



## **PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL**

**LAND OFF  
BRADFORD ROAD  
TROWBRIDGE  
BA14 9AX**

|                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Client:</b>            | <b>Mr L. Dunnill</b> |
| <b>Project Ecologist:</b> | <b>Jan Freeborn</b>  |
| <b>Contract:</b>          | <b>Q835</b>          |
| <b>Survey date:</b>       | <b>20 May 2022</b>   |

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### SUMMARY SHEET

|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>Date of survey:</b>       | 20 May 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>OS grid ref:</b>          | ST843580                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Findings:</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site surveyed was an area of failed single age conifer plantation located within an area of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland</li> <li>• Habitat and features were present on the site which might support small populations of common reptile species</li> <li>• No evidence of badgers or water voles was found on survey</li> <li>• The site is within the yellow zone as defined by the Trowbridge Bechstein's bat mitigation strategy</li> <li>• Tracks and glades created within the conifer plantation are likely to be used by local bat populations as commuting routes and feeding areas</li> <li>• No potential bat roost features were identified in trees likely to be affected by the proposed work due to their age and structure</li> <li>• Breeding birds may from time to time in the conifers which will be affected by the proposed work, particularly those with bushy ivy in which birds could construct nests</li> </ul> |
| <b>Conclusions:</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is as low risk that the proposed work may have a negative impact on breeding birds</li> <li>• There is a low risk that the proposed work may have a negative impact on widespread reptile species</li> <li>• There is a low risk that lighting related to the new development may result in spillage onto commuting routes and feedings areas used by bats</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Recommendations:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trees which carry bushy climbing vegetation should be checked before felling to ensure that no breeding birds are present</li> <li>• Piles of cut timber and rubble should be dismantled with care by hand to avoid harm to any individuals of common reptile species which may be present</li> <li>• Precautionary guidance should be followed during tree felling to avoid harm to individual bats which may be present from time to time</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Biodiversity net gain</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bird and bat boxes, one of each, should be fixed to suitable elevations of the buildings to be constructed on the site</li> <li>• Bird and bat boxes should be fixed to suitable trees in the conifer plantation to provide roost opportunities for bats where few currently exist</li> <li>• A 1.2 metre wide margin along the side of the existing and newly constructed tracks should be sown with a suitable wildflower mix to provide a reservoir of seed from which colonisation of the surrounding woodland can take place</li> <li>• Consideration should be given to a planting scheme of deciduous native species trees and shrubs which will enhance the biodiversity of the conifer plantation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |



## **PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL**

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- 1 Introduction**
  - 1.1 Aims and objectives**
  - 1.2 Site location**
    - Figure 1 Map view of site location (indicated by red filled circle)**
    - Figure 2 Aerial view of site location (indicated by red filled circle)**
  - 1.3 Site description**
    - Figure 3 Plan of existing and proposed site layouts and elevations of new buildings**
  - 1.4 Description of proposed work**
- 2 Methodology**
  - 2.1 Desk study**
  - 2.2 Field survey**
    - 2.2.1 Date of survey**
    - 2.2.2 Survey methodology**
    - 2.2.3 Weather conditions**
    - 2.2.4 Names of surveyors, licence numbers, competencies, experience**
    - 2.2.5 List of equipment**
- 3 Limitations of survey**
- 4 Results**
  - 4.1 Results of desk study**
    - Figure 4 Aerial view of site in local context**
  - 4.2 Results of field survey**
- 5 Discussion and analysis of results**
- 6 Conclusions**
- 7 Recommendations**
- 8 Biodiversity Net Gain**
- 9 Appendices**
  - Appendix 1 Site photographs**
  - Appendix 2 Designated sites within 2 kilometres of the site surveyed**
  - Appendix 3 Habitat map**
  - Appendix 4 Summary of legislation relating to widespread reptile species**
  - Appendix 5 Suggested bat boxes and bird boxes suitable for location on external walls of the buildings to be constructed on the site and on trees within the woodland**

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Aims and objectives

- To determine the presence of protected habitats and protected species
- To assess the potential ecological impact of the proposed work

## 1.2 Site location (refer to Appendix 2)

The site surveyed was located at ST843580 within an area of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland. The immediate and wider countryside was in agricultural use as arable and pasture.

**Figure 1**  
**Map view of site location**  
**(indicated by solid red circle)**

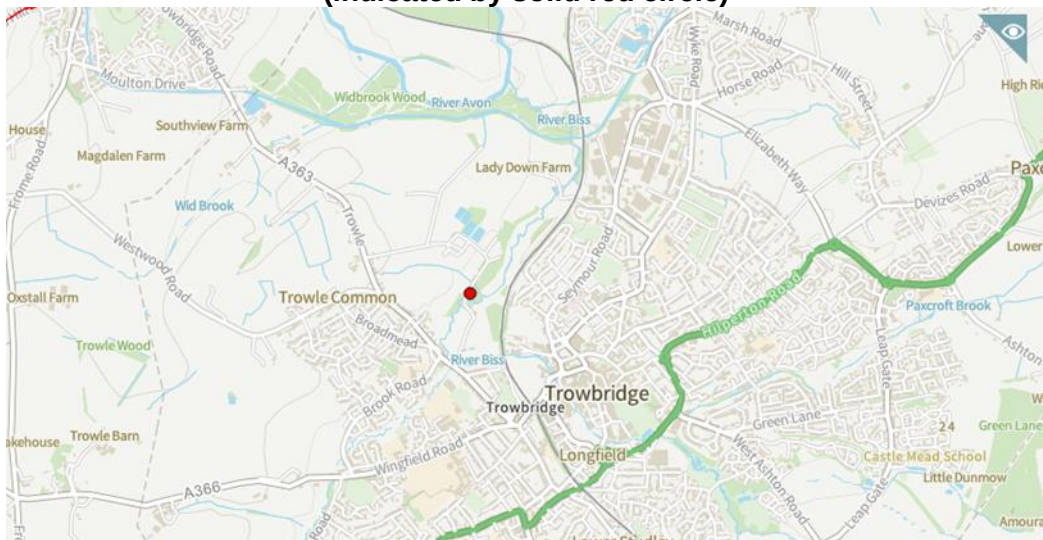


**Figure 2**  
**Aerial view of site location**  
**(indicated by solid filled circle)**



**Scale 1:25,000**  
**ST843580**

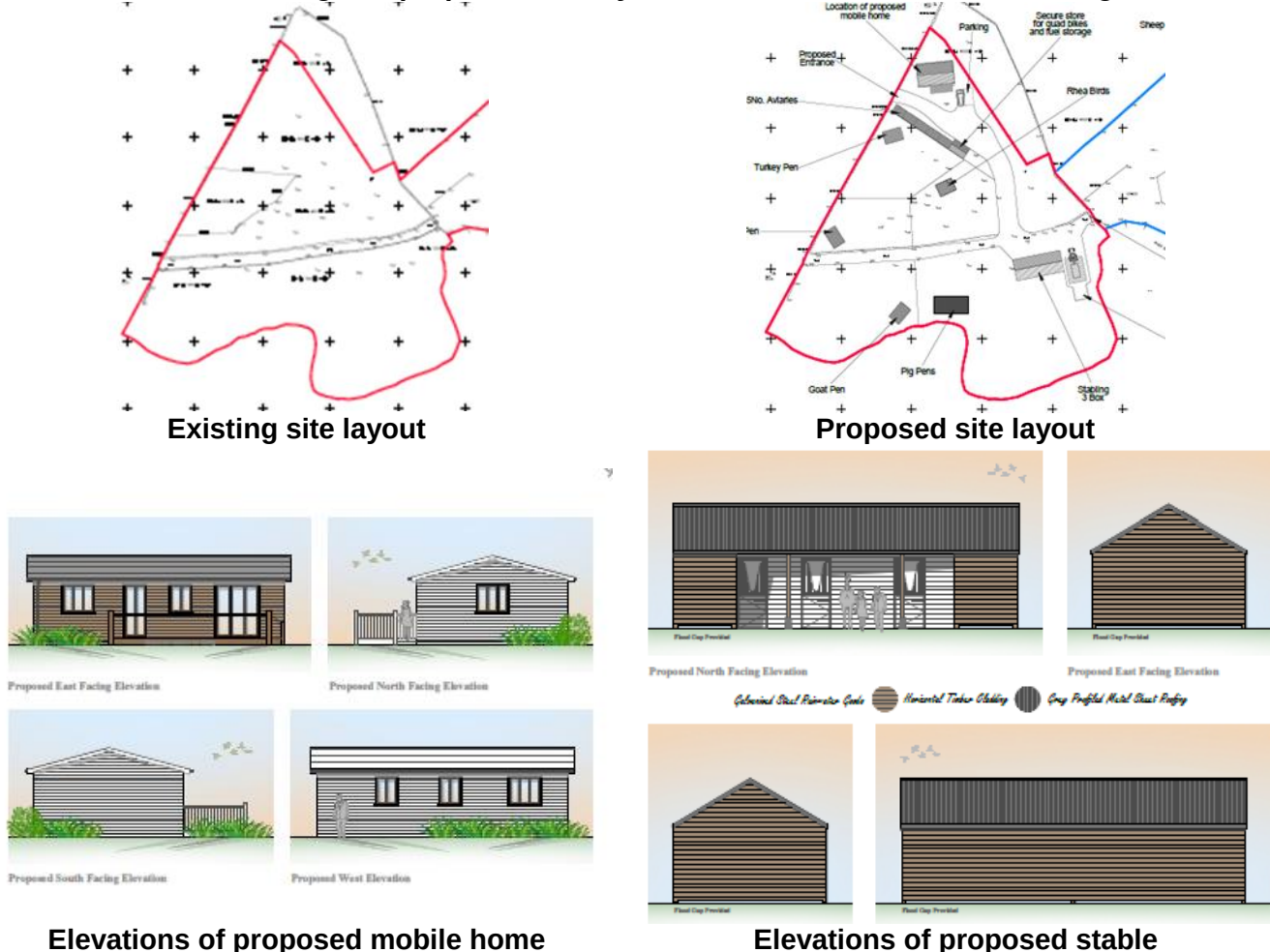
### 1.3 Site description

The site surveyed was set within an area of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland and was now dominated by plantation spruce *Picea abies* said to have been planted 20 years previously. The River Biss flowed along the southern boundary of the site. Beyond the site boundaries

### 1.4 Description of proposed work

Figure 3

Plan of existing and proposed site layouts and elevations of new buildings



Elevations of proposed mobile home

Elevations of proposed stable

It is proposed to erect a temporary rural workers accommodation unit and stable building on the site with associated vehicular access for an existing equestrian business and rare breeds smallholding.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Desk study

**2.1.1** Information regarding designated sites and habitats within a 2 kilometre radius was obtained from MAGIC (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>).

**2.1.2** An aerial view of the site was reviewed to assess the level of connectivity to the immediate and surrounding countryside.

### 2.2 Field survey

#### 2.2.1 Date of survey

The site was surveyed in the daytime on 20 May 2022.

#### 2.2.2 Survey methodology

**Habitat survey:** Habitats on the site were surveyed in accordance with Phase 1 habitat and National Vegetation Classification survey techniques.

**Badgers:** Evidence of the presence of badgers was searched for including:

- Sett entrances of a size and shape typical of those created by badgers (most badger tunnels have a distinctive wider than tall entrance with a flattened base).
- Tunnels excavated by badgers are around 30cm in diameter and not less than 25cm in diameter.
- Signs of fresh excavation of soil or bedding material associated with these entrances suggesting current occupation by badgers
- Trees with claw marks or areas of bark worn smooth suggesting use by badgers as scratching posts
- Deposits of badger faeces or mucus in latrine pits or groups of latrine pits used as territorial markers
- Badger tracks in nearby grassland or gaps in hedges created by badger access
- Evidence of badger feeding in nearby grassland in the form of snuffle holes

**Water voles:** An assessment was made of the habitat on the site for the potential to support water voles.

- The suitability of habitat for water voles was assessed in accordance with guidelines contained in *Water Vole Field Signs and Habitat Assessment A Practical Guide to Water Vole surveys Pelagic Publishing 2021 Mike Dean*.
- Field signs of water voles were searched for including latrines and deposits of droppings, burrows of a size which could be used by water voles in soft substrate of the river banks, water vole footprints in soft mud, feeding remains in the form of vegetation cut at a 45 degree angle at the end, areas of vegetation grazed to a very low level, particularly when associated with burrow entrances and runs in emergent and marginal vegetation.

**Bats:** An assessment was made for the presence of potential bat roost features in trees likely to be affected the proposed work. The potential for the risk of bat tree roost features being present was assessed against the following criteria.

- **High:** Trees with scratch marks and/or staining that could indicate the presence of a bat roost; or oak, ash, beech or Scots pine with holes, crevices and/or dense ivy cover, particularly those that are located within or on the edge of woodland or within a large hedgerow.
- **Medium:** Trees of any species with holes, cracks or crevices that appear to provide potential roosting sites but may be less suitable because of a less favourable location.
- **Low:** Trees with crevices, holes or ivy cover but which are considered unlikely to provide roost habitat, often because the tree is too small.

**Widespread reptile species:** An assessment was made of habitat on the site to support widespread reptile species.

### 2.2.3 Weather conditions

Weather conditions at the time of survey were warm and dry.

### 2.2.4 Surveyor

The site was surveyed by an experienced ecologist licenced to survey for bats (Class licence Levels 3 and 4 CLS 19 and CLS20) and for barns owls in relation to development sites and trained and experienced in reptile, badger, water vole and Phase 1 habitat and National Vegetation Classification survey techniques and in woodland management.

### 2.2.5 List of equipment

Survey was aided by a clipboard and field notebook, a camera and close focus binoculars.

## 3 Limitations to survey

3.1.1 There were no limitations to survey.

3.1.2 All parts of the site were accessible.

## 4 Results (refer Appendix 2 Designated sites within a 2 kilometre radius)

### 4.1 Results of desk study

**Figure 4 Aerial view of site in local context**



**Scale 1:10,000**

- 4.1.1** Review of an aerial image of the site indicated that the site located in a rural location but where extensive areas of established residential development were present to toward the south beyond a busy main road and mainline rail track.
- 4.1.2** The site was located within an area of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland described on MAGIC as having low confidence in the main habitat classification.
- 4.1.3** The site is located within the yellow zone as defined by the Trowbridge Bechstein's Bat Mitigation Strategy.
- 4.1.4** This zone is a composite of:
- A 1.5km buffer around 'Core Roosts3.' for the Bechstein's breeding population in the Trowbridge area, including Green Lane Wood, Biss Wood and Picket and Clanger Wood. These buffers are referred to as 'Core Areas' in the Wiltshire Bat SAC Guidance page 7, section 3.2 (Wiltshire Council, September, 2015) 'Core Areas' are of particular importance for foraging and commuting bats associated with the 'Core Roosts'.
  - A 4km buffer around 'Core Roosts' for greater horseshoe bats and a 2km buffer around 'Core Roosts' for lesser horseshoe bats where these overlap with the Trowbridge Community Area.
  - Key commuting corridors which link the above-mentioned Core Areas with the SAC which lies beyond the Trowbridge Community Area. These include: the River Biss and railway line through Trowbridge; the area known as the Hilperton Gap in north Trowbridge; land to the south west of Trowbridge and; land to the north east of Trowbridge. Evidence comes from radio tracking and verified records of Annex 2 species found in this locality.
- 4.1.5** Within a 2 km radius of the site surveyed were the following sites and habitats with statutory designations:
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (England)
  - Ancient Woodland (England)
    - Great Bradford Wood Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland and Ancient Replanted Woodland
  - Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland (England)
  - National Forest Inventory (GB)
  - Priority Habitat Inventory - Traditional Orchards (England)
- 4.1.6** Within a 2 km radius of the site surveyed were the following granted EPS licence applications:
- 2020-48340-EPS-MIT relating to Common pipistrelles allowing the destruction of a resting place

- 2015-11070-EPS-MIT relating to Common pipistrelles allowing the destruction of a resting place
- 2015-11070-EPS-MIT-1 relating to Common pipistrelles allowing the destruction of a resting place
- 2015-15090-EPS-MIT relating to Common pipistrelles and Lesser Horseshoe bats allowing the destruction of a resting place
- EPSM2012-4095 relating the Great Crested newts allowing the destruction of a resting place

#### **4.2 Results of field survey (refer Appendix 1 Site photographs and Appendix 3 Habitat map)**

**4.2.1** The site was located off a narrow surfaced track within an area of Priority Habitat Deciduous woodland.

**4.2.2** The site surveyed was dominated by a failed crop of single age plantation spruce *Picea abies* which was said to have been planted 20 years previously. However, some native species deciduous tree species remained and some regeneration appeared to be occurring. The spruce had been thinned or had fallen due to adverse weather conditions creating open conditions within the woodland. Some spruce clearance had taken place to create woodland tracks for access through the woodland and a route along which to remove fallen and cut timber.

**4.2.3** Animal and poultry pens occupied by pigs, goats, chickens, ducks geese and non-exotic bird species were present on the site related to the existing equestrian business and rare breeds small holding. The majority of the livestock housing was of a small size.

**4.2.4** A galvanised metal and blockwork open fronted shed with a shallowing sloping corrugated metal roof was split into interior compartments and was used for the rearing of young livestock. Lambs, calves and young cattle were present at the time of survey. The roof was unlined and the walls single skinned. This building will be retained.

**4.2.5** Deciduous tree species identified in the understorey during survey included hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, elder *Sambucus nigra* and a number of Common lime *Tilia cordata*.

**4.2.5** Very many of the spruce *Picea abies* had been colonised by ivy and stands of nettle were very frequent.

**4.2.6** The wider area of woodland was not surveyed but deciduous species appeared more dominant and it appeared that the coniferous plantation had occupied only the area occupied by the site surveyed. .

#### **4.5 Results of protected species survey**

**4.5.1** The plantation conifers on the site were not of an age, structure or condition likely to provide potential bat roost features. The ivy present was bushy and likely to obstruct access for bats to any crevices in trees that the ivy may conceal.

**4.5.2** No evidence of badgers was found on survey.

**4.5.3** No evidence of water voles in the form of latrines or burrows in the river banks was found on survey of the River Biss which runs along the southern boundary of the site. There was a lack of emergent aquatic and marginal vegetation which would provide shelter and food sources for water voles and the bankside habitat was therefore suboptimal for water voles.

**4.5.4** There were a number of fallen trees, rubble and timber piles present on the site and particularly in the open glades created by tree removal or window blow these could create habitat for widespread reptile species such as Common lizards and slow worms. Due to the nearby water course, habitat attractive to grass snakes is also present.

**4.5.7** Ivy covered trees on the site may provide shelter for breeding birds.

### **5 Discussion and analysis of results**

**5.1** The failed conifer plantation appears to have been created 20 years ago and may have been planted following clearance of trees in an area of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland. Many of these conifers support a heavy growth of ivy which could provide shelter for breeding birds.

- 5.2 The young age and single stemmed structure of these trees offer little potential for roosting bats.
- 5.3 The open areas and glades created by the slow removal of the failed conifers are likely to be attractive to local populations of bats as a sheltered feeding area, although roost opportunities within the coniferous plantation woodland are few. It would therefore be essential avoid unnecessary lighting of these areas in order not to deter bats from feeding and flying. Bats are light averse, although may feed on insects attracted to light in the dark periphery of these areas. However in avoiding light bats may change their behaviour resulting in flying longer distances and reducing the time spent hunting for their insect prey. This can create an imbalance between the amounts of energy expended in the capture of food and that gained through consumption of insect prey and may result in adverse effects on breeding success and survival through hibernation which can contribute to decline in numbers of bat populations.
- 5.4 Necessary removal of some of these conifers to create access and for safety reasons and also as a result of wind blow has created glades and high light levels in some areas of the woodland where sunlight can enter.
- 5.5 Storage of cut and sectioned timber has created piles in these areas which are potential habitat for reptiles as a place to bask, hunt for food and in which to seek shelter. If exposed to sunlight for much of the day, these piles are likely to provide used by reptiles which bask in sunlight in order to raise their body temperatures to remain active and hunt for food. Such timber piles are also likely to provide the dry and low temperatures in winter which hibernating reptiles require.
- 5.6 The slow clearance of the conifer crop has created open and presents an opportunity for the site to begin to regenerate as deciduous mixed age woodland from the seed source present in the remaining surrounding deciduous woodland.

## 6 Conclusions

- 6.1 The proposed development will result in reduction in area of a failed single aged conifer plantation.
- 6.2 There is a negligible risk of bats being present in roosts in the trees planned for removal.
- 6.3 Potential reptile habitat was found on survey and there is a low risk that small populations of Common lizards, slow worms and perhaps grass snakes may be present.
- 6.4 There is a low risk that lighting associated with the proposed development may deter bats from feeding and flying in the area.

## 7 Recommendations

- 7.1 A lighting strategy should be drawn up aimed at minimising the spillage of light as a result of the proposed development. It would important to avoid unnecessary lighting of tracks and glades likely to be used as bats as commuting routes and feeding areas. Dark corridors should be maintained through the woodland. This should be in keeping with the recommendations contained in Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK Bats and the Built Environment series <https://cdn.bats.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Resources/ilp-guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting-compressed.pdf?v=1542109349>
- 7.2 Precautionary guidance should be followed when felling or sectioning any fallen trees on the site in order to avoid harm to any individual bats which may be present. This precautionary guidance includes:
  - Removal of climbing vegetation, particularly if there are any thick woody stems, from any trees or branches which are removed as part of the proposed work prior to any felling cuts being made, This is necessary to avoid harm to any concealed bats which may be present.
  - Removal of loose bark from any part of the tree prior to felling cuts being made. This is necessary to avoid harm to any concealed bats which may be present.
  - Any cracks, cavities, splits, rot holes or any other crevices in which bats might be concealed should be checked for the presence of bats or for signs

of use by bats before a felling cut is made. If possible felling cuts should be made as far as distinct as possible below and above any opening to a potential roost feature. This is necessary to avoid harm to any concealed bats which may be present.

- If possible cut branches or sections should be lowered to the ground. If this is not possible felling should be planned so that cut branches fall onto vegetating rather than directly to the ground in order to reduce the impact of the fall on any concealed bats which may be present.
- If bats or bat droppings are found at any time during the proposed work, this must stop immediately and further advice sought from Chalkhill.

**7.3** Precautionary guidance should be followed to avoid harm to individual slow worms, Common lizards and grass snakes which may be present from time to time.

- Any disturbance or removal of timber piles or rubble should be carried out with carer to avoid harm to any individual reptiles which may be present. Any reptiles encountered should be carefully captured and release into similar habitat elsewhere on the site.
- Reptile refugia in the form of cut branches and rubble should be created in undisturbed areas on the site and piles of rubble should be created as potential hibernation sites for reptiles.

**7.4** Trees and shrubby vegetation planned for removal should be checked for the presence of breeding birds and if present work must stop until the nest is no longer active. Ideally tree removal should not be carried out during the breeding season for birds. The breeding season for birds is regarded as being between and including the months of February to August, although some species will breed outside of this period of time. Nests are regarded as being active when being constructed, contain incubating eggs or unfledged or fledged nest dependent young.

## **8 Biodiversity Net Gain (refer Appendix 6 Suggested suitable bat and bird boxes to be fixed to the exterior of the buildings to be constructed on the site and for trees)**

**8.1** A bird and a bat box, one for each building, should be fixed to a suitable elevation of the buildings to be constructed on the site. Elevations without windows should be chosen to avoid spillage of light, particularly onto the bat boxes and these boxes should be placed as high as possible.

**8.2** The edges of the new access track and other newly created access tracks should be sown with a 1.2 metre wide margin of a native species wildflower mix suitable for woodland/hedge base conditions. This will kick-start colonisation of the deciduous woodland and create a more diverse ground flora by providing seed source and will enhance the biodiversity of the site.

**8.3** Given the location of the site within a yellow zone as defined by the Trowbridge Bechstein's bat mitigation strategy, there will be biodiversity net gain if bat boxes suitable for use by Bechstein's bats are put up on trees within the coniferous plantation.

**8.4** Bechstein's bats are a woodland species which will use bat boxes in woodland where there are few potential bat tree roost features. Although breeding female Bechstein's bats require optimal woodland habitat with permanent standing water, males and non-breeding juveniles and adults will occupy bat boxes in suboptimal habitat. Bat boxes in the conifer plantation will therefore create biodiversity net gain by providing potential roosts in a woodland where few currently exist for individuals from local populations of Bechstein's bats and for other crevice seeking woodland bats species too.

**8.5** For similar reasons bird boxes suitable for use by a range of common bird species should be located with the conifer plantation.

**8.6** Ideally there should be a planting scheme for the site which must include only native species of deciduous trees and shrubs already present on the site or known to grow well in the area. This will enhance the biodiversity of the Priority Habitat Deciduous woodland.

## 9 Appendices

### Appendix 1 Site photographs



Existing site access track



Failed conifer plantations with many trees colonised by ivy



Proposed location of new temporary rural workers accommodation unit



Area of windblown and cleared conifers

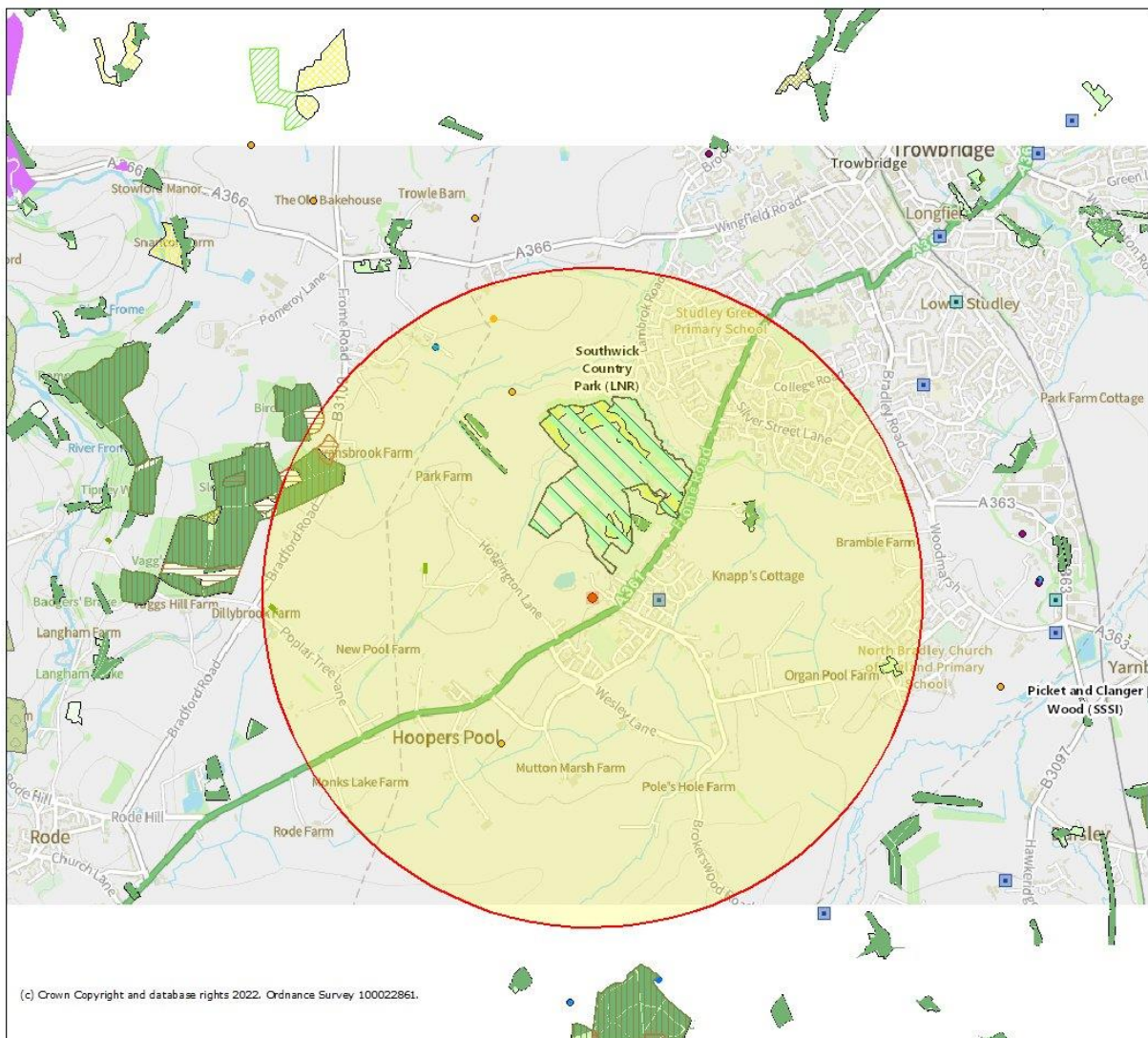


Timber pile creating potential feature for reptiles



Existing access track to location of proposed temporary rural workers accommodation unit

## Appendix 2 Designated sites within a 2 kilometre radius of the site surveyed



### Legend

- Local Nature Reserves (England)
- National Nature Reserves (England)
- Ramsar Sites (England)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (England)
- Special Areas of Conservation (England)
- Special Protection Areas (England)
- RSPB Reserves (GB)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Good quality semi-improved grassland (Non Priority) (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Dry Acid Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Meadows (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture (England)

- Priority Habitat Inventory - Upland Calcareous Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Upland Hay Meadows (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Blanket Bog (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Fens (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Raised Bog (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Reedbeds (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Upland Flushes, Fens and Swamps (England)

### Priority Habitat Lakes

- Dystrophic
- Eutrophic
- Mesotrophic (Marl)
- Mesotrophic

- Oligotrophic

### OS Priority Ponds with Survey Data (polygons)

- Clean Water for Wildlife and Priority Pond
- Clean Water for Wildlife
- Priority Pond

### Chalk Rivers

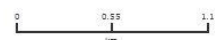
- High certainty
- Low certainty

### Ancient Woodland (England)

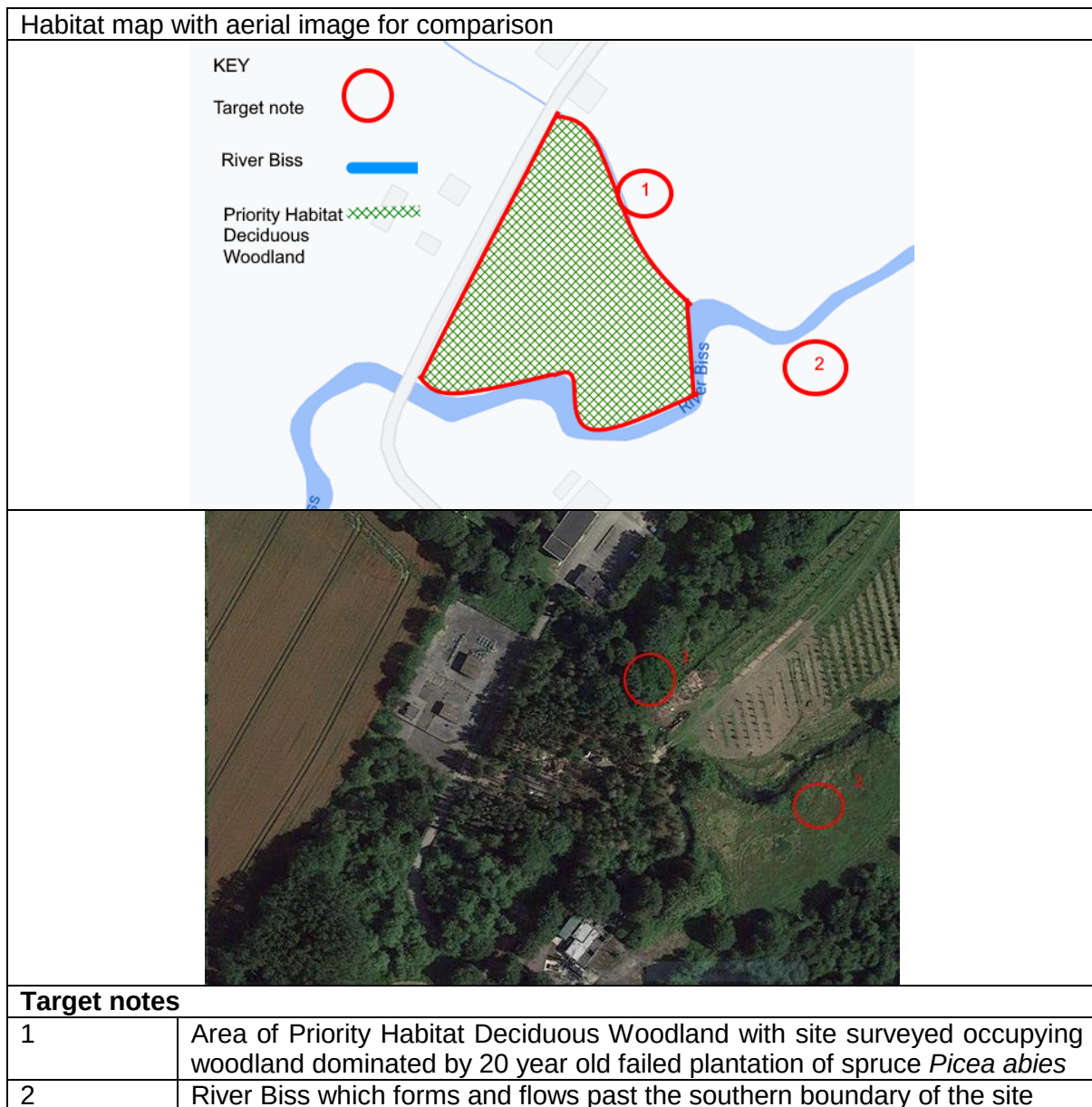
- Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland
- Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland (England)

Projection = OSGB36  
 xmin = 380000  
 ymin = 153500  
 xmax = 387000  
 ymax = 158000

Map produced by MAGIC on 11 May, 2022.  
 Copyright resides with the data suppliers and the map must not be reproduced without their permission. Some information in MAGIC is a snapshot of the information that is being maintained or continually updated by the originating organisation. Please refer to the metadata for details as information may be illustrative or representative rather than definitive at this stage.



### Appendix 3 Habitat map



#### Appendix 4 Summary of legislation relating to widespread reptile species

All widespread reptile species are protected by law from deliberate harm and killing.

#### Appendix 5 Suggested bat boxes and bird boxes suitable for location on the external walls of the buildings to be constructed on the site and on trees within the woodland

|                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Kent bat box                                                                                                  | Example of timber bird box                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <a href="http://www.kentbatgroup.org.uk/kent-bat-box.pdf">http://www.kentbatgroup.org.uk/kent-bat-box.pdf</a> | <a href="https://www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/providing-birds/putting-nest-boxes-birds/make-nest-box">https://www.bto.org/how-you-can-help/providing-birds/putting-nest-boxes-birds/make-nest-box</a><br><a href="https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/house_sparrow_nest_box_plan.pdf">https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/house_sparrow_nest_box_plan.pdf</a><br><a href="https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/blue_tit_nest_box_plan.pdf">https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/blue_tit_nest_box_plan.pdf</a><br><a href="https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/bto-robin-nest-box-plan.pdf">https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/bto-robin-nest-box-plan.pdf</a> |

**Disclaimer** All reasonable effort was taken to ensure an accurate assessment of the situation at the time of the survey. However, the absence of recorded presence or sign should not be taken as an absolute guarantee that the site was not being used by a particular species. There is also no guarantee that any particular species will not use the site at any time in the future. Survey results may be weather or seasonally dependent. Any interpretation of legislation is based on our understanding and experience of the law. The relevant statutory authority can provide a more definitive interpretation.

This report is the responsibility of Chalkhill Environmental Consultants. It should be noted, that whilst every effort is made to meet the client's brief, no site investigation can ensure complete assessment or prediction of the natural environment.