

Land off Windsor Drive, Devizes
Wiltshire

Ecological Appraisal

March 2026

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Executive Summary

- i) **Introduction.** Aspect Ecology was commissioned by Robert Hitchins Ltd in November 2024 to undertake an Ecological Appraisal in respect of proposed development of land off Windsor Drive, Devizes.
- ii) **Proposals.** The proposals are for development of the site to provide up to 40 new residential dwellings, with associated open space and access.
- iii) **Survey.** The site was surveyed in March 2025 with mapping of habitats based on the UK Habitat Classification system. In addition, a general appraisal of fauna was undertaken to record the potential presence of any protected, rare or notable species, with specific surveys conducted in respect of bats and Badger. Desk study information has also been gathered from the local records centre and online resources.
- iv) **Ecological Designations.** The site itself is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations. The nearest statutory designation is Roundway Down and Covert Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), approximately 1.8km north-west of the site. The nearest European designation is Salisbury Plains SAC and SPA, approximately 6.6km south-east of the site. The nearest non-statutory designation is Kennet & Avon Canal Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which is located approximately 0.2km north of the site. All the ecological designations in the surrounding area are physically well separated from the site and are unlikely to be adversely affected by the proposals.
- v) **Habitats.** The site is dominated by arable land not forming an important ecological feature. Features of ecological importance include the two native hedgerows at the boundaries which qualify as BAP Priority Habitat hedgerows. Hedgerows are fully retained under the proposals and will be protected during construction. Enhancements to the site hedgerow resource will be implemented through the landscaping proposals, in line with Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.
- vi) **Protected Species.** Habitats within the site are suitable to support protected and notable fauna including roosting bats, Dormouse, Hedgehog and Brown Hare. The site also supports a number of Red Listed bird species however none of these were recorded breeding within the site. With respect to roosting bats, a single tree was identified with the potential to support multiple bats however this is to be both retained and buffered within the proposals through proposed woodland planting. In addition, appropriate mitigation measures are proposed to safeguard such species during construction and maintain the suitability of habitats in the long-term.
- vii) **Enhancements.** Ecological enhancements proposed to secure a biodiversity net gain will be set out further in the BNG strategy as a separate submission. Faunal enhancements are also proposed, to be detailed as part of a faunal enhancement plan which can be secured via a suitably-worded planning condition.
- viii) **Summary.** In summary, the proposals have sought to minimise impacts on biodiversity and subject to the implementation of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures, the proposals would not result in significant harm to biodiversity.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Proposals

- 1.1.1 Aspect Ecology was commissioned by Robert Hitchins Ltd in November 2024 to undertake an Ecological Appraisal in respect of the proposed development of land off Windsor Drive, Devizes, Wiltshire, centred at grid reference SU 01803 61914 (see Plan 6969/ECO1), hereafter referred to as 'the site'.
- 1.1.2 The proposals are for development of the site to provide up to 40 new residential dwellings, with associated open space and access.

1.2 Site Overview

- 1.2.1 The site is located in Devizes, Wiltshire within an urban-edge context. The site is bound to the north by scrub and arable land, Windsor Drive to the west and arable land and allotments to the south, beyond which lies the town of Devizes. Agricultural land bounds the site to the east, with further arable land beyond.
- 1.2.2 The site predominantly comprises a triangular-shaped arable field with narrow modified grassland field margins. The site is bound by hedgerows along the east and south. Small areas of mixed scrub, Bramble scrub and modified grassland are also present within the site.

1.3 Purpose of the Report

- 1.3.1 This report documents the methods and findings of the baseline ecology surveys and desktop study carried out in order to establish the existing ecological interest of the site, informing an appraisal of the likely ecological effects of the proposals. The importance of the habitats and species present is evaluated. Where necessary, avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures are proposed to safeguard any significant existing ecological interest within the site. Where appropriate, opportunities for ecological enhancement are identified with reference to national conservation priorities and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs). Habitats are also assessed under Statutory Biodiversity Metric Guidance to inform the pre-development biodiversity value of the site in regard to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

2 Methodology

2.1 Desktop Study

- 2.1.1 In order to compile background information on the site and its immediate surroundings Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC) was contacted in November 2024. Data were requested from within a search area extending 2km from the boundary of the site.
- 2.1.2 Information on statutory designations was obtained from the online Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) database¹, which uses data provided by Natural England, from within a search area extending to 25km from the site. The MAGIC database was also searched to identify the known presence of any Priority Habitats within or adjacent the site.
- 2.1.3 In addition, the Woodland Trust database² was searched for any records of ancient, veteran or notable trees within or adjacent to the site.
- 2.1.4 The information received from these organisations is discussed in the text and reproduced where appropriate at on Plan 6969/ECO2.

2.2 Habitat Surveys

- 2.2.1 The site was surveyed in March 2025 to ascertain the general ecological value of the land contained within the boundaries of the site and to identify the main habitats and ecological features present.
- 2.2.2 The site habitat types were identified and mapped in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification system (version 2.01)³, together with an assessment of the species composition and condition of each habitat. This technique provides an inventory of the habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential for botanical interest which require further survey. Any such areas identified can then be examined in more detail through Phase 2 surveys. This method was extended in line with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal⁴ to record details on the actual or potential presence of notable or protected species.
- 2.2.3 In line with guidance⁵, the fine scale minimum mapping unit of 25sqm or 5m in length has been used where appropriate.
- 2.2.4 The nomenclature used for plant species is based on the Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) taxon list⁶.

Habitat Condition Assessment

- 2.2.5 To determine the pre-development biodiversity value of the site for the BNG calculation, the condition of habitats has been assessed in accordance with the methodology set out in

¹ Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC), at <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

² Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory, at <https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

³ UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.01* (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)

⁴ Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2013) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*.

⁵ *The UK Habitat classification User Manual*. Version 1.1. 2020

⁶ <https://bsbi.org/taxon-lists>

the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Technical Annex⁷ and using professional judgement. Condition assessment data was collected during the March 2025 survey.

2.3 Faunal Surveys

- 2.3.1 General faunal activity, such as mammals or birds observed visually or by call during the course of the surveys was recorded. Particular attention was also paid to the potential presence of protected, rare or notable species, with specific survey work undertaken for bats, Badger *Meles meles* and breeding birds as described below.

Bats⁸

Preliminary Appraisal

- 2.3.2 A review was undertaken of the desk study information obtained to identify any known constraints in relation to bats, the bat species recorded and habitats likely to be used by bats within the site and the surrounding area. This included a review of background records, known designations including Special Area of Conservation (SAC)s or SSSIs relevant to bats and an appraisal of OS mapping and aerial photography to identify habitats likely to be of value to bats.
- 2.3.3 During the initial habitat survey, the potential suitability of the site for bats in relation to roosting habitats, potential flight-paths and foraging habitats (termed a 'daytime bat walkover') was investigated. Features were assessed as of negligible, low, moderate or high potential suitability for roosting, foraging and commuting, based on the framework set out under BCT guidance. This appraisal has informed the scope of the survey work undertaken as set out below.

Trees

- 2.3.4 Trees were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats based on the presence of features such as holes, cracks, splits or loose bark. Trees were categorised as supporting Potential Roost Features (PRFs), Further Assessment Required (FAR) or supporting no suitable features.
- 2.3.5 **Ground Level Tree Assessment.** Where practical, trees that may be impacted by the development proposals were subject to a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) based on relevant guidance⁹ with PRFs categorised as PRF-I (only suitable for individual or small numbers of bats) or PRF-M (suitable for multiple bats). Any PRFs identified were inspected using binoculars from ground level for any signs indicating possible use by bats, such as staining, scratch marks or bat droppings. Where accessible from ground level, PRFs were subject to close inspection using a torch.

⁷ Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Annex 1 – Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology

⁸ Surveys based on: Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023) UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. CIEEM; and Bat Conservation Trust (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn).

⁹ Bat Conservation Trust (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn).

Badger¹⁰

2.3.6 A Badger survey was carried out in March 2025. The survey comprised two main elements. The first element involved searching for evidence of Badger setts. For any setts that were encountered, each sett entrance was noted and mapped. The following information was recorded:

- Number and location of well used and active entrances; these are clear from any debris or vegetation and are obviously in regular use and may, or may not, have been excavated recently;
- Number and location of inactive entrances; these are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves and twigs in the entrance or have plants growing in or around the edge of the entrance; and
- Number of disused entrances; these have not been in use for some time, are partly or completely blocked and cannot be used without considerable clearance. If the entrance has been disused for some time all that may be visible is a depression in the ground where the hole used to be and the remains of the spoil heap.

2.3.7 The second element involved searching for signs of Badger activity such as well-worn paths and push-throughs, snagged hair, footprints, latrines and foraging signs, so as to build up a picture of any use of the site by Badger.

Breeding Birds¹¹

2.3.8 The use of the site by breeding birds was assessed over three survey visits, each undertaken on a separate day in April, May and June 2025. Birds observed or heard within the site were recorded in accordance with a method modified from the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO's) Common Bird Census technique¹².

2.3.9 On each survey occasion a route through the site was walked by an experienced ornithologist. Note was made of all birds either seen or heard. These 'registrations' were annotated on a site plan using standard BTO codes for each bird species and appropriate abbreviations.

2.3.10 This survey methodology has the advantage over other survey methods of mapping each registration to a specific point within the site and is therefore able to identify those areas containing the highest density and diversity of bird species.

2.3.11 The dates of each survey, together with a summary of the weather conditions are shown in Table 2.1 below.

¹⁰ Based on: Mammal Society (1989) Occasional Publication No. 9 – Surveying Badgers

¹¹ Surveys based on methodology within: Baille *et al.* RA (2010) *Breeding Birds in the Wider Countryside: their conservation status*, BTO Research Report No. 385, BTO, Thetford.

¹² Marchant (1983) Common Birds Census Instructions. Available at: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birdtrends/2020/methods/common-birds-census>

Table 2.1. Breeding bird survey dates and weather conditions.

Survey Date	Weather Conditions			
	Wind (BF)	Temp(°C)	Cloud Cover (%)	Precipitation (0-5)
28/04/2025	1	14-16	100	0
17/05/2025	3-4	16-18	55	0
13/06/2025	3-4	18-20	60	0

BF0 = calm, BF12 = hurricane force

2.4 Survey Constraints and Limitations

- 2.4.1 Not all of the species that occur in each habitat will necessarily be present or detectable during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent during different seasons. The habitat survey was undertaken outside the optimal season. However, the broad habitat types present within the site were able to be identified sufficiently for the purpose of this report, and to enable an adequate assessment of the intrinsic ecological interest of the site to be made.
- 2.4.2 Note was made of any invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) that were observed during surveys on an encounter basis only, no specific invasive species survey was conducted. The detectability of such species varies according to factors such as the time of year or site management regime and therefore the absence of invasive species should not be assumed even if no such species were recorded during the surveys undertaken.
- 2.4.3 Densely vegetated habitats within the site are more difficult to survey for the presence of field signs of species such as Badger. Although dense scrub vegetation is present within the site, no push throughs or other evidence of Badger was recorded at the scrub margins, and it is therefore considered that the survey results do provide an accurate baseline against which to assess likely impacts on Badger of the proposals.

2.5 Ecological Evaluation Methodology

- 2.5.1 The evaluation of ecological features and resources is based on professional judgement whilst also drawing on the latest available industry guidance and research. The approach taken in this report is based on that described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018)¹³, which identifies 'important ecological features' within a defined geographical context (i.e. international, national, regional, county, district, local or site importance). Further details are provided at Appendix 6969/1.

2.6 Relevant Planning Policy

National Policy Approach to Biodiversity in the Planning System

- 2.6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹⁴ describes the Government's national policies on 'conserving and enhancing the natural environment' (Chapter 15). NPPF is

¹³ CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine, ver. 1.3 (updated September 2024)

¹⁴ Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024) *National Planning Policy Framework*

accompanied by Planning Practice Guidance on 'Biodiversity, ecosystems and green infrastructure' and ODPM Circular 06/2005¹⁵.

- 2.6.2 NPPF takes forward the Government's strategic objective to halt overall biodiversity loss¹⁶, as set out at Paragraph 187, which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

'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'

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

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

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

- 2.6.4 The above approach encapsulates the 'mitigation hierarchy' described in British Standard BS 42020:2019¹⁷, which sets out the following step-wise process:

- **Avoidance** – avoiding adverse effects through good design;

¹⁵ ODPM (2006) Circular 06/2005: Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – A Guide to Good Practice

¹⁶ DEFRA (2011) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services

¹⁷ British Standards Institution (2013) Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development, BS 42020:2019

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

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

Local Policy

2.6.6 Wiltshire Council adopted their Core Strategy in 2015 which, outlines the Council's vision and strategy for the county. Additionally, the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan was also adopted in 2015.

Adopted Core Strategy (2015)

2.6.7 The Core Strategy Development Plan includes the following policies and strategies which are relevant to biodiversity and ecology:

- Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and geodiversity
- Core Policy 51: Landscape
- Core Policy 52: Green infrastructure
- Core Policy 69: Protection of the River Avon SAC

Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan (2015)

2.6.8 The Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan (July 2015) includes the following policies relevant to ecology and biodiversity:

- ESD1 – Environment and Sustainability

3 Ecological Designations

3.1 Statutory Designations

- 3.1.1 The statutory designations of ecological importance that occur within the local area around the site are shown on Plan 6969/ECO2.
- 3.1.2 The nearest European designation is Salisbury Plains SAC and Special Protection Area (SPA), approximately 6.6km south-east. Salisbury Plains SAC is a composite site that qualifies under Article 4.4 of the EC Directive (92/43/EEC) as it hosts the Annex I species *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grassland, semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland facies (*Festuco-Brometalia*), semi-natural dry grassland and scrubland facies (*Festuco-Brometalia*) including important orchid sites, as well as hosting Annex II Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas* (*Eurodryas*, *Hypodryas*) *aurinia*. Salisbury Plains SPA qualifies under Article 4.1 of the EC Directive (79/409/EEC) as it is used regularly by more than 10% of the Great British breeding population of Stone Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* and 1% of wintering Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, and also qualifies under Article 4.2 of the EC Directive as it supports nationally important of migratory populations of approx. 20% Quail *Coturnix coturnix* and 1% of Hobby *Falco subbuteo*. The site also supports low numbers of Annex I Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* and Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*. The next nearest European designation Pewsey Downs SAC, located approx. 7.5km east of the site.
- 3.1.3 The nearest statutory nature conservation designation to the site is Roundway Down and Covert SSSI, located approximately 1.8km north-west of the site. Roundway Down and Covert SSSI is designated for its chalk downland which supports a range of habitats and an assemblage of chalk downland butterflies.
- 3.1.4 The next nearest statutory nature conservation designation to the site is Drews Pond Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR), approximately 2.1km south-west of the site. Drews Pond Wood LNR is designated for its habitats including woodland, coppice and meadows, in addition to supporting ancient woodland indicator species and protected species.
- 3.1.5 Natural England has developed Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) as an initial tool to help assess the risk of developments adversely affecting SSSIs, taking into account the type and scale of developments. The site sits within IRZs in relation to Roundway Down and Covert SSSI and Stert Brook Exposure SSSI, however, these IRZs do not relate to residential development.

Assessment of Proposals

- 3.1.6 The site falls outside the Salisbury Plains SAC & SPA recreational zone of influence (up to 6.4km), as defined by Wiltshire Council's 'HRA and Mitigation Strategy for Salisbury Plain SPA' (updated 2025)¹⁸. Accordingly, the proposed development site is considered to be separated from these designated wildlife sites such that the wildlife sites are unlikely to be affected by the development proposals.
- 3.1.7 Wiltshire Council also has specific guidance on nutrient neutrality for a number of the rivers within its catchment, including River Avon (Hampshire) catchment. This relates specifically to phosphorus and nitrogen, with an assessment on nutrient neutrality required and financial contribution for phosphorus credits. The proposed development would discharge

¹⁸ Wiltshire Council (2024) HRA and Mitigation Strategy for Salisbury Plain SPA

to the River Avon (Bristol) catchment, so will have no risk of effects on the River Avon (Hampshire). Wiltshire Council's Screening Opinion concluded that no adverse effects are anticipated on the SAC.

- 3.1.8 All other statutory designations are well separated from the site and are unlikely to be affected by the proposals.

3.2 Non-statutory Designations

- 3.2.1 The non-statutory designations of nature conservation interest that occur within the local area are shown on Plan 6969/ECO2. The nearest non-statutory nature conservation designation to the site is Kennet & Avon Canal Local Wildlife Site (LWS), located approximately 0.2km north of the site. The Kennet & Avon Canal LWS is designated for its Priority Habitat 'Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland' and for the open water associated with the canal. The next nearest non-statutory nature conservation designation to the site is Lay Wood, which is located approximately 1km north-east of the site.

Assessment of Proposals

- 3.2.2 The site itself is not subject to any non-statutory nature conservation designations. All non-statutory designations in the surrounding area are physically well separated from the site by existing development. Given the type and scale of the development proposals, these designations are unlikely to be affected.

3.3 Priority Habitats, Ancient Woodland and Notable Trees

- 3.3.1 There are no records of any notable or veteran trees within or adjacent to the site, as well as no Priority Habitat or ancient woodland.

Assessment of Proposals

- 3.3.2 The site itself is not subject to any Priority Habitat, ancient woodland or veteran trees such that they are unlikely to be affected.

3.4 Summary

- 3.4.1 In summary, the site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designation. The site contains Priority Habitat 'Hedgerows', although this designation affords no specific legal protection and includes nearly all hedgerows dominated by native species.

4 Habitats and Ecological Features

4.1 Background Records

4.1.1 Records of the nationally scarce White Mullein *Verbascum lychnitis* were returned from within the south extent of the site, along with the nationally scarce Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum* adjacent to the eastern site boundary. White mullein was recorded a short distance offsite in 1977, and typically occurs in rough pastures, recently cleared woodland, on railway embankments, tracksides and road verges and in quarries and waste places. The application site itself offers no suitable habitat, although the sides of the track offsite to the east, could be suitable if not too shaded, as the seed is notably persistent within the seed bank. Spiked Star-of-Bethlehem was recorded 30m east of the site in 2023 and is a plant of woodland edges, hedgerows, road verges and rough grassy banks on calcareous soils, and is a feature of road verges and green lanes in Wiltshire. The off-site track edges provide suitable habitat, although the onsite habitats are unsuitable. Neither species was recorded onsite during the survey work.

4.1.2 Records of county notable Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum* and Spotted Medick *Medicago arabica*, as well as Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, were returned from within the 1km x 1km OS grid square containing the site, albeit more specific information was not available that would allow the precise location of these records to be determined in relation to the site. Bluebell are protected from intentional picking, uprooting or destruction under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Tutsan favours moist, shady habitats such as woodland edge and hedgerows, Spotted Medick is typically encountered in strips of grassland in urban areas and by roadsides and on mown lawns, and Bluebell grows in shady woodland and hedgerows. The site offers limited habitat suitable for these species, and none was recorded during the survey work.

4.1.3 A record of Priority Species Lesser Butterfly-orchid *Platanthera bifolia*, was returned from WSBRC dated from 2015, This species requires nutrient-poor, wet heath environments that are typically acidic, and is sensitive to nutrient enrichment. There is no suitable habitat for this species within the site.

4.1.4 No evidence for the presence of any of these Priority Species was recorded within the site during the survey work undertaken.

4.2 Overview

4.2.1 The locations of habitat types and features within the site are indicated on Plan 6969/ECO3. The site predominantly comprises an arable field with narrow modified grassland field margins. The site is bound by hedgerows along the east and south. Small areas of scrub, Bramble scrub and grassland are also present within the site.

4.3 Priority Habitats

4.3.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places duties on public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their normal functions. In particular, Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats which are of principal importance for conservation in England. This list is largely derived from the 'Priority Habitats' listed under the former UK BAP, which continue to be regarded as priority habitats under the subsequent country-level biodiversity strategies.

- 4.3.2 Of the habitats within the site, the hedgerows are considered to qualify as BAP Priority Habitats and therefore constitute important ecological features. To qualify as a BAP Priority Hedgerow, the hedgerow must exceed 20m in length, be less than 5m wide and lack any gaps exceeding 20m. The hedgerow must also comprise at least 80% coverage of at least one woody UK native species. From the analysis of Countryside Survey data, it is estimated that 84% of hedgerows in Great Britain qualify. This is discussed further in the relevant habitat sections below.

4.4 Irreplaceable Habitats

- 4.4.1 Irreplaceable habitats are now defined under The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024 and include blanket bog, lowland fens, limestone pavements, coastal sand dunes, ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees, spartina saltmarsh swards and mediterranean saltmarsh scrub.

- 4.4.2 No irreplaceable habitats are present within or adjacent to the site.

4.5 Habitat Descriptions and Evaluation

- 4.5.1 The habitats and ecological features present within the site are described in Table 4.1 below. This table sets out their UK Habitat Classification Primary Habitats and Secondary Codes, and the corresponding habitat type and condition according to the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The table also indicates whether these habitats constitute an important ecological feature and sets out their level of importance, taking into account the status of habitat types and the presence of rare plant communities or individual plant species of elevated interest.

Table 4.1a. Habitat Descriptions and Evaluation – Area Habitats

Ref	UK Hab Primary Habitat/ Secondary Codes*	Statutory Biodiversity Metric Habitat Type and Condition	Description	Evaluation
-	c1 arable and horticulture 600	Cropland: winter stubble (condition assessment N/A)	The majority of the site is an arable field which had been recently ploughed at the time of the survey. Narrow field margins are present at the field margins, with species recorded including Creeping Bent <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> , Cock's-foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> , Dock <i>Rumex</i> sp., Cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i> , Common Nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> , Ivy <i>Hedera helix</i> , Field Wood-rush <i>Luzula campestris</i> , Dog-rose <i>Rosa canina</i> , Bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. and moss.	Does not form important ecological feature
G1	g4 modified grassland 10, 107, 801	Grassland: modified grassland (poor condition)	G1 forms the grassland along the road verge, which comprised a short sward of ~10-15cm. Species recorded include Cock's-foot and Yorkshire-fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i> , with herbs including Lesser Celandine <i>Ranunculus ficaria</i> , Creeping Buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , Daisy <i>Bellis perennis</i> , Common Nettle, Cleavers, Dandelion <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg., Cow Parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> and Ragwort <i>Senecio jacobaea</i> .	Does not form important ecological feature
G2	g4 modified grassland 128	Grassland: modified grassland (poor condition)	G2 formed a patch of grassland in the south-eastern corner of the site, and comprised a relatively short sward ~10-15cm with some longer tussocks. Species recorded include Perennial Rye-grass <i>Lolium perenne</i> , Creeping Bent, False Oat-grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i> and Cock's-foot, and herbs including Cleavers, Common Nettle, Bramble and Field Maple <i>Acer campestre</i> .	Does not form important ecological feature
G3	g4 modified grassland 200	Grassland: modified grassland (poor condition)	G3 formed an area of grassland at the north of the site, with a longer sward height of 10-50cm. False Oat-grass was noted to be the dominant species, with additional species recorded including Cock's-foot, Yorkshire-fog and Perennial Rye-grass, Dock, Cleavers, Cow Parsley, Cut-leaved Crane's-bill <i>Geranium dissectum</i> , Creeping Buttercup, Hedgerow Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pyrenaicum</i> , Speedwell <i>Veronica</i> sp, Lesser Celandine, Common Nettle, Dog-rose, Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , Red Dead-nettle <i>Lamium purpureum</i> and Hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> . A single semi-mature tree is present along the road verge at the west of the site.	Does not form important ecological feature
S1 & S2	h3h mixed scrub 202	Heathland and shrub: mixed scrub (poor condition)	Small patches of mixed scrub are present within the site. Scrub S1 is located at the south-eastern corner of the site and comprises Ivy, Common Nettle and Elm <i>Ulmus procera</i> . Scrub S2 at the north of the site comprised Bramble, Elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i> , Hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> , Ivy, Lords and Ladies <i>Arum maculatum</i> and Cleavers.	Does not form important ecological feature
-	h3d bramble scrub	Heathland and shrub: bramble scrub	A patch of bramble scrub was noted at the south-western corner of the site.	Does not form important ecological feature

Ref	UK Hab Primary Habitat/ Secondary Codes*	Statutory Biodiversity Metric Habitat Type and Condition	Description	Evaluation
		(condition assessment N/A)		

* Habitat types not listed as a primary habitat are indicated in brackets

UK Hab Secondary Codes:

10 – scattered scrub

107 – mown and collected

128 – tall or tussocky sward

200 – tree

202 – young trees – self-set

600 – ploughed

801 – road verge or island

Table 4.1b. Habitat Descriptions and Evaluation – Hedgerows/Line of Trees

Ref	UK Hab Primary Habitat/ Secondary Codes*	Statutory Biodiversity Metric Habitat Type and Condition	Description	Evaluation
H1	h2a native hedgerow 112, 518, 522	Native hedgerow – associated with bank or ditch (good condition)	Hedgerow H1 is present along the eastern boundary, adjacent to a public right of way. Hedgerow H1 was noted to be unmanaged and outgrown. Species recorded include Elder, Hawthorn, Hazel, Sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> , Field Maple, Blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i> and Dogwood <i>Cornus sanguinea</i> . Whilst a formal Hedgerow Regulations assessment has not been undertaken, Hedgerow H1 is assessed as likely to qualify as an important hedgerow under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 as it contains at least four woody species, it has two features (it connects with an adjacent hedgerow and comprises less than 10% gaps) and is adjacent to a footpath.	Priority habitat and ecologically 'important' under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997, likely forms important ecological feature (local value)
H2	h2a native hedgerow 203, 518, 522	Native hedgerow (good condition)	Hedgerow H2 is located along the southern boundary and was noted to be defunct. Species recorded include Ash, Elder, Hawthorn, Hazel, Sycamore, Field Maple, Cherry <i>Prunus</i> sp. and Blackthorn.	Priority habitat, forms important ecological feature (local value)

* Habitat types not listed as a primary habitat are indicated in brackets

UK Hab Secondary Codes:

112 - earthbank

203 – mature tree

518 – neglected

522 - native

4.6 Summary

- 4.6.1 On the basis of the above, the following habitats within and adjacent to the site are considered to form important ecological features:

Table 4.2. Evaluation summary of habitats forming important ecological features.

Habitat	Level of Importance
Hedgerows	Local

- 4.6.2 Other habitats present within the site include arable, modified grassland, mixed scrub, and bramble scrub. Whilst almost no habitat is without some limited ecological value at the site scale, these habitats do not form intrinsically important ecological features, being highly anthropogenically modified, ubiquitous in the local area, and easily recreated.

4.7 Assessment of Proposals

- 4.7.1 The proposed development has followed the mitigation hierarchy approach as set out under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with consideration given first to avoidance, followed by mitigation and compensation.
- 4.7.2 In line with this hierarchy, habitats forming important ecological features are largely retained under the proposals avoiding significant habitat losses, with built development focused within areas of lower value habitat including modified grassland and arable cropland. Losses of these habitats, not forming important ecological features, will be addressed as part of the overall balance of biodiversity net gain.
- 4.7.3 A discussion of effects and any requirements for mitigation or compensation in relation to individual habitats of ecological importance is set out below.

Hedgerows

- 4.7.4 All hedgerows are to be retained and will be protected during construction works in line with standard practice, as detailed further at Chapter 6.

Other Development Impacts

- 4.7.5 Standard measures will be implemented to minimise construction effects such as dust deposition and surface run-off of contaminants or silt, whilst implementation of a drainage strategy as part of the completed development will contribute towards nutrient neutrality. Ongoing management of retained habitats and open spaces will allow for management of recreational activity to minimise disturbance to sensitive habitats and wildlife. Further detail is set out at Chapter 6 below.

5 Faunal Use of the Site

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 During the survey work, general observations were made of any faunal use of the site with particular attention paid to the potential presence of protected or notable species. Specific survey work was undertaken in respect of bats, Badgers and birds, the results of which are set out below.

5.2 Priority Species

- 5.2.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places duties on public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their normal functions. In particular, Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of species which are of principal importance for conservation in England. This list is largely derived from the 'Priority Species' listed under the former UK BAP, which continue to be regarded as Priority Species under the subsequent country-level biodiversity strategies.
- 5.2.2 During the survey work undertaken, the Priority Species House Sparrow and Skylark were recorded within the site. This is discussed further below.

5.3 Bats

- 5.3.1 **Legislation.** All British bats are classed as European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and are also listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). As such, both bats and their roosts (breeding sites and resting places) receive full protection under the legislation (see Appendix 6969/2). If proposed development work is likely to result in an offence a licence may need to be obtained from Natural England which would be subject to appropriate measures to safeguard bats. Given all bats are protected species, they are considered to represent important ecological features. Several bat species are also S41 Priority Species.
- 5.3.2 **Background Records.** Records of Pipistrelle sp. were returned from within two 1km x 1km OS grid square containing the site, albeit specific information was not available that would allow the precise location of these records to be determined in relation to the site. Information received from the WSBRC also included records of Whiskered Bat *Myotis mystacinus*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*, Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, *Myotis* sp, Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Leisler's Bat *Nyctalus leisleri*, Bechstein's Bat *Myotis bechsteinii*, Natterer's Bat *Myotis nattereri*, Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, Greater Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, Nathusius' Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus* within 2km of the site.

Survey Results and Evaluation

Preliminary Appraisal

- 5.3.3 As detailed above, records of bats have been returned for the area surrounding the site. These species are largely typical given the region and the types of habitats present in the wider area of the site, although Greater Horseshoe bat, Lesser Horseshoe Bat and

Barbastelle are of particular interest given their very rare status, whilst Leisler's Bat, Nathusius' Pipistrelle and Serotine are considered rare within Southern England. The desk study does not indicate any ecological designations within 10km of the site which are identified for their bat interest.

5.3.4 Habitats within the wider area of the site largely comprise open farmland, with features including woodlands and watercourse corridors likely to be of elevated interest for bats. Notably, the Kennet & Avon Canal Local Wildlife Site LWS, located approximately 0.2km north of the site, as well as the River Evenlode and Blenheim Park, supporting numerous ancient and veteran trees, are located within 3km of the site. The site is bounded by residential development to the west, although a reasonable network of hedgerows with frequent associated trees extends to the east and south of the site, providing moderate connectivity to Pinsley Wood just over 1km to the east. Connectivity appears more limited to the north of the site, where strong hedgerow linkages are lacking and with the settlement of Long Hanborough a short distance to the north.

5.3.5 Within the site, a single tree has been identified as potentially suitable to support roosting bats, detailed further below. A preliminary assessment of habitats in terms of their likely value for foraging and commuting bats is set out in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1. Assessment of value of habitats within the site for foraging and commuting bats

Commuting (potential flight-paths)	Foraging habitats
Hedgerow network forms continuous habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape to the east and south of site – high potential suitability. Negligible commuting routes along the western boundary.	Small areas of semi-natural habitat including grassland and scrub – low potential suitability. Arable fields unlikely to support foraging activity away from boundary hedgerows – low potential suitability.

Roosting – Trees

Assessment of Roosting Potential

5.3.6 Trees within the site were subject to an initial assessment for their suitability to support roosting bats. Where practical, trees have been subject to a ground level tree assessment (GLTA). Trees identified as supporting PRFs or identified as FAR are indicated on Plan 6969/ECO3. The results of this assessment are summarised in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2. Tree assessment results

Tree Ref.	Species	Assessment and potential roosting features	Summary
T1	Ash	Mature tree with 2x rot holes on northern elevation at ~5m and ~6m high on end of branch overhanging site, 3x rot holes on northern elevation above previous branch on another branch overhanging site, large rot hole near trunk on northern elevation ~6m high, rot hole on branch facing west ~8m high, knot hole facing north ~10m high and ivy cover.	PRF-I (x1) & PRF-M (x8)

5.3.7 All remaining trees within the site, not detailed within the table above, are assessed to provide negligible potential opportunities for roosting bats.

Assessment of Proposals

Roosting

Trees

- 5.3.8 It is understood that the trees within the site, including the tree described above with potential bat roost features, are to be retained within the proposals, such that in the event that bats are present within the tree they will remain unaffected. As such, subject to the implementation of the recommendation outlined at Chapter 6 below in relation to lighting, it is considered that bats will be fully safeguarded under the proposals.

Foraging and Commuting

- 5.3.9 The hedgerows and scrub within the site are to be retained under the proposals, whilst new tree, hedgerow, woodland and shrub planting will improve connectivity through the site and increase the foraging potential and connectivity of the site. The hedgerows will also be safeguarded through the implementation of protection and safeguarding measures as set out in Chapter 6 below. However, bats could be impacted by lighting associated with the proposed development, and accordingly a sensitive lighting scheme is proposed as detailed further at Chapter 6.
- 5.3.10 Accordingly, subject to the implementation of the recommendations outlined at Chapter 6 below, along with other ecological enhancements, it is considered that the conservation status of local bat populations will be fully safeguarded under the scheme.

5.4 Badger

- 5.4.1 **Legislation.** Badger receives legislative protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (see Appendix 6969/2), and as such should be assessed as an important ecological feature. The legislation aims to protect this species from persecution, rather than being a response to an unfavourable conservation status, as the species is in fact common over most of Britain.
- 5.4.2 Licences can be obtained from Natural England for development activities that would otherwise be unlawful under the legislation. The types of activity that should be licensed are described in the relevant best practice guidance.^{19, 20}
- 5.4.3 **Survey Results and Evaluation.** Survey results and evaluation in respect of Badger are set out in a Confidential Appendix separate to this report.

5.5 Dormouse

- 5.5.1 **Legislation.** Dormouse is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and is a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Such legislation affords protection to individuals of the species and their breeding sites and places of rest (see Appendix 6969/2). Dormouse is

¹⁹ English Nature (2002) *Badgers and Development*

²⁰ Natural England (2011) *Badgers and Development: A Guide to Best Practice and Licensing, Interim Guidance Document*

also a S41 Priority Species. On this basis, Dormouse is considered to form an important ecological feature.

- 5.5.2 **Background Records.** No records of Dormouse within or immediately adjacent to the site were returned from the desktop study. Data returned from WSBRC included three records of Dormouse, the closest of which was located 0.8km to the north-east of the site, dating from 2008.
- 5.5.3 Previous survey work was undertaken by Nicholas Pearson Associates between October and November 2012²¹. A single Dormouse nest was recorded within the eastern boundary of field F2.
- 5.5.4 **Evaluation.** The site contains suitable habitat for Dormouse in the form of areas of hedgerows and scrub. However, the majority of the site is dominated by arable land which is unsuitable for Dormouse, and the site is separated from the records by the canal.
- 5.5.5 Nest tube surveys undertaken in by Nicholas Pearson Associates in 2012 confirmed the presence of Dormouse, with evidence in the form of a single nest found along the eastern boundary of the arable field adjacent to the north of the site.
- 5.5.6 Given the presence of a well-connected hedgerow network, it is likely Dormouse is present, albeit at low densities throughout the site.
- 5.5.7 Nevertheless, the site is located within the known distribution of Dormice and the possibility of this species being present should be considered²².
- 5.5.8 **Assessment of Proposals.** As the site is located within the known distribution of Dormice and records were returned from within 2km of the site, it is assumed Dormice are likely present within suitable on-site habitats. Furthermore, previous survey work in 2012 identified. All hedgerows and scrub are to be retained under the proposals. Therefore, a number of precautionary safeguards are outlined at Chapter 6 to safeguard Dormouse should they be present during construction. Additionally, further woodland, scrub and hedgerow planting will be created under the proposals which will enhance Dormouse habitats. Planting within the scrub and woodland planting is recommended to include dormouse friendly plants including Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, Hazel, Hawthorn and Dog-rose.

5.6 Other Mammals

- 5.6.1 **Legislation.** Several other mammal species including Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* and Otter *Lutra lutra* receive full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Otter is also a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), whilst both Water Vole and Otter are S41 Priority Species.
- 5.6.2 Other UK mammal species do not receive direct legislative protection relevant to development activities but may receive protection against acts of cruelty (for example, under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996). In addition, a number of these mammal species including Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*, Polecat

²¹Nicholas Pearson Associated (2013) Ecological Surveys Report

²² Wells, D., Chanin, P. & Gubert, L. (2025) *Hazel Dormouse Mitigation Handbook*, The Mammal Society

Mustela putorius and Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus* are S41 Priority Species and should be assessed as important ecological features.

- 5.6.3 **Background Records.** Records of Hedgehog were returned from within the 1km x 1km OS grid square containing the southern part of the site. More specific information was not available that would allow the precise location of these records to be determined in relation to the site. Data returned from WSBRC also included records of Harvest Mouse, Water Vole, Otter, Brown Hare and Polecat (Priority Species) were returned within 2km of the site. The closest record of Harvest Mouse was recorded in 1974 located approximately 0.4km east of the site. The closest record of Water Vole was recorded in 1989 located approximately 0.1km north of the site. The closest record of Otter was recorded in 2013 located approximately 0.2km north of the site. The closest record of Brown Hare was recorded in 2007 located approximately 0.5km east of the site. The closest record of Polecat was recorded in 2015 located approximately 1.9km south of the site.
- 5.6.4 **Survey Results and Evaluation.** No waterbodies are present within the site or its immediate surroundings. Habitats present within the site are unsuitable for use by Water Vole and Otter such that these species are not considered to be present within the site and they do not form a constraint to development.
- 5.6.5 No evidence of any other protected, rare or notable mammal species was recorded from within the site. Other mammal species likely to use the site, such as Fox *Vulpes vulpes*, remain common in both a local and national context, and do not receive specific legislative protection in a development context. Such species are not a material planning consideration and the loss of habitats used by these species to the proposals is of negligible significance.
- 5.6.6 The desktop study returned records of Brown Hare, Polecat and Hedgehog. Hedgehog, Polecat, Brown Hare and Harvest Mouse are Priority Species, despite Hedgehog being relatively common and widespread in England. The site contains habitats that may be used by these species, although given the small size of the site Brown Hare, Polecat, Harvest Mouse and Hedgehog are assessed as being of potential importance at a site level only.
- 5.6.7 **Assessment of Proposals.** The majority of the habitat to be removed will be arable land. The scrub will be protected during development and enhanced with further planting under the proposals. Post development the habitats present will represent an improvement for Hedgehog and potentially Harvest Mouse. Habitat losses arising from the proposals are not considered likely to have significant effects on Brown Hare and Polecat. For Hedgehog, habitat losses would also be offset by the provision of new gardens and open space. Precautionary safeguards are recommended to minimise the risk of harm to other mammals that may be present. Enhancement measures to maintain habitat connectivity for Hedgehog are recommended, as set out in Chapter 6 below.

5.7 Amphibians

- 5.7.1 **Legislation.** All British amphibians receive a degree of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Great Crested Newt is protected under the Act and is also listed as a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). As such, both Great Crested Newt and habitats used by this species are afforded protection (see Appendix 6969/2). Great Crested Newt is also a S41 Priority Species, as are Common Toad *Bufo bufo*, Natterjack Toad *Epidalea calamita*, and Pool Frog *Pelophylax lessonae*. As such, these species should be assessed as important ecological features.

5.7.2 Background Records. No records of Great Crested Newt from within or adjacent to the site were returned by the desktop study. Records of Great Crested Newt were returned from the wider area, with the closest record located approximately 0.6km west of the site, recorded in 1949. Records of Common Toad were returned from within two 1km x 1km OS grid squares containing the site. More specific information was not available that would allow the precise location of these records to be determined in relation to the site.

5.7.3 Survey Results and Evaluation. No waterbodies are present on-site or within 250m of the site. Additionally, the site itself is dominated by cropland which provides suboptimal terrestrial habitat for amphibians.

5.7.4 Assessment of Proposals. The hedgerows and longer areas of grassland offer some limited foraging and sheltering opportunities for amphibians and are to be retained and protected under the proposals. Precautionary measures in relation to vegetation clearance are set out in Chapter 6 below, to minimise the risk of harm to amphibians in the unlikely event they are present at the time of work. In the highly unlikely event that Great Crested Newt are encountered during construction, works will cease and Aspect Ecology contacted to advise further, this may involve the acquisition of a licence to enable works to continue.

5.8 Reptiles

5.8.1 Legislation. All six species of British reptile are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which protects individuals against intentional killing or injury. Sand Lizard *Lacerta agilis* and Smooth Snake *Coronella austriaca* receive additional protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), as set out at Appendix 6969/2. All six reptile species are also S41 Priority Species. As such, all reptile species should be assessed as important ecological features.

5.8.2 Background Records. Information returned from the desk study included records of Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica*, and Adder *Vipera berus* within 2km of the site. The closest record of Slow-worm was recorded in 2002 located approximately 0.6km south-west of the site. The closest record of Common Lizard was recorded in 2006 located approximately 0.8km south of the site. The closest record of Grass Snake was recorded in 2008 located approximately 1km north-west of the site. The closest record of Adder was recorded in 2011 located approximately 1.5km south of the site.

5.8.3 Survey Results and Evaluation. The majority of the site comprises cropland with very small areas of modified grassland. Given the lack of records of these species in the vicinity and the very limited suitable habitat present on site, a proportionate approach to the potential presence of reptiles would be to implement suitable precautionary safeguards using habitat modification during site clearance, as detailed in Chapter 6 below.

5.8.4 Assessment of Proposals. Subject to the implementation of suitable precautionary safeguards as outlined in Chapter 6 the proposals are unlikely to have a significant negative effect on any local reptile populations. Following development, the landscaping proposals will include increased areas of grassland and scrub, which will provide improved habitat for any reptiles which may be present and any reptiles that may be present could recolonise the improved site following their temporary displacement.

5.9 Birds

- 5.9.1 Legislation.** All wild birds and their nests receive protection under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) in respect of killing and injury, and their nests, whilst being built or in use, cannot be taken, damaged or destroyed. Species included on Schedule 1 of the Act receive greater protection and special penalties apply to legal offences (see Appendix 6969/2).
- 5.9.2 Conservation Status.** The conservation importance of British bird species is categorised based on a number of criteria including the level of threat to a species' population status²³. Species are listed as Green, Amber or Red. Red Listed species are considered to be of the highest conservation concern, being either globally threatened and/or experiencing a high level or rapid rate of population decline (>50% over the past 25 years). Numerous birds are also S41 Priority Species. Red and Amber listed species and Priority Species should be assessed as important ecological features.
- 5.9.3 Background Records.** Information returned by the desk study included records of Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (Red Listed and Priority Species), as well as Red Listed Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* within two of the 1km x 1km OS grid squares containing the site, albeit more specific information was not available that would allow the precise location of these records to be determined in relation to the site.
- 5.9.4** Additional records of Red Listed species returned from within 2km of the site included Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, all of which are also all Priority Species. Records of Priority Species Lesser Redpoll *Acanthis cabaret* and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, as well as records of Schedule 1 Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Mediterranean Gull *Ichthyaetus melanocephalus*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Merlin *Falco columbarius*, Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba*. Barn Owl is listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bird while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young, and disturb dependant young.
- 5.9.5 Survey Results and Evaluation.** Bird species observed within the site during the habitat survey included Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, House Sparrow, Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* and Great Tit *Parus major*.
- 5.9.6** Most of the birds recorded at the site are not listed as having any special conservation status, although House Sparrow is included on the Red list²⁵ as a result of declines in UK breeding populations. This species is also a S41 Priority Species. However, the habitats present are common in the surrounding area and there is no evidence to suggest the site is

²³ Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D. and Win I. (2021). 'The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. British Birds 114, p.p. 723-747.

of elevated value at a local level for this species, which remains common throughout Great Britain²⁴.

- 5.9.7 Based on the habitats within the site, a specific breeding bird survey was undertaken. A total of 24 species were recorded over the three survey visits, of which five are Red Listed species on the Birds of Conservation Concern and four are Amber Listed. No species were noted to be confirmed breeding, albeit the majority were probably breeding due to the presence of singing males potentially holding territory.

Table 5.3. Breeding bird survey results summary.

Species (BTO code)	Conservation status	Est. No. pairs	Notes
Woodpigeon (WP) <i>Columba palumbus</i>	Amber	0	Possibly breeding. Small flocks seen throughout. The arable field could act as a good food source for this species.
House Sparrow (HS) <i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Red	0	Probable breeder. 1 colony seen located along the western boundary.
Skylark (S.) <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Red	0	Probable breeder. Singing males seen but the suitability of the site is low given the narrow field margins and the arable field undergoing active cultivation and constantly changing.
House Martin (HM) <i>Delichon urbicum</i>	Red	0	Foraging over fields.
Wren (WR) <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Amber	0	Probable breeder. Singing males heard. Suitable on-site habitat is limited to the hedgerows and areas of scrub.
Starling (SG) <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Red	0	Small flocks foraging.
Dunnock (D.) <i>Prunella modularis</i>	Amber	0	Probable breeder. Numerous within most hedges.
Greenfinch (GR) <i>Chloris chloris</i>	Red	0	Possible breeder. Singing males.
Linnet (LI) <i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Red	0	Possible breeder. Small flocks seen flying over. The arable field could be a good food source for this species in summer.

- 5.9.8 An additional 15 species were recorded in the Survey Area which are not of conservation concern namely, Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Magpie *Pica pica*, Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*, Jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* and Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*. The majority of these are likely to have bred within the Survey Area.

- 5.9.9 **Assessment of Proposals.** The site supports an assemblage of breeding birds that is typical of arable land. The habitats of highest value to nesting birds include the hedgerows and the trees along the northern boundary. The arable which dominates the site provides nesting habitat to a small number of Skylark however as the crop grows through the season, the suitability becomes progressively diminished.

²⁴ Population estimates of birds in Great Britain and the United Kingdom. Musgrove et al., British Birds, 2013

- 5.9.10 All hedgerows and scrub within the site are to be retained under the proposals. Additionally further scrub, hedgerow and woodland habitats will be created under the proposals which will enhance bird nesting habitats.

5.10 Invertebrates

- 5.10.1 **Legislation.** Various invertebrate species are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). In addition, Large Blue *Phengaris arion*, Fisher's Estuarine Moth *Gortyna borelii lunata* and Lesser Whirlpool Ram's-horn Snail *Anisus vorticulus* receive protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), as set out at Appendix 6969/2. Some invertebrates are also S41 Priority Species. Where such species are present, they should be assessed as important ecological features.

- 5.10.2 **Background Records.** No records of invertebrates were returned from within or adjacent to the site. Records of Black Oil-beetle *Meloe proscarabaeus*, Brindled Beauty *Lycia hirtaria*, Buff Ermine *Spilosoma lutea*, Cinnabar *Tyria jacobaeae*, Dingy Skipper *Erynnis tages*, Duke of Burgandy *Hamearis lucina*, Dot Moth *Melanchra persicariae*, Dusky Brocade *Apamea remissa*, Figure of Eight *Diloba caeruleocephala*, Garden Tiger *Arctia caja*, Grey Dagger *Acronicta psi*, Grizzled Skipper *Pyrgus malvae*, Knot Grass *Acronicta rumicis*, Lackey *Malacosoma neustria*, Large Nutmeg *Apamea anceps*, Marsh Fritillary *Eurodryas aurinia*, Mottled Rustic *Caradrina morpheus*, Shoulder-striped Wainscot *Leucania comma*, Small Blue *Cupido minimus*, Rustic *Hoplodrina blanda*, Violet Oil-beetle *Meloe violaceus*, Wall *Lasiommata megera*, White Ermine *Spilosoma lubricipeda*, White-letter Hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album* (Priority Species) were returned by the desk study, the closest located approximately 0.1km west of the site.

- 5.10.3 **Survey Results and Evaluation.** No evidence of the presence of any protected, rare or notable invertebrate species was recorded from within the site during the UK habitat survey. The site is dominated by arable land and managed modified grassland, which are likely to only support a limited diversity of invertebrates. The site contained several areas of bare ground and occasional patches of scrub but otherwise supports relatively few micro-habitats that would indicate possible elevated value for invertebrates²⁵, such as a variable topography with areas of vertical exposed soil, areas of species-rich semi-natural vegetation; variable vegetation structure with frequent patches of tussocks combined with short turf; free-draining light soils; walls with friable mortar or fibrous dung. Accordingly, the site is likely to support only a limited diversity of invertebrates.

- 5.10.4 **Assessment of Proposals.** Habitats within the site are unlikely to support an important invertebrate assemblage and therefore the proposals are unlikely to result in harm to protected, rare or notable invertebrate populations.

5.11 Summary

- 5.11.1 On the basis of the above, a summary of the evaluation of fauna is provided below:

²⁵ Natural England (2010) Higher Level Stewardship – Farm Environment Plan (FEP) Manual, 3rd Edition

Table 5. Error! No text of specified style in document. **4.** Evaluation summary of fauna forming important ecological features.

Species / Group	Summary	Level of Importance
Bats – Roosting	One tree identified with potential to support multiple roosting bats	Local
Bats – Foraging	Limited foraging habitat in the form of hedgerows and scrub, which will be retained	Site
Bats – Commuting	The southern and eastern hedgerows provide commuting routes around the urban edge,	Local
Dormouse	Known presence in the locality with connection to the site. However, all potential habitat will be protected and enhanced.	Local
Water Vole	Absent	None
Otter	Absent	None
Great Crested Newt	Likely absent	None
Reptiles	Potential habitat limited to hedgerows, scrub and limited field margins. Post development the site will offer enhanced habitats for this group.	Site
Birds	A range of urban edge bird species utilise the hedgerows and scrub for nesting, but no bird species is considered likely to be dependent upon the site for maintenance of its local population.	Site

5.11.2 Other fauna supported by the site include non-Priority Species of mammals, amphibians and invertebrates. These species do not form important ecological features.

6 Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancement

6.1 Mitigation and Compensation

6.1.1 As set out in the previous chapters, the proposed development has followed the mitigation hierarchy approach as set out under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), with consideration given first to avoidance, followed by mitigation and compensation.

6.1.2 Based on the assessment of the proposals and ecological designations, habitats and associated fauna identified within or adjacent to the site, it is proposed that the following mitigation and compensation measures (**MC1-MC8**) are implemented under the proposals. Further detailed mitigation strategies or method statements can be secured via suitably-worded planning conditions, as recommended by relevant best practice guidance (BS 42020:2019).

Ecological Designations

6.1.3 The site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations and it is unlikely that any such designations in the surrounding area will be significantly affected by the proposals. Accordingly, no specific mitigation or compensation measures are required.

Habitats

6.1.4 **MC1 – Hedgerow and Tree Protection.** All hedgerows, scrub and trees to be retained within the proposed development should/would/will be protected during construction in line with standard arboricultural best practice (BS5837:2012) or as otherwise directed by a suitably competent arboriculturalist. This may require the use of protective fencing or other methods appropriate to safeguard the root protection areas of retained trees, scrub and hedgerows.

6.1.5 **MC2 – New Hedgerow Planting.** New native hedgerow planting will be provided under the proposals. This will ensure a minimum 10% gain in hedgerow biodiversity value and will be secured as part of the BNG strategy.

Bats

6.1.6 Potential roosting habitat provided by the tree on the southern site boundary is retained under the proposals. Impacts on foraging and commuting bats will be minimised by implementation of a sensitive lighting design, as detailed further below.

6.1.7 **MC3 – Sensitive Lighting.** Light-spill onto retained and newly created habitat, in particular the retained hedgerows, trees and scrub (especially along the southern, eastern and northern boundaries), will be minimised in accordance with good practice guidance²⁶ to reduce potential impacts on light-sensitive bats (and other nocturnal fauna). This will be achieved through the implementation of a sensitively designed lighting strategy, with consideration given to the following key factors:

²⁶ Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (2023) Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and artificial lighting at night; Stone, E.L. (2013) Bats and lighting: Overview of current evidence and mitigation guidance; ILP (2011) Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light. Institution of Lighting Professionals, GN01:2011.

- **Light exclusion zones** – lighting should be controlled in areas likely to be used by bats. Light exclusion zones or ‘dark buffers’ may be used to provide interconnected areas free of artificial illumination to allow bats to move around the site;
- **Appropriate luminaire specifications** – consideration should be given to the type of luminaires used, in particular luminaries should lack UV elements and metal halide and fluorescent sources should be avoided in preference for LED luminaries. A warm white spectrum (ideally <2,700K) should be adopted to reduce the blue light component;
- **Light barriers / screening** – new planting (e.g. hedgerows and trees) or fences, walls and buildings can be strategically positioned to reduce light spill;
- **Spacing and height of lighting units** – increasing spacing between lighting units will minimise the area illuminated and allow bats to fly in the dark refuges between lights. Reducing the height of lighting will also help decrease the volume of illuminated space and give bats a chance to fly over lighting units (providing the light does not spill above the vertical plane). Low level lighting options should be considered for any parking areas and pedestrian / cycle routes, e.g. bollard lighting, handrail lighting or LED footpath lighting;
- **Light intensity** – light intensity (i.e. lux levels) should be kept as low as possible to reduce the overall amount and spread of illumination;
- **Directionality** – to avoid light spill lighting should be directed only to where it is needed. Particular attention should be paid to avoid the upward spread of light so as to minimise trespass and sky glow;
- **Dimming and part-night lighting** – lighting control management systems can be used, which involves switching off/dimming lights for periods during the night, for example when human activity is generally low (e.g. 12.30 – 5.30am). The use of such control systems may be particularly beneficial during the active bat season (April to October). Motion sensors can also be used to limit the time lighting is operational.

Reptiles

- 6.1.8 **MC4 – Habitat Manipulation.** The habitat manipulation exercise will involve cutting suitable vegetation within the affected areas of the development footprint to a short height (~15cm) to encourage reptiles to disperse to suitable areas of retained/nearby habitat, whilst also allowing for a fingertip search of the area. Following this, a destructive search will be undertaken. Any potential refuge features, e.g. piles of rubble, heavy logs, brash piles, will be fingertip-searched by an ecologist prior to being carefully disassembled. Any reptiles encountered during the destructive search will be carefully rescued by the supervising ecologist and relocated to suitable nearby habitat. This exercise should be carried out under the supervision of a competent ecologist during the active reptile season (generally March/April to September/October, depending on prevailing weather).

Nesting Birds

- 6.1.9 Removal of vegetation may result in effects on nesting birds. Accordingly, the following approach will be adopted.
- 6.1.10 **MC5 – Nesting Bird Restrictions.** To avoid a potential offence under the relevant legislation, no clearance of suitable vegetation should be undertaken during the bird-nesting season (1st March to 31st August inclusive). If this is not practicable, any potential nesting habitat to

be removed should first be checked by a competent ecologist in order to determine the location of any active nests. Any active nests identified would then need to be cordoned off (minimum 5m buffer) and protected until the chicks have fledged. These checking surveys would need to be carried out no more than two days in advance of vegetation clearance.

Other Fauna

6.1.11 MC6 – Small Mammal Safeguards. In order to safeguard Hedgehog, Brown Hare and other small mammals should they enter the site during construction works, the following measures will be implemented:

- A watching brief should be maintained for Hedgehog, Brown Hare and other small mammals throughout any clearance works;
- Any trenches left open overnight should be provided with a means of escape, e.g. gently graded ramp or a roughened plank, in order to allow animals to escape should they enter the trench. This is particularly important if the trench fills with water;
- Any temporarily exposed open pipes or open drains should be blanked off at the end of each working day so as to prevent animals gaining access as may happen when contractors are off-site;
- Any trenches/pits should be inspected each morning to ensure no animals have become trapped overnight;
- The storage of any chemicals at the site will be contained in such a way that they cannot be accessed or knocked over by any roaming animals;
- Fires will only be lit in secure compounds away from wooded habitats and will not be allowed to remain lit during the night;
- Unsecured food and litter will not be left within the working area overnight;
- Any piles of material already present on site, particularly vegetation/leaves, etc. and any areas of dense scrub or hedgerows, shall be dismantled/removed by hand and checked for Hedgehog prior to the use of any machinery/disposal;
- Any material to be disposed of by burning, particularly waste from vegetation clearance and tree works, should not be left piled on site for more than 24 hours in order to minimise the risk of Hedgehogs or other animals occupying the pile. If this cannot be avoided, material should be stored within a container such as a skip to prevent animals from gaining access. Any material which has been stored on the ground overnight should be moved prior to burning to allow a thorough check for any animals which may have been occupying the pile;
- In the event that an injured mammal is found, the animal should be wrapped carefully in a towel and taken to a local vet immediately. If an injured Hedgehog is found the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS) can be phoned (01584 890 801).

6.1.12 MC7 – Faunal Habitat Connectivity. To maintain connectivity throughout the site for Hedgehog and other small mammals and to allow access to suitable foraging habitat

contained within residential gardens, small holes (13cmx13cm) should be created within garden fences or under gates.

6.2 Ecological Enhancements

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

Habitats

- 6.2.2 Habitat enhancements will be delivered as part of the BNG strategy, forming a separate submission. This will be informed by the following principles, according with national and local conservation priorities.
- 6.2.3 **New Planting.** Where practicable, new scrub and woodland planting within the site should be comprised of native species of local provenance, including trees and shrubs appropriate to the local area. Suitable species for inclusion within the planting could include native trees such as Oak, Birch *Betula pendula* and Field Maple, whilst native shrub species of particular benefit would likely include fruit and nut bearing species which would provide additional food for wildlife, such as Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Honeysuckle, Crab Apple *Malus sylvestris*, Hazel and Elder. Where non-native species are proposed, these should include species of value to wildlife, such as varieties listed on the RHS' 'Plants for Pollinators' database, providing a nectar source for bees and other pollinating insects.
- 6.2.4 **Wildflower Grassland and Flowering Lawn.** Within areas of open space, wildflower grassland can be created. These should be subject to a varied management regime to provide a range of sward types. Most areas should be managed as hay meadow, subject to cutting 2-3 times a year to promote a flower rich sward, whilst areas of rough, tussocky grassland can be established along woodland and hedgerow margins. As such, grassland areas will provide a rich habitat resource for invertebrate species, in turn providing increased foraging opportunities for wildlife including birds and bats. Consideration can also be given to the laying of wildflower turfs, comprising locally appropriate native species, to establish wildflower grassland. This would ensure rapid establishment of these habitats and reduce the timeframe for delivering the range of ecological benefits that are proposed. Within parks and other recreation and amenity areas, consideration can be given to seeding of flowering lawn, containing a range of herb species which respond well to frequent mowing. This will provide a further flowering and pollen resource for invertebrates.
- 6.2.5 **Scrub Planting.** Scrub habitat should be established along woodland margins, hedgerows and within grassland areas creating scrub mosaics and forming valuable ecotone habitats for a range of wildlife, including reptiles, small mammals and invertebrates.
- 6.2.6 **Wetland Features.** The opportunity exists under the proposals to create new wetland habitats as part of the Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS). Where practical these should be designed in accordance with ecological principles, incorporating measures such as shallow, sinuous margins, areas of permanent water and planting with native vegetation. Such measures will benefit a range of wetland species including birds, aquatic invertebrates and amphibians whilst also helping to attenuate surface water run-off.
- 6.2.7 **Hedgerows.** New lengths of native hedgerow planting can be provided along the boundaries of green space areas and around areas of built development. Existing hedgerows should

also be subject to supplementary planting where necessary to fill gaps and strengthen the integrity of the hedgerow.

Fauna

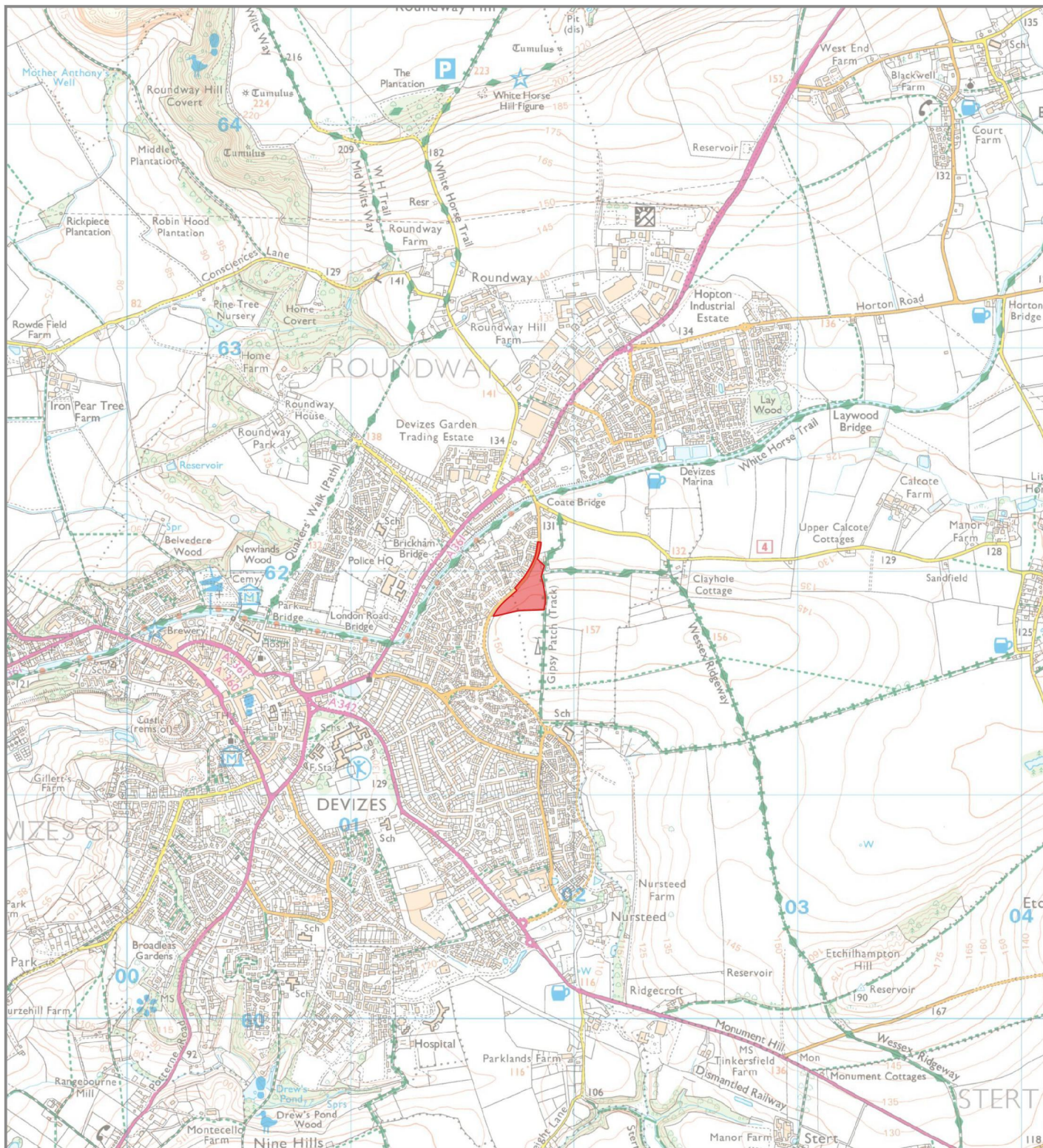
- 6.2.8 To provide additional opportunities for fauna, it is proposed that a range of new features are incorporated within the proposed development. This should include the following features, with specific measures to be detailed as part of a faunal enhancement plan which can be secured via a suitably-worded planning condition.
- 6.2.9 **Bat Boxes.** Bat boxes should be incorporated within the proposed development. The provision of bat boxes will provide new roosting opportunities for bats in the area, such as Soprano Pipistrelle, a national Priority Species. To maximise their potential use, the bat boxes should ideally be situated on suitable retained trees, erected as high up as possible and sited in sheltered wind-free areas that are exposed to the sun for part of the day, facing a south-east, south or south-westerly direction. In addition, where architectural design allows, integrated bat boxes / roost features should be incorporated into a proportion of the new build dwellings. The precise number and locations of boxes / roost features should be determined by a competent ecologist, once the relevant final development design details have been approved.
- 6.2.10 **Bird Boxes.** Bird nesting boxes should be incorporated within the proposed development, thereby increasing nesting opportunities for birds at the site. This should include integrated nest boxes within new buildings targeting species including Swift and House Sparrow, whilst boxes can be erected on retained trees. The precise number and locations of boxes should be determined by a competent ecologist, once the relevant final development design details have been approved.
- 6.2.11 **Habitat Piles and Refugia.** A proportion of any deadwood arising from vegetation clearance works should be retained within the site in a number of wood piles located within areas of new planting, new wetland habitats or areas of wildflower grassland in order to provide potential habitat opportunities for invertebrate species, which in turn could provide a prey source for a range of other wildlife. Dedicated hibernacula and refugia can also be provided for reptile and amphibian species, comprising log or rubble piles either left open or covered in soil and turfs. Loggeries can also be provided, comprising buried logs to form dead wood habitat for invertebrates such as Stag Beetle.
- 6.2.12 **Bee Bricks and Insect Boxes.** It is recommended that bee bricks be incorporated within the proposed development thereby increasing nesting opportunities for declining populations of non-swarming solitary bee populations. Ideally, bee bricks should be located within suitable south-facing walls (where architectural design allows), located at least 1m off the ground. The bricks should be unobstructed by vegetation, though within close vicinity of nectar and pollen sources. Insect boxes can also be provided within the areas of wildlife habitat in order to enhance the nesting and over-wintering locations available for a range of invertebrates, particularly solitary wasps and bees.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 Aspect Ecology has carried out an Ecological Appraisal of the proposed development, based on the results of a desktop study, habitat survey and breeding bird surveys.
- 7.2 The available information confirms that no statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations are present within or adjacent to the site, and none of the designations within the surrounding area are likely to be adversely affected by the proposals.
- 7.3 The habitat survey has established that the site is dominated by habitats not considered to be of intrinsic ecological importance, whilst the proposals have sought to retain those features identified to be of value. Where it has not been practicable to avoid loss of habitats, new habitat creation is proposed to offset losses, in conjunction with the landscape proposals.
- 7.4 The habitats within the site have the potential to support protected or otherwise notable species in small numbers, including species protected under both national and European legislation. The site has the potential to support only locally important populations of any protected or notable species, at most, due to the limited potentially suitable habitat on site. Accordingly, a number of mitigation measures have been proposed to minimise the risk of harm to these species, with compensatory measures proposed, where appropriate, in order to maintain the conservation status of local populations.
- 7.5 In conclusion, the proposals have sought to minimise impacts and subject to the implementation of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures, the proposals will not result in significant harm to biodiversity.
- 7.6 Ecological enhancements are proposed to achieve a biodiversity net gain, to be set out further as part of the BNG strategy in a separate submission.

Plan 6969/ECO1:

Site Location



Key:

Site Location

aspect ecology
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Land off Windsor Drive,
Devizes
Site Location

6969/ECO1

A/JP

February 2026

CB/JP

PROJECT

TITLE

DRAWING NO.

REV

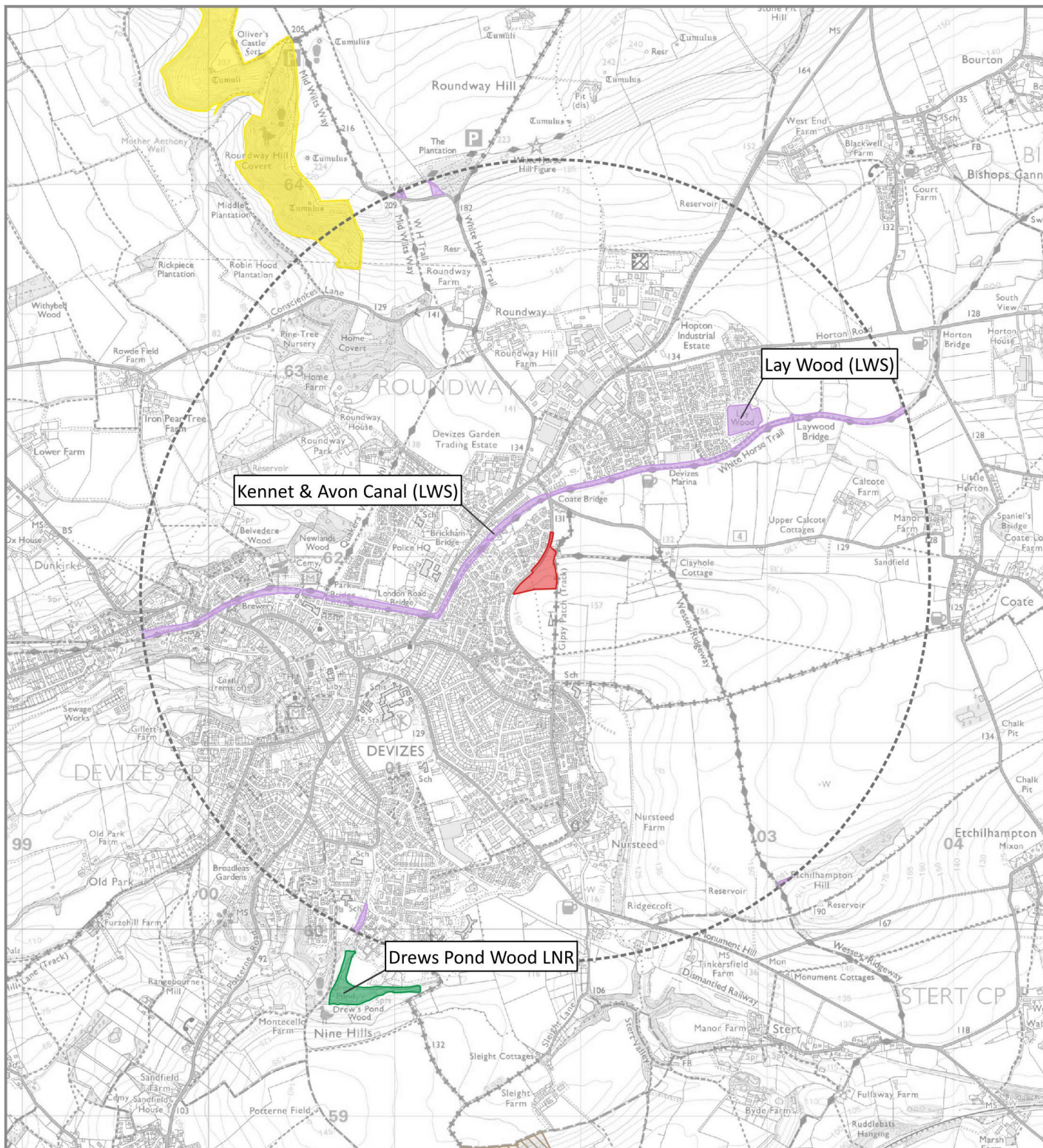
DATE

QC



Plan 6969/ECO2:

Ecological Designations



Key:

- Site Location
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Local Wildlife Site (LWS)
- Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW)
- Local Records Centre 2km Search Area

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Land off Windsor Drive,
Devizes
Ecological Designations

6969/ECO2

A/IP

February 2026

CB/JP

PROJECT

TITLE

DRAWING NO.

REV

DATE

QC



Non-statutory data provided by Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre

Plan 6969/ECO3:

Habitats and Ecological Features



- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - c1c5 winter stubble
 - g4 modified grassland
 - h3d bramble scrub
 - h3h mixed scrub
 - u1b developed land; sealed surface
 - h2a native hedgerow
 - h2a native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch
 - Tree with Potential to Support Multiple Roosting Bats
 - Tree

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Habitats and Ecological Features

6969/ECO3

B/JP

February 2026

CK/LS



Plan 6969/ECO4:

Breeding Bird Survey Results



- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - c1c5 winter stubble
 - g4 modified grassland
 - h3d bramble scrub
 - h3h mixed scrub
 - u1b developed land; sealed surface
 - h2a native hedgerow
 - h2a native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch
 - Tree with Potential to Support Multiple Roosting Bats
 - Tree

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Land off Windsor Drive, Devizes

Habitats and Ecological Features

6969/ECO3

B/JP

February 2026

CK/LS



Appendix 6969/1:

Ecological Evaluation

Evaluation Methodology

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

Importance of Ecological Features

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

Designated Sites

- Statutory sites designated or classified under international conventions or European legislation, for example World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA);

¹ CIEEM (2018) 'Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine', Version 1.3, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester (updated September 2024)

- Statutory sites designated under national legislation, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR);
- Locally designated wildlife sites, e.g. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Biodiversity Lists

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

Red Listed, Rare, Legally Protected Species

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

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

Assigning Level of Importance

6. The importance of an ecological feature should then be considered within a defined geographical context. Based on CIEEM guidance, the following frame of reference is used:
 - International (European);
 - National;
 - Regional;
 - County;
 - District;
 - Local (e.g. Parish or Neighbourhood);
 - Site (not of importance beyond the immediate context of the site).
7. Features of 'local' importance are those considered to be below a district level of importance, but are considered to appreciably enrich the nature conservation resource or are of elevated importance beyond the context of the site.
8. Where features are identified as 'important' based on the list of key sites, habitats and species set out above, but are very limited in extent or quality (in terms of habitat resource or species population) and do not appreciably contribute to the biodiversity interest beyond the context of the site, they are considered to be of 'site' importance.
9. In terms of assigning the level of importance, the following considerations are relevant:

Designated Sites

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

Habitats

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

Species

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

Appendix 6969/2:

Legislation Summary

LEGISLATION SUMMARY

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

* The nests of birds that re-use their nests as listed under Schedule ZA1, e.g. Golden Eagle, are protected against taking, damage or destruction irrespective of whether they are in use or not.
8. Offences in respect of Schedule 1 birds are subject to special, i.e. higher, penalties. Schedule 1 birds also receive greater protection such that it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly:
 - Disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or while it is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young;
 - Disturb dependent young of such a bird.

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

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

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

A sett is defined as “any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a Badger”. Natural England advice (June 2009) is that a sett is protected so long as such signs remain present, which in practice could potentially be for some time after the last actual occupation by Badger. Interference with a sett includes blocking tunnels or damaging the sett in any way
14. Licences can be obtained from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) for development activities that would otherwise be unlawful under the legislation, provided there is suitable justification. The SNCO for England is Natural England.
15. **Hedgerows Regulations 1997.** ‘Important’ hedgerows (as defined by the Regulations) are protected from removal (up-rooting or otherwise destroying). Various criteria specified in the Regulations are employed to identify ‘important’ hedgerows for wildlife, landscape or historical reasons.
16. **Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act for England and Wales 2000.** The CROW Act provides increased measures for the management and protection of SSSIs and strengthens wildlife enforcement legislation. Schedule 12 of the Act amends the species provisions of the WCA 1981, strengthening the legal protection for threatened species. The Act also introduced a duty on Government to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity and maintain lists of species and habitats for which conservation steps should be taken or promoted, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

17. **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.** Section 41 of the NERC Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as local planning authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Act, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when exercising their normal functions. 56 habitats and 943 species of principal importance are included on the S41 list. These are all the habitats and species in England that were identified as requiring action in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).
18. **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).** The Regulations enact the European Union's Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) in the UK. The Habitats Directive was designed to contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity within member states through the conservation of sites, known in the UK as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), containing habitats and species selected as being of EC importance (as listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive respectively). Member states are required to take measures to maintain or restore these natural and semi-natural habitats and wild species at a favourable conservation status.
19. The Regulations also require the compilation and maintenance of a register of European sites, to include SACs and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)² classified under Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive). These sites constitute the Natura 2000 network. The Regulations impose restrictions on planning decisions likely to significantly affect SPAs or SACs.
20. The Regulations also provide protection to European Protected Species of animals that largely overlaps with the WCA 1981, albeit the provisions are generally stricter. Under Regulation 43 it is an offence, *inter alia*, to:
 - Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European Protected Species;
 - Deliberately disturb any wild animals of any such species, including in particular any disturbance likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture their young, to hibernate or migrate, or which is likely to affect significantly their local distribution or abundance;
 - Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.
21. Similar protection is afforded to European Protected Species of plants, as detailed under Regulation 47.
22. The Regulations do provide a licensing system that permits otherwise illegal activities in relation to European Protected Species, subject to certain tests being fulfilled.

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

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