where birds who bred off site are likely to use some of the habitats/boundary habitats on the site) was 46 species, which using the diversity criteria (Fuller, 1980) would put the site value at Local – District in terms of species diversity.
- 3.41 The site and immediate environs contains a single legally protected species, Red Kite a possible breeder in the wider local area but not on site in 2025. This species is widespread and common in Wiltshire having undergone considerable range expansion since re-introduction in the 1990s-2000's.
- 3.42 The numbers of farmland bird species recorded as possible to confirmed breeding species is relatively low, with individual Yellowhammer, Linnet, Whitethroat, and Mistle Thrush territories around boundaries and off site, small numbers of Swallow, Song Thrush and Stock Dove present on site or locally, but no Skylark or scarcer farmland bird species that are present in the wider local area such as Corn Bunting or Grey Partridge recorded as breeding birds in 2025.
- 3.43 Woodland and woodland edge bird species are reasonably well represented given the wooded environment locally. This includes widespread woodland species including, Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Song Thrush, Dunnock, Stock Dove, Treecreeper, and Tawny Owl, but no scarce or local species. The majority of habitat for these species on site is restricted to the site boundaries.
- 3.44 Suburban species are also well recorded, with House Sparrow, Starling, House Martin, and Swift all present in the wider local area, and foraging over or on the site on occasion.
- 3.45 The breeding bird assemblage within the ZOI was considered to be of importance of **Local - District level** importance. In the absence of development, the conservation status is likely to remain **favourable and stable**.

Bats

Records Search

- 3.46 The records search Wiltshire and Swindon Biodiversity Records Centre (WSBRC) includes a number of field records/flying bats and roosts within 5km of the Site. The records for roost sites are confidential and therefore not included within a dedicated Figure. Bat species that have been recorded within 5km of the Site include:
- Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
 - Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
 - Brown Long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
 - Long-eared bat species *Plecotus* sp.

- Pipistrelle species *Pipistrellus* sp.
- Nathusius' Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*
- Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Bechstein's *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Whiskered *Myotis mystacinus*
- Brandt's *Myotis brandtii*
- Leisler's *Nyctalus leisleri*
- Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*
- Great Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*
- Barbastelle *Barbastellus barbastellus*

3.47 The majority of the records located within 2km of the Site are present in the residential areas of Warminster, west of the Site and along the Wyle River Valley, in particular the Hensford Marsh area where there is a complex of river tributaries and water meadows. There is a lack of records for bats to the south, north and east of the Site, this likely doesn't represent a lack of bats and bat roosts, rather a lack of intensive and targeted surveys.

3.48 Natural England's Multi-Agency Geographic Information Centre (MAGIC) was also consulted for nearby European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) granted in respect of works to bat roosts with the closest located approximately 0.5km to the west of the Site for destruction of a breeding site and resting place for Common Pipistrelle. A small number of other bat EPSL's for the damage and destruction of resting places are distributed within the landscape around the Site, mostly to the north and over 1km away, mainly licences for the damage or destruction of Common and Soprano Pipistrelle roosts as well as Brown long-eared.

Field Survey

3.49 Surveys at Home Farm, Warminster have been conducted during 2025 and include:

- Bat Habitat Appraisal (8 April 2025);
- Ground Level Tree Assessment (8 April 2025);
- Daytime Inspection of the Buildings (8 April 2025);
- Nighttime Bat Walkover (April, July, September 2025); and
- Automated Static Detector Surveys (April-October 2025 inclusive).

3.50 All surveys were carried out in line with Good Practice Guidelines (Collins ed., 2023). Full details of the bat surveys undertaken by EPR are provided in **Appendix 3**.

Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW)

3.51 The habitats on Site were assessed during the update PEA and were considered for their likely potential to support foraging and commuting bats. The majority of the Site is comprised of

cropland with a limited amount of sheltered foraging, although the boundary habitats, particularly to the northeast, and the central hedgerow were considered most likely to present opportunities for foraging and commuting bats. The public footpath that runs from the more built-up areas in the south to the wider countryside in the north is lined on both sides by native hedgerow and provides a good dark corridor for nocturnal species across the Site. The Site is well connected to the surrounding landscape.

- 3.52 The habitats were considered to be of moderate to high suitability for foraging and commuting bats. Whilst well connected to the wider landscape the Site, and it encompasses continuous habitat such as hedgerows and tree lines, the Site lacks high quality habitats such as woodland and water courses.

Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA)

- 3.53 A GLTA was carried out at the same time as the update PEA. Within the Site there is one tree within Site boundary which has been assessed as being PRF-M, able to support multiple bats and four other trees located just outside the Site boundary in addition to a line of trees at the edge of the adjacent woodland strip at the northeastern edge of the Site (**Figure 4**). **Appendix 6** includes the raw data table from the survey which details the features noted on each tree with bat roost potential.
- 3.54 All of the trees are due to be retained within the development and therefore no further targeted surveys were required. Initial vantage points during the Nighttime Bat Walkovers (NTBW) (**Figure 5**) were located close to PRF-M trees, and no bats were recorded emerging from these trees.

Nighttime Bat Walkover (NTBW)

- 3.55 Nighttime surveys were carried out during April, July and September 2025 and included a mix of vantage points and a transect utilising two surveyors, full methodology is included in **Appendix 3**. **Figures 5-7** detail the route taken and the results of each NTBW survey.
- 3.56 **Table 3.5** summarises the results of the NTBW surveys.

Table 3.5 – NTBW Results Summary

Month	Summary of NTBW results across the site
April	A total of 4 species were recorded (Noctule, Common and Soprano Pipistrelle, Serotine) Common and Soprano Pipistrelles were recorded foraging in and around the barn at the northeast fixed point, and in the adjacent lane when this area was traversed towards the end of the transect. Social calling from both species was also observed in this area at both times. No bats were observed at the central/south fixed point. Most activity was recorded in darker areas along the north, east and west boundaries of the site, and along Grange Lane.
July	A total of 4 bat species were recorded (Noctule, Common and Soprano Pipistrelle, <i>Myotis</i> sp.). Most activity was recorded on the dark tree-lined boundaries of the site including the north fixed point. These include the lane on the east site of the site and along the edge of the off-site wooded area east of Grange Lane. During the point count sustained foraging by 3+ Common and Soprano Pipistrelles and a <i>Myotis</i> sp. were observed in and around the

	barn close to the northeast corner of the site. No bats were observed during the point count towards the centre/south of the site.
September	A total of 5 (possibly 6) bat species were recorded (Noctule, Serotine, Common and Soprano Pipistrelle, a <i>Myotis</i> sp. and a <i>Nyctalus</i> sp.) Common pipistrelles were observed exiting the treeline close to the south fixed point shortly after sunset. Serotine were and Common Pipistrelle were observed foraging around both fixed points. Noctule foraging and Soprano Pipistrelle social calls were also observed. The majority of activity was recorded at the fixed points and along the north and east boundaries of the site.

Automated Static Bat Detector Surveys

- 3.57 The automated static detectors deployed within the north and south areas of each parcel (for five consecutive nights each month from July to October) identified bat passes from at least eleven different bat species (Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Nathusius's Pipistrelle, Long-eared species, *Myotis* Sp., Noctule, Leisler's, Serotine, Greater Horseshoe, Lesser Horseshoe and Barbastelle). The highest number of passes was by Common Pipistrelle bats. Some species were recorded relatively infrequently, including the rarer and less widespread species of Barbastelle, Greater Horseshoe and Lesser Horseshoe. A summary of the automated static bat detector survey results is provided in **Tables 3.6-3.8** below. The location of the static bat detectors is shown on **Figures 5-7**.

Table 3.6 – Total number of passes per species

Site totals	Pip pip	Pip pyg	Pip sp	Pip nat	Le sp	Myo sp	Ept ser	Nyc noc	Nyc lei	Nyc sp.	LFB	Rhi fer	Rhi hip	Barb	Total calls
Total calls	6074	2875	145	10	3.04	230	1190	1190	42	140	82	40	12	115	12449
% of total calls	48.79	23.09	1.16	0.08	2.44	1.85	9.56	9.56	0.34	1.12	0.66	0.32	0.10	0.92	100

Pip pip = Common Pipistrelle, Pip pyg = Soprano Pipistrelle, Myo sp = *Myotis* species, LE sp = Long-eared species, LFB = Low-frequency bat (Noctule/Leislars/Serotine (Big Bat)), Ept ser = Serotine, Nyc sp = *Nyctalus* species, Nyc noc = Noctule, Nyc Lei = Leislars, Rhi fer = Greater Horseshoe Bat, Rhi hip = Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Barb= Barbastelle

Table 3.7 – Total number of bat passes per sampling location

Location	South	North
Total calls	8235	4214
% of total calls	66.15	33.85

Table 3.8 – Total number of bat passes (both locations) per month

Month	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Total calls	1917	952	1263	2496	4967	677	177

% of total calls	15.40	7.65	10.15	20.05	39.9	5.44	1.42
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Evaluation

- 3.58 The assemblage of bats using the Site is relatively diverse although unsurprising given the geographical location. The Site is comprised of small number of habitats that are not considered to be highly suitable for bats alone, but in the context of the surrounding landscape they form part of a landscape that is highly suitable, particularly for species such as Greater Horseshoe that tend to utilise a patchwork of woodland and cattle grazed pasture. Woodland adjacent to the Site is not extensive however, and the agricultural use of the fields on the Site is quite dynamic and therefore does not provide a consistent foraging resource for this species. The rarer species of bat tend to have more specific habitat needs and therefore the lower number of recordings for these species during the NBW surveys all suggest that these species are using the Site occasionally, but most likely passing through the Site to more suitable habitats in the wider landscape.
- 3.59 No commuting routes were identified, however the hedgerows and treelines around and through the Site were found to be used as flight paths for a range of species. No distinct foraging areas were recorded however sustained foraging from up to 3 Pipistrelle sp. at a time was recorded in the farmyard, however this is outside of the Site boundary. No roosts were recorded on or close to the Site although a number of trees within and adjacent to the Site were found to have features with the potential to support roosting bats. Therefore, no individual Important Ecological Features (IEF) for specific species have been identified.
- 3.60 The bat assemblage as a whole is considered to be of **Regional Importance** in line with guidance on the assessment of assemblage importance in the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (CIEEM, 2025). In the absence of development, the conservation status is likely to remain **favourable and stable**.

Badger

- 3.61 During the PEA survey carried out in February 2023 a single Badger latrine was identified within the northwest corner of the Site. No badger setts were identified on or adjacent to the Site in 2023.
- 3.62 An update Badger walkover survey was carried out on 8th April 2025. No setts on or adjacent to the site were recorded. One mammal track considered to be used by Badger was found crossing the track into the field in the southeastern corner of the Site, emanating from a strip of woodland of Brishopstrow House and Spa.
- 3.63 No evidence of Badger setts were recorded during any of the surveys carried out, however it is considered likely that Badgers periodically enter the Site for foraging purposes.

Reptiles

Desk Study

- 3.64 WSBRC returned records for all of the common and widespread species of reptile within a 2km radius of the Site. Records for Adder *Vipera berus* are noted on or just outside the 2km radius at Southleigh Woods to the south west of the Site. Records for Grass Snake *Natrix Helvetica*

are confined mainly to the River Wylfe valley and Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara* are dotted around to the south and north of the Site but not in any adjacent habitats. Records for Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis* are the closest to the Site but mainly confined to some garden habitats in Warminster to the west and habitats just east of Eastleigh Woods to the south of the Site.

Field Survey

- 3.65 The PEA surveys assessed the habitats across the Site for their suitability to support reptiles. During both the 2023 and 2025 appraisals the habitats within the Site boundary were considered to have potential to support the more common and widespread species of reptile, however, the majority of habitats were found to have low suitability for reptiles. The cropland does not provide any suitable shelter or foraging resource for reptiles. The field margins do however have the potential to support common and widespread species of reptile.
- 3.66 A targeted reptile survey for reptiles following best practice guidelines (Froglife, 1999, Gent and Gibson, 2003) was carried during the active season 2025. The surveys recorded Grass Snake, Common Lizard and Slow Worm within field margins across the whole Site, refer to **Figure 8 – Reptile Survey Summary** for the distribution of recorded reptiles across the Site. The results of the survey are included in **Table 3.9** below.

Table 3.9 – Reptile Survey Summary

Visit No.	Date	Time		Temperature (°C)		Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (Beaufort Scale)	Rain	Reptiles
		Start	Finish	Start	Finish				
1	29/04/2025	18:30	19:45	17	17	10	1	0	1 x adult (unid) Grass Snake
2	06/05/2025	12:00	13:30	18	18	30	0-1	0	1 x female Common Lizard 1 x sub-adult Common Lizard 1x female Slow Worm 1 x sub-adult Slow Worm 1 x juvenile Grass Snake
3	12/05/2025	09:35	10:40	16	16.6	100	0-1	0	1 x male Common Lizard 1 x female Common Lizard 1 x male Slow Worm 3 x female Slow Worm 1 x female Grass Snake 1 x juvenile Grass Snake
4	22/05/2025	10:00	11:20	16	16	30	1	0	2 x female Slow Worm 1 x female Grass Snake 1 x juvenile Grass Snake

5	28/05/2025	10:30	11:45	16	16	50	3	0	1 x female Common Lizard 1 x female Slow Worm 1 x female Grass Snake
6	09/06/2025	11:45	13:30	17	18	95	2	0	1 x female Common Lizard 1 x female Grass Snake
7	14/06/2025	9:00	10:30	17	17	40-50	1	0	1 x female Grass Snake

- 3.67 All of the Grass Snakes recorded were located in the northeastern corner of the Site along the field boundary and within the tussocky grassland and ruderal habitats around the farmyard. This area supported a greater density of Slow Worm as well, however they were also distributed more widely across the Site and found along most of the field boundaries, particularly in the north. Similarly Common Lizard were found distributed across the whole Site but mostly on the south facing slopes of the northern field boundaries in both northern and southern areas of the Site.

Evaluation

- 3.68 Low numbers of each species were recorded during the survey visits. Size class estimation considers the number of adult reptiles of the species observed during a single survey visit (using a density of 10 artificial reptile refugia per ha of suitable reptile habitat) according to reptile survey guidance (Froglife, 1999), and therefore this indicates that the populations for Grass Snake, Common Lizard and Slow Worm are low.
- 3.69 According to best practice guidelines (Froglife, 1999) the assemblage of reptile species across the Site qualifies as a “Key Reptile Site”. To understand the value of the Site for reptiles’ consideration of abundance of such reptile sites within the county was given and due to the limited assemblage of reptile species across Wiltshire the reptile assemblage is likely to be of **Local-District** value. The conservation status is unfavourable stable due to the small amount of suitable habitat present with no chance of improvement in its current state due to the current land use. An increase in the amount of suitable habitat has the potential to increase the value of the Site for reptiles to County Level.

Invertebrates

- 3.70 The records returned by WSBRC included a range of Priority species of butterflies within 2km of the Site, many of these records are recorded within 1km grid squares and mainly to the north of the Site, associated with specific chalk grassland habitats associated with Salisbury Plain. The Site does fall within a 1km grid square for an Adonis Blue *Polyommatus bellargus* butterfly record and it is therefore not known whether this species was recorded within the Site boundary or not. However, there are no habitats within the site for this species, which is a chalk grassland specialist and requires presence of its foodplant Horseshoe Vetch *Hippocrepis comosa*.
- 3.71 Habitats with the potential to support invertebrates within the Site are limited and where present the habitat types are common and widespread. Due to the lack of open sandy/bare ground suitable for burrowing invertebrates and the limited plant species diversity the Site is unlikely to support a rare assemblage of invertebrates.

Evaluation

- 3.72 The invertebrate assemblage within the Site boundary is assessed to be of value within the **zone of influence** only and is not taken forward to impact assessment.

Amphibians

Desk Study

- 3.73 WSBC returned records for Common Frog *Rana temporaria*, Common Toad *Bufo bufo*, and Great Crested Newt (GCN) are present within 2km of the Site boundary. A large number of records for Common Frog and Common Toad were returned from WSBC all located mostly to the south of Warminster, a small number of records for Common Toad are also recorded to the north of the Site on Salisbury Plain.
- 3.74 Three records were returned for Great Crested Newt within 2km of the Site. The closest records are approximately 1.6km to the west of the Site within the Wylye river valley and a new record for 2023 recorded to the northwest of the Site. The second record is located approximately 1.7km to the south of the Site on the other side of the A36.
- 3.75 A search of the Governments Multi-Agency Geographical Information System (MAGIC) found no records of granted European Protected Species Licences (EPSL's) or pond survey and class licence return records for Great Crested Newts within 2km of the Site.

Field Survey

- 3.76 No ponds are located within the Site boundary. The closest pond is located approximately 85m to the south of the Site and is stream fed from the River Wylye. The pond is located to the south of Boreham Road. The pond is large, almost 'lake like' and as it is so well linked to the river it is likely to have fish and an element of flowing water. Other ponds are located to the southeast of the site at approximately 430m and 480m from the Site boundary, the furthest of the two also appears stream fed from the River, although both are part of the River system and wetland corridor.
- 3.77 It was not possible to gain access to the closest pond in order to undertake a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) for Great Crested Newts or eDNA sampling however the owners of the pond mentioned that it had been surveyed a number of times in the past. Due to the lack of records it is considered unlikely that the pond does support Great Crested Newts.
- 3.78 The hedgerow bases and tussock grassland boundaries are suitable for terrestrial amphibians including GCN. These habitats are suitable to support amphibians dispersing, hibernating, sheltering and foraging. However, it is unlikely that these features provide a corridor for dispersing GCN as no ponds are noted to the north of the Site.

Evaluation

- 3.79 Whilst there are ponds within 500m of the Site, Boreham Road presents a reasonable barrier/hindrance to dispersal from the closest pond. Whilst GCN can roam up to 500m from their breeding ponds, they typically exploit habitats within 250m more often, and are usually most heavily reliant on habitats within about 50m. Radio-tracking studies have shown that adult GCN typically remain within 100m of their breeding pond (Jehle 2000) with a maximum dispersal of 150m (Jehle & Arntzen 2000). In addition, drift fencing and pitfall trap capture rates decline significantly at distances over 50m from the breeding pond and are rarely effective at distances over 100m from a breeding pond (Cresswell & Whitworth 2004). It is unlikely that if GCN are

present within the ponds to the south that they would travel onto habitats within the Site boundary, particularly as more optimal habitats are present closer to the ponds within the patchwork of wet habitats and woodland within the Wylve River valley.

- 3.80 Toad are a priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006. The boundary habitats and hedgerow bases are likely to support this species and other terrestrial amphibians and therefore the Site is considered to be of value within the **Zone of Influence** for amphibians.

Hazel Dormouse

- 3.81 The records search returned by WSBRC did not include any records for Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* within 2km of the Site. A search of the Governments Multi-Agency Geographical Information System (MAGIC) found a single record of a granted European Protected Species (EPSL) for this species, located approximately 2.5km to the south east on the A36 corridor.
- 3.82 The PEA survey included an appraisal of the suitability of habitats within and adjacent to the Site boundary for Hazel Dormouse. The hedgerows include a variety of native fruiting species which could provide a good foraging resource as well as dense foliage that is suitable for nesting animals. Whilst these habitats are well connected to the wider landscape there is a lack of optimal woodland habitat connected to the Site. Small patches of deciduous woodland are present to the north and east of the Site however the landscape is dominated by open grassland habitats and lack the structural diversity and connectivity that Hazel Dormice require.
- 3.83 More extensive optimal Hazel Dormouse habitat is present to the South of the Site however Boreham Road and the Wye River Valley present a barrier for dispersal to Hazel Dormice and therefore it is considered unlikely that Hazel Dormice are present within the Site boundary.

Other Protected Species

- 3.84 The habitats on Site are not considered suitable to support other protected species such as Water Vole *Arvicola amphibious*, and Otter *Lutra lutra*. These species are scoped out of the impact assessment.

Summary of Important Ecological Features

- 3.85 With reference to the assessment criteria set out in **Appendix 3**, IEFs that are considered to be of Local importance or greater, to be taken forward for impact assessment in Section 4 are summarised in **Table 3.10** below.

Table 3.10: Important Ecological Features to be considered further in this EclA

Feature	Importance
Native hedgerow	Local
Veteran tree(s)	Local-District
Individual native trees	Local
Breeding bird assemblage	Local-District
Bat Assemblage	Regional
Reptiles	Local-District

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Introduction

- 4.1 This section examines the potential for significant ecological impacts and effects on IEFs as a result of the biophysical changes arising from the Proposals, both during the site clearance and construction phase and operational phase. Where impacts are identified, opportunities for impact avoidance and mitigation are explored. If the potential for significant residual effects remains after mitigation, then opportunities for compensation are also set out.

Impact Avoidance by Design

- 4.2 In accordance with the principle of the mitigation hierarchy, the scheme has been designed to avoid ecological impacts as far as possible in the first instance, thus reducing the need for extensive mitigation measures.
- 4.3 Impact avoidance measures incorporated into the Proposed Development include:
- Retention of native hedgerows;
 - Retention of mature and veteran trees; and
 - Buffering of hedgerows and tree line.

Mechanisms for Implementing and Securing Mitigation

- 4.4 Throughout this section reference is made to a suite of plans and strategies which will include and expand upon the key principles of the impact avoidance and mitigation measures described below, and which can be secured through planning conditions or obligations, including:

Construction Environmental Management Plan

- 4.5 The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will set out detailed measures for protecting the environment during the site clearance and construction phase. This will include specifications for construction timing and logistics; pollution prevention measures; measures to control surface water run-off and the emission of dust and noise; and specific measures that will be prescribed to avoid or mitigate damage and disturbance to important species and habitats, such as the exclusion of construction activities from sensitive areas.

Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancements Plan

- 4.6 The Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancements Plan will include details of how retained habitats will be enhanced and new habitats created within the Site boundary. Mitigation measures for will also be included, in particular a detailed reptile mitigation strategy.

Landscape and Ecology Management Plan

- 4.7 The Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) will provide prescriptions for the ongoing management of the open greenspace within the Site boundary.

Lighting Plan

- 4.8 A light Strategy will provide detailed specifications for the provision of lighting within the development, including measures that will be applied to minimise potential impacts on ecological receptors and ensure that the proposed development complies with best practice guidelines.

Impact Assessment

Designated Sites

Construction Phase Impacts and Mitigation

Internationally Designated Sites

- 4.9 Due to the distance of the international designated sites from the Site no impacts are predicted during the construction phase.

Nationally Designated Sites

- 4.10 Due to the distance of the nationally designated sites from the Site no impacts are predicted during the construction phase.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.11 Due to the distance of the non-statutory designated sites from the Site no impacts are predicted during the construction phase.

Operation Phase Impacts and Mitigation

Internationally Designated Sites - Increase in Nutrients

- 4.12 The River Avon SAC has been identified as being negatively impacted by the levels of phosphates released into it, with the increase in nutrient levels causing eutrophication, to the detriment of the qualifying habitats and species. These nutrient outputs are largely the result of agricultural practices and wastewater. Uncertainty remains as to whether additional development (thereby creating additional wastewater) will further exacerbate these negative impacts.
- 4.13 As a result, in March 2022, Natural England produced advice for Local Planning Authorities advising that, unless new development can achieve nutrient neutrality, it cannot be considered to be in compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations').
- 4.14 A nutrient neutrality calculation and mitigation strategy has been submitted with the application demonstrating how the proposals will achieve nutrient neutrality. This is likely to be through the purchase of off-site credits through a third party scheme.

Internationally Designated Sites - Increase in Recreational Impacts

- 4.15 The Proposed Development will result in an increase in new residents within the ZOI of the Salisbury Plain SAC SPA. New residents visiting the Salisbury SPA SAC could disturb ground-nesting birds and damage habitats, thereby leading to adverse effects on the SPA SAC qualifying features. The HRA and Mitigation Strategy for Salisbury Plain SPA (in relation to recreational pressures from residential development (Wiltshire Council 2024) sets out measures to mitigate the effect and requires development within 6.4km of the SPA to contribute to these measures through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Nationally Designated Sites

- 4.16 Due to the distance of the nationally designated sites from the Site no impacts are predicted during the construction phase.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.17 Due to the distance of the international designated sites from the Site no impacts are predicted during the construction phase.

Native Hedgerow

Site Clearance and Construction Impacts

Loss of Hedgerows

- 4.18 The majority of the hedgerows that currently exist on and within the Site boundary will be retained as part of the development. Breaches in H7 & H8, which run down the centre of the northern part of the Site, will occur to construct an access road to the proposed houses in the northwestern section of the Site. A small breach in H11 will occur towards the eastern end of the hedge to link up the existing and proposed public footpaths around the Site. The total amount of hedgerow lost will be small and therefore the loss of hedgerow will lead to a **permanent negative effect** at the **Zol Level** in the absence of mitigation.
- 4.19 New species-rich hedgerow planting will be incorporated into the proposals to replace the loss of hedgerow within the Site. This will result in a net increase in hedgerow habitats in line with BNG and local and national biodiversity objectives. The new hedgerows will be managed appropriately to ensure the structural and species diversity. As a result of the planting of new species rich hedgerows there will be **no residual negative impacts**.

Damage or Degradation of Hedgerows

- 4.20 Retained hedgerow habitats could be damaged as a result of Site clearance and construction activities including the movement of construction traffic around the Site and the storage of construction materials.
- 4.21 As hedgerows are a priority habitat and of local value, the impacts from clearance and construction could lead to a **permanent negative effect** significant at a **Local level** in the absence of mitigation.
- 4.22 Retained hedgerows will be buffered and protected with fencing during the construction phase of the development. A buffer zone of 5m where possible will be included for every retained hedgerow and this will exclude access to construction vehicles and the storage of materials. Detailed measures will be included within a CEMP. Retained hedges should be fenced outside the construction zone.
- 4.23 The successful implementation of these measures should ensure that there is **no residual negative impact** on hedgerows during the construction phase.

Operational Phase Impacts

- 4.24 During operation, the majority of the hedgerows have been designed to be away from private gardens. An exception is for H7. This hedge will be retained in situ, but will not be able to be managed as part of the open space. However, the provision of new native species rich hedgerow planting will ensure that any loss of value to this hedge from lack of ongoing favourable management is mitigated resulting in **no significant impact**.

Individual Native and Veteran Trees

Site Clearance and Construction Impacts

Loss Mature and Veteran Trees

- 4.25 The proposals include the retention of all but one mature (T15) and all veteran trees. The loss of a single mature Ash tree is to be mitigated through new native tree planting within the open space on site resulting in **no significant impact**.

Damage or Degradation of Retained Mature and Veteran Trees

- 4.26 Construction activities on the Site will result in the creation of dust and the use of chemicals and fuel within the Site. Impacts on trees may result from the creation of dust (covering leaves and impacting the trees ability to photosynthesise), spillages of chemicals and fuel; and also the movement of construction related vehicles within the root protection zone. Other impacts may also arise from the direct clearance of vegetation and excavation of the Site to construction houses and roads.
- 4.27 Unmitigated the impact from construction activities on mature and veteran trees would be significant. The damage or degradation of mature and veteran trees would lead to a **permanent negative effect** at a **Local-District Level**.
- 4.28 In order to mitigate any impacts on mature and veteran trees a CEMP will be written which will include measures to reduce impacts. Measures would include but not be limited to:
- Dust suppression system;
 - The safe storage of fuels and chemical compounds in a designated location away from sensitive habitats;
 - Emergency plan to ensure any spillages of chemicals or fuel are dealt with swiftly;
 - Trees to be buffered and the buffer zone to be fenced to restrict access into the buffer zone for construction traffic and construction activities. The buffer zone should include the entire RPA as set out in the Arboricultural report.
- 4.29 Ensuring a CEMP is in place and implemented will ensure there are **no residual negative impacts** on mature and veteran trees.

Breeding Bird Assemblage

Site Clearance and Construction Impacts

Injury and Death of Birds

- 4.30 Should birds be present with occupied nests at the time of site clearance and construction works, there would be a high risk of injury or death to birds and their eggs/chicks. The injury or death of individual birds would result in an offence under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 4.31 Without mitigation the site clearance and construction works could lead to the injury or death of birds which would result in a **permanent negative effect** at the **Zone of Influence** level.
- 4.32 If site clearance and construction works are to happen during the active breeding season (Feb-Aug), a Precautionary Method of Working Statement should be provided by an ecologist and

followed to ensure legislation is adhered to. This would involve pre-clearance checks of vegetation over 50m high, with any active nests found protected in situ until any dependent young have fledged the nest.

- 4.33 Given the above, no injury or death are therefore predicted during the site clearance and construction works. Should the scope of works change in future or birds be unexpectedly encountered, advice on compliance with the legal protection afforded to birds is provided in **Section 7**.

Loss of Nesting and Foraging Habitat

- 4.34 The scheme will result in a loss of lower value farmland habitat for the local assemblage of bird species. Given that the wider local area contains farmland habitat of higher value, this loss is not considered significant, and there is not considered to be a significant reduction in the resource in the zone of influence. There is a substantial area of open space within the scheme and habitat creation and management prescriptions should be designed to provide bird habitats as part of this resource. This can include a diversity of grassland, scrub, tree and hedgerow habitats. This will provide benefit to woodland and suburban edge birds that are a substantial feature of the site at present. Overall, with mitigation to provide enhanced bird habitats in the open space on site there should not be a significant adverse residual impact on local bird populations from the scheme proposals.

- 4.35 As part of the mitigation, 1 swift bricks or other bird box will be installed in all dwellings on site.

Operation Phase Impacts

Increased Pet Predation

- 4.36 There is the potential for increased predation on birds, namely from domestic cats which may negatively impact bird assemblages utilising nesting and foraging features within the ZoI. This effect will be offset by the improvements to bird habitat provision that will boost the species of conservation importance identified during the bird survey work, to offset any losses to domestic cats resulting in **no significant impacts**.
- 4.37 To further mitigate the potential negative impact of increased predation, when adding habitat enhancements such as integrated bird boxes, the positioning is to be out of reach of cats. The retainment of habitats away from development will also provide some shelter for birds.

Reptile Assemblage

Site Clearance and Construction Impacts

Injury and Death to Reptiles

- 4.38 Should reptiles be present within areas where habitat clearance takes place there is a risk of harming animals. Although the injuring of individual reptiles is unlikely to represent a **significant negative impact** on the conservation status of the reptile assemblage above Zone of Influence level, this would result in an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 4.39 Some areas of reptile habitat will need to be cleared and therefore during these works animals may be harmed in the process. A reptile mitigation strategy will be produced and integrated into the CEMP, Biodiversity Enhancements Strategy and LEMP, which will ensure that any loss of habitat is compensated and that works are carried out in a precautionary manner to ensure no reptiles are harmed in compliance with the relevant legislation.

- 4.40 An outline Reptile Mitigation Strategy is detailed below:
- Any clearance works to take place during the active reptile season (April-September).
 - Retained areas of suitable reptile habitat to be included within fenced buffers.
 - Phased reduction of habitat proposed for clearance using hand tools.
 - Removal of features such as log piles, brash, rocks or piles of debris to be carried out by hand.
 - Supervised destructive search of remaining vegetation.
 - Animals to be relocated to retained areas of suitable habitat within the Site boundary.
- 4.41 The above strategy takes into account the need to remove small areas of reptile habitat. In the event that the proposals change and larger areas of habitat needs to be removed it may be necessary to undertake a relocation activity prior to the careful removal of habitats. This would require the placing of artificial refuges in areas proposed for removal, undertaking a capture programme and relocating animals to retained areas of habitat within the Site boundary. The successful implementation of the reptile mitigation strategy will result in **no residual significant impacts** on the reptile assemblage.
- 4.42 The harming of reptiles and the reduction of available habitat and connectivity would likely have a **permanent negative effect** at a **Local-District** level.
- Loss of Habitat*
- 4.43 Many of the boundary habitats that are currently used by reptiles will be retained, however where habitat clearance is required this will reduce the amount of available habitats for reptile species and potentially impact on the connectivity of habitats within the Site and to the wider landscape.
- 4.44 To ensure impacts on reptiles are mitigated a Reptile Mitigation Strategy will be in place to ensure that retained habitats are protected from development activities and any required habitat clearance is carried out following the relocation of animals to retained habitats within the Site boundary. The Biodiversity Enhancements Plan will include measures for the creation of habitats that are suitable for reptiles along boundaries and in areas of open greenspace. Not only compensating for the small loss of habitats but increasing the amount of available habitat and connectivity around the Site for reptiles.
- 4.45 Successful implementation of a suitable Reptile Mitigation Strategy and Biodiversity Enhancements Plan should ensure there are **no residual impacts** to the reptile assemblage. Positive habitat management and increased connectivity for reptiles has the potential to provide a **positive impact**, significant at the **Local** level.

Bat Assemblage

Site Clearance and Construction Impacts and Mitigation

Disturbance of Potential Bat Roosts

- 4.46 No bat roosts have been identified within the Site boundary, however a number of trees which are due for retention do have potential to support roosting bats, both small and larger roosts. Should bats be present within roosts during the construction stage of the development there is a risk of disturbing roosting bats. Although the disturbance of individual bats is unlikely to represent a significant impact on the conservation status of the bat assemblage above Zone of Influence level, this would result in an offence under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 4.47 Increased lighting on the Site during the construction phase may negatively impact on potential roost sites. Illumination of roosts would result in a **temporary negative impact** significant at the **local level**.
- 4.48 All potential roost features will be retained as part of the proposals. Within the CEMP protections for retained mature and veteran trees will be put in place and these protections will in turn protect potential roost features from direct accidental damage. The CEMP will include details on the positioning of nighttime security lighting to ensure none shines onto potential roost features, and also include details on the working hours which will avoid nighttime construction activities so that flood lighting is not required.
- 4.49 The successful implementation of the above measures should ensure that there are **no residual impacts** on potential bat roosts. Measures to ensure compliance with the law relating to bats is included within **Section 7**.

Loss of Foraging and Commuting Habitat

- 4.50 The majority of the bat activity on the Site was recorded along hedgerows and treelines at the boundaries and hedgerow running up the centre of the Site. These habitats will largely be retained within the proposals. None of the surveys found bats to be utilising the cattle grazed areas of the Site, however given the presence of Greater Horseshoe bats it is possible that the cattle grazed habitats form part of a complex of habitats utilised by this species in the wider landscape. Whilst some grassland habitats will be retained the land use will be changed and unlikely to support grazing animals. Other impacts on flight lines and foraging areas may also arise from lighting.
- 4.51 In the absence of mitigation the loss of foraging areas and flight lines will result in a **permanent negative impact** significant at the **Local level**.
- 4.52 To compensate for the small loss of hedgerow the proposals include the planting of native hedgerows. The landscaping plans will include the planting of native fruiting and night flowering species to provide an additional foraging resource for bats. Retained Site boundaries will be enhanced, and habitat creation works will include the creation of grasslands and ponds. These measures will benefit the invertebrate assemblage on Site and in turn provide benefits to bats by increasing prey abundance and diversity on Site.
- 4.53 With the implementation of mitigation to enhance and create additional foraging and commuting habitats there should be **no significant residual impacts**.

Operational Phase Impacts and Mitigation

Disturbance to Bats

- 4.54 In the absence of mitigation there is the potential for increased light levels during the operational phase of the development to have a negative impact on bat assemblages utilising habitats within the Zone of Influence for roosting, foraging and commuting purposes.
- 4.55 The level of impact depends greatly on the assemblage of bats and given the high diversity of bat species recorded using the Site for foraging and commuting purposes and the presence of more light adverse species, the increase of artificial lighting could lead to a **permanent negative effect** significant at a **District Level** in the absence of mitigation.
- 4.56 To mitigate the impacts of external lighting and to ensure that any habitat creation and management benefits are able to meet their full potential, a Lighting Strategy will be developed and implemented to ensure nocturnal wildlife is protected.
- 4.57 The lighting strategy for the Proposed Development will be developed in accordance with the principles outlined in *Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night* produced by the Bat Conservation Trust and the Institute of Lighting Professionals, and will include the following design principles:
- External lighting has been designed using louvres, cowls and full cut-off luminaires to prevent light spill onto the boundary habitats. In practice, this means targeting maximum levels of 0.2 lux in the horizontal plane and 0.4 lux in the vertical plane at these features, unless baseline light levels on site already exceed this.
 - Created habitats such as species-rich grasslands and native scrub, as well as SUDs basin, should similarly have light levels minimised through design.
 - Specification of 'warm white' LED luminaires with a maximum correlated colour temperature of 3000K (ideally 2700K), no ultraviolet and infrared content, and reduced short wavelength light content.
 - Specification of zero-degree tilt to ensure the downward distribution of light.
 - Specification of shields and integral louvres where required to prevent light spill onto sensitive areas.
 - Consideration will be given to the provision of dark periods through the night where elements of street lighting are turned off or turned down.
- 4.58 The effective implementation of the above measures should ensure that impacts on the bat assemblage in the operational phase of the development are mitigated and therefore there would be **no residual impact** as a result of the scheme.

Summary of Residual Effects and Compensation

- 4.59 After mitigation no residual impacts are anticipated and therefore no compensation is prescribed.

Summary of Impact Assessment

- 4.60 **Table 4.1** below provides a summary of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on IEFs, opportunities for impact avoidance and mitigation, or compensation where significant residual effects have the potential to remain.

Table 4.1: Summary of Impact Assessment.

Feature	Importance	Unmitigated Impacts	Mitigation	Significance of Residual Effects	Compensation
<i>Site Clearance and Construction Phase</i>					
Native Hedgerow	Local	Loss of Hedgerow Damage and degradation	Retention and protection of hedgerows through appropriate buffer zones and implementation of CEMP	Not significant	N/A
Individual Native & Veteran Trees	Local-District	Damage to roots Dust and spillages during construction	Appropriate Buffer Zones Implementation of CEMP	Not significant	N/A
Breeding Bird Assemblage	Local-District	Disturbance of nesting birds and damage/destruction of nest sites Loss of nesting and foraging habitat	Implementation of CEMP Implementation of Biodiversity Enhancements Plan to include planting of native species and habitat creation	Not significant	N/A
Bat Assemblage	Regional	Disturbance by additional lighting Loss of foraging and commuting habitat	Implementation of CEMP Implementation of Lighting Plan Implementation of Biodiversity Enhancements Plan to include planting of native species and habitat creation	Not significant	N/A
Reptile Assemblage	Local-District	Injury or death through Site clearance Loss of habitat	Implementation of CEMP Implementation of Biodiversity Enhancements Plan to include planting of native species and habitat creation	Not significant	N/A
<i>Operational Phase</i>					
Rive Avon SAC	International	Increase in Phosphate Levels	Purchase of off-site nutrient credits	Not significant	N/A
Salisbury Plain SAC SPA	International	Increased recreation	Contribution to Wiltshire Council's Mitigation Strategy.	Not significant	N?A

Feature	Importance	Unmitigated Impacts	Mitigation	Significance of Residual Effects	Compensation
Breeding Bird Assemblage	Local-District	Loss of farmland habitats	Implementation of Biodiversity Enhancements Plan to include planting of native species and habitat creation	Not significant	N/A
Bat Assemblage	Regional	Disturbance Loss of foraging habitats	Implementation of Biodiversity Enhancements Plan to include planting of native species and habitat creation	Not significant	N/A

5. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Introduction

- 5.1 This section describes the way in which the Proposals can achieve biodiversity net gain alongside development, in accordance with the relevant National and Local biodiversity policies and strategies summarised at **Appendix 2**.
- 5.2 In line with the Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations an assessment has been made of the potential for the Proposed Development to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This has been measured using the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric published on July 2025 and related Defra Condition Assessment Guidance.
- 5.3 Full details of the methodology applied and results, including the minimum information required for the purposes of a planning application, baseline survey and assessment information, a description of the parameters used and assumptions made, and the Metric inputs/outputs are provided in a separate BNG report (EPR 2026) and are summarised below.

Summary of Results of Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

Description of the Baseline

- 5.4 The total number of on-site baseline biodiversity units is calculated as follows:
- 25.91 Area Habitat units
 - 9.47 Hedgerow units
- 5.5 The main baseline habitats are grass and herbal leys and permanent pasture. Field boundaries include a mix of native hedgerows and are either species-rich native hedgerow or Other native hedgerow or non-native and ornamental hedgerow. Four veteran Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* trees are present on the Site, which are defined as irreplaceable habitat.

Post Development Biodiversity Outcomes/Results

- 5.6 As set out in the Metric Calculation Tool submitted with the Application, the Proposals are predicted to deliver the following net gains, with all Trading Rules met:
- 35.86 area habitat units, or 38.37%
 - 15.41 hedgerow units, or 62.79%
- 5.7 A large proportion of the BNG is being delivered through the creation of approximately 4 ha of species rich grassland primarily within the public open space. This includes areas described on the Landscape Masterplan as, Flowering lawn (Emersgate mix EL1 or similar), Species rich long grassland (Emersgate mix EM10 or similar), Wildflower meadow (Emersgate mix EM2 or similar) or Hedgerow mixture (Emersgate EH1 mix or similar). These have all been classified as Other neutral grassland within the calculator and will be a mix of wildflower and non-

agricultural grasses suitable for specific locations such as shade tolerant mix to be sown around scrub and hedgerows. All areas with the exception of the area of Flowering lawn have been assigned a precautionary condition of 'Moderate' within the calculator. The areas of Flowering lawn have been assigned a condition of 'Poor' to reflect the need to keep the grass short in these areas.

- 5.8 A significant number of trees are being planted across the development, which will be native species within the open space and predominantly native species across the developed area.
- 5.9 A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be required to set out the proposed details of how the target habitat types and conditions required to achieve the BNG results will be achieved. This will be through a combination of habitat retention, creation and enhancement measures, followed by ongoing management for a minimum period of 30 years.
- 5.10 Should planning consent be granted, the HMMP will be submitted to Wiltshire Council alongside a Biodiversity Gain Plan to discharge the biodiversity gain planning condition. The mechanism for securing the delivery of significant on-site enhancements is to be agreed with Wiltshire Council but could take the form of a planning condition, planning obligation or conservation covenant.
- 5.11 The successful establishment of newly created habitats, and progress of all habitats towards their post-development Target Conditions, will need to be regularly monitored to ensure that the predicted BNG will be realised on the ground. The HMMP will set out details of the proposed monitoring actions and frequency.

Other Biodiversity Gain Measures

Integrated Wildlife Habitats

- 5.12 No bat roosts have been found to be present on Site from the bat surveys, however the inclusion of integrated bat roost features within the buildings alongside the enhancements of retained habitats and creation of new habitats within the natural greenspace areas, will provide increased opportunities for crevice dwelling bat species on the Site. Bat boxes will be integrated into residential dwellings on a range of aspects and mostly on buildings located close to the boundaries of the Site. A total of 30 boxes will be installed in pairs.
- 5.13 Integrated bee and bug boxes/bricks will be installed into the south facing walls of 10 of the houses.
- 5.14 Hedgehog highways will be created within the fence line of all suitable properties, this will allow the free movement of hedgehogs, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Swift bricks or other bird box will be installed on every home. Both of these measures are in line with the 'Homes for Nature' standards Bellway have committed to delivering.
- 5.15 No artificial lighting will be positioned to directly shine on to any of the integrated wildlife habitats.

6. CONSEQUENCES FOR DECISION MAKING

Summary of Mechanisms to Secure Impact Avoidance, Mitigation and Compensation Measures

6.1 The following strategies, which will be secured by planning conditions and/or obligations, will be required to ensure the successful implementation of the impact avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures set out in **Section 4**:

- Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP);
- Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancements Plan;
- Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP).
- Lighting Strategy.

Biodiversity Net Gain

6.2 In accordance with national and local policy, the Proposed Development will deliver biodiversity enhancements. The enhancement measures are intended to benefit known features of ecological importance present within the Zol, as well as biodiversity in general, and to contribute towards targets set out within the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

6.3 It is recommended that a BNG Assessment is carried out in accordance with The Environment Act 2021 which requires all planning developments to increase biodiversity by 10% through onsite enhancements or offsite contributions.

6.4 Key deliverables include:

- Integrated bird boxes installed at a 1:1 ratio;
- 30 integrated bat boxes installed in pairs on various aspects of residential properties;
- Integrated bee bricks and bug boxes on southern aspects of the residential properties;
- Hedgehog Highway;
- Native tree and scrub planting;
- Creation of species rich long grassland, wildflower meadow and flowering lawn; and
- Creation of species rich hedgerows.

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Should planning permission be granted for the Proposed Development, the following legal considerations will apply, in accordance with the following items of legislation:

- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Badgers

7.2 The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) protect Badgers from killing and injury and their setts from removal, damage, obstruction and disturbance.

7.3 Prior to the start of construction on Site, an update Badger survey will be carried out to ensure no setts have been created within the Proposed Development area. This should be carried out approximately 2-6 months prior to the start of any development so that there is sufficient time to obtain a development licence if necessary.

7.4 During the construction phase, open trenches must either be covered overnight or include mammal ladders to prevent accidental entrapment. Such measures should be detailed within the CEMP.

7.5 With the implementation of the above mitigation measures will ensure legal compliance with regards to Badgers.

Conclusion

7.6 This EclA has predicted that the Proposed Development will not have any significant negative residual effects on IEFs, and subject to the above, will conform to all applicable nature conservation related legislation and policy, as set out at **Appendix 2**.

7.7 The BNG Assessment has demonstrated that a 10% uplift in biodiversity can be achieved on Site. Proposed enhancement measures will ensure that the proposals are in accordance with relevant planning and biodiversity policy.

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Figures

Figure 1a	Site Location and Statutory Designated Sites
Figure 1b	Site Location and Site Relevant to Local Planning Policy
Figure 2	Habitats and Features
Figure 3	Breeding Bird Survey Results: Confirmed and Probable Breeding Locations for Notable Species
Figure 4	Ground Level Tree Assessment for Bats
Figure 5	Nighttime Bat Walkover Results – April
Figure 6	Nighttime Bat Walkover Results – July
Figure 7	Nighttime Bat Walkover Results – September
Figure 8	Reptile Survey Summary

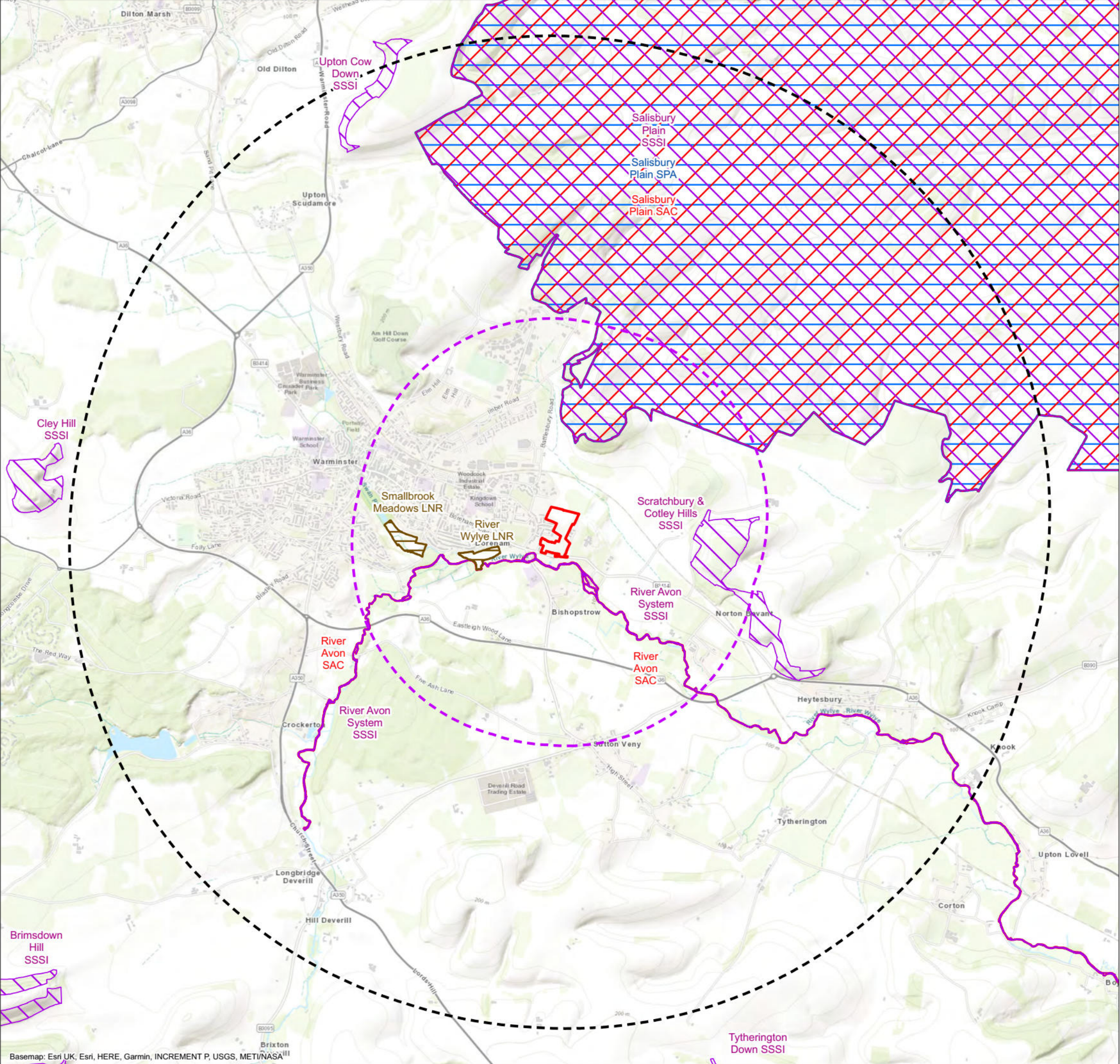


Figure 1a Site Location & Statutory Designated Sites

KEY

- Site boundary
- 2km linear distance from site boundary
- 5km linear distance from site boundary
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

SCALE: 1:40,000 at A3

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Metres

N



CLIENT: Bellway Homes

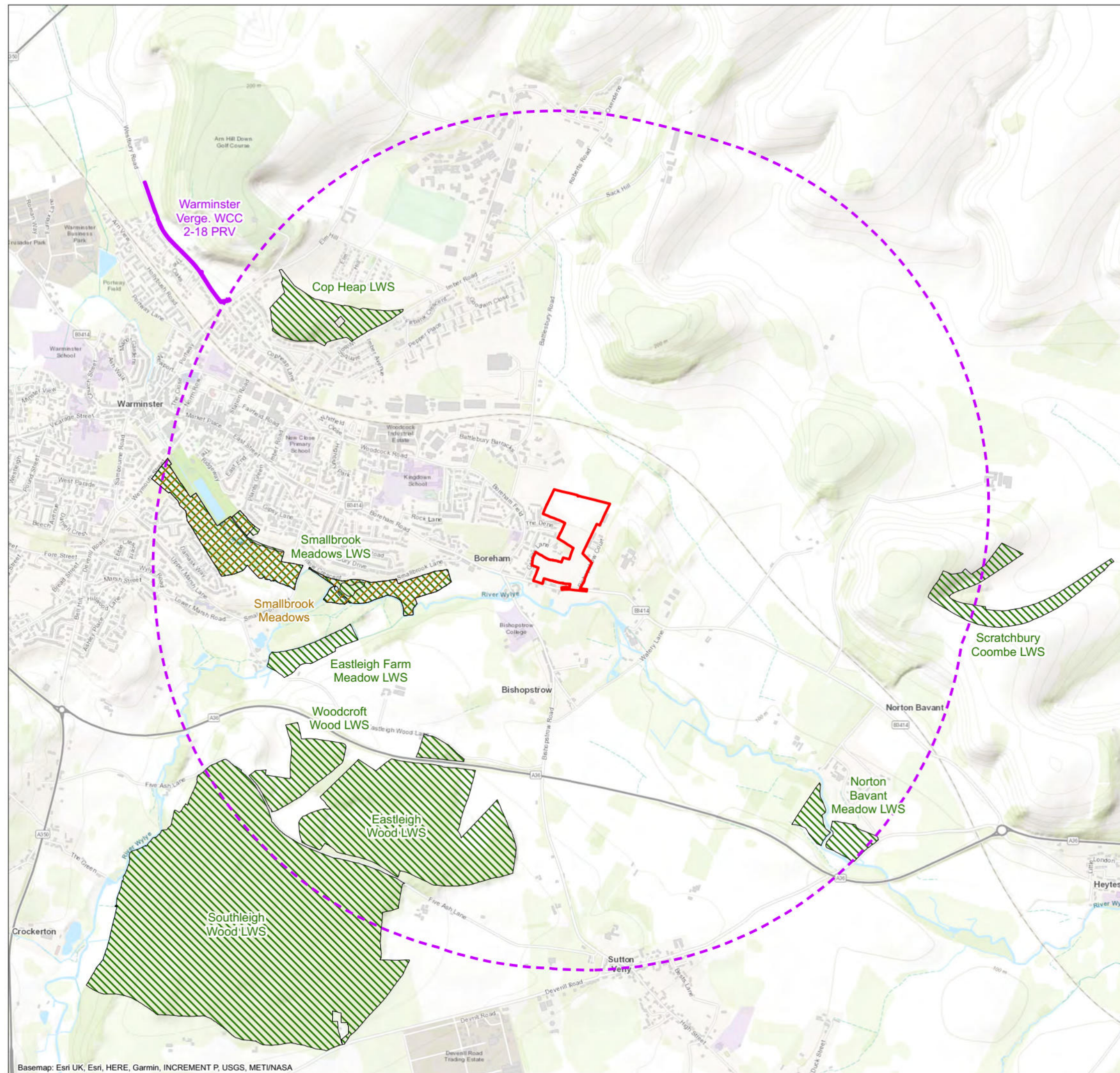
PROJECT: Warminster, Wiltshire

DATE: 04 February 2026

Figure 1b Site Location and Sites Relevant to Planning Policy

KEY

-  Site boundary
-  2km linear distance from site boundary
-  Protected Road Verge (PRV)
-  Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
-  Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) Reserves



SCALE: 1:20,000 at A3

0 200 400 600 800 1,000 Metres



CLIENT: Bellway Homes

PROJECT: Warminster, Wiltshire

DATE: 04 February 2026

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P32/75

LWS, WWT Reserves, and PRV: © Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre

Basemap: Esri UK, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, METI/NASA

Figure 2 Habitats & Features



KEY

- Site boundary
- Individual trees
- Veteran trees
- h2 - Hedgerows
- c1 - arable and horticulture
- g3 - neutral grassland
- g4 - modified grassland
- h3 - dense scrub
- u1 - built-up areas and gardens

SCALE: 1:2,000 at A3

0 20 40 60 80 100 Metres



CLIENT: Bellway Homes

PROJECT: Warminster, Wiltshire

DATE: 04 February 2026

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Aerial Image: Microsoft, Vantor

P32/75



Figure 3 Breeding Bird Survey Results

KEY

 Site boundary

Confirmed and Probable Breeding Locations for Notable Species

 Red Listed species

 Amber Listed species

Red listed species

GR Greenfinch

HS House Sparrow

LI Linnet

M. Mistle Thrush

SG Starling

Y. Yellowhammer

Amber listed species

D. Dunnock

SD Stock Dove

ST Song Thrush

WH Common Whitethroat

SCALE: 1:2,250 at A3

0 20 40 60 80 100 Metres



CLIENT: Bellway Homes

PROJECT: Warminster, Wiltshire

DATE: 04 February 2026



Figure 4 Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) for Roosting Bats

- KEY
- Site boundary
 - Individual tree suitability:
 - PRF-M
 - PRF-I
 - Line of trees suitability:
 - PRF-M

SCALE: 1:2,000 at A3

0 20 40 60 80 100 Metres



CLIENT: Bellway Homes

PROJECT: Warminster, Wiltshire

DATE: 04 February 2026



Figure 5 Night-time Bat Walkover Survey Results – April

KEY

- Site boundary
- Automated detector location
- Fixed point survey location
- Transect start and finish point
- Bat transect route
- Common Pipistrelle (heard not seen)
- Soprano Pipistrelle (heard not seen)
- Noctule (heard not seen)
- Serotine (heard not seen)

SCALE: 1:2,000 at A3

0 20 40 60 80 100 Metres

N



CLIENT: Bellway Homes

PROJECT: Warminster, Wiltshire

DATE: 04 February 2026



Figure 7 Night-time Bat Walkover Survey Results – September

- KEY
- Site boundary
 - Automated detector location
 - Fixed point survey location
 - Transect start and finish point
 - Bat transect route
 - Common Pipistrelle (heard not seen)
 - Soprano Pipistrelle (heard not seen)
 - Pipistrelle species (heard not seen)
 - Myotis species (heard not seen)
 - Noctule (heard not seen)
 - Nyctalus sp. (heard not seen)
 - Serotine (heard not seen)

SCALE: 1:2,000 at A3

0 20 40 60 80 100 Metres



CLIENT: Bellway Homes

PROJECT: Warminster, Wiltshire

DATE: 04 February 2026



Figure 8 Reptile Survey Summary

- KEY
- Site boundary
 - Slow-worm
 - Common lizard
 - Grass snake
 - Refugia

SCALE: 1:2,000 at A3

0 20 40 60 80 100 Metres



CLIENT: Bellway Homes

PROJECT: Warminster, Wiltshire

DATE: 04 February 2026

Appendix 1

Site Layout

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KEY: SITE LAYOUT

- APPLICATION BOUNDARY
- PROPOSED SITE ACCESS

SURFACE MATERIALS:

- GARDEN/POS/HIGHWAY VERGE (SEE DETAILED LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS)
- TARMACADUM
- BLOCK PAVING

ENCLOSURE DETAILS:

- 1.8M HIGH BRICK WALL
- 1.8M HIGH TIMBER PANEL FENCING
- 1.2M ESTATE RAILING
- 0.45M ESTATE RAILING
- LOW LEVEL HEDGEROW (SEE DETAILED LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS)

LANDSCAPING:

- INDICATIVE TREE PLANTING (SEE DETAILED LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS)
- RETAINED VEGETATION (SEE TREE RETENTION PLAN)
- RETAINED TREE (CATEGORY A)
- ROOT PROTECTION ZONE
- ROOT PROTECTION ZONE - VETERAN

- TREE / VEGETATION REMOVED

OTHER:

- BIN COLLECTION POINT
- GATE/PERSONNEL DOOR
- STREET LIGHTING - COLUMN
- STREET LIGHTING - BOLLARD
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING (SEE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN)
- PEDESTRIAN LINKS
- KEY IDENTIFIED VIEWS TO EXISTING MONUMENT FROM THE SITE
- EXISTING PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY
- LAP
- LEAP
- SUB STATION LOCATION
- PROPOSED DRAINAGE (SEE DETAILED DRAINAGE PLAN)

SHOW HOMES:

- SHOW HOME
- SALES OFFICE

LAND NORTH OF BOREHAM ROAD, WARMINSTER

Accommodation Schedule							
Housetype	Sq.ft	Sq.m	St.	Beds	No's	Total Sqft	Total Sqm
OPEN MARKET HOUSING							
2B HOOPER	790	73.4	2	2	4	3,160	294
COINER	876	81.4	2	2	4	3,504	326
BLEMMERE	1,026	95.3	2	3	12	12,312	1,144
3B COPPER SMITH	1,026	95.3	2	3	12	12,312	1,144
HILLARD	1,052	97.7	2	3	6	6,312	586
REEDMAKER	1,309	121.6	2	4	10	13,090	1,216
4B BOWYER	1,356	126.0	2	4	11	14,916	1,386
LUTHIER	1,392	129.3	2	4	9	12,528	1,164
PHILOSOPHER	1,507	140.0	2	4	9	13,563	1,260
5B WATCHMAKER	1,901	176.6	2	5	4	7,604	706
Sub Total (Open Market)					81	99,301	9,225
AFFORDABLE							
1B STATIONER	496	46.1	2	1	3	1,488	138
BOOKBINDER	646	60.0	2	1	3	1,938	180
2B BAKER	876	81.4	2	2	16	14,016	1,302
3B DRAFTSMAN	935	86.9	2	3	10	9,350	869
TILLMAN	1,026	95.3	2	3	20	20,520	1,906
4B CARTOGRAPHER	1,109	103.0	2	4	2	2,218	206
Sub Total (Affordable)					54	49,530	4,601
TOTAL					135	148,831	13,827
DENSITY dwelling/acre					15	no./ac	
DENSITY dwelling/hectare					36	no./ac	

LAND AT HOME FARM, WARMINSTER – SITE LAYOUT



Appendix 2

Legislation and Planning Policy Relating to Wildlife and Development in England

This document is intended to provide summary information on legislation and planning policy relevant to biodiversity in England and is believed to be correct at the date of publication, but should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional legal advice.

LEGISLATION

The Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 placed a requirement on the Secretary of State to make regulations setting out long-term targets for air quality, water, biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste reduction. It also required the Government to produce an Environmental Improvement Plan, to report on progress towards its goals annually, to meet the targets that are set in relation to the improvement of the natural environment and to produce remedial plans should this not be achieved.

In relation to water quality, the Act placed new duties on the Government, Environment Agency and sewerage undertakers to reduce the frequency and harm of discharges from storm overflows on the environment, and for monitoring the quality of watercourses affected by those overflows.

It also included a requirement for an independent Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) to be established, with responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on progress against environmental improvement plans and targets. The OEP also has investigation and enforcement powers against public authorities failing to comply with environmental law when exercising their functions.

The Act made provision for 10% biodiversity gain to become a condition of planning permission in England, through amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These amendments came into force on the 12th February 2024 (delayed to 2nd April 2024 for 'small sites') and are implemented through a series of new statutory instruments collectively referred to in this document as the 'Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations' (detailed further below). The 10% biodiversity gain is measured through a biodiversity metric published by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Act also establishes Biodiversity Net Gain as a requirement for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

The Act also strengthens the biodiversity duty placed on public authorities through amendments to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Section 40, requiring such authorities to not only conserve but also enhance biodiversity when exercising their functions. Public authorities will also be required to publish summary reports of actions taken under Section 40 at least every five years.

The Act provides the legal basis for the creation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSSs) for England (including specifying their content), and the preparation and publication of species conservation strategies and protected sites strategies.

The Act also created a new legal vehicle known as a 'Conservation Covenant' which is a voluntary, legally binding private agreement between landowners and responsible bodies (the latter designated by the Secretary of State) which conserve the natural or heritage features of the land, enabling long-term

conservation. Conservation Covenants are designed to ‘run with the land’ when it is sold or passed on and are intended to become a primary mechanism for the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The Act provides new powers for the Government to amend in future Regulation 9 and Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the ‘Habitats Regulations’) – but “only if satisfied that the regulations do not reduce the level of environmental protection provided by the Habitats Regulations”.

Several aspects of protected species licencing have also been adjusted by the Act. These include the removal of several inconsistencies between the Habitats Regulations and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), ensuring that licences issued under the former piece of legislation also apply under the latter, and making it now possible for licences to be issued under Section 16(3) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) for purposes of overriding public interest. The maximum term of a licence that can be issued by Natural England has also been extended from 2 to 5 years.

The Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations

The Biodiversity Net Gain provisions of the Environment Act 2021 referred to above were implemented through several pieces of secondary legislation, collectively referred to in this document as the ‘Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations’, that came into force on 12 February 2024 (delayed to 2 April 2024 for sites meeting the published definition of a ‘small site’). The Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations are as follows:

- The Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning)(Modifications and Amendments)(England) Regulations 2024
- The Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning)(Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2024
- The Biodiversity Gain Site Register Regulations 2024
- The Biodiversity Gain Site Register (Financial Penalties and Fees) Regulations 2024
- The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024
- The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024
- The Environment Act 2021 (Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024

Collectively, these Regulations implement the requirement under the Environment Act 2021 for a 10% biodiversity gain, as measured by a metric, to become a condition of planning permission in England.

A publicly accessible register of Biodiversity Gain Sites was published on the date that these Regulations came into force, along with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (produced by Defra on behalf of the Secretary of State) and associated guidance (see below).

The required biodiversity gain can be delivered on and/or offsite (subject to adherence to a biodiversity net gain hierarchy detailed in guidance – see below) and establishes the basis for purchasing off-site credits to meet the 10% obligation if required. In most cases the land used to deliver biodiversity gain must be maintained for at least 30 years, and the biodiversity gain planning condition requires a

Biodiversity Gain Plan to be submitted to and approved by the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

Off-site biodiversity gains must be secured either through a Section 106 Agreement or Conservation Covenant, and 'significant' on-site biodiversity gains must be secured either through a Section 106 Agreement or a planning condition.

The legislation also clarifies that the baseline biodiversity value of a site should be taken from the date on which planning consent is granted, unless otherwise agreed with the LPA. This excludes any activities undertaken without planning permission (or other relevant permissions) after 30 January 2020 which have had the effect of reducing the biodiversity value of the land. In such cases, "the pre-development biodiversity value is to be taken to be its biodiversity value immediately before the carrying on of the activities."

Through the above Regulations, the Government has established an initial list of 'irreplaceable habitats' that must be recorded in the metric if present on site but which cannot be 'traded' through the biodiversity net gain process. Defra has confirmed the intention to consult on this initial list of habitats during 2024 and adjust it if necessary.

Guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain

To help those involved in the planning process, the Defra and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have published guidance on the technical aspects of biodiversity net gain and planning practice guidance respectively, available at the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-biodiversity-net-gain>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is already enshrined in the key principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and some local planning policies include a requirement to deliver net gain above the minimum statutory 10% figure.

In addition to the above, British Standard BS: 8683:2021 *Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain – Specification* builds on and adds to previous UK Good Practice Guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain produced by CIEEM, CIRIA and IEMA.

In addition to habitat creation or enhancement undertaken to achieve biodiversity net gains, the NPPF (and often local policy) also seeks general biodiversity enhancement measures, which often include measures not directly accounted for in the Defra Metric, such as the provision of nest boxes.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (known as the "Habitats Regulations") were originally drawn up to transpose the European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the "Habitats Directive") into UK legislation. Following the UK's exit from the European Union, the Habitats Regulations – as amended by

Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 – remain in force until such a time as they are superseded by new or updated domestic legislation.

The Habitats Regulations provide for the designation of both Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in the UK, which previously formed part of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas across Europe and are now part of the UK's "National Sites Network". New National Sites may be designated under the Regulations.

The Regulations also prohibit certain actions relating to European Protected Species (EPS), which include *inter alia* Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*, European Otter *Lutra lutra*, Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis*, Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* and all native species of bat.

Further information on SPAs, SACs and European Protected Species is provided in the relevant sub-sections of this Appendix.

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is a key mechanism for the legislative protection of wildlife in Great Britain. Various amendments have occurred since the original enactment. Certain species of bird, animal and plant (including all of the European Protected Species listed above) are afforded protection under Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Act. Reference is made to the various Schedules and Parts of this Act (**Table A1.1**) in the section of this Appendix dealing with Legally Protected Species. The Act also contains measures for the protection of the countryside, National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and public rights of way as well as preventing the establishment of invasive non-native species that may be detrimental to native wildlife.

Table A1.1: Relevant Schedules of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Schedule	Protected Species
Schedule 1 Part 1	Protects listed birds through special penalties at all times
Schedule 1 Part 2	Protects listed birds through special penalties during the close season
Schedule 5 Section 9.1 (killing/injuring)	Protects listed animals from intentional killing or injuring
Schedule 5 Section 9.1 (taking)	Protects listed animals from taking
Schedule 5 Section 9.2	Protects listed animals from being possessed or controlled (live or dead)
Schedule 5 Section 9.4a	Protects listed animals from intentional damage or destruction to any structure or place used for shelter or protection
Schedule 5 Section 9.4b	Protects listed animals from intentional disturbance while occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection
Schedule 5 Section 9.5a	Protects listed animals from being sold, offered for sale or being held or transported for sale either live or dead, whole or part
Schedule 5 Section 9.5b	Protects listed animals from being published or advertised as being for sale
Schedule 8	Protects listed plants from: intentional picking, uprooting or destruction (Section 13 1a); selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale (live or dead, part or derivative) (Section 13 2a); advertising (any of these) for buying or selling (Section 13 2b).
Schedule 9	Prohibits the release of species listed in the Schedule into the wild.
Schedule 9a	Allows environmental authorities to issue species control orders to landowners, obliging them to control/eradicate invasive and/or non-native species.

Further information on legally protected species, designated wildlife sites and invasive non-native species is provided in the relevant sub-sections of this Appendix.

Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000

Many of the provisions of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000 have been incorporated as amendments into the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and some provisions have now been superseded by later legislation such as The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).

The most relevant changes provided by the CRoW Act include the added protection given to SSSIs and other important sites for nature conservation. Importantly, under the Act it became a criminal offence to "recklessly disturb" Schedule 1 nesting birds and species protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. It also enabled heavier penalties on conviction of wildlife offences.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 was intended to raise the profile of biodiversity amongst all public authorities (including local authorities, and statutory undertakers) and to make biodiversity an integral part of policy and decision-making processes. The NERC Act also improved wildlife protection by amending the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Section 40 (S40) of the Act places a 'Biodiversity Duty' on all public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their normal functions. This includes giving consideration to the restoration and enhancement of species and habitats.

Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. This was published in 2007 and is commonly referred to as the "S41 list". Public authorities have a responsibility to give specific consideration to the S41 list when exercising their normal functions. For planning authorities, consideration for Species and Habitats of Principal Importance will be exercised through the planning and development control processes. Further information on Species and Habitats of Principal Importance is provided in the relevant sub-sections of this Appendix.

The Water Environment Regulations 2017

Currently, the overriding legislation relating to freshwater is the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017. The Regulations set out objectives to deliver a better water environment based upon achieving a 'good status' for freshwater bodies. The concept of 'good status' is a more rigorous measure of environmental quality than previous measures, which now takes into account not just the chemical status but also the ecological health and the extent of artificial physical modification to rivers.

The Regulations are based upon the concept of protecting water through the management of river basin districts (RBDs) and require the implementation of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs). Regulation 33 requires public bodies to 'have regard' to the RBMP when making planning decisions, for example through the granting of planning permission with appropriate planning conditions and/or obligations. These could require measures to be implemented (e.g. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), grey water recycling etc.) or funds to be provided for habitat enhancement schemes.

The Regulations also affect planning policy through the implementation of Programmes of Measures for each river basin district. This involves bringing together funding from various sources and co-ordination of the activities of organisations with an interest in the use of land and water, including developers.

SITES DESIGNATED FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE

There is a hierarchy of nature conservation sites which is based on the level of statutory (legal) protection and the administrative level of importance. Other features of nature conservation interest outside designated sites may also be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Statutory Sites: International

Ramsar Sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) provide the primary legal basis for the protection of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in the UK.

SACs are sites which support internationally important habitats and/or species listed as being of Community Importance in the Annexes of the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. SPAs are sites which support internationally important numbers of bird species listed as being of Community Importance in the Annexes of the European Birds Directive 2009/147/EC. Following the UK's exit from the EU, these now form part of the "National Sites" network rather than the EU Natura 2000 network.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention held in Iran in 1971 and although not covered under the Habitats Regulations they are, as a matter of national planning policy, subject to the same strict protection as SACs and SPAs. The majority of terrestrial Ramsar sites in England are also notified as SPAs, SACs and/or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

To avoid confusion with the nationally designated sites described below, EPR refers to SACs and SPAs as 'International sites', given the reasons for their designation.

Any plan or project considered likely to affect an International site (SAC, SPA or Ramsar) must be subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), as set out under Regulation 63 (and Regulation 105 in respect of Land Use Plans) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024.

The 'competent authority' determining whether a plan or project should proceed carries out the HRA, but the onus is on the developer to provide the necessary information to inform this process, usually in the form of a report.

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), the competent authority must determine in the first instance whether a proposed development is 'likely to have a significant effect on the International Site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects'. This stage of the HRA process is known as 'screening', and 'measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects' of the subject plan or project cannot be taken into account at this stage.

If a likely significant effect cannot be precluded (screened out) on the basis of objective information, the competent authority must undertake an 'Appropriate Assessment' to fully assess these implications against the site's conservation objectives, to determine if there would be an adverse effect on the integrity of the affected International Site(s). A precautionary approach must be taken with respect to determining whether or not there would be an adverse effect, and the appropriate nature conservation body (in most cases Natural England) should be consulted. Except in certain exceptional circumstances prescribed by the Regulations where there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for allowing a development to proceed and no alternative to achieving the objectives of these reasons that are less harmful to the International Site(s), the competent authority may not undertake or authorise the plan or project until they have established (based on the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment) that the activity will not adversely affect the integrity of the International Site. This should be the case where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

Regulation 16A of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 sets out the management objectives of the National Site Network, which can be summarised as follows:

- to maintain or, where appropriate, restore habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive within the UK's territory to a favourable conservation status (FCS); and
- contribute to ensuring, in their area of distribution, the survival and reproduction of wild birds and securing compliance with the overarching aims of the Wild Birds Directive.

The appropriate authorities must also have regard to:

- the importance of protected sites in meeting the above objectives, including breeding, moulting, staging and wintering areas for in the case of migratory bird species;
- their importance for the coherence of the national sites network; and
- the threats of degradation or destruction (including deterioration and disturbance of protected features) on SPAs and SACs.

Government guidance¹ also states that competent authorities have a duty to help protect, conserve and restore the designated features of SACs and SPAs when carrying out their statutory work, including taking decisions that might affect a site. They also have a duty to consider how they can help to prevent the deterioration of the site's habitats from human activity or natural changes, including habitats that support designated species, and prevent significant disturbance of the site's designated species from human activity or natural changes.

Depending on which entity is responsible for authorising a plan or project, competent authorities can include (but are not limited to) local planning authorities, planning committees, the Secretary of State and statutory agencies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Statutory Sites: National

Nationally important sites include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). A development proposal that is likely to affect a nationally important site will be subject to special scrutiny by the local planning authority and Natural England. Certain operations may be permitted. Any potentially damaging operations that could have an adverse effect directly or indirectly on the special interest of the site will not be permitted unless the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation and/or geological value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard such sites, as set out in Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/duty-to-protect-protect-restore-european-sites>

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the CROW Act 2000 provide the primary legal basis for the protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). These sites have been designated to capture the best examples of England's flora, fauna, geological or physiographical diversity. Natural England are responsible for assessing the condition of these areas and agreeing management plans for their conservation.

Public bodies have a duty to take reasonable steps to conserve and enhance the special features of sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) when carrying out their statutory duties and giving others permission for works, such as reviewing planning applications.

Natural England has produced, for every SSSI in England, a list of 'Operations Requiring Natural England's Consent' (ORNECs). Activities listed as ORNECs cannot be carried out within the relevant SSSI unless Natural England has issued their written assent to the activity taking place.

National Nature Reserves

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are declared under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. They are managed to conserve their habitats or to provide special opportunities for scientific study of the habitats communities and species represented within them. NNRs represent the very best parts of England's SSSIs. The majority of NNRs also have European nature conservation designations.

Statutory Sites: Regional/Local

Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are declared by local authorities under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as living green spaces in towns, cities, villages and countryside. They provide opportunities for research and education, or for simply enjoying and having contact with nature. LNRs are usually protected from development through local planning documents which may be supplemented by local by-laws.

Non-Statutory Sites

Local Wildlife Sites

Local planning authorities may designate non-statutory sites for their nature conservation value based on important, distinctive and threatened habitats and species within a national, regional and local context. Guidance for selecting and designating such sites have been produced by Defra. These sites are not legally protected but are given some protection through the planning system. These sites may be declared as 'County Wildlife Sites' (CWSs), 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation' (SINCs), or 'Sites of Nature Conservation Importance' (SNCIs) in local plans. Non-statutory sites are a material consideration when planning applications are being determined. The precise amount of weight to be attached, however, will take into account the position of the site in the hierarchy of sites as set out above. Further information is typically provided in local level planning policy and related guidance.

Nature Conservation in Areas Outside Designated Sites

Various other features exist outside designated sites that are important for the conservation of nature and which are a material consideration in the planning system.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England

Fifty-six habitat types have been identified as Habitats of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 (S41) of the NERC Act 2006. Although these habitats are not legally protected, the NPPF, Government Circular 06/05, good practice guidance, the NERC Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021 place a clear responsibility on planning authorities to further the conservation of these habitats. They can be a material consideration in planning decisions, and so developers are advised to take reasonable measures to avoid or mitigate impacts to prevent their net loss and to enhance them where possible. Additional guidance to developers is typically provided in local level planning policy.

The S41 list also includes species as explained below under 'Species of Principal Importance in England'.

Networks of Natural Habitats

Networks of natural habitats link sites of biodiversity importance and provide routes or stepping stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species in the wider environment. Examples include rivers with their banks, traditional field boundary systems (such as hedgerows), ponds and small woods. Local planning authorities are encouraged through the NPPF to maintain networks by avoiding or repairing the fragmentation and isolation of natural habitats through planning, policies and development control.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows can act as wildlife corridors that are essential for migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. Hedgerows that qualify as a Habitat of Principal Importance under S41 of the NERC Act 2006 are a material consideration in the planning system.

Under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, it is an offence to remove a hedgerow classed as 'important' under the criteria set out by the Regulations without submitting a notice to the Local Planning Authority and waiting for their decision. The Regulations are aimed at countryside hedges and do not apply to hedges around private dwellings or where planning permission has been granted for a project that includes hedge removal. Hedgerows that satisfy wildlife, archaeological, historical or landscape criteria qualify as 'important' under the Regulations. If a hedgerow is not important, the Local Planning Authority may not prevent its removal; however, Local Planning Authorities are required under the Regulations to protect and retain important hedgerows unless satisfied that the circumstances justify their removal.

Tree Preservation Orders

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) may be declared under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Town and Country Planning (Trees) Regulations 1999 to protect individual trees and woodlands from development and cutting. TPOs are primarily put in place to preserve amenity or for landscape conservation reasons. The importance of trees as wildlife habitat may be taken into account, but alone is not sufficient to warrant a TPO. For this reason, TPOs do not fit comfortably under the remit of nature conservation and are generally dealt with by an arboricultural consultant rather than an ecologist. Further

guidance on TPOs in relation to development is available from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Ancient Woodland & Veteran Trees

Ancient woodlands are defined in England as areas continuously wooded since at least 1600 AD (although certain open areas such as rides and glades within woodlands are also considered part of a woodland and brief periods of tree cover removal will not remove ancient woodland status). Even an ancient wood which has been replanted may still have remnants of ancient woodland wildlife and historical features and has potential to be restored. For this reason, Natural England's Provisional Ancient Woodland Inventory (PAWI) draws a distinction between Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW) and 'Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site' (PAWS). The inventory also lists ancient pasture woodland.

Ancient woodland is not a statutory designation and does not provide legal protection, but local authorities are directed under the NPPF and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) not to grant planning permission for any development that would result in the 'loss or deterioration' of irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland, ancient trees or veteran trees unless there are 'wholly exceptional reasons' and 'a suitable compensation strategy in place'. Local Planning Authorities must take into account Natural England and the Forestry Commission's *Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees*, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-advice-for-making-planning-decisions>

Surface & Ground Waters

Surface waters (including flowing and standing water) and ground water can directly and indirectly impact upon the conservation of nature.

Guidance on pollution prevention is hosted on the Government's website and focuses on regulatory requirements. This covers topics including the prevention of pollution if you are a business, managing business and commercial waste, oil storage, working on or near water, and managing water on land. Careful planning and the application of these guidelines can help reduce the risk of construction and maintenance work causing pollution to surface and ground waters. Some activities with the potential to impact watercourses or groundwater may require consent under the Water Resources Act 1991.

Water Resources Act (WRA) 1991 (as amended)

Under the WRA there is strict regulation of discharges (including sediment, chemicals, nutrients) to rivers, lakes, estuaries and groundwaters. It also aims to ensure that polluters cover the costs associated with pollution incidents.

SPECIES PROTECTION

Legally Protected Species

The species listed in the following subsections are protected by law in England. When preparing a planning application, it is essential to determine the presence or likely absence of legally protected species and the extent to which they may be affected by a proposed development. This can best be achieved by undertaking surveys early in the planning process. Impact avoidance and/or mitigation measures may be required to address any predicted impacts upon protected species and may

necessitate a the obtaining of a licence. The Government website offers standing advice from Natural England and DEFRA which can be applied to planning applications that affect protected species.

Bats

There are 18 species of bat native in the UK, seven of which are Species of Principal Importance in England under S41 of the NERC Act 2006. All bats and bat roosts are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Bats are also a European Protected Species protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture bats;
- Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly disturb bats in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect the ability of any significant group of bats to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young or the local distribution of or abundance of a species of bat;
- Intentionally, or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct any place used for shelter or protection (i.e. bat roosts) or intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat whilst it is occupying such a place;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat; and
- Possess, sell or transport a bat, or anything derived from it.

Development proposals affecting bats or their roosts require a European Protected Species mitigation licence from Natural England.

Great Crested Newt

The Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a Species of Principal Importance in England. It is legally protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is afforded significant further protection as a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Collectively, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture Great Crested Newts;
- Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly disturb Great Crested Newts in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect the ability of any significant group of Newts to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young or the local distribution of or abundance the species;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct any place used by Great Crested Newts for shelter or protection, or intentionally or recklessly disturb a Great Crested Newt whilst it is occupying such a place;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a Great Crested Newt; and
- Possess, sell or transport a Great Crested Newt, or anything derived from it.

Development proposals affecting the Great Crested Newt require a European Protected Species mitigation licence from Natural England.

Hazel Dormouse

The Hazel Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* is a Species of Principal Importance in England. It is legally protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is afforded significant further protection as a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Collectively, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture Dormice;
- Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly disturb Dormice in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect the ability of any significant group of Dormice to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young or the local distribution of or abundance of the species;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to places used by Dormice for shelter or protection (whether occupied or not) or intentionally or recklessly disturb a Dormouse whilst it is occupying such a place;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a Dormouse;
- Possess or transport a Dormouse (or any part thereof) unless under licence; and
- Sell or exchange Dormice.

Development proposals affecting the Dormouse require a European Protected Species mitigation licence from Natural England.

European Otter

The European Otter *Lutra lutra* is a Species of Principal Importance in England. It is legally protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is afforded significant further protection as a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Collectively, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture Otters;
- Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly disturb Otters in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect the ability of any significant group of Otters to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young or the local distribution of or abundance of Otters;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to places used by Otters for shelter or protection (whether they occupied or not) or intentionally or recklessly disturb an Otter whilst it is occupying such a place;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an Otter;
- Possess or transport an Otter (or any part thereof) unless under licence; and
- Sell or exchange Otters.

Development proposals affecting the Otter require a European Protected Species licence from Natural England.

Eurasian Beaver

The Eurasian Beaver *Castor fiber* is a European Protected Species under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). As a result of this protection, it is considered an offence to:

- Deliberately disturb a Beaver - this includes any action likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or rear their young
- Deliberately injure, capture or kill a Beaver;
- Damage or destroy the breeding site or resting place of a Beaver;
- Possess, control or transport a Beaver; and
- [offer to] Sell or exchange Beavers.

This applies whether the Beaver is alive or dead and includes Beaver parts and derivatives.

Development proposals affecting the Eurasian Beaver require a European Protected Species licence from Natural England.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) also prohibits the release of Beavers into the wild unless under licence, and makes it an offence to use any trap or snare for the purpose of killing, taking, restraining or injuring Beavers.

Reptiles

All four of the widespread British species of reptile, namely the Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, Slow-Worm *Anguis fragilis*, Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica* (previously *Natrix natrix*) and Adder *Vipera berus*, are Species of Principal Importance in England. They are protected under Schedule 5 (Sections 9.1, 9.5a, 9.5b) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from intentional killing, injury and trade. The habitat of the four widespread reptiles is not legally protected; however the replacement of habitat lost through development may be required through the planning system. Mitigation for these species is not subject to licensing by Natural England but should nonetheless be planned to minimise disturbance and potential project delays.

The Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* and the Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* are the rarest reptile species in Britain. In addition to the protection that is afforded to the widespread species of reptile listed above, these species are protected further under Schedule 5 (Sections 9.4b and 9.4c) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also European Protected Species protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture Sand Lizards or Smooth Snakes;
- Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly disturb Sand Lizards or Smooth Snakes in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect the ability of any significant group of Sand Lizards or Smooth Snakes to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young or the local distribution or abundance of either species;

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct any place used by Sand Lizards or Smooth Snakes for shelter or protection, or intentionally or recklessly disturb a Sand Lizard or Smooth Snake whilst it is occupying such a place;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a Sand Lizard or Smooth Snake;
- Keep, sell, or exchange Sand Lizards or Smooth Snakes or their eggs; and
- Deliberately take or destroy their eggs.

Development proposals affecting Smooth Snake or Sand Lizard require a European Protected Species mitigation licence from Natural England.

Water Vole

The Water Vole *Arvicola terrestris* is a NERC Act 2006 S41 Species of Principal Importance in England. The legal protection for Water Voles was increased in 2008 to fully cover the species under Section 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately (but not recklessly) kill, injure or take Water Voles;
- Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used by Water Voles for shelter or protection;
- Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly disturb Water Voles whilst they occupy a structure or place used for that purpose;
- Sell Water Voles or offer or expose for sale or transport for sale; and
- Possess or control live or dead Water Voles or derivatives.

Developers who wish to maintain, build on or alter areas used by Water Voles must ensure that unnecessary damage is avoided and all reasonable steps are taken to minimise impacts on Water Voles and their burrows. The Wildlife and Countryside Act provides a defence against the offences listed above, provided the action is the incidental result of an otherwise lawful operation and could not reasonably have been avoided.

A licence to displace Water Voles must be obtained from Natural England before conducting any activities involving displacement operations (this is different to a conservation licence, which is required for survey methods that involve disturbing Water Voles or their burrows, or capturing them). To obtain a displacement licence, it is necessary to demonstrate that the activity/activities will result in a conservation benefit for Water Voles.

Birds

49 species of bird are listed as Species of Principal Importance in England. All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence, with certain exceptions (e.g. game birds), to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird and to take, damage or destroy their nests or eggs.

Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) affords extra protection for certain species and applies harsher penalties for offences. Any intentional or reckless disturbance of a Schedule 1 bird, whilst it is nesting or rearing dependent young, constitutes an offence.

Regulation 10 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) requires appropriate authorities and conservation bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to take such steps that they consider appropriate in order to secure “*the preservation, maintenance and re-establishment of a sufficient diversity and area of habitat for wild birds in the United Kingdom, including by means of the upkeep, management and creation of such habitat (...)*”.

European Badger

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended in Scotland) offers considerable protection to both Badgers and Badger setts. This legislation was enacted to protect the European Badger *Meles meles* against baiting and not as a means of species recovery as it is common in England. It is an offence to cruelly treat, kill or take Badgers, but it is also illegal to intentionally or recklessly damage or disturb a Badger sett while it indicates signs of current use by a Badger.

The Government website contains information to help developers and their proponents avoid sett disturbance and to identify setts that are in current use. It is important to maintain adequate foraging territory in development proposals affecting Badgers as the destruction or severance of large areas of foraging territory could also be taken to include habitat loss. Licences to disturb Badgers and their setts in respect of development may be issued by Natural England provided provisions are made to minimise disturbance.

Wild Mammals

All wild mammals are protected against cruelty under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996, which makes it an offence to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate any wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.

White-Clawed Crayfish

The White-Clawed Crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* is a NERC Act S41 Species of Principal Importance in England. Outside designated sites (e.g. SACs), the White-Clawed Crayfish receives limited protection under Schedule 5 (Sections 9.1, 9.5a and 9.5b) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. This legislation does not provide strict protection of individual crayfish or their habitats but it does prevent prohibit the capture of this species without a licence. A conservation licence must therefore be obtained from Natural England before conducting any mitigation involving the capture and handling of this species.

European Eel

The Eels Regulations 2009 (as amended in 2011) aim to combat the population decline of the European eel *Anguilla anguilla* through protection of migration routes and controls on the numbers of eels allowed to be taken. In order to protect migration routes, any structures which may prevent upstream or downstream migration of eels must be reported to the Environment Agency. Eel passages must be constructed where needed and maintained in a good condition.

Freshwater Fish

The Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975 protects freshwater fish, particularly salmon and trout. It prevents the destruction of spawning grounds and the obstruction of migratory passages through the building of weirs, dams etc.

Licences for Development

Licences are required to permit activities prohibited under wildlife legislation, namely the disturbance or capture of protected species or damage to their habitats. Natural England is the licensing authority in England. Licences are only issued for certain purposes, which are set out in the legislation, and only where there is a valid justification. The licences most relevant to development scenarios are discussed below.

European Protected Species Mitigation Licences

A European Protected Species mitigation licence (EPSML) is required from Natural England to undertake any development that is reasonably likely to result in an offence in respect of a European Protected Species protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); including *inter alia* all species of bats, Hazel Dormouse, Great Crested Newt, Sand Lizard, Smooth Snake, European Otter and Eurasian Beaver. Natural England must be satisfied that the following three tests are satisfied before it will issue a licence covering a European Protected Species:

1. The proposal is necessary to preserve public health or public safety, or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;
2. There is no satisfactory alternative; and
3. The proposal will have no detrimental effect to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

Other Protected Species Mitigation Licences

Natural England can issue mitigation licences for reasons of “overriding public interest” in respect of animal and plant species listed on Schedules 5, 6 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), excluding birds and European Protected Species (as these have separate licensing systems). In the context of development, the most relevant species are likely to include Adder, Grass Snake, Common Lizard, Slow-worm and several species of plant.

Applicants must demonstrate that the licence is for the purpose of overriding public interest, and also that there are “no other satisfactory solutions”. In practice, therefore, this type of licence is likely to be difficult to obtain for most types of development.

Conservation Licences

In the context of development, conservation licences are normally only relevant to mitigation involving the capture of Water Voles or White-Clawed Crayfish. Conservation licences are granted to permit the trapping and translocation of these species on the condition that the development activity is properly planned and executed and thereby contributes to the conservation of the population of the species.

Badger Licences

Licences to disturb Badgers and their setts in respect of development (including closure of setts if required) may be issued by Natural England, provided provisions are made to minimise disturbance.

Species of Principal Importance in England

943 species have been identified as being of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 (S41) of the NERC Act 2006. The S41 list includes species found in England which have been identified as requiring action under the now superseded UK Biodiversity Action Plan 2007 (plus the Hen Harrier). While many of these species may not be legally protected (some are protected under the legislation described above), there is a clear responsibility on local planning authorities to further their conservation. These species can be a material consideration in development control decisions and so developers are advised to take reasonable measures to avoid or mitigate impacts to prevent the net loss of these species, and to enhance their habitats where possible. Additional guidance to developers is typically provided in local level planning policies.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

There are a number of species not ordinarily resident in the UK, such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and others. Those which pose a significant threat, if uncontrolled, to our ecology and economy are listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). For an offence to be committed, a species must be released or allowed to escape into the wild. For example, if a plant listed on Schedule 9 is not adequately controlled by a land owner, once they are aware that it is present, and the species is allowed to spread into adjoining areas, then this could potentially constitute an offence.

Further guidance on INNS can be found on the website of the GB Non Native Species Secretariat: <https://www.nonnativespecies.org/>

Japanese Knotweed is also classed as 'controlled waste' under the Environment Protection Act 1990 (as amended) and if taken off site it must be disposed of safely at a licensed landfill site. Soil containing rhizome material should also be regarded as contaminated and treated accordingly.

Species Control Orders

A new schedule 9A was inserted into the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) by Sections 23 to 25 of the Infrastructure Act 2015. This gives environmental authorities (in England the Secretary of State, Environment Agency, Natural England and the Forestry Commission) the power to offer 'species control agreements' to landowners in respect of invasive and/or non-native species, such as Japanese Knotweed. If the landowner does not comply with a species control agreement, or refuses to enter into one, the environmental authority may issue a 'species control order', requiring the owner to eradicate or control the species, or to allow the environmental authority access to carry out these operations themselves.

PLANNING POLICY & GUIDANCE

This section set out the main planning policy and government guidance that relates to the conservation of nature at all levels of government.

National Level

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied in local-level policy and decision making. The NPPF has a clear "presumption in favour of sustainable development" (paragraph 11), with economic, social and environmental objectives. This presumption does not apply where a plan or project has failed the 'appropriate assessment' test under the Habitats Regulations (paragraph 195).

Section 15 of the NPPF provides guidance on conserving and enhancing the natural environment through the planning system, as summarised below.

Firstly, planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by applying the following key principles:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
- recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and
- preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.

Section 15 also requires planning policies and decisions to limit the impact of artificial light pollution on nature conservation.

Secondly, when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following key principles:

- if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or (as a last resort) compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- proposed development that is likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI (either individually or in combination with other developments) should normally be refused;

- planning permission should normally be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees, unless there are 'wholly exceptional reasons' and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported, while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

In the case of SSSIs and irreplaceable habitats, exceptions may be made if it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development, in that location, clearly outweigh the costs in terms of loss or adverse impacts.

Section 15 specifies that listed or proposed Ramsar sites, potential European sites, and sites identified or required as compensatory measures for adverse effects on designated/listed or potential/proposed European and Ramsar sites should be given the same protection as designated European sites.

Section 15 includes the following text on air quality:

- Planning policies and decisions should sustain and contribute towards compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts from individual sites in local areas;
- Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement. So far as possible these opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage, to ensure a strategic approach and limit the need for issues to be reconsidered when determining individual applications; and
- Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas and Clean Air Zones is consistent with the local air quality action plan.

The NPPF also sets out principles for plan-making, including the allocation of land with the least environmental or amenity value, and taking a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure by identifying, Figureping and safeguarding components of local wildlife-rich habitats, wider ecological networks, wildlife corridors and stepping stones, and those areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation.

Government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

The Government produced Circular 06/05 to provide guidance on the application of the law to the conservation of nature. Although the document is in the process of being updated, Paragraphs 98 and 99 remain relevant as they set out the following principles and obligations:

- The presence of protected species is a material consideration when determining a development proposal;
- Local authorities should consult with Natural England before granting permission, and consider imposing planning conditions or obligations to secure the long-term protection of the species;

- The presence of protected species, and the extent to which they may be affected by the proposed development, must be established before permission is granted;
- Given the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development.

Planning Practice Guidance

Revised and updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was launched by the Department for Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) as a web-based tool in March 2014 to accompany the NPPF. The webpages are set out in a Q&A format. The PPG consolidates and supersedes existing guidance on a range of planning-related topics, clarifies some of the statements made in the NPPF, and provides links to relevant legislation and other sources of advice.

The Guidance outlines a number of important principles in relation to nature conservation and biodiversity, including the need to integrate biodiversity into all stages of the planning process and to consider opportunities to enhance biodiversity and contribute to the Government's commitments and targets set out in *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*.

The guidance also requires that "an ecological survey will be necessary in advance of a planning application if the type and location of development are such that the impact on biodiversity may be significant and existing information is lacking or inadequate", and recommends that "local planning authorities should only require ecological surveys where clearly justified, for example if they consider there is a reasonable likelihood of a protected species being present and affected by development."

Other guidance

In addition to the Planning Practice Guidance, various other forms of guidance and standards are available in relation to biodiversity and the development process. Of particular note is *British Standard BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development*, published in August 2013, which replaces *Planning to Halt the Loss of Biodiversity (PAS 2010): Biodiversity conservation standards for planning in the United Kingdom*.

This document is designed to complement the NPPF and is aimed at organisations concerned with ecological issues throughout the planning process, including local authorities, developers, planners and ecological consultants. It sets out step-by-step recommendations on how to incorporate biodiversity considerations at all stages of the planning process, with a focus on the provision of consistent, high quality and appropriate ecological information, effective decision making, and high standards of professional conduct and competence.

Regional Level

Regional plans (such as the South East Plan Regional Spatial Strategy) have been revoked, but some specific policies have been saved. The only policy saved from the South East Plan is Policy NRM6, which relates to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA).

Local Level

The following Wiltshire Core Strategy adopted 2015 policies of relevance include:

Core Policy 50 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 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.

The Warminster Neighbourhood Plan (2016) includes Policy E5 – Surrounding Environment which states that:

New developments should respect local character. The provision of green space that enhances its surroundings will be supported. Improvements to natural environment, green space and biodiversity will be supported.

In addition to the Wiltshire Core Strategy (2015) and the Warminster Neighbourhood Plan (2016), the Warminster Town Council Biodiversity Policy (2025) is a stand-alone document that is a material consideration in planning. This sits alongside the Local Plans and sets out the statutory duty of the council (and all public authorities) to have regard for nature conservation in exercising their functions. One of the main aims and objectives of the policy is to “*consider the impact on biodiversity when making all decisions, particularly on planning applications and land management*”.

BIODIVERSITY PLANS AND STRATEGIES

The NERC Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to have due regard to biodiversity when exercising their normal functions, and the NPPF requires planning policies to “promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species, and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity” (paragraph 174). These targets are set out in a range of biodiversity plans and strategies from the international through to the district level.

An overview of the key biodiversity plans and strategies in the UK, and their implications for development, are set out below.

National level

The Government’s Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 is the first revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan published in 2018. It sets out ten goals aimed at restoring nature – of which the ‘apex goal’ is to halt the decline of biodiversity. The EIP 2023 includes targets and commitments to:

- Halt the decline in species abundance by 2030;
- Restore or create more than 140,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2028;
- Improve the Red List Index for England by 2042;
- Achieve favourable condition for 48% of designated features in Marine Protected Areas by 2028;
- Complete update condition assessments for all SSSIs by 2028;
- Increase tree canopy and woodland cover by 0.26% by 2028;
- Reduce water pollution from agricultural nitrogen, phosphorus and sediments by at least 40% by 2038; and
- Reduce phosphorus loadings from treated wastewater by 80% by 2038.

Other targets have been set in relation to, water demand, residual waste, air quality, and. pollution from abandoned metal mines and agriculture.

The *UK Biodiversity Action Plan 2007* (UK BAP) has been superseded by the *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework* and individual national biodiversity strategies. The UK Framework sets out the overarching vision, strategic goals and priority activities for the UK's work towards international biodiversity targets (known as the 'Aichi Targets'), as agreed by 192 parties at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010.

In England, *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services* is the national biodiversity strategy, which has the stated mission "(...) to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people." In order to focus activity and assess performance in achieving this mission, Biodiversity 2020 sets out objectives relating to terrestrial and marine habitats and ecosystems, species and people.

Progress towards the National biodiversity targets are measured by the UK's Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) through a suite of biodiversity 'indicators', with annual reports published here: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/uk-biodiversity-indicators/>

Blueprint for Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss: the UK's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2030

At the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Montreal in 2022, 196 countries agreed the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). This framework, an ambitious set of four goals and 23 targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, sets out the shared pathway towards the vision of a world living in harmony with nature by 2050. The Blueprint for Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss: The UK's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for 2030 (NBSAP 2030) sets out how the UK will implement each of the targets set by the GBF in the UK.

Approach to implementing the GBF in the UK and the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies (UKOTs and CDs)

Environmental policy is a devolved function in the UK, subject to a small number of reserved areas. This means that the four countries can implement the 23 targets of the GBF in a manner that suits their individual circumstances. However, all share the following priorities as described in the UK Biodiversity Framework (UKBF):

- Protecting and restoring nature;
- Sustainable use and resource management; and
- Mainstreaming and finance.

The UK-specific targets are set out in Annex A of the NBSAP 2030. These include ensuring that:

- At least 30% of degraded ecosystems are under effective restoration by 2030 (Target 2);
- At least 30% of inland, marine and coastal waters are under effective conservation and management by 2030 (Target 3);
- Urgent management actions are implemented to halt human-induced extinction of threatened species (Target 4);
- The impacts of invasive alien species are reduced by 2030 (Target 6);

- Risks and negative impacts of pollution from all sources are reduced by 2023 (Target 7);
- Area, quality, connectivity and access to green and blue space is significantly and sustainably increased through biodiversity-inclusive urban planning (Target 12); and
- Full integration of biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes, poverty eradication strategies, strategic environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments and, as appropriate, national accounting (Target 14).

These targets were submitted to the Convention on Biological Diversity in August 2024. Progress towards targets will be monitored via a set of UK Biodiversity Indicators and reported on via an online tool, <https://ort.cbd.int/national-targets?countries=gb>.

Local level

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs)

While BAPs at the national level have now been superseded by *the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework* and *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*, many county and district level BAPs still exist.

The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (2008) is a county-level plan that sets habitat and species priorities, targets and management prescriptions. Whilst BAPs have been superseded as stated above, the Wiltshire BAP still remains a widely used document for understanding species and habitat targets and determining those that still remain priorities.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

Local Nature partnerships have in most areas of England now identified BOAs and produced documentation setting out the existing features of ecological importance within those areas, and a state of how opportunities to enhance biodiversity could be actioned. These provide a useful starting point when considering how individual planning applications might best go about contributing toward enhancements to the natural environment.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs)

In pursuance of obligations under the Environment Act 2021, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs identified 48 'strategy areas' that collectively cover the whole of England, and appointed a 'responsible authority' to produce an LNRS for each strategy area. An LNRS must contain a habitat Figure for the area and a statement of biodiversity priorities to include a descriptions of the opportunities that are available for recovering or enhancing biodiversity.

When complete, the LNRS for an area will effectively supersede earlier documents including local BAPs. The Defra Biodiversity Metric utilises multipliers to disincentivise development that causes the loss of habitats that are considered to be priorities under an LNRS for the area, and reward proposals that create or enhance them.

The Wiltshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy was finally adopted on 21 October 2025. This provides a framework for how to reverse decline in biodiversity and to enhance for biodiversity across the county. The strategy includes species considered to be priority as well as habitats and includes practical

measures to enhance or restore them. An interactive Figure includes strategically important habitat networks detailing habitats and areas for retention, enhancements or creation.

Appendix 3

Assessment Methods

ECIA ASSESMENT METHODOLOGY

Overview

The approach to Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) taken in this report takes account of guidance in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.2.' (CIEEM, 2018). The Preface of the CIEEM EcIA Guidelines states:

"Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development published by the British Standards Institute (BS 42020:2013) cites the CIEEM EcIA Guidelines as the acknowledged reference on ecological impact assessment. The Guidelines are consistent with the British Standard on Biodiversity, which provides recommendations on topics such as professional practice, proportionality, pre-application discussions, ecological surveys, adequacy of ecological information, reporting and monitoring."

In accordance with the above guidance, EPR takes the following step-wise approach to EcIA:

- Prediction of the activities associated with a proposed scheme that are likely to generate biophysical changes which may lead to significant effects (either positive or negative) upon Important Ecological Features (IEFs);
- Identification of the likely Zone of Influence (Zoi) of those activities;
- Scoping to select the ecological features (habitats, species, ecosystems and their functions/processes) that are likely to fall within the predicted Zois and be affected by the activities;
- Evaluation of IEFs likely to be affected – both negatively and positively;
- Identification of likely impacts (positive and negative) on IEFs, together with an assessment of the geographic level at which effects are likely to be significant;
- Application of the mitigation hierarchy - refinement of the proposed scheme to incorporate impact avoidance and/or mitigation measures for negative effects on IEFs, and enhancements in order to deliver net gains;
- Assessment of the significance of residual effects and identification of any policy drivers for additional mitigation or compensation in the event of residual significant negative effects; and
- Advice on conformance with policy and legislation.

Ecological Evaluation Method

The evaluation method used in this EcIA uses the following geographic scale of importance for ecological features:

- International/European;
- National;
- Regional;
- County (or Metropolitan or Local Authority-wide area);
- Local; and
- Within the Zone of Influence.

With this in mind, features taken forward for detailed impact assessment are those which:

- Are evaluated as being of at least 'Local' ecological importance, or have the potential to be so; and
- Are likely to be affected, positively or negatively, by the proposals.

Ecological features deemed to be of less than 'Local' importance are considered throughout the EclA process in the context of the national planning policy requirement for 'Biodiversity Net Gain'. The implications for those features that are protected by legislation are also discussed separately at the end of the EclA report.

Ecological Importance is judged with reference to the following factors:

- Statutory requirements and policy objectives (e.g. site designations or the country lists of habitats and species of principle importance for the conservation of biodiversity); and
- Biodiversity value (e.g. diversity, rarity, scarcity, function within ecosystem, population trends).

Impact Assessment Method

The ecological features selected to be included in the assessment are those which both meet the importance threshold and are likely to be affected by the proposed scheme.

The first stage of the assessment is to determine the potential impacts upon each important ecological feature, with reference to the likely biophysical changes arising from the proposals. Impacts can be characterised according to their extent, magnitude, duration, timing, frequency, reversibility, and whether they are positive or negative.

The likelihood of cumulative impacts with other planned or consented projects is also taken into account at this stage.

An assessment is then made of whether the effect(s) of an impact upon an important ecological feature is likely to be considered 'significant' in EclA terms.

Significant Effects

The EclA Guidelines state that:

"Significance is a concept related to the weight that should be attached to effects when decisions are made. For the purpose of EclA, 'significant effect' is an effect that either supports or undermines biodiversity conservation objectives for 'important ecological features' or for biodiversity in general.....in broad terms, significant effects encompass impacts on structure and function of defined sites, habitats or ecosystems and the conservation status of habitats and species (including extent, abundance and distribution)." [our emphasis]

Put simply, an effect is considered significant if it is likely to change the structure and function of defined sites and ecosystems or the conservation status of habitats and species.

Professional judgement about significance is informed by conservation objectives for the affected feature, where available (for example conservation objectives set by Natural England for European

designated sites, or in habitat and species action plans). The 'conservation status' (habitats and species) or the degree to which a feature is exhibiting 'integrity' in terms of structure, function and condition (defined sites or ecosystems) is also considered. The predicted effect of natural and man-made trends in the absence of development is also taken into account in determining the conservation status or integrity of a feature and in considering whether otherwise insignificant effects may contribute to a significant cumulative effect.

The CIEEM Guidelines state:

"The evaluation of significant effects should always be based on the best available scientific evidence. If sufficient information is not available further survey or additional research may be required. In cases of reasonable doubt, where it is not possible to robustly justify a conclusion of no significant effect, a significant effect should be assumed. Where uncertainty exists, it must be acknowledged in the EclA."

Opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gain

EPR will advise the applicant's team about how a scheme may be refined, in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy, to achieve net gains in biodiversity. Once the biodiversity measures are agreed, EPR will assess any residual effects and advise on the degree of compliance with national and local policy and nature conservation legislation. This process may evolve with the design of the development. In some instances, it may not be possible to avoid all the significant adverse effects or to deliver biodiversity net gain within the development site. In that case, EPR will advise of any opportunities to contribute to wider (offsite) biodiversity strategies which would deliver the appropriate mitigation, compensation and/or enhancement.

The final agreed measures will be set out clearly, so that the LPA can readily understand what planning conditions or legal agreements are required to achieve the necessary level of policy and legal compliance.

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

The ecological appraisal was completed in order to inform the masterplanning process and establish the appropriate scope of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Guidelines for the Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.2. (2018). CIEEM's 2017 Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal were also taken into account.

The Initial Ecological Appraisal was carried out in February 2023 and followed the following methodology.

Desk Study Methodology

A desk study was carried out in order to gather and refer to existing biodiversity and contextual information with respect to the zone of influence and the wider area. This involved interrogation of internet resources, including the Multi-agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) aerial photos, current Ordnance Survey Figures and historical Figures. Reference was also made to local planning policies, strategies and initiatives relating to biodiversity.

A request was made to Wiltshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) for legally protected and priority species records in their database and this was updated in 2025 to inform the most up-to-date assessment. The local records search and other desktop research was over a 2km radius for nationally and locally important features and a 5km radius for European Protected Species and sites of European significance.

Fieldwork Methodology

The field survey was completed by Claire Clarke on 20th February 2025. The core of the Home Farm Site and immediately surrounding land was walked, recording habitats (using the UK Habitat Classification) and features of potential value to wildlife and any evidence of, or potential for, protected or priority species or habitats, in accordance with the methods described below.

Land Use, Habitat Types, Vegetation Communities and Flora

Within the study area the land use, habitat types and landscape features (such as hedgerows and veteran trees) were described and Figureped. For each main habitat type the dominant vegetation communities were recorded, along with any notable or indicator plant species, (including invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed where observed). A preliminary evaluation of the structure, quality and likely management of each habitat or feature was also carried out.

The survey method used to record this information was based on the UK Habitat Classification System (UK Hab, 2020). Botanical nomenclature in this report follows Stace (2019).

Fauna

The potential for habitats and features to support protected or notable species, or species of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, were recorded, as were any signs encountered. The following is a summary of the approach taken for this Ecological Appraisal.

Badgers

Consideration was given to the presence of habitat potentially suitable for supporting Badgers, including woodland and grassland. Potential evidence of the presence of Badgers was looked out for and noted, including earthworks that might be Badger setts, and signs such as dung pits, mammal pathways through ground vegetation and under fences, and hairs on fences.

Dormouse

The type and quality of habitat with the potential to be suitable for supporting Dormice, such as woodland and hedgerows, was considered during the survey. In particular the presence of Oak, Hazel and berry-bearing shrubs was noted, and the connectivity of habitat recorded.

Water Voles

The presence and quality of watercourses with the potential to support Water Voles was recorded during the survey. Potential evidence of Water Voles, including burrows in the tops and vertical face of riverbanks, and feeding evidence was recorded where appropriate.

European Otter

Where watercourses are present, a preliminary evaluation of the quality of the riparian habitat for potentially supporting Otters was made. A preliminary search was made for signs of Otters, including spraints which are often left in prominent places on river banks, such as logs and bare patches of ground.

Birds

Any birds seen whilst carrying out the survey were recorded, and the type and quality of habitats available for birds was considered, including vegetation suitable for nesting, and habitat with the potential to support valued species, including breeding and wintering birds.

Amphibians

Consideration was given to the presence of habitat potentially suitable for supporting amphibians, including water bodies (ponds, ditches), woodland, scrub and rough grassland, and features such as log piles that might provide hibernation areas. Where appropriate, effort to gather direct evidence of amphibians was undertaken by making a preliminary search for eggs by examining vegetation within reach of the margins of water bodies, and for resting animals on land by looking under potential refuges, such as stones, wood and rubbish near to water bodies.

Reptiles

The presence and quality of habitat considered potentially suitable for supporting reptiles was recorded. This included areas providing basking and foraging areas, hibernation and breeding sites, such as rough grassland and scrub, banks, burrows, rubble piles, compost heaps, hedgebanks and water bodies.

Invertebrates

Readily identifiable invertebrates seen during the survey were recorded, and habitats and features likely to support noteworthy groups and species were noted, for example herb-rich grasslands, areas of bare ground and deadwood habitats, including woodland and veteran trees.

Bats

Bats use buildings and trees for roosting and breeding and, where present, a preliminary assessment of the potential for these features to support bats was undertaken during the survey. Potential may include gaps beneath roof or hanging tiles, in soffits, or beneath the end of ridge tiles, but also under the edge of felt on flat roofs. In trees potential roosting features include woodpecker holes, splits in branches and peeling bark.

Preliminary evidence was obtained through noting any staining around potential roost entrances, and looking for bat droppings, for example on windowsills. A preliminary evaluation was also undertaken of potential bat foraging habitat in the area, including woodland, pasture, hedges and watercourses.

TARGETED SPECIES AND HABITAT SURVEYS

The Ecological Appraisal undertaken in 2023 identified the potential for certain protected species to be present within the zone of influence of the proposals, as well as the requirement to undertake more detailed habitat surveys and condition assessments. Further information on the ecological baseline of the Site was required to inform a BNG assessment and strategies for the retention, protection, enhancement and creation of habitats; to design required mitigation strategies for various species and to undertake a full EclA of the Site required to inform a planning application. The methodology for undertaking further targeted ecological surveys is detailed below.

Vegetation

Field Survey

Habitats were assessed with regard to the UK Habitat Classification UKHab Ltd (2023) The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 2 at <http://www.ukhab.org/>.

The survey was carried out by Gareth Knass MCIEEM by walking the site on a number of dates between March-June 2025, with the final survey visit on the 10 June 2025. Survey was undertaken during weather conditions suitable for survey, and each parcel was walked making notes of habitat types to a Minimum Mapping Unit (MMU) resolution of 25m² where considered necessary.

Vegetation types were identified visually from the past experience of the surveyor and by reference to the published UKHab definitions. Mapping was carried out onto printed copies of Google Earth aerial photography and by making use of numbered target notes. Digital photographs were taken in each habitat type to assist with recording and Mapping.

Lines of trees and shrubs less than 5 metres wide forming boundaries between fields were counted as hedges and included in the survey. Any watercourse habitats were recorded. Trees and hedgerows predominantly outside of the site Red Line Boundary have not been included in assessment.

Where the level 5 habitat could not be determined or is not reflective of the habitat type due to a lack of indicative species, habitats were categorised to level 4 or the broader level 3 habitat and notes made.

Condition Assessments

A condition assessment under the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain assessment guidelines was undertaken for each habitat type recorded, making note of additional habitat features required for each condition assessment habitat/hedgerow type. The version of the condition assessment used is July 2025. This included use of quadrats in habitat parcels to the required size and quantity (www.gov.uk). Species abundance was assessed using the DAFOR scale (Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional, Rare) and percentage cover in a quadrat and over a habitat parcel.

Under the condition assessment, baseline habitats will be assigned a result of 'Good', 'Moderate' or 'Poor' based on the scoring instructions provided within the condition criteria. Certain habitats are allocated a fixed condition score and do not require an assessment. These are marked 'No assessment required – condition fixed at 'Poor' for some Low distinctiveness habitats, or 'No assessment required – condition N/A' for all Very Low distinctiveness habitats.

Where considered useful, geological Figures (www.bgs.ac.uk), historical aerial photography (Google Earth), historical Figureping (www.Figures.nls.uk) and national habitat Figureping (www.magic.gov.uk) was used to further understand habitat/hedgerow units.

Survey Limitations

Survey work represents a snapshot of the site on the dates the survey was undertaken. The current surveys were carried out within the main survey season. Grassland habitats were in reasonable condition for survey, although some cutting of vegetation had taken place by June, and in these situations the abundance of certain species may be harder to judge. On this basis a judgement is made based on the experience of the surveyor as to the habitat type and value in condition assessment.

Breeding Birds

The survey methodology below follows the breeding bird survey methodology in the bird survey guidelines published by the Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group (BSASG, 2025), and has regard to principles in the Common Bird Census and Breeding Bird Surveys run by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) (based on methodology by Marchant, 1983, and Bibby et al., 2000). It also has regard to the specific survey methodology for Annex 1 bird species in Gilbert et al., 1998.

Field Survey

The field survey was undertaken using the following methods:

- Six breeding bird survey visits between March-June 2025.
- Five visits to be dawn surveys and one visit a dusk survey.
- Individual visits to a part of the site were undertaken at least 10 days apart.
- The direction and, where possible, the starting point of the survey routes varied between visits.
- Survey visits for diurnal species started up to 30 minutes either side of sunrise and were completed by 11.00am.
- Survey visits for nocturnal and crepuscular species were undertaken from as a minimum 1hr before sunset to c1-2 hours after sunset.
- The intensity of coverage along the transect was as even as possible.
- All areas of the site were walked within 50m where possible.
- Each visit recorded as much information as possible including sex of adults, and location of recently fledged juveniles.
- Bird data was collected using BTO species and behaviour codes, and an adapted field sheet methodology from Common Bird Census, Breeding Bird Survey and Bird Survey Guideline methodologies and transcribed onto printed Figures of the site in the field.
- The following information was recorded on each visit: date, start and finish times, observer name and weather conditions.
- No visits were undertaken in windy conditions (Beaufort scale greater than 4-5), poor visibility, or if the site was subject to unusually high levels of disturbance.

Data Analysis

Bird data analysis was undertaken comparing the co-ordinates of each transect field Figure to provide a summary Figure of species, selected notable species, and a table of all species recorded.

Following this, the data was further analysed to determine where species territories are likely to be present.

The following parameters were then adopted to determine breeding status and this was applied to Figureing of individual species:

- **Confirmed Breeding** = an active nest, or recently fledged dependant young;
- **Probable Breeding** = territorial activity on two or more separate transect visits, or with the surveyor's discretion – with reasoning outlined;

- **Possible Breeding** = territorial activity on one transect visit, or with surveyor's discretion – with reasoning outlined;
- **Present** = A species recorded during survey work but considered not likely to be breeding on or immediately adjacent to the site.

In addition to the above analysis, the number of Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 1 species, national Biodiversity Action Plan species, and Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury et al., 2021) was also calculated.

Bird Feature Evaluation

The method for describing the importance of areas for birds is based on that developed by Fuller, 1980 & 1982. This includes consideration of the following factors to establish overall feature value:

Rarity

The list of birds covered by the Rare Breeding Bird Panel (RBBP) at www.rbbp.org.uk is a useful resource when considering the rarity of a species. The RBBP splits its data into different geographical areas to provide regional context. Rarity should also be considered in a local context where possible, and relevant County Bird Reports and Atlases can also provide such data on rarity.

Species with fewer than 1,000 breeding pairs in Britain are considered Nationally Rare (Fuller, 1980). The Breeding Bird Atlas (Balmer et al., 2013) records breeding distributions of birds in Britain and Ireland by 10x10 km grid squares. This makes it possible to describe the frequency of occurrence with below a 30% level whereby a species can be described as 'Scarce'.

Species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) or on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive are worthy of special consideration. These lists consider measures such as population size and distribution.

Population Size

The percentage of a population size unit (e.g. national, county) that occurs within the site/area. Where 1% or more of the defined geographical unit of a species regularly uses a site, then the site may be important at that geographical scale.

Priority Species and Conservation Concern

Bird species that are listed as Species of Principal Importance for Conservation under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 (BAP species), or as Red/Amber-listed Birds of Conservation Concern, are considered to be particularly vulnerable due to factors such as serious population declines or reductions in their natural range. These species are therefore given special consideration when assessing the conservation importance of breeding bird assemblages.

Diversity

The number of species recorded in an area (species richness) is a simple and effective measure of diversity, which can be used in the assessment of a breeding bird assemblage. Fuller, 1980 provided thresholds by which to determine diversity based on the number of breeding species (confirmed/probable/possible):

- Local to District = 25-49 species.
- County = 50-69 species.

- Regional = 70-84 species.
- National = 85+ species.

Limitations

Bird survey work only provides a snapshot in time of the use of the site by breeding bird surveys, and is limited to variables encountered on the visit dates, including weather, disturbance, and bird activity on that date.

The use of predominantly transect survey effort is often relatively poor at documenting certain species groups, i.e. nocturnal species and raptors, the latter are often better observed from a vantage point away from the site. The methodology above acknowledges these difficult groups with some survey effort including standing at a suitable vantage point towards the end of a transect to record raptor activity, but this effort is more limited in extent than the transect work. In the case of nocturnal species, the nocturnal survey visit picked up potential for nocturnal species to a reasonable extent given the habitats on site and locally.

Bats

Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW)

An update DBW was carried out by Claire Clarke on behalf of EPR on the 8th April 2025 in combination with a full update PEA of the Site. In addition to the GLTA and PRA of buildings (see below), the habitats across and adjacent to the Site was considered for their suitability to support foraging and commuting bats.

Prior to the DBW aerial Figures were surveyed to gain an understanding of the Site context and relative connectivity to the wider landscape. During the DBW the Site was walked, and habitats were Figureped and considered for their suitability to support foraging and commuting bats. During the DBW the design of further surveys was considered.

Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA)

A survey of trees within the Site was completed on the 8th April 2025 by Claire Clarke on behalf of EPR. The surveys comprised a search from ground level, with the aid of binoculars, for features with suitability to support bats, including woodpecker holes, loose bark, cracks and crevices, broken off limbs and dense Ivy *Hedera helix*, as well as signs of bats, such as scratching and staining.

A GPS point was taken for each tree found to have potential Bat Roost Features (BRF) and the following information was recorded:

- Tree species;
- Approximate height;
- Approximate diameter at breast height;
- Any potential roost feature, its type, aspect, height and any other descriptive features;
- Suitability for roosting bats; and

- Any constraints to survey.

Based on the information collected during the surveys, trees were categorised for their suitability for bats in accordance with *Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, 2024). Based on the features recorded, trees were identified as having either PRF-I or suitable to support low numbers of roosting bats only or PRF-M or suitable to support multiple bats.

Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)

External and internal building inspections were undertaken by Claire Clarke (a licensed bat ecologist) on 8th April 2025. Using a high-powered torch and close focusing binoculars as required, the ecologist searched for bats and evidence of bats, such as droppings, urine staining, feeding remains, scratch marks and features with the potential to support bats e.g. gaps or crevices in walls, mortice joints, gaps behind bargeboards etc.

Based on the results of the inspections, each building was assessed as having either negligible, low, moderate or high suitability to support bats, or confirmed bat roost, based on current good practice bat survey guidelines (Collins, 2023).

Nighttime Bat Walkover

One transect route (**Figure 5-7**) was walked on each survey visit. Survey methods were based on current good practice bat survey guidelines (Collins, 2023) with the transect routes designed to sample a range of different habitats across the Site with vantage point surveys undertaken for the first 30 minutes after sunset. During each survey, details such as species/species group, numbers of bats and direction of flight (where observed) and behaviour, e.g. commuting, foraging and social calling were noted.

Each transect was walked by a pair of surveyors using bat detectors (Petterson D240X and/or EMTouch). Surveyors walked each transect at a steady pace recording bat activity (as described above). The number of ‘bat passes’ per species/species group were recorded in addition to bat behaviour. In this report a bat pass is defined as ‘the number of echolocation registrations within a 10 second interval’. For example, this could be a single registration, such as a bat flying past a ‘stopping point’ whilst commuting elsewhere, to repeated registrations, e.g. associated with foraging’. On this basis, a maximum of 6 bat passes can arise from an individual bat per minute.

The starting location along each route and direction the transect was walked was changed across the surveys to reduce sampling bias as far as reasonably possible. Each dusk survey commenced at sunset and continued for approximately 2 hours.

Full metadata for the surveys can be found in **Table A3.1**.

Table: A3.1: Timings of surveys

Date	Sunset	Start	End	Start Temperature (°C)	End Temperature (°C)	Cloud Cover	Wind (Beaufort Scale)	Rain
29/04/25	20:28	20:13	22:46	16.0	10.3	0	1	Dry
02/07/25	21:27	21:12	23:27	19.5	12.8	0	1-2	Dry
08/09/25	19:37	19:22	21:37	13.5	9.7	20	1	Dry

Automated Static Bat Detector Surveys

Automated static detectors were deployed to sample different habitats across the Site and gather further information on the bat assemblage and relative bat activity. Two automated static detectors were deployed (Anabat Swifts).

Automated detectors were deployed for five consecutive nights each month from April to October 2025 inclusive. Weather information for each survey period was provided by Weathernet from the nearest weather station.

Bat calls were analysed using appropriate software (Anabat Insight) and identified to species/species group based on parameters in Russ (2021) and Middleton *et al.* (2014).

Survey metadata is shown in **Table A3.2** below.

Table A3.2: Static Detector Surveys Metadata

Month	Night beginning	High/Low Temperature (°C)	Sunset	Sunrise	Survey hours (including 0.5hrs prior to sunset and after sunrise)
April	24/04/2025	13 - 2	20:19	05:52	10:33
	25/04/2025	13 – 5	20:21	05:50	10:29
	26/04/2025	15 – 3	20:23	05:48	10:25
	27/04/2025	16 - 3	20:24	05:46	10:22
	28/04/2025	20 - 4	20:26	05:44	10:18
May	21/05/2025	15 - 5	21:01	05:08	09:07
	22/05/2025	14 - 6	21:03	05:07	09:04
	23/05/2025	15 - 13	21:04	05:06	09:02
	24/05/2025	16 - 14	21:05	05:05	09:00
	25/05/2025	15 - 10	21:06	05:04	08:58
June	15/06/2025	17 – 14	21:26	04:52	08:26
	16/06/2025	20 – 9	21:26	04:52	08:26
	17/06/2025	18 – 12	21:26	04:52	08:26
	18/06/2025	24 – 11	21:27	04:52	08:25
	19/06/2025	23 - 14	21:27	04:52	08:25
July	11/07/2025	27 – 13	21:21	05:07	08:46
	12/07/2025	26 - 12	21:20	05:08	08:48
	13/07/2025	23 – 16	21:19	05:09	08:50
	14//07/2025	16 - 10	21:18	05:10	08:52
	15/07/2025	18 - 14	21:17	05:12	08:55
August	22/08/2025	21 - 9	20:15	06:07	10:52
	23/08/2025	21 – 10	20:13	06:09	10:56
	24/08/2025	20 – 9	20:11	06:11	11:00
	25/08/2025	23 – 13	20:09	06:12	11:03
	26/08/2025	19 – 14	20:07	06:14	11:07
September	12/09/2025	13 - 11	19:29	06:40	12:11

	13/09/2025	13 - 5	19:27	06:42	12:15
	14/09/2025	17 - 13	19:24	06:44	12:20
	15/09/2025	15 - 11	19:22	06:45	12:23
	16/09/2025	15 - 11	19:20	06:47	12:27
October	10/10/2025	14 - 7	18:26	07:25	13:59
	11/10/2025	13 - 3	18:24	07:27	14:03
	12/10/2025	11 - 5	18:21	07:29	14:08
	13/10/2025	13 - 12	18:19	07:30	14:11
	14/10/2025	12 - 10	18:17	07:32	14:15

Badgers

A walkover Badger survey was conducted by Julian Brown on behalf of EPR on the 8th April 2025. The survey area included the entire Site, and where possible, land up to at least 50m outside the Site. Extending the survey outside of the Site boundary ensures that any Setts located within the potential works area and that may be affected by the proposed works are found.

The survey area was systematically searched setts and other characteristic signs of badger activity such as latrines, paths (only confirmed badger paths were recorded, i.e. there was a clear link to a sett or additional evidence of badger activity nearby), footprints, hairs (caught on fences and in sett entrances) and feeding signs. For each badger sett identified, the number of entrances and level of use were recorded and the sett was then classified according to the criteria used in the National Badger Surveys (Cresswell *et al.*, 1990; Wilson *et al.*, 1997). Sett grid references were established using a hand-held GPS unit (Garmin eTrex 10).

Limitations

Badgers may dig holes and create new setts in a short space of time and the status of existing setts may also be subject to change over time. Therefore, this survey presents a snapshot of badger activity at the time it was completed and takes no account of any changes that may have occurred since the survey.

Amphibians

An initial assessment of the Site for Great Crested Newts was made during the walkover survey and looking at Figures and aerial photos. Whilst the main road is considered a significant barrier to Great Crested Newts it was decided that the closest pond would be surveyed and assessed for its suitability for Great Crested Newts and an eDNA survey carried out.

Numerous attempts were made to gain access however it was not a suitable time for the landowner, and no access was permitted to the pond 85m to the south of the Site.

Reptiles

The reptile survey method was based on the standard accepted practice (Froglife 1999, Gent and Gibson, 2003). Artificial refugia were deployed within habitats considered suitable for reptiles, Artificial refugia are materials such as roofing felt, tin or corrugated onduline that warm up fast and retain heat for longer than the ground or surrounding vegetation. Reptiles are exothermic and will use artificial

refuges to shelter under in order for their bodies to reach a temperature required for activity. Using artificial refuges therefore enables easier detection of reptiles and is an established method for collecting data on reptiles.

A total of 42 artificial refugia (roofing felt - 28 and corrugated onduline - 14) were distributed in suitable reptile habitat within the Site boundary on 8 April 2025. Survey visits were conducted at suitable weather conditions and at a time appropriate to the season (Gent and Gibson 2003), between 25 April 2019 and 14 June 2025. Suitable weather conditions are generally considered to be between 10°C and 18°C with intermittent sunshine and little or no wind or rain. However, it is possible to carry out surveys in warmer conditions dependant on local conditions on the site and the location of individual refugia. During the survey visits, refugia checks were combined with a direct observation survey, which involves visually searching suitable locations for basking reptiles.

Seven surveys were conducted in suitable weather conditions with at least 2 days between survey visits.

Limitations

The survey method was undertaken to establish the presence or likely absence of reptiles within the zone of influence. To gain a greater understand of population density it is usually necessary to carry out a higher number of surveys. However given the restricted nature of the habitats present, the density of reptile refugia distributed (greater than 10 per hectare of suitable habitat) and the use of experienced surveyors it was considered that enough information was gathered to make a reasonable calculation of population density.

Appendix 4

Site Photos



Photo 1: Rye-grass leys on Site



Photo 2: Herb-rich leys on Site



Photo 3: Other neutral grassland (g1)



Photo 4: Arrhenatherum neutral grassland on road verge



Photo 5: Arrhenatherum neural grassland on field margins



Photo 6: Tall forb- Thistle and Nettle dominated habitats



Photo 7: Bramble scrub margin



Photo 8: Mixed scrub field margin



Photo 9: Hedgerow with trees (H1)



Photo 10: Hedgerow with trees (H2)



Photo 11: Hedgerow with trees (H3)



Photo 12: Hedgerow with trees (H4)



Photo 13: Hedgerow H5



Photo 14: Hedgerow H6 (left side)



Photo 15: Hedgerow H7



Photo 16: Hedgerow H8



Photo 17: Hedgerow H9

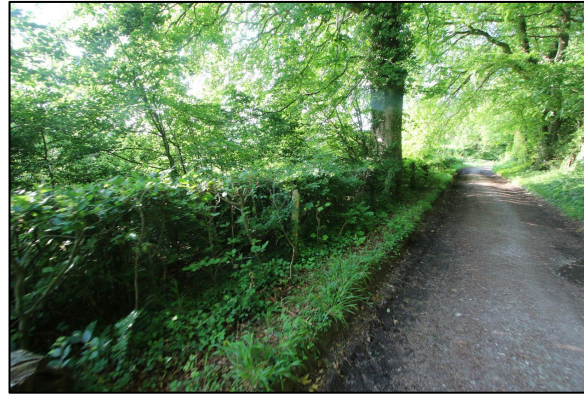


Photo 18: Hedgerow H10

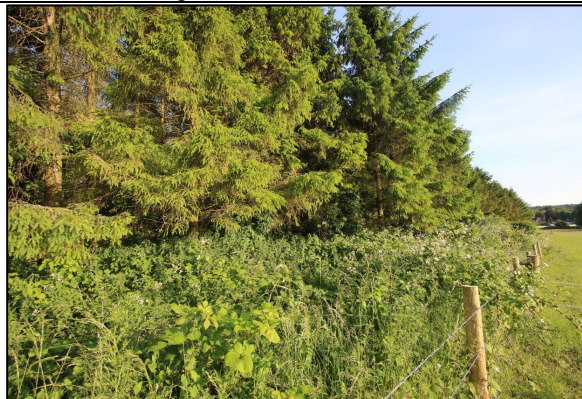


Photo 19: Hedgerow H11



Photo 20: Farm building and yard



Photo 21: Artificial track surface



Photo 22: Medium sized Beech (right side of road), eastern Site boundary



Photo 23: Veteran Ash in hedgerow H3

Appendix 5

Plant Species List

current taxon name	Common name	Site	Designation
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	1	Least concern
<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	Ground-elder	1	Least concern
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common Bent	1	Least concern
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	1	Least concern
<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	Garlic Mustard	1	Least concern
<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	Meadow Foxtail	1	Least concern
<i>Anisantha sterilis</i>	Barren Brome	1	Least concern
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet Vernal-grass	1	Least concern
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley	1	Least concern
<i>Arctium minus</i>	Lesser Burdock	1	Least concern
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass	1	Least concern
<i>Ballota nigra</i>	Black Horehound	1	Least concern
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	1	Least concern
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	False-brome	1	Least concern
<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>	Soft Brome	1	Least concern
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed	1	Least concern
<i>Cardamine flexuosa</i>	Wavy Bitter-cress	1	Least concern
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet Chestnut	1	Least concern
<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Cornflower	1	UK BAP Priority Species
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Common Knapweed	1	Least concern
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear	1	Least concern
<i>Cerastium glomeratum</i>	Sticky Mouse-ear	1	Least concern
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Fat-hen	1	Least concern
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	1	Least concern
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle	1	Least concern
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed	1	Least concern
<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood	1	Least concern
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	1	Least concern

<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	1	Least concern
<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	Smooth Hawk's-beard	1	Least concern
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Crested Dog's-tail	1	Least concern
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot	1	Least concern
<i>Daucus carota</i>	Carrot	1	Least concern
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted Hair-grass	1	Least concern
<i>Dioscorea communis</i>	Black Bryony	1	Least concern
<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	Common Couch	1	Least concern
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb	1	Least concern
<i>Epilobium obscurum</i>	Short-fruited Willowherb	1	Least concern
<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i>	Hemp-agrimony	1	Least concern
<i>Euphorbia peplus</i>	Petty Spurge	1	Least concern
<i>Festuca pratensis</i>	Meadow Fescue	1	Least concern
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red Fescue	1	Least concern
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	1	Least concern
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	1	Least concern
<i>Galium mollugo</i>	Hedge Bedstraw	1	Least concern
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill	1	Least concern
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb-Robert	1	Least concern
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens	1	Least concern
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground-ivy	1	Least concern
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	1	Least concern
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed	1	Least concern
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog	1	Least concern
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Cat's-ear	1	Least concern
<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	Red Dead-nettle	1	Least concern
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Oxeye Daisy	1	Least concern
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass	1	Least concern
<i>Lolium multiflorum</i>	Italian Rye-grass	1	
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common Bird's-foot-trefoil	1	Least concern
<i>Malus ×domesticus</i>	Apple	1	
<i>Malva moschata</i>	Musk Mallow	1	Least concern
<i>Matricaria recutita</i>	Scented Mayweed	1	Least concern
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick	1	Least concern

<i>Myosotis arvensis</i>	Field Forget-me-not	1	Least concern
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Timothy	1	Least concern
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain	1	Least concern
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain	1	Least concern
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-grass	1	Least concern
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough Meadow-grass	1	Least concern
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> agg.	Knotgrass	1	Least concern
<i>Prunus cerasifera</i>	Cherry plum	1	Least concern
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken	1	Least concern
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak	1	Least concern
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup	1	Least concern
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	1	Least concern
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog-rose	1	Least concern
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble	1	Least concern
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock	1	Least concern
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock	1	Least concern
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	1	Least concern
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i>	Salad Burnet	1	Vulnerable (native ssp. <i>sanguisorba</i>)
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common Ragwort	1	Least concern
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel	1	Least concern
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Champion	1	Least concern
<i>Silene latifolia</i>	White Champion	1	Least concern
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sow-thistle	1	Least concern
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge Woundwort	1	Least concern
<i>Tamus communis</i>	Black Bryony	1	Least concern
<i>Taraxacum</i>	Dandelion agg.	1	Least concern
<i>Tilia xeuropaea</i>	English Lime	1	
<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>	Goat's-beard	1	Least concern
<i>Trifolium dubium</i>	Lesser Trefoil	1	Least concern
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover	1	Least concern
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	1	Least concern
<i>Tripleurospermum inodorum</i>	Scentless Mayweed	1	Least concern
<i>Ulmus</i> sp.	Elm	1	Least concern
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle	1	Least concern

<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common Field Speedwell	1	
<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	Ivy-leaved Speedwell	1	Least concern
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved Speedwell	1	Least concern
<i>Vicia sativa subsp. segetalis</i>	Common Vetch	1	Least concern
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush Vetch	1	Least concern

Key

Nomenclature – Follows the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland Plant Distribution Database: ddb-taxon-list-2025-06-17 accessed September 2025.

Brackets refers to Stace, C. (2019) New Flora of the British Isles. 4th Edition.

UK Red list = Stroh, P., Prescott, O., Bateman, R., Cooke, E., Cousins, M., Fay, M., Finger, A., Harrower, C., Jones, A., Lansdown, A., Leach, S., Macdonald, I., Mills, A., Pearman, D., Prendergast, A., Rich, T., Rumsey, F., Woodman, J., Walker, K. (2025) A new vascular plant Red List for Great Britain. British & Irish Botany Vol. 7 No. 3 - Special Issue: GB Red List. Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland.

Appendix 6

Ground Level Tree Assessment for Bats Results Table

Bat Tree Inspection Recording Form											
Site		Surveyor			Date		Conditions/constraints				
Home Farm		Claire Clarke			08/04/2025		Conditions were optimum for surveying				
Tree					Potential Roost Feature(s)				Assessment		
Ref	GPS	Species	DBH	Height	Type*	Aspect	Height	Description	Suitability	Access/Further survey/Recommendations	Constraints
1	501	Ash	1.5m	15m	IP			Dense mat of ivy	BRP-I	Adequate compensation for loss of PRF and PWMS	Ivy covered may mask features
2	502	Horse Chestnut	1.25	15m	CR	S	6M	<u>Tree located off site.</u> Rotten limb on southern aspect with splits on underside	BRP-M	Climb and endoscope if works will impact on the tree	
2	502	Horse Chestnut	1.25m	15m	KH	N and S	various	<u>Tree located off site.</u> Knot holes on north and southern aspects	BRP-M	Climb and endoscope if works will impact on the tree	
3	503	Beech	1.5m	20m	KH			<u>Tree Located off site.</u> Knot Holes	BRP-M	Climb and endoscope if works will impact on the tree	Trees located off site and therefore difficult to see all aspects
4	504	Beech	1.5m	20m	CR			<u>Tree Located off site.</u> Large split of trunk	BRP-M	Climb and endoscope if works will impact on the tree	Trees located off site and therefore difficult to see all aspects
5	509	Ash	2m	10m	BR			Massive trunk mostly rotted out and ivy covered. Possibly holes leading up into limbs.	BRP-M	Endoscope and search with torch. Can be undertaken from a ladder, not suitable for climbing due to rot.	Ivy covered may mask features
6	510	Ash	1.5m	10m	IP			Ivy covered	BRP-I	Adequate compensation for loss of PRF and PWMS	Ivy covered may mask features

7	511	Ash	1.75m	10m	IP			Ivy covered	BRP-I	Adequate compensation for loss of PRF and PWMS	Ivy covered may mask features
8	512	Ash	2m	10m	IP			Ivy covered	BRP-I	Adequate compensation for loss of PRF and PWMS	Ivy covered may mask features
9	513	Ash	2m	10m	IP, BR			Rotten heartwood and ivy covered	BRP-I	Adequate compensation for loss of PRF and PWMS	Ivy covered may mask features
10	-	Beech	1.5m	20m	various			<u>Line of beech trees located off site.</u> Features on most trees, some with jackdaw nests in.	BRP-M	Climb and endoscope if works will impact on the tree	Trees located off site and therefore difficult to see all aspects

*WH: woodpecker hole	KH: knot hole	PC: pruning cut	TO: tear-out	CF: compression fork	WE: weld	SN: snag	IP: ivy plating	CR: crack
DF: desiccation fissure	BR: butt-rot	HB: hazard beam	FL: fluting	LS: lightning strike	WO: wound	SH: shatter	LB: lifting bark	CA: canker