

Ecological Impact Assessment

Ashton Park Switching Station,
Trowbridge, Wiltshire

22 April 2026

Ecology
Arboriculture
Land Management



Report Details

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Site Details

Site Name and Location	Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge, Wiltshire
Central OS Grid Reference	ST 87142 57218
Client	Persimmon Homes and Barratt Homes Bristol

Boundary



Executive Summary

Site Location	The Site is located directly west of Leap Gate Road. Surrounding land use includes urban development to the north and agricultural fields and woodland blocks to the east and south.
Proposals	Detailed application for a switching station and associated landscaping to include native hedgerows and trees.
Survey Work	Desk-based study, UK Habitat Classification survey.
Designated Sites with Potential Impacts	Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA) & Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats SAC and Green Lane Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The Site lies within the Yellow Zone and the Grey Hatched Zone of the Trowbridge and Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy.
Baseline Habitats	The Site comprises a discrete area, approximately 0.1ha, containing other neutral grassland and a vegetated bund, consisting primarily of tall forbs. A small, modified grassland strip is present adjacent to Leap Gate Road.
Protected/ notable Species	The Site has suitable habitat for great crested newts (GCN), badgers, hedgehogs, reptiles and limited foraging/commuting for bats.
Mitigation and Compensation	- Loss of habitats will be compensated through planting of other neutral grassland, native hedgerows and individual trees. - A pre-commencement badger check will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist. Any works to be undertaken within 20m of an active badger sett will require a licence from Natural England. - Precautionary measures will be implemented to avoid harm to badgers, reptiles, amphibians, breeding birds and other fauna during habitat removal and construction. - No additional artificial lighting during the construction and operational phase of the development.
Biodiversity Net Gain	A separate BNG Statement and Assessment Report is provided (GE Consulting, 2026a).

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1 Introduction

This report presents the results of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for the proposed Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge, Wiltshire in relation to detailed planning application. The surveys were commissioned by Persimmon Homes and Barratt Homes Bristol.

The area within the application boundary is hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

1.1 Site Context

The Site is located directly west of Leap Gate Road. Surrounding land use includes urban development to the north and agricultural fields and woodland blocks (including Green Lane and Biss Woods) to the east and south.

1.2 Description of Proposed Development

Detailed application for an electrical switching station and associated hard and soft landscaping to include native hedgerows and trees.

1.3 Aims

The aims of this report are to:

- 🦋 Identify and describe the habitats and species likely to be affected by the proposed development and assess the ecological value of these features;
- 🦋 Identify key ecological constraints to the proposed development and evaluate the significance of any potential effects; and,
- 🦋 Provide recommendations for mitigation and enhancement opportunities in accordance with relevant planning policy, legislation and other published guidance (see **Appendix 2**).

2 Methods

2.1 Desk Study

An internet search was undertaken to identify statutory sites designated for nature conservation value within a 2km radius of the Site boundary (10km for international sites), using the Government's mapping website MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk). A search was made of MAGIC for European Protected Species (EPS) Mitigation licenses issued by Natural England within 2km of the Site boundary since 2008 and Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) within or adjacent to the Site boundaries and aerial photography of the wider area was reviewed to assess connectivity and landscape features which may be important to local biodiversity.

2.2 Extended UK Habitat Classification Survey

A Site walkover was undertaken on 10 December 2025 by Hamish Kidd BSc FISC Level 4 when weather conditions were dry with good visibility.

All habitats within the Site were identified, described and mapped during the field survey in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) (UKHab Ltd., 2023 (V2.0)) and Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Defra, 2024a) classifications for hedgerows, with other linear and point features mapped using Phase 1 Habitat Survey symbology (JNCC, 2010).

Primary habitats have been mapped to a Minimum Mapping Unit (MMU) of 25m², although where features of note of a smaller scale are present, these have also been recorded and mapped. Any habitats (e.g. traditional orchard) with no appropriate primary habitat label were assigned a secondary habitat code. Other secondary UKHab codes were recorded where relevant, although they are described qualitatively within this report for ease of reading. A non-exhaustive botanical species list was compiled, with plant names following Stace (2019).

Hedgerow species richness was defined in accordance with the Hedgerow Survey Handbook (Defra, 2007).

The survey was extended to highlight the potential presence of protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017). This involved a search to identify the presence or potential presence of species such as breeding birds, bats, badger, dormouse, reptiles and amphibians. Target Notes (TNs) were used to record any features or habitats of ecological interest. Where access allowed, adjacent habitats were also considered in order to assess possible impacts of the proposal in a wider context.

A digital map was produced using QGIS (QGIS.org, 2026. *QGIS Geographic Information System*. QGIS Association. Available from: www.qgis.org). The habitat map is shown in **Figure 1**. Common names for flora and fauna are given in the body of the report with scientific names provided in **Appendix 4**.

2.3 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

A baseline BNG assessment was undertaken using the statutory biodiversity metric (released in July 2025) to assess the pre-development and indicative post-development value of the habitats on Site following current guidance (Defra, 2024b). Further details are provided in the BNG Statement and Assessment Report (GE Consulting, 2026a).

2.4 Survey Limitations

Care has been taken to ensure that balanced advice is provided on the information available and collected during the study period (s), and within the resources available for the project. However, the possibility of important ecological features being missed due to survey timings, absence during surveys or the year of survey cannot be ruled out. In addition, the lack of evidence or records of protected species on Site does not preclude their presence from Site.

The habitat survey was undertaken outside the optimal period for recording flowering plants which reduced the visibility of flowering plants. To ensure that the Site habitats were not undervalued, where appropriate, the highest distinctiveness habitat type and best possible condition considered likely to be present were used, given the current use/management.

3 Baseline Conditions

3.1 Designated Sites

The Site lies within the yellow zone for the Trowbridge and Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy (TWBMS). Designated sites are described in **Table 1** below.

Table 1: Designated sites records within 2km of Site boundary, 10km for European sites

Site Name	Proximity to Site	Description
<i>National Site Network ('European sites')</i>		
Salisbury Plain SPA & SAC	6.8km south	Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site: 5130 <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands 6210 Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (*important orchid sites) Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site: 1065 Marsh fritillary butterfly <i>Euphydryas</i> (<i>Eurodryas</i>, <i>Hypodryas</i>) <i>aurinia</i>
Bath & Bradford on Avon Bats SAC	8.4km northwest	Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site: 1304 Greater horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i> 1323 Bechstein's bat <i>Myotis bechsteinii</i> Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection: 1303 Lesser horseshoe bat <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>
<i>Statutory Sites</i>		
Green Lane Wood LNR	0.68km east	Complex of deciduous woodland with plants indicating ancient woodland including Solomon's Seal, Stinking Iris and several orchids. Grass snake and slow worm, butterflies, such as Silver washed Fritillary and Duke of Burgundy.

3.2 Habitats and Flora

The distribution of habitats is shown on **Figure 1** and full details with photographs are provided in **Appendix 3**.

The Site comprises a discrete area, approximately 0.1ha, split evenly between other neutral grassland and a vegetated bund, consisting primarily of tall forbs. A small strip of amenity grassland is also present adjacent to the pavement. The other neutral grassland is currently unmanaged and shows signs of previous improvement, with grass species including perennial rye grass, Yorkshire fog and rough meadow grass, although the sward was generally rich in herbs. Given the small extent and commonality of this habitat within the surrounding area, the other neutral grassland is of no more than **Site** importance. The bund, likely bare earth colonised by species that are adapted to disturbed ground, consists of species such as black mustard, teasel, great mullein, perennial sow thistle and bristly ox-tongue and is of no more than **Site** importance.

3.3 Fauna

Table 2 lists the fauna considered as part of the assessment.

Table 2: Assessment of Fauna on Site

Species/ Group	Location & Rationale
Amphibians	There are records for great crested newt (GCN) within 2km of the Site. MAGIC identified one granted EPSL for GCN from 2013, 1.4km west. The Site is within an Amber Risk Zone for GCN. Aerial imagery identified one suitable pond within 250m of the Site, 0.15km northeast. The Site itself offers limited foraging, commuting and refuge opportunities for amphibians, including GCN, in their terrestrial phase in the form of grassland and tall forbs. Due to the restricted extent and quality of suitable habitat, alongside the relatively small scale of the Site, its ecological value is considered to be of no greater than Site level importance for GCN and other widespread amphibian species.
Badger	The Site provides limited suitable foraging and commuting habitat for badgers in the form of tussocky grassland and is connected to suitable habitat in the surrounding landscape. The vegetated bund provides suitable sett building conditions due to its banked nature. No signs of badger were recorded on Site, although it is possible that badgers may be passing through the Site as part of a wider territory. Badgers are not listed as a species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in Wales and have therefore not been assigned a scale of importance in this case but will be considered further in this assessment in relation to their legal protection only.
Bats	There are records for bats within 2km of the Site. MAGIC identified four granted EPSLs for bats within 2km for non-breeding roosts including common pipistrelle, lesser horseshoe and brown long-eared. Green Lane and Biss Woods are classified as 'Core Roosts' for Bechsteins bats as outlined in the Trowbridge and Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy. There are no suitable roosting features, such as buildings or trees, within the Site boundary. As no features are present, roosting bats are not considered further in this report. No suitable linear features are present within the Site boundary that could support bat foraging or commuting activity. The grassland habitat within the Site offers only very limited foraging value for bats due to its small extent and its location adjacent to a road illuminated by street lighting. In addition, the grassland is isolated within the wider landscape, with no connecting linear features that would enable bats to commute onto the Site. As a result, the proposed development will not lead to any significant loss of foraging habitat for bats. In the absence of appropriate roosting or commuting features, the Site is assessed as having Negligible ecological importance for bats.
Birds	The Site offers very limited foraging and nesting opportunities for birds, restricted to grassland and tall forbs. No trees, hedgerows or scrub are

Species/ Group	Location & Rationale
	present on the Site and therefore nesting opportunities are only available to ground nesting bird species. Due to the restricted extent and quality of suitable habitat, alongside the relatively small scale of the Site, its ecological value is considered to be of no greater than Site level importance for birds.
Dormouse	MAGIC did not identify any granted PSLs for dormice within 2km of the Site. The Site does not contain suitable habitat for dormice and lacks connectivity to appropriate habitat in the surrounding landscape. Consequently, dormice are considered absent from the Site and are therefore not assessed further within this report.
Hedgehog	The Site offers limited foraging and commuting opportunities for hedgehogs, restricted to grassland and tall forbs. Due to the restricted extent and quality of suitable habitat, alongside the relatively small scale of the Site, its ecological value is considered to be of no greater than Site level importance for hedgehogs.
Invertebrates	The grassland and tall forbs on Site offer limited foraging, breeding and refuge opportunities for invertebrates and are likely to support a common and widespread assemblage of species only. Due to the restricted extent and quality of suitable habitat, alongside the relatively small scale of the Site, its ecological value is considered to be of no greater than Site level importance for invertebrates.
Reptiles	Grassland areas represent the primary habitat for reptiles, offering restricted potential for foraging, refuge, and basking. These habitats are of relatively low quality, lacking structural diversity and features such as scrub, hedgerows, or rough ground that are typically more suitable for reptiles. As such, use of the Site by reptiles is likely to be opportunistic as opposed to being an important resource within the wider landscape. Due to the restricted extent and quality of suitable habitat, alongside the relatively small scale of the Site, its ecological value is considered to be of no greater than Site level importance for reptiles.
Other notable species	Suitable riparian habitat is absent from the Site and therefore riparian mammals are considered to be absent and not assessed further in this report.

4 Impacts And Mitigation

4.1 Designated Sites

The Site lies within the yellow zone and grey hatched zone of the TWBMS, however, due to the discrete scale and nature of the proposals, they are not considered likely to have a significant impact on foraging or commuting habitats for bats. The habitats within the Site, notably other neutral grassland, have limited value for foraging bats, with the extent of this habitat being very limited in scale. Additionally, the Site has no linear features that would facilitate the movement of bats on and off the Site, meaning access to the foraging habitat, in the form of grassland, is restricted.

The proposals will result in the loss of some of this other neutral grassland, however, proposals also include the planting of new meadow grassland, as well as native hedgerow and tree planting. This habitat creation will likely improve the opportunities for foraging and commuting bats on Site. To further avoid impacts to any Annex II bats associated with the SAC during construction, between 1st April and 31st October, works during the construction phase will be undertaken starting no earlier than 30 minutes after sunrise and finishing no later than 30 minutes before sunset with no Site lighting overnight. No additional lighting will be installed as part of the operational phase, meaning no increase in artificial lighting above the current level from adjacent street lighting. While submitted as a separate application, the proposals should be considered in the context of the wider Ashton Park scheme (planning reference 15/04736/OUT), located to the southeast of the Site. The Ashton Park scheme incorporates extensive mitigation measures relating to bats, which are relevant when considering potential cumulative effects arising from the proposed development. Taking this into account, the mitigation and enhancement measures proposed on-site, in combination with the strategic bat mitigation secured as part of the Ashton Park scheme, are considered sufficient to ensure that no adverse effects on Annex II bat species associated with the SAC will arise.

While the Site lies within the IRZ of Picket and Clanger Wood SSSI (c. 2.4km south), the small scale and nature of works mean it is considered very unlikely that the proposals will impact upon the features of the designation.

Given their distance from the Site and the small scale of the proposed development, no impacts are predicted to affect designated sites, and they are not considered further in this report.

4.2 Habitats and Flora

Due to the small scale of the development, it will not be possible to retain the baseline habitats. This will result in the loss of discrete areas of other neutral grassland, tall forbs and modified grassland. These losses will be compensated for through the creation of other neutral grassland and individual tree planting, with the area of other neutral grassland exceeding the area present at baseline. While no hedgerows are present at baseline, native hedgerow planting is included in proposals.

Through these compensation measures, no significant impacts are anticipated to habitats.

4.3 Fauna

4.3.1 Badger and Hedgehog

Badgers and their setts receive protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which protects them from deliberate harm and injury.

No badger setts were recorded, and evidence of badger activity was absent within the Site, therefore it is considered that the species doesn't currently pose a constraint to the proposed development. However, mindful that badgers are highly mobile and frequently establish new setts, suitable habitats which are to be affected by development, such as the grassland, could support badger setts in the future.

To protect any badgers that may be utilising the Site for commuting and foraging, the following precautionary measures will be followed during construction:

-  Trenches will be covered at the end of each working day and any temporarily exposed pipes will be capped to prevent badger gaining access during the night;
-  Any trenches or deep pits which must be left open overnight will be provided with a means of escape should a badger enter. This would simply be in the form of a roughened plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp to the surface;

- Any trenches/pits will be inspected each morning to ensure no badgers have become trapped overnight. Should a badger become trapped in a trench it may attempt to dig itself into the side of a trench and form a temporary sett. Should a trapped badger be encountered, the advice of an ecologist must be sought immediately. If necessary, the ecologist will contact the RSPCA or a vet who will move the badger to safety or provide treatment if required;
- The storage of topsoil or other 'soft' building material within the construction site will be given careful consideration. Badgers may readily adopt such mounds as setts. To avoid this, mounds will be kept to a minimum and any essential mounds will be subject to daily inspections;
- Food and litter are not to be left within the working area overnight to minimise the potential for any roaming badgers to be attracted to the construction site; and
- The storage of any chemical within the construction site will be contained in such a way that they cannot be consumed or knocked over by any wildlife.

The mitigation measures outlined above will also serve to protect hedgehogs and other mammals from harm. In addition, any features with potential to support hedgehog will be removed sensitively either by a check prior to removal, or by sensitive removal to ground level to allow a visual check for hedgehog. If a hedgehog is found at any point during construction works, then works must stop immediately and an ecologist contacted in the first instance.

With the proposed mitigation measures no significant impacts are anticipated for badger or hedgehog.

4.3.2 Bats

As discussed in **Section 4.1**, the baseline habitats on Site have limited value for foraging and commuting bats, limited to a small extent of other neutral grassland, with no linear features present to facilitate movement between the Site and the wider landscape. Consequently, the Site is not expected to function as a notable foraging or commuting area for bats, with the surrounding street lighting further diminishing its potential value.

Despite the small scale of the Site, as part of a larger field, the proposals will include the provision of suitable habitats in the form of an increased area of other neutral grassland, with additional hedgerow and individual tree planting. These enhancements will improve the opportunities for foraging and commuting bats on-site through the provision of prey resources associated with these habitats, as well as linear features to aid in commuting throughout the Site and into the wider landscape. With these enhancements in place, the Site is likely to be improved for foraging and commuting bats.

To further negate negative impacts on Annex II bats associated with the SAC within the Site and its nearby surrounds, during construction between 1st April and 31st October, works will be undertaken starting no earlier than 30 minutes after sunrise and finishing no later than 30 minutes before sunset with no Site lighting overnight. No additional lighting will be installed as part of the operational phase, meaning no increase in artificial lighting above the current level from adjacent street lighting. These mitigation measures will be secured via a CEMP.

With the proposed mitigation measures and further enhancements to the habitats on-site, in combination with the strategic bat mitigation secured as part of the wider Ashton Park scheme, no significant impacts are anticipated for foraging and commuting bats.

4.3.3 Birds

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), with certain species afforded additional protection measures.

The proposals will result in the loss of an area of grassland which has the potential to provide suitable habitat for ground nesting birds. Given the protection afforded to all breeding birds, their nests, eggs and

young, any vegetation clearance, including the future management of habitats, should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March to August inclusive). If this is not practicable, then works should be preceded by a nesting bird check by a suitably qualified ecologist within 48 hours of the commencement of works. If evidence of nesting is recorded, works within that particular area should not proceed until the chicks have fledged, with a buffer zone around the active nest of 10m minimum.

New grassland, hedgerow and tree planting will increase the opportunities for nesting and foraging birds within the Site. With the proposed mitigation and compensation measures no significant impacts are anticipated for birds.

4.3.4 *Invertebrates*

The proposals will result in the loss of an area of grassland and tall forbs which has the potential to provide suitable habitat for a common and widespread assemblage of invertebrates. To compensate for this loss, the proposals will incorporate structurally diverse landscaping, including wildflower grassland, hedgerow and tree planting, designed to enhance habitat quality for invertebrates. Planting schemes will include a variety of native species selected to provide nectar, pollen, and foliage resources across different seasons, ensuring a continuous food supply throughout the year.

With the proposed compensation measures no significant impacts are anticipated for invertebrates.

4.3.5 *Reptiles and amphibians*

In the absence of mitigation, there is a risk of habitat loss and/ or fragmentation, potentially causing a minor negative impact on reptiles and amphibians within the Site. This is primarily as a result of the proposals causing loss of grassland. To compensate for this loss in habitat, new habitat will be created in the form of south facing structurally diverse grassland with features such as hibernacula in the form of log and brash piles.

To protect reptiles and amphibians from harm, the following method statement will be followed during Site preparation and construction:

-  Initially, the vegetation removal will be cut to approximately 150mm, (starting from the centre of the parcel and working towards boundary vegetation) with the arisings removed and habitats left for a minimum of 48 hours in suitable weather conditions i.e. no rain or high winds;
-  A further cut will then be made to 50mm, in the same direction as outlined above, to encourage any remaining reptiles/ amphibians towards the retained and buffered areas of suitable habitat.
-  Once complete, the vegetation will be maintained at a low-level (<50mm) until the start of development works.

With the proposed mitigation and compensation measures no significant impacts are anticipated for reptiles or amphibians.

5 Biodiversity Net Gain

The baseline units for the Site comprise 0.12 habitat units, 0 hedgerow units and 0 watercourse units. An indicative BNG assessment suggests that the Site is likely to be capable of delivering 10% onsite. Further details are provided in the BNG Statement and Assessment Report (GE Consulting, 2026a), which provides the BNG information required to support the planning application under Article 7 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 as well as local information required by Wiltshire Council LPA, and in the submitted statutory biodiversity metric (GE Consulting, 2026b).

6 Protected/Notable Species Features

The following enhancements detailed in **Table 3** are recommended in line with national guidance and local planning policy.

Table 3: Enhancement Features

Quantity & Type	Illustrations	Description & Installation
1 no. integrated bat boxes	 Vivara Pro Build-in Woodstone Bat Box and Habibat Bat Box  Installation	- Fully integrated boxes to be built into the fabric of the building. Install within the cavity of walls. The entrance hole can sit flush to a course of bricks. - Suitable models include the Vivara Pro Build-in Woodstone Bat Tube, Habibat Bat Box or similar approved which can be chosen to suit the finishing of the building. Suppliers include www.nhbs.com and www.wildcare.co.uk. - Position a minimum of 3m above the ground. - Locate where there is a clear, unlit flight path for bats to linear vegetation (e.g. hedgerows) and away from windows. - Install away from any artificial light sources, to prevent light spill illuminating the boxes.

7 Conclusions

In summary the Site was considered to be of relatively low ecological interest, with no adverse impacts predicted on important ecological features.

Avoidance measures and careful timing of works have been incorporated into the design to minimise impacts to protected and notable species; and habitat creation has been included to compensate for habitat loss.

Provided the avoidance and mitigation measures are carried out, the proposal is considered unlikely to have significant adverse effects on ecological features.

Enhancement features have been described with the aim of providing an increase in wildlife opportunities on Site post-development, contributing to the aims of National Planning Policy



Framework and local policy. An indicative Biodiversity Metric has been supplied which shows that the Site is capable of delivering a 10% net gain on-site.

8 References

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Key:

-  Site Boundary
-  Tall forbs
-  g3c - Other neutral grassland
-  g4 - Modified grassland
-  u1b - Developed land, sealed surface



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Figure 1:
UK Habitat Classification Survey and Protected Species Findings

Project:
Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge

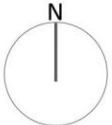
Client:
Barratt Homes

Date:
17/4/2026

Ref:
3187-EclA-F1

Drawn:
HK

Revision:
-



Appendix 1 – General Glossary of Terms

Annex I	Threatened bird listed on Annex I of the EC Birds Directive/ Habitats listed on Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive
Annex II	Species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of SACs
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BMCL	Bat Mitigation Class Licence
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
BoCC	Bird of Conservation Concern
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CWS	County Wildlife Site
DBW	Daytime Bat Walkover
EPS	European Protected Species
GLTA	Ground Level Tree Assessment
HPI	Habitat of Principal Importance required under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
HSI	Habitat Suitability Index
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
GCN	Great crested newt
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LEMP	Landscape and Ecology Management Plan
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MMU	Minimum Mapping Unit
NBW	Night-time Bat Walkover
NE	Natural England
NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NVA	Night Vision Aid
NVC	National Vegetation Classification Survey
OSWI	Other Site of Wildlife Interest
pCWS	Potential County Wildlife Site
POS	Public Open Space
PRA	Preliminary Roost Assessment
PRF	Potential Roost Feature
Ramsar	A wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention
RPA	Root Protection Area
TWBMS	Trowbridge and Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPI	Species of Principal Importance required under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UKHab	UK Habitat Classification System
UWS	Unconfirmed Wildlife Site
WCA	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended)
ZOI	Zone of Influence

Appendix 2 – Planning Policy and Legislation

Habitat and Species Legislation

Species and habitats receive legal protection in the UK under various legislation, including:

- 🦋 The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended);
- 🦋 The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
- 🦋 The Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000;
- 🦋 The Hedgerows Regulations 1997;
- 🦋 The Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and
- 🦋 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Where relevant, this report takes into account the legislative protection afforded to specific habitats and species.

Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 operates as the UK's legal framework for environmental protection and provides legislation on environmental governance, principles, targets and improvement plans, waste and resource efficiency, nature protection, and water and air quality.

Part 6 of the Environment Act 2021 requires a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain for all new developments (with specified exemptions), and amends Schedule 7a (Biodiversity Gain in England) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021) to mandate this in England. This will apply to most major developments from 12th February 2024 and to small sites from 2 April 2024.

The biodiversity net gain regulations most directly relevant to planning are:

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

In addition, there are regulations for the Biodiversity Gain Site register established under section 100 of the Environment Act 2021 for registered off-site biodiversity gains.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how local planning authorities should incorporate them into their own policies and plans. Section 15 of the NPPF contains several policies targeted at enhancing the natural environment and requires local authorities to consider how impacts on biodiversity can be minimised and provide net gains in biodiversity. Paragraph 187 (a-f) states that:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;*
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”*

In addition, paragraph 192 (b) ensures that to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

“b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”

Additional Planning Practice Guidance (PPGs) supports the NPPF and includes guidance on:

-  Agricultural land, soil and brownfield land of environmental value;
-  Green infrastructure;
-  Biodiversity, geodiversity and ecosystems; and
-  Landscape.

Wiltshire Planning Policy

The Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document ('the plan') was formally adopted in January 2015. The plan provides a positive and flexible overarching planning policy framework for Wiltshire for the period up to 2026. It contains the relevant planning policies:

-  Core Policy 50 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
-  Core Policy 52 – Green Infrastructure

Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan

The Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in February 2015 and includes the following relevant policies:

Policy 13 Task 6.4 – Insure the biodiversity of the river valleys is maintained.

UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was succeeded in 2012 by the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' which demonstrates a whole-environment strategy on how the UK contributes to achieving the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD) 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In England, 'Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services' (Defra, 2011) sets out the strategic direction for biodiversity policy in the future. The former UK BAP was used to draw up lists of species and habitats of 'principal importance' which continue to be regarded as priorities under the Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework and are identified under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; these species have been considered throughout this report.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The latest available Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was produced by the Wiltshire Biodiversity Partnership in 2008. The plan includes a Generic Action Plan, ten Habitat Action Plans and a Bat Species Action Plan, which covers all bat species in Wiltshire. The Wiltshire and Swindon Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group have since published Landscape Biodiversity Areas which provides an additional framework for landscape-scale conservation with which to coordinate conservation efforts in Wiltshire and Swindon. The Site lies within Area 4: Cotswolds Limestone Lowlands, which highlights woodland, limestone grassland, neutral grassland and rivers as priorities for conservation.

Trowbridge and Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy

The Trowbridge and Westbury Bat Mitigation Strategy (TWBMS) is aimed at developers, consultants and planners involved in assessing development proposals in the landscapes in and surrounding Trowbridge and Westbury.

The overall aim is to provide a clear and detailed approach to considering the impact of development in the Trowbridge and Westbury area on the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This will help inform strategic planning for the area's future housing needs.

The TWBMS sets out survey and mitigation requirements to ensure forthcoming development in the Trowbridge and Westbury areas will deliver robust mitigation and that planned development will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC and functionally linked woodlands to the east and south-east of Trowbridge either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. Any planning applications for speculative development that fall within the bat sensitivity zones set out in this document would also need to adhere to the requirements detailed herein and would be assessed accordingly.

Appendix 3 – Site Photographs

Description	Photograph
Other neutral grassland.	
Tall forbs on earth bund.	

Appendix 4 – List of Flora and Fauna

Flora

Common name	Scientific name	Recorded on Site?
Black mustard	<i>Brassica nigra</i>	✓
Bristly ox-tongue	<i>Helminthotheca echinoides</i>	✓
Great Mullein	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	✓
Perennial rye grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	✓
Perennial sow thistle	<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	✓
Rough meadow grass	<i>Poa trivialis</i>	✓
Wild Teasel	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>	✓
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	✓

Fauna

Common name	Scientific name	Recorded on Site?
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	X
Bechstein's bat	<i>Myotis bechsteinii</i>	X
Brown long-eared bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	X
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	X
Duke of Burgundy butterfly	<i>Hamearis lucina</i>	X
Grass snake	<i>Natrix helvetica</i>	X
Great crested newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	X
Greater horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i>	X
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	X
Lesser horseshoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	X
Marsh fritillary butterfly	<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>	X
Silver-washed fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>	X
Slow worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	X
Water vole	<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	X

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