

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Survey site:

Guest Farm, 1A Rixon Gate, Ashton Keynes, Swindon, SN6 6PH

Client:

J West Developments Ltd

Survey date:

16th July 2025

Project:

The proposed development is for the demolition of the existing agricultural buildings present onsite and subsequent erection of 4 residential dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping.

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

The site survey was undertaken by Ecological Consultant Olga Herman (Accredited Agent on Natural England Bat Licence Number: provided on request).					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (mph)	Rain
16/07/2025	25	42	0	8	None

Ecological Survey Factor Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under optimal weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice. The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.
Habitats and Plants	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i> UKHabs codes used Buildings (u1b5) Developed land; sealed surface (u1b) Built-up areas and gardens (u1) – Vegetated garden (828) Other neutral grassland (g3c) Other neutral grassland (g3c) – Traditional orchard (27) Bramble scrub (h3d)	<u>Site Context</u> The site is located at National Grid Reference SU 05248 94081 and has an area of approximately 0.3ha. The site is characterised by several large agricultural buildings and a large concrete courtyard with areas of encroaching vegetation and a small orchard to the east. The site is located within a suburban context, within Ashton Keynes and as a result, the site has arable farmland to the south and residential dwellings to the north and west. To the north of the site is a large fishing lake and to the east is a sports pitch. Beyond its immediate surrounding there are several habitats of elevated ecological value including several SSSI designated sites. A location plan is provided in appendix 2. <u>Priority Habitats</u> The site lies within an area identified on Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory as coastal and floodplain grazing marsh (CFGM) which is listed as a habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). However, to qualify as Coastal Floodplain Grazing Marsh the habitat must meet the following criteria; 1. Periodically inundated pasture or meadow with ditches that maintain the water levels, containing standing, brackish or freshwater FAIL – the site does not contain any ditches. 2. Ditches are especially rich in plants and invertebrates FAIL

Other coniferous woodland (w2c) – Line of trees (33) (<i>offsite</i>)	3. Almost all areas are grazed and some are cut for hay or silage FAIL – no livestock or agricultural land use 4. Sites may contain seasonal water-filled hollows and permanent ponds with emergent swamp communities, but not extensive areas of tall fen species like reeds; although they may abut with fen and reed swamp communities. FAIL – no seasonal swamp, fen or reed communities on or near the site 5. On floodplains of river and reclaimed land behind seawalls PASS – on the floodplain of the River Thames and River Isis 6. May contain areas of lowland meadow, modified grassland and other neutral grassland PASS 7. May be small areas of tall fen type habitats and or scrub FAIL 8. May contain floodplain wetland mosaic (Secondary code 55) as a spatial subset FAIL 9. NVC: Whilst other communities may be present, MG11 – MG12 strongly diagnostic of CFGM – FAIL – species recorded within this area do not indicate these communities. 10. Supports important for the number of breeding waders such as snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>, lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> and curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>. Internationally important populations of wintering wildfowl also occur including Bewick swans <i>Cygnus bewickii</i> and whooper swans <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>. FAIL UKHabs does not provide a structured assessment criteria for CFGM but using both UKHabs and JNCC Priority Habitat Criteria, the habitat passes two of the ten criteria and is therefore unlikely to qualify as Section 41 Habitat of Principle Importance in its present state. <u>Limitations</u> It is not considered that there were any significant limitations to the completion of the assessment. <u>Buildings (u1b5)</u> There are 7 agricultural buildings present onsite. There are described in greater detail in relation to bats below. <u>Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)</u> The site largely comprises a concrete courtyard providing access around the site. <u>Built-up areas and gardens (u1) – Vegetated garden (828)</u> There is an area of garden to the southwest of the site which comprises grassland and scattered ornamental shrub and grassland species.
--	--



Modified grassland (q4) – Traditional orchard (27)

Modified grassland is present in parcels to the west of the site and to the east of the site which includes several small fruit trees. Species include False Oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Sheeps Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), Curled Dock (*Rumex crispus*), Ground Elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*), Greater Burdock (*Arctium lappa*), Broadleaved Plantain (*Plantago major*), Cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Hawk Bit (*Leontodon hispidus*), Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Soft Brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), Common Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne*), Spiky Sedge (*Carex spicata*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*), Annual Meadow Grass (*Poa annua*), Common Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), Cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*) and Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*). Trees within the Orchard are mostly Apple (*Malus sp.*) and small sized (DBH 7.5-30cm).



Bramble scrub (h3d)

Overgrown areas of bramble beginning to encroach onto the site are present to the west in the entrance and to the northeast of the site between B3 and B7.



	<u>Other coniferous woodland (w2c) – Line of trees (33) (offsite)</u> There is an offsite line of mature nonnative line of conifer trees located around the north and eastern borders of the site associated with the ditch which is also present offsite.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development may result in the damage and destruction of areas of priority habitat. Other habitats onsite are considered to be low value and widespread but there may be a reduction in the biodiversity value of the site. The proposed development also may result in the damage or surrounding lines of trees through root compaction.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<u>Mitigation</u> Retained trees should be protected in line with the measures outlined in the British Standard "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2012). Proposed plans should be revised to avoid impacts to areas of priority habitats. In the event of impacts to priority habitats, bespoke compensation should be agreed by the local planning authority to mitigate the loss. <u>Enhancements</u> A biodiversity net gain assessment will be completed at the site which will ensure the proposed development results in a 10% uplift in biodiversity.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<u>Statutory Designated Sites</u> The following Statutory Designated sites are present within 2km of the site: • Cotswold Water Park (SSSI) ~100m east – “A breeding great crested grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>; little egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i> and little ringed plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>; a diverse assemblage of breeding birds of lowland open waters, their margins and scrub; non-breeding shoveler <i>Spatula clypeata</i>; gadwall <i>Mareca strepera</i>; pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>; tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>; great crested grebe; coot <i>Fulica atra</i>; green sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i> and lesser black-backed gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>; an assemblage of over 20,000 waterbirds during the non-breeding season; and populations of the aquatic plants starry stonewort <i>Nitellopsis obtusa</i>, lesser bearded stonewort <i>Chara curta</i>; pointed stonewort <i>Nitella mucronata</i> and clustered stonewort <i>Tolypella glomerata</i>.” – Natural England • Upper Waterhay Meadow (SSSI) ~1.47km southeast – “Upper Waterhay Meadow lies on the Thames floodplain west of Cricklade. It constitutes an example of a neutral alluvial meadow with a large population of snakeshead fritillary <i>Fritillaria meleagris</i>, traditionally managed by cutting for hay.” – Natural England • Pike Corner (SSSI) ~1.15km southwest – “This site consists of two low-lying meadows in the flood plain of the Swill Brook, a small calcareous tributary of the River Thames which is situated only half a mile to the north. The

	<i>meadows have been grazed for many years without ploughing or any use of artificial fertilisers. They support a very rich flora with several plant species which are rare in Wiltshire and southern England.” – Natural England</i> <u>Non-Statutory Designated Sites</u> The presence of non-statutory designated sites cannot be determined without the results of a biological records centre search.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Due to the close proximity of the site to Cotswold Water Park (SSSI), there may be impacts on statutory designated sites as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<u>Mitigation</u> Natural England should be consulted for advice on potential impacts to the SSSI as a result of the proposed development.
Bats	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<u>Limitations</u> It is not considered that there were any significant limitations to the completion of the roosting assessment onsite. <u>Local Records</u> The following European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) are present within 2km of the site: • 2018-37942-EPS-MIT (SU05909441) for common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle covering the destruction of a breeding and resting site. Located 670m northeast. • 2018-37942-EPS-MIT-1 (SU05909441) for common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle covering the destruction of a breeding and resting site. Located 670m northeast. • EPSM2012-5078 (SU06199439) for common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Daubenton’s and brown long eared covering the destruction of a resting place. Located 930m northeast. • EPSM2013-6307 (SU06599470) for brown long-eared, common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle covering the damage and destruction of a resting place. Located 1.45km northeast. <u>Bat Foraging and Commuting Value</u> Grassland, scrub and orchard onsite provide suitable foraging habitat for bats and the line of trees adjacent to the site provides commuting value for bats. <u>Bat Roosting Value (B1)</u> B1 comprises a single-story breeze block constructed building with a corrugated metal roof and open access on the southwester elevation. This provides foraging value for bats within the building. There is also potential roosting

	features located around the northeastern and northwestern elevations of the building which are suitable for crevice roosting bats and may provide internal access for void roosting bats. The internals of the building are considered suboptimal for void roosting bats due to the lack of protection from predators and the high levels of light internally. B1 is considered to have low value for roosting bats. <u>Bat Roosting Value (B2)</u> B2 is also a single storey building constructed of breezeblocks with partial wooden cladding. There are suboptimal potential roosting features suitable for crevice roosting bats on all elevations of the building with the largest number located to the south of the building. B2 is considered to have low value for roosting bats. <u>Bat Roosting Value (B3)</u> B3 comprises a single storey wooden cladded building with corrugated metal roof. The wooden cladding is largely well sealed but there are small gaps providing suitability for crevice roosting bats between the cladding to the northwest, east, and south of the building. B3 is therefore considered to have low value for roosting bats. <u>Bat Roosting Value (B4, B5, B6, B7)</u> B4, B5, B6 & B7 are agricultural buildings which have been constructed of corrugated metal and have negligible value for roosting bats. <u>Bat Roosting Value (Trees)</u> Trees have not been assessed for roosting value to bats as it is unknown which trees are proposed for removal as part of the proposed development.
Foreseen Impacts	<u>Foraging and Commuting Bats</u> The proposed development will result in an increase in lighting on the site which may result in the disturbance of bats and alter the natural behaviour of nocturnal species. <u>Bat Roosting Value (B1, B2 & B3)</u> The demolition of B1, B2 & B3 may result in the harm or death of roosting bats and the destruction of a bat roost. <u>Bat Roosting Value (B4, B5, B6 & B7)</u> There are no foreseen impacts on roosting bats in B4, B5, B6 & B7. <u>Bat Roosting Value (Trees)</u> The removal of trees may result in the harm or death of roosting bats.

<i>Recommendations</i>	<u><i>Foraging and Commuting Bats</i></u> A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during and post-development, which will include the following measures: • Light spill on to trees should be avoided. • Use narrow spectrum light sources to lower the range of species affected by lighting. • Use light sources that emit minimal ultra-violet light. • Avoid white and blue wavelengths of the light spectrum to reduce insect attraction and where white light sources are required in order to manage the blue shortwave length content they should be of a warm / neutral colour temperature <4,200 kelvin. • Not use bare bulbs and any light pointing upwards. The spread of light will be kept in line with or below the horizontal. • Light spill will be reduced via the use of low-level lighting used in conjunction with hoods, cowls, louvers and shields. Lights will also be directional to ensure that light is directed to the intended areas only. • External lighting will be on PIR sensors that are sensitive to large objects only (so that they are not triggered by passing bats) and will be set to the shortest time duration to reduce the amount of time the lights are on. • Wall lights and security lights will be 'dimmable' and set to the lowest light intensity settings. There are several products on the market that allow the control of the light intensity and the duration that the lights are on. All lighting on the developed site will make use of the most up to date technology available. <u><i>Roosting Bats (B1, B2, B3)</i></u> One bat emergence or re-entry survey is required during the active bat season (optimal May to August, suboptimal September) to confirm presence or likely absence of a bat roost in B1, B2 and B3. Infra-red cameras should be used as an aid. Seven surveyors are required to provide full coverage of the buildings. If the absence of a bat roost cannot be determined during the first visit, then further surveys will be required. If bat roosts are confirmed in the building two additional surveys may be required to characterise the roost and to inform an EPSL application to Natural England. Surveys should be a minimum of three weeks apart. The EPSL application requires that surveys have been undertaken within the most recent active bat season and planning permission must have been granted and all relevant wildlife-related conditions have been discharged prior to submission. <u><i>Bat Roosting Value (B4, B5, B6, B7)</i></u> There are no further recommendations in relation to roosting bats for these buildings. <u><i>Bat Roosting Value (Trees)</i></u>
-------------------------------	--

	If any trees are to be removed as part of the proposed development, a ground level tree assessment will be required prior to any impacts to assess the trees value to roosting bats. <u>Enhancements</u> Enhancements will be decided following the results of phase 2 surveys.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<u>Local Records</u> Records cannot be determined without the purchase of biological records data. <u>Site Value</u> No evidence of nesting birds was recorded during the survey. The buildings and vegetation onsite have value for nesting bird species. There is no value onsite for overwintering birds or barn owls.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development is considered to be inconsequential to nesting bird populations within the context of the wider environment but the removal of vegetation and impacts to the buildings could result in the disturbance, harm or even death of nesting birds if present at the time of works.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<u>Mitigation</u> Any building or vegetation removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged. <u>Enhancements</u> The addition of 4 x WoodStone External House Sparrow Nest Box within the eaves of the new dwellings would provide additional nesting opportunities at the site. All bird boxes should be installed in line with manufacturers recommendations.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<u>Local Records</u> There are no EPSLs for reptiles within 2km of the site. <u>Site Value</u>

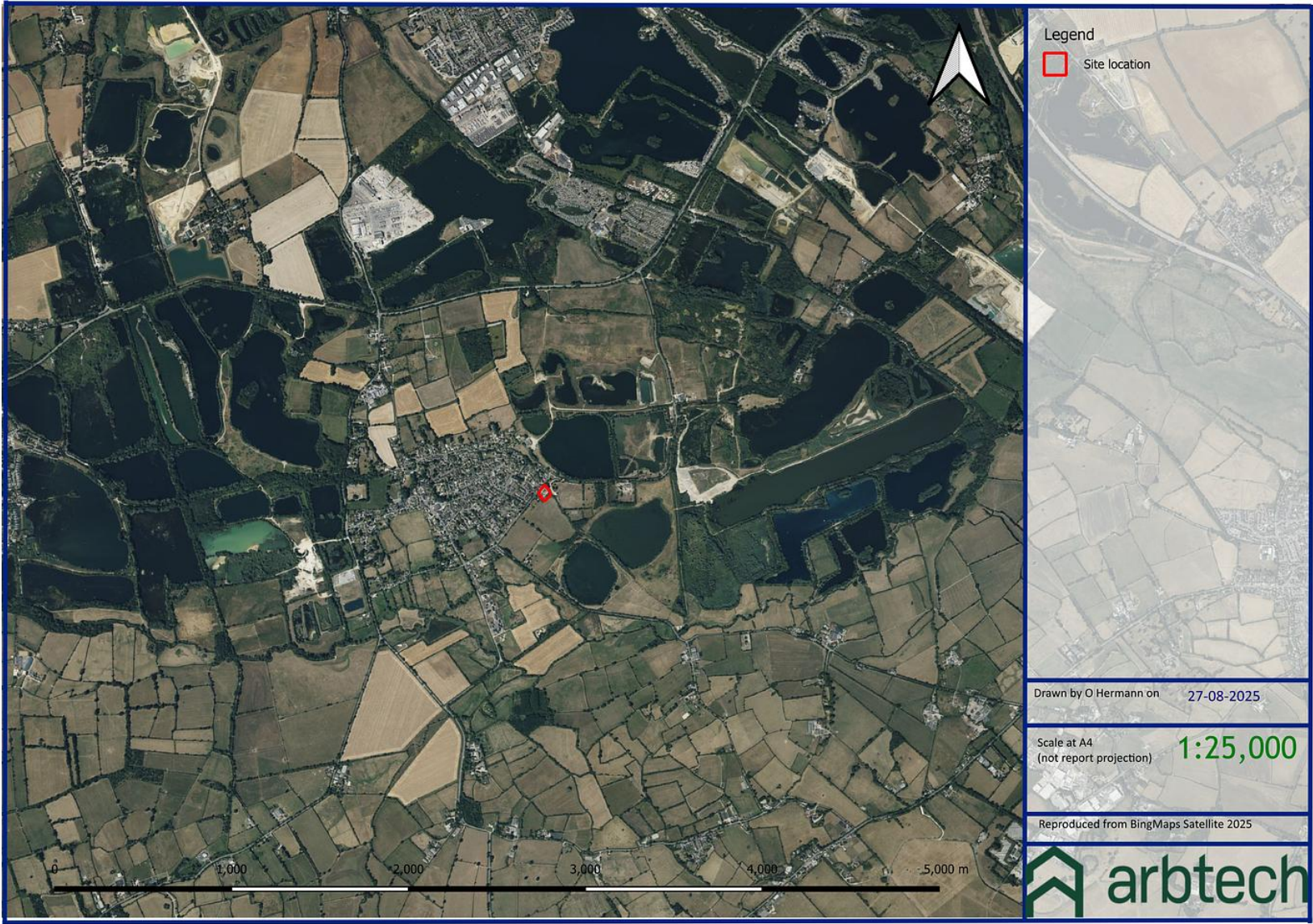
	Grassland and scrub onsite provide value for common species of reptiles as well as connectivity to surrounding suitable habitats.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The removal of vegetation on the site may result in the harm or death of reptiles in the absence of mitigation.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<u>Mitigation</u> Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to reptiles, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the reptile hibernation season (November to February) insofar as is possible. • A toolbox talk will be given to contractors regarding the possible presence of reptiles at the site. • A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for reptiles. • A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any reptiles to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter reptiles from the working area. • Any rubble piles will be dismantled by hand and debris and brash will be stored on pallets or removed from the site to prevent reptiles from utilising these areas. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. <u>Enhancements</u> The addition of hibernacula onsite would provide additional refuge and hibernation opportunities within the site for reptiles post development.
Great Crested Newts (GCN) & Other Amphibians	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<u>Local Records</u> There are no EPSLs for great crested newts (GCN) within 2km of the site. <u>Pond Locations</u> There are 4 ponds located within 500m of the site, none of which are located within 250m of the site. Ponds are separated from the site by agricultural land and a sports pitch which are suboptimal habitats for commuting GCN

	and other amphibians. There are also several lakes located within the surrounding landscape which are not considered suitable for GCN. <u>Site Value</u> Grassland and scrub onsite provide value for amphibians but lacks connectivity to surrounding ponds.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Due to the distance and lack of connectivity to suitable GCN ponds and the presence of barriers to dispersal including urban land and lakes, it is not considered likely that GCN will be present at the site. However more mobile species of amphibians may use the site for occasional commuting and foraging within their terrestrial phases of life.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<u>Mitigation</u> Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to great crested newts, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented for common amphibians during construction, including the following measures: • Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the amphibian hibernation season (November to February) insofar as is possible. • A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any amphibians to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter amphibians from the working area. • Any rubble piles will be dismantled by hand and debris and brash will be stored on pallets or removed from the site to prevent amphibians from utilising these areas. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby aquatic habitats that amphibians could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • If any common amphibians are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. • In the unlikely event that a great crested newt is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Badgers & Other Mammals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<u>Local Records</u> Records cannot be determined without the purchase of biological records data.

	<u>Setts</u> No setts were recorded on or within 30m of the site. <u>Foraging and Commuting</u> Habitats onsite are suitable for foraging and commuting badgers and other terrestrial mammals.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	<u>Setts</u> It is not anticipated that there will be any impacts on badger setts as a result of the proposed development. <u>Foraging and Commuting</u> The proposed development may result in the harm or death of badgers and other terrestrial mammals if present at the time of construction.
<i>Recommendations</i>	<u>Mitigation</u> Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to badgers, further badger surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for any new badger activity if works do not commence within three months. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which badgers could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. <u>Enhancements</u> Enhancement of the existing orchard and addition of hedgehog houses at the site will provide additional enhancements for badgers and hedgehogs. Additionally adding hedgehog highways into any new boundary fencing will maintain connectivity through the site.
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<u>Local Records</u> Records cannot be determined without the purchase of biological records data. <u>Site Value</u>

	A ditch is located offsite to the northeast. There are no signs of riparian mammals, and the ditch was dry at the time of the survey. The ditch is not considered suitable for riparian mammals due to the absence of water.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on riparian mammals as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further mitigation is required for riparian mammals as a result of the proposed development.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	<u>Local Records</u> There are no EPSLs for dormice within 2km of the site. <u>Site Value</u> Habitats onsite lack the three dimensional habitat required by dormice as well as lacking the connectivity to surrounding suitable dormice habitats.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further mitigation is required for dormice as a result of the proposed development.

Appendix 1: Site Location



Appendix 2: UKHabs Map



Appendix 3: PRF Locations/building locations



Appendix 4: Proposed Plans



Arbtech Consulting Limited has prepared this report for the sole use of the above-named client or their agents in accordance with our General Terms and Conditions, under which our services are performed. It is expressly stated that no other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this report or any other services provided by us. This report may not be relied upon by any other party without the prior and express written agreement of Arbtech Consulting Limited. The conclusions and recommendations contained in this report are based upon information provided by third parties. Information obtained from third parties has not been independently verified by Arbtech Consulting Limited.

© This report is the copyright of Arbtech Consulting Limited. Any unauthorised reproduction or usage by any person other than the addressee is strictly prohibited.

Version control			
Status	Issue	Name	Date
Draft	0.1	Leah Cook, Consultant Ecologist	27/08/2025
Final	1.0	Leah Cook, Consultant Ecologist	28/08/2025
Amended	1.1	Kat Aburrow BSc, Consultant Ecologist	24/10/2025