

Ecological Impact Assessment

Pitts Farm

For: Great Canney Developments Ltd

July 2026

Site Details

Site Location	Pitts Farm, Sedgehill, Shaftesbury, SP7 9JB
Central Grid Reference	ST 85639 28507
Client	Great Canney Developments Ltd

Quality Assurance

Job Number	6340		
Report Title	Pitts Farm – Ecological Impact Assessment		
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This report is the responsibility of Abbas Ecology, it has been prepared and submitted in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental management's Code of Professional Conduct.

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

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Executive Summary

Preliminary Survey: 20/05/2026

This assessment was commissioned for the proposal for the demolition of an agricultural building on site and the erection of a new residential property with associated drive, parking area, garden plus a new access road. A New green infrastructure is proposed with a new SuDS reedbed, scrape and pond to process the wastewater from the new property.

The site lies mostly within the existing farmyard with the new access road running along an existing track to the southeast and the SuDS being in a small adjacent field.

eDNA testing of the three ponds within the wider ownership found no evidence of the presence of Great Crested Newts. There were no other protected species issues found on site that required further survey work, however there is a low risk that common reptiles, GCN and other amphibians could be present in the small area of grassland during works. Precautionary mitigation is recommended to ensure no individuals are harmed during the creation of the SuDS and re-seeding of the grassland. Nesting bird checks will also be carried out on H2 and H3 if SuDs creation works are carried out during the nesting bird season.

The widening of the access point in hedgerow H1 is unlikely to pose a threat of harm to Dormice or nesting birds given the very small loss and position at the end of the canopy and being road-side.

There will be a small loss of Modified Grassland and Species-rich Native Hedgerow with Trees habitats, plus some unauthorised degradation identified in two hedgerows that had been removed prior to the preliminary survey. These will be mitigated for under the BNG assessment through the enhancement of a retained area of Modified Grassland and planting of new Species-rich Native Hedgerow with Trees habitats along with the creation of an Intensive Orchard habitat. This will result in a 33.85% net gain to area habitats and a 18.04% net gain to linear/hedgerow habitats.

Additional enhancements to meet the NPPF and Wiltshire planning legislation will involve the installation of a bat boxes, Dormouse Boxes and the planting Yellow Loosetrife with the SuDS features to support the rare Yellow Loosetrife Bee returned from the data search records.

I. Introduction

I.1 Individuals/Organisation Involved in the Assessment

Simon Rayburn Bsc. Simon has over seven years' experience in protected species surveys within the consultancy sector as well as a range of experience of a range of species groups in a voluntary capacity. He has managed individual projects in the consultant's role for over five years. He holds a Field Identification Skills Certificate for plants from the BSBI at level 4.

The report was commissioned by Great Canney Developments Ltd.

I.2 Purpose

A preliminary ecological appraisal looks at the area to assess its likely value for protected species and other wildlife. It is not a specific survey for any one species and looks for general habitat types but it will identify the need for further survey work if required.

The Ecological Impact Assessment will:

- identify and prescribe all potentially significant ecological effects associated with the proposed development.
- set out mitigation measures required to ensure compliance with nature conservation legislation and to address any potentially significant effects.
- identify appropriate enhancement measures

I.3 Site Location

The site is located within Pitts Farm, a small farm centred around a residential property with permanent pasture and hay meadows dominating the agricultural land around it. Pitts Farm lies in a rural location with only a small number of scattered residential properties and other farm buildings in the immediate area.

The site location boundary is shown in Fig 1.



Figure 1. Aerial view of the site, outlined in red. Aerial imagery copyright Google 2026.

1.4 Description of proposal

The proposals are for the demolition of the existing barn and the erection of a new residential building with associated drive, parking and garden. An on-site SuDS is also incorporated to manage the fowl water and rainwater.

2. Planning policy and legislation

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) became mandatory for large sites from 12 February 2024 and small sites from 1st April 2024.

BNG is an approach to development. It makes sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development.

In England, BNG is mandatory under [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021\)](#).

Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development.

The National Planning Policy Framework was amended in December 2024 and details National planning policy and all items relating to Protected species and habitat are detailed in Appendix 1.

Biodiversity enhancement measures as required by NPPF, section 15 and Local Plan Policy will need to be included.

Further specialist surveys may also be recommended, in some cases, to determine whether protected species are present and whether the legislation relating to them is being followed. These will usually need to be completed before the planning application is submitted. Failure to do so may result in the application being delayed or refused.

The planning authority for the site is Wiltshire Council.

The no part of the site is in the County's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The LNRS interacts with BNG by providing the strategic significance of a site as well as providing information about notable sites in the area.

3 Methodology

3.1 Scope of Assessment

The zone of influence (Zol) for a project is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects because of the proposed project and associated activities. The assessment does not just consider habitat on site but habitat off site that maybe connected to the proposal site and therefore effected by the proposals.

Species have different influence zones according to their mobility and territory sizes. These are outlined if there is a risk to a particular species.

3.2 Desk study

The government's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside website (www.magic.gov.uk) was reviewed to look for:

- Designated sites, Priority Habitats, European Protected Species licences and other relevant information – within 1 km of the site.
- Countryside Stewardship Targeting areas that were on or adjacent to the site were noted.

A data search was obtained from Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Record Centre (WSBRC) to look for Local Sites and protected/important species within 1km of the site.

Bats Zol is considered to extend up to 6 km, based on Core Sustenance Zones stated by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT, 2016). Therefore, the species search for Annexe II bats extended to this range if appropriate.

LNRS features on and adjacent to the site were viewed on the Wiltshire Council website. These are used to assess the strategic significance of a site and feed into the BNG assessment.

3.3 Field survey

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was carried out following CIEEM guidance. This looks at the area to assess its likely value for protected species and other wildlife. It is not a specific survey for any one species and looks for general habitat types, but it will identify the need for further survey work if required. Once the appraisal is carried out and it is concluded that no further work is required an Ecological Impact Assessment of the proposal can be carried out.

All areas of semi-natural habitat were also surveyed, and any features of interest noted. Consideration was also given to the potential of this area to act as a wildlife corridor.

Habitats on site were assessed according to the UK Habitats Classification Scheme, level 3. A phase 1 map showing UK Habitat types, level 3 was produced to guide Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). A quality assessment of each habitat was undertaken using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric condition assessment sheets. A plant species list was made between April - September and a 'DAFOR' scale applied to indicate relative abundance for grassland and other habitat if they were assessed to be medium, high or of very high distinctiveness. Following the DAFOR assessment UK classification to level 4 and 5 may be undertaken if appropriate.

Boundary features including walls and hedgerows were assessed if present. Hedgerows if affected were assessed in terms of species richness (five or more woody species in a 30m stretch) or if in favourable condition.

The entire site was surveyed for protected species, and for the potential for protected species. All protected species surveyed followed guidance from Natural England's Standing Advice Sheets for the relevant species. Habitat features or points of interest were also noted.

A consistent search effort for evidence of bats was applied to all parts of the site that are due to be impacted by the proposed works. The methodology used to search this site is consistent with the guidelines provided in the Bat Conservation Trusts Bat Survey Guidelines (2024). Table 1 provides further guidance on how potential roost features (PRFs) were assessed in structures. Any trees within the site boundary underwent a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) with trees being assessed as 'negligible'; 'PRF-I' where the potential roost feature (PRF) is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats; PRF-M where the

PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony. Any PRFs detected will trigger further survey work.

The habitat surrounding the site was assessed for its suitability for use by bats, identifying features such as possible commuting corridors and foraging areas as listed in table 1. These features assist bats with orientation in the dark, allowing bats to successfully navigate between roosts and foraging areas.

Any habitat features, for example scrub and trees, which could potentially be used by nesting birds, was noted and any nesting activity within the buildings was recorded. Ground nesting bird potential was also considered if the habitat was suitable (wide, open fields etc.).

Habitat features that may be suitable as hibernacula or feeding/resting areas by reptiles were noted.

Any area that could be used by badgers for foraging or could potentially contain a badger sett was surveyed and any field signs, such as snuffle holes, latrines or hairs were noted.

Any river corridors or aquatic features with potential for use by otter or water vole were surveyed and any signs of otter such as spraint or footprints were noted. Water voles were surveyed using methodology detailed in Water Vole Conservation Handbook, Third Ed. (Strachan, R. , Moorhouse, T., Gelling, M. ,WildCRU, University of Oxford Publication, 2011).

Any habitat features that could potentially provide feeding or nesting habitat for dormice were checked for signs of this species and areas with potential for use by dormice were noted. Visual surveys for nests and opened nuts were undertaken if the work only involves losing a small amount of habitat (for example access gaps in hedgerows). Guidance provided in the dormouse conservation handbook, second ed. (Bright, P, Morris, P, Mitchell-Jones, T, Natural England, 2006) was also followed. The Zol was considered, looking for connecting habitats on-site that extend off site to other hedgerows and woodland areas that might be used by dormice.

Any terrestrial or aquatic habitat features that could be used by great crested newt were noted. Any ponds within 1km of the site were subject to a Habitat Suitability Index assessment (ARG UK, 2010) and where appropriate eDNA testing, where landowner permission could be obtained. The Zol for GCNs is considered to extend to 500 m from the site, as this is the distance up to which the

species will typically travel to access breeding ponds (Froglife, 2001). If HSI assessment could not be carried out the 'pond-scape' within 500m and linking habitat was still assessed using online maps and aerial photographs.

Invertebrate habitats were noted during this assessment including potential for butterflies, moths and dragonflies. Micro features that are particularly important to invertebrates were also highlighted such as deadwood, edge of scrub, damp areas and grassland structure. Potential for protected invertebrates were considered, including white-clawed crayfish, stag beetles, southern damselfly, brown and white-letter hairstreak butterflies.

Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible ^a	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions ^b and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats ^c).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.
^a Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute). ^b For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance. ^c Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten <i>et al.</i>, 2016 and Jansen <i>et al.</i>, 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell, 2022 and Tomlinson, 2020) and winter hibernation of numbers of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust, 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.		

Table 1: Excerpt from Bat Mitigation Guidance, 2025. Bat potential in structures and surrounding vegetation.

3.4 BNG Calculation

The proposal was described through the BNG hierarchy principal at the earliest stage with the client so that any decline in on-site biodiversity could be avoided. The need to gain a biodiversity net gain of 10% was outlined, illustrating the need to the client and working with landscape architects if appropriate.

BNG was calculated by entering baseline (habitats currently present) area and post-development habitats into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. A minimum of 10% net gain in biodiverse habitats was targeted as a minimum to meet the legislative requirement.

If a LNRS is present on the site it affects the strategic significance of a site in the following way:

- The strategic significance multiplier is marked as 'Low' for all on and off-site baseline habitats.
- The strategic significance multiplier is marked as 'High' for post-development mapped habitats where a potential measure has been proposed to deliver the priorities of that LNRS and the proposed intervention is consistent with the mapped area of the LNRS.
- The 'Medium' multiplier category is not to be used if there is a published LNRS.

Further Ecological Work to Complete Assessment

3.5 Great Crested Newt Survey

A Great Crested Newt (GCN) eDNA test was carried out on the three ponds within the property. This was carried out following the desk study that found a large number of ponds in the wider area, within and beyond the 1km desk study radius, plus some records of Great Crested Newts, albeit none within 1km of the site. This suggested that the species could be present, but not as yet recorded, within the site.

The company Surescreen Scientifics Ltd was used to supply the sample collecting kit and complete the DNA testing. The methodology states to take 20 water samples from different locations around each pond, ensuring substrate is not stirred up that may interfere with the testing process, and aggregated within a single bag. Six samples are then taken from the bag, once thoroughly mixed, and added to the supplied test tubes containing the processing solution. The samples were then posted,

avoiding the weekend as the weather was particularly hot at the time, thus ensuring the samples would not deteriorate if held by the courier in unsuitable conditions for a prolonged period of time. The samples were stored in the surveyor's home refrigerator until the following week.

The samples were collected on 20/05/2026 at the same time as completing the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, to ensure it fell within the GCN eDNA survey window. The methodology supplied with the kit was followed, with the exception that samples from all three ponds were combined into one test kit. As none of the ponds will be impacted, the aim was to ascertain if GCN were present in the area, and therefore if they could be found in the grassland and woodland within the redline boundary. As all three ponds were small in size with less than 50% of each pond's banks accessible for safely taking samples, it was not possible to take 20 unique samples from each pond. As such it was assessed that this deviation from the sampling methodology would not result in a false negative through potential under-sampling.

Habitat suitability index surveys were also carried out on each pond.

4. Baseline Biological Conditions

4.1 Statutory and Local Sites

The 1km desk study across the relevant sources found the following information:

- There are no statutory sites within 1km.
- The site lies in the SSSI impact risk zone for three sites, the nearest being Hang Wood, 3km to the north. The proposals do not require consultation with Natural England.
- The LNRS showed the site to be within the 'Dorset - Stour Chalk Streams and Clay Vales Project' and 'The Heart of Wessex' areas. These both have management targets to 'create or enhance wetland and river habitat'. As no river habitat is on site, then this is not something that the enhancements can support.
- There were no ecological networks or Priority Habitats within the search radius.

A data search was obtained from the Wiltshire Biodiversity Record Centre for a 1km radius around the site which supplied the following additional data:

- There are three Local Wildlife Sites within 1km of the site. These are Mere Park Pale; a narrow strip of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland with ponds, Mere Park Meadows; a series of hay meadows with species-rich grassland and hedges most with in-field ponds and Westmarsh Farm Meadows; a series of unimproved hay meadows with species-rich grassland and hedgerows with old Oak pollards on clay soils.

The small amount of statutory and recognised local wildlife sites in the area does not suggest that the area is of high conservation value, but protected species may still be present. Complimentary habitat to enhance the ecological network in the area will be considered as a part of this assessment.

4.2 Habitats

The site consists largely of an area of hardstanding with a modern barn. An area of grassland adjacent plus a number of hedgerows make up the semi-natural habitats on site. Some of the hedgerows are 'assumed' being brought into consideration via the BNG assessment as unauthorised habitats removed

since January 2020. A young, planted woodland lies adjacent as well as some permanent grassland. Three ponds are also present within the wider ownership of land.

4.2.1 Grassland

The grassland on site is all classified as Modified Grassland. The majority of this is in a small plot to the northeast of the site (photo 1), adjacent to the hardstanding of the yard. The central area had not been cut for some months at the time of the survey, but the sward was not developed enough to suggest it was permanently left uncut year-on-year. A strip around the outside had been cut more recently, the sward being slightly shorter here.

The grassland here was species poor with less than 6 species per m². Rough Meadow-grass dominated the sward with over 70% coverage with a small amount of Yorkshire fog and Soft Brome also present. Forbs were found only in low numbers and coverage and consisted of common species with Ground Ivy, Creeping Buttercup and Cut-leaved Crane's-bill making up the majority of species with some Common Nettle and Spear Thistle also present in small numbers.

The grassland extended into the yard along a small strip (photo 2). This had a very similar species composition and is considered to be contiguous with the grassland to the north, but under more regular cutting. This area was maintained very short mown resulting in patches dominated by common low-growing forbs such as Self-heal and White Clover.

The other area of grassland consisted of the track which ran through the newly planted woodland (photo 3). This was recorded as grassland as the woodland was too young and as such represents a remnant of the grassland of the field in which the new woodland was planted, rather than a constituent part of a woodland.

The grassland here was also species poor with less than 6 species per m², but some species typical of more shady habitats were present in small numbers around the edges where hedgerows (offsite) were present such as Greater Stitchwort and Cuckoo Flower. Some common ruderals such as Pale Willowherb were present colonising the patches of bare ground with Creeping Buttercup the only forb with a coverage of more than 10%. Small numbers of Pignut and Hemlock were also present in the quadrats as well as Germander Speedwell and Red Campion by the hedgerows. The grasses were dominated by Rough Meadow Grass (>85%) with some Yorkshire Fog and Phleum sp. also present in places.

A small strip of grassland of the adjacent field was also brought into the redline boundary to the northwest to accommodate the creation of a new hedgerow (photo 4). The grassland here was also species poor, with less than 4 species per m² with grass and forb composition much the same as the small grassland plot.

	Photo 1. The plot of grassland to the northwest, looking southeast.
	Photo 2. The strip of grassland extending into the yard.
	Photo 3. The grassland along the track running besides the woodland (left) with the hedgerow on the right (both off-site).

	Photo 4. The grassland to the northwest where the new hedgerow has been planted in advance.
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4.2.2 Hedgerows

There are five hedgerows within the redline boundary. H1 and H2 are only within the site where existing access points are present running from the public road to the south, passed the planted woodland and to the plot of grassland. Technically no vegetation of these hedgerows is within the site, but access points are considered to be part of a hedgerow.

H3 runs along the north of the site alongside the plot of grassland and extends into the yard a short distance.

H4 & H5 were not present at the time of the preliminary survey but were identified from historical aerial imagery, as required under the BNG assessment rules. Assumptions were made on the composition and condition based on hedgerows H2 and H3 which they joined to, plus photographs supplied by the architect that showed some of H4 still present (photo 8). The arboriculture report from 2026 contained the species. H4 ran around the edge of the yard and H5 ran through the middle of the grassland (see figure 2 below).

Aerial imagery shows that removal of H5 was started around the cut-off time for historical consideration, but it could not be confirmed exactly which side of the start date this occurred. It has therefore been assumed it was all present within this period, so it is mapped extending across the length of the plot. The size of the hedgerow could be inferred from the aerial imagery, but the condition score is assumed; the relatively wide size of H5 without much variation between differing historical images suggest a regularly cut habitat with a good continuous canopy.

The hedgerows are summarised in table 2 below.

	Photo 5. Hedgerow H1. The existing access point is adjacent to the Ash tree.
	Photo 6. Hedgerow H2.
	Photo 7. Hedgerow H3.



Photo 8. Hedgerow H4. Taken by the architect in September 2025.

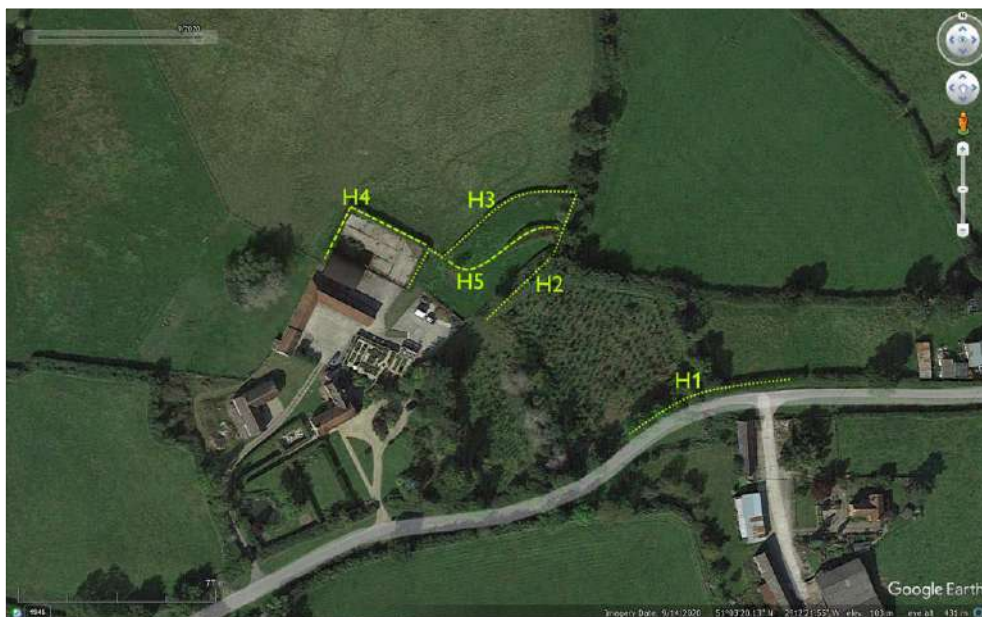


Figure 2. Aerial imagery dated 14/09/2020. Locations of the hedgerows marked with dotted lines (present in 2026) and dashed lines (absent in 2026). Aerial imagery from 2018 shows H5 running as marked above, but just under half is present in this image. N.b. lines indicate location of the hedgerows, but do not represent how much is within the redline boundary.

Hedgerow	Species Composition	Condition	Average Height x Width (m)	Trees present?
H1	Field Maple (5%), Hazel (10%), Ash (5%), Holly (5%), Blackthorn (75%)	Good: no canopy gaps, damage or encroachment. But some trees were not healthy (Ash dieback disease)	1.75 x 2.5	Yes, one semi-mature Ash tree. X6 younger trees had been pollarded, likely for Ash dieback management.

H2	Hawthorn (10%), Blackthorn (60%), Hazel (10%), Dog Rose (1%), English Elm (10%), Field Maple (10%).	Good: no canopy gaps, damage or encroachment. But trees were not healthy (Ash dieback and Dutch Elm disease)	2.75 x 2.75	Yes, one semi-mature Ash with dieback and 5 dead English Elms.
H3	Field Maple (25%), Hazel (10%), Hawthorn (65%)	Good: no canopy gaps, damage or encroachment.	1.75 x 1.75	No
H4	Field Maple (30%), Hazel (10%), Hawthorn (60%)	Moderate – photograph from Sept 2025 shows gappy, poorly formed canopy.	1.5 x 1.5 - based on photograph and historical aerial imagery.	No
H5	Max. 4 species likely based on H3 & H4.	Good – looks to have continuous canopy coverage, bar a hole in the middle, and regularly cut.	2 x 3 - based on historical aerial imagery, height assumed.	No

Table 2. Summary of the hedgerows, composition and condition.

4.2.3 Woodland and other Hedgerows

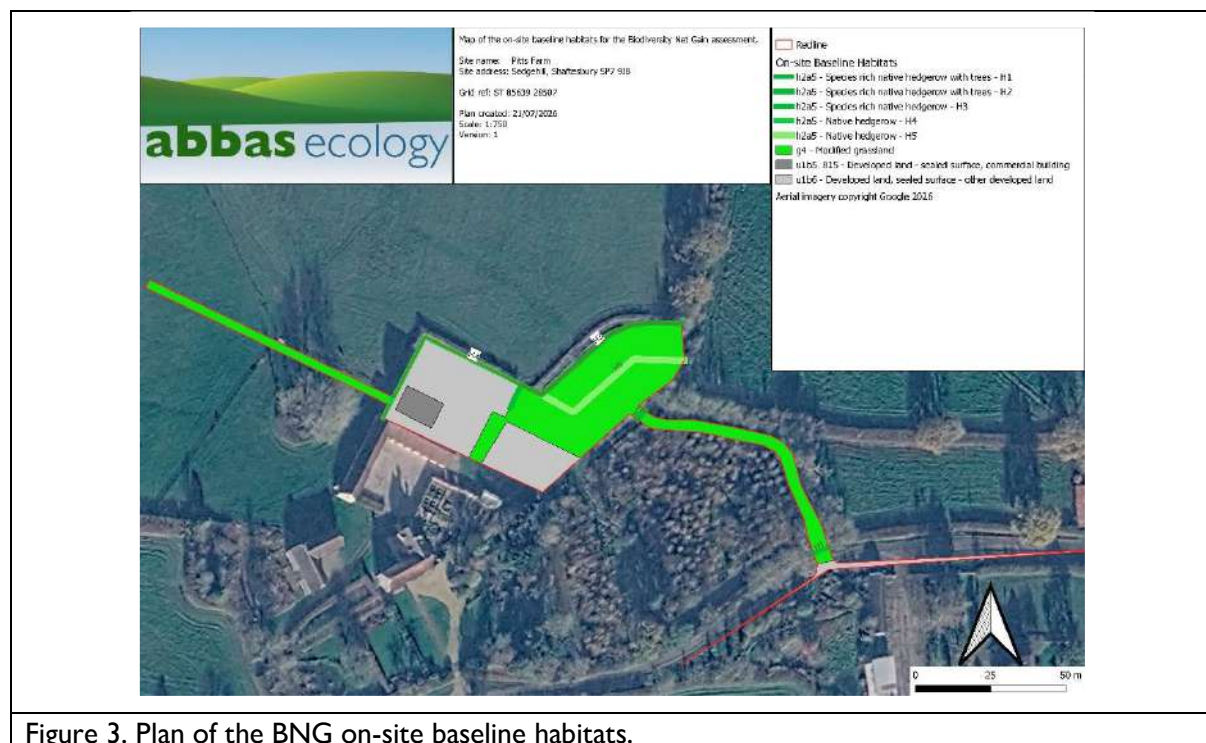
The newly planted woodland is dominated by English Oak with the trees all being of a 'young' age class. The grassland formerly present still persisting under the canopy. Further hedgerows are present adjacent to the site where H2 extends alongside the grassland and a further hedgerow runs alongside the woodland track. These habitats lay outside of the site but will need to be protected during construction works.

4.2.4 BNG

The scoring on-site habitats consist of the Modified Grassland and the Hedgerows. Non-scoring habitats consist of the building and surrounding concrete hardstanding of the yard. The grassland is classified the same throughout with no notable differences so is recorded as one unit. The hedgerows are split into five distinct habitats H1 to H5. The baseline figures of the scoring habitats are summarised below.

- The areas of Modified Grassland cover 0.2112ha, is in 'poor' condition throughout and provides 0.42 area habitat units in total.
- H1 is a Species-rich Native Hedgerow with Trees and runs for 5.5m through the site, is in 'moderate' condition and provides 0.07 habitat units.
- H2 is a Species-rich Native Hedgerow with Trees and runs for 4m through the site, is in 'moderate' condition and provides 0.05 habitat units.
- H3 is a Native Hedgerow and runs for 71.1m within the site, is in 'good' condition and provides 0.43 habitat units.
- H4 is a Native Hedgerow and runs for 66.1m within the site, is in 'moderate' condition and provides 0.26 habitat units.
- H5 is a Native Hedgerow and runs for 54.0m within the site, is in 'good' condition and provides 0.32 habitat units.

The strategic significance is 'Area/compensation not in local strategy' as no LNRS features were identified on or adjacent to the site.



There has been unauthorised habitat degradation identified prior to the BNG baseline survey completed in 2026, supported by historical aerial imagery as shown in figure 4 below. This consists of two hedgerows, H4 and H5. These habitats have been included in the BNG baseline with assumed composition and conditions as discussed in section 4.2.2 above.



Figure 4. Historical aerial imagery from 14/09/2020 showing hedgerows present around the yard and in the plot off grassland.

4.3 Species/Groups

The data search returned very few records for any groups of plants or animals. This does not represent an absence of any species or indicate an area of low biodiversity, especially given there was only a single bird record (of a rare species) that is normally well represented, but rather indicates that little recording has been carried out in the area.

4.3.1 Roosting Bats

The barn was assessed to have negligible bat roosting potential. It is constructed of a steel framework with timber lower walls and corrugated metal panel upper walls and roof. There were no potential roosting features identified and no evidence of use found inside.

The data search returned two records of bat roosts, one of an unidentified species of Pipistrelle bat and one Common Pipistrelle roost. Neither were maternity roosts.

	
Photo 9. The exterior of the barn	Photo 10. The interior of the barn

There were no potential roosting features identified on any of the hedgerow trees. All of the trees in the newly planted woodland were too young to provide any potential roosting features.

No further surveys or mitigation required.

4.3.2 Foraging and Commuting Bats

The grassland on site was of low diversity but does provide some structure that could support invertebrate communities in the longer patches, however it was very small in extent and subject to cutting that likely provides only temporary habitat for short periods of the year. Overall the grassland is of negligible value to foraging bats.

There were no mature trees on or adjacent to the site, but a small number of semi-mature trees were present in the hedgerows. These would provide some limited foraging opportunities, but do not constitute a significant resource for bats.

The hedgerows all provide suitable commuting routes for bats that could pass through the site between roosts and foraging habitats.

The data search returned five field records for Common Pipistrelle, one field record for Soprano Pipistrelle and one field record for a species of Myotis bat.

No further surveys required, some precautionary mitigation recommended.

4.3.3 Breeding Birds

All of the hedgerows and trees provide suitable nesting habitats for birds. No nests were found in the barn and none identified in any of the trees or hedgerows. No agitated bird activity was noted during the survey that could suggest a discretely made nest was present nearby.

A Tawny Owl nest box was installed in H2 adjacent to the woodland. It could not be confirmed if it was in use at the time of the survey.

There was one record for birds within 1km of the site, which was of a Red Kite.

None of the hedgerows present in 2026 will be removed bar a small section (2m) of H1 that will be lost to widen the existing access point to highway standards. As this is at the end of the canopy and along a roadside, it is unlikely that nesting birds would be present here during removal works.

No further surveys required, precautionary mitigation is required during works and mitigation for the loss nesting habitat of H4 and H5.

4.3.4 Dormice

Hedgerows H1, H2 and H3 all provide suitable Dormouse habitat with connections to further potential supporting habitat in the extensive hedgerow networks surrounding the property with small blocks of woodland further afield.

The newly planted woodland provides some supporting habitat, but at such a young age will provide limited foraging opportunities, particularly as English Oak is not a key food source species.

None of the hedgerows present in 2026 will be removed bar a small section (2m) of H1 that will be lost to widen the existing access point to highway standards. As this is at the end of the canopy and along a roadside, it is unlikely that Dormice would be present here during removal works.

The two hedgerows lost prior to 2026 will have resulted in a loss of some moderate quality habitat but given the extensive habitats in and around the site, this will have had a negligible impact, should they be present in the area.

There were no records of Dormice from the data search.

No further surveys or mitigation are required.

4.3.5 Badgers

There were no setts found in or adjacent to the site and no foraging signs or potential commuting routes identified.

There were two records of Badgers from the data search with a maximum count of two, neither were for setts.

No further surveys are required, but precautionary mitigation is recommended during works.

4.3.6 Reptiles

The grassland on site provides some suitable habitat for supporting common reptiles, but it is unlikely to support a population on its own. Slow worms and Grass Snakes may enter the grassland as part of wider supporting habitats across the property, off-site, but may not be present year-round on-site given the grassland is subject to periodic cutting.

The surrounding permanent grasslands were short cut/grazed so provided little shelter, but small patches of taller herbaceous vegetation are present around the hedgerows, ponds etc. These provide a small network of supporting habitat, but are not extensive enough that large populations are likely to be present in close proximity to the site.

The hedgerows in and around the site provide suitable shelter and hibernation potential for reptiles.

Common Lizards are unlikely to be found in the grassland given the small extent of the habitat and lack of supporting habitat adjacent.

There were no records for any reptiles returned from the data search.

No further surveys are required as this would be disproportionate to the likelihood of presence, but precautionary mitigation is recommended.

4.3.7 Great Crested Newts and other Amphibians.

Great Crested Newts

There are three ponds within the ownership of the applicant, none of these are within the site. A further seven were identified from maps within 500m of the site, with another 20+ in the 500-1km radius around the site. The dominant land use around the site is permanent grassland in a mix of hay meadow and pasture which provides extensive terrestrial habitat, linked by the hedgerow network, plus some small woodland blocks. The high pond density and amount of supporting terrestrial habitat makes it highly likely that Great Crested Newts could be present in the area.

The three ponds on the property were surveyed, the off-site ponds were not surveyed as those on-site returned a negative eDNA result and only a small amount of potential supporting habitat will be impacted.

The habitat suitability index (HSI) was calculated for the three ponds surveyed and the results are shown in table 4 below. The HSI is a preliminary assessment to gauge the suitability of a pond for providing breeding habitat for GCN. Pond 1 scored the highest with an 'excellent' suitability outcome. This was the garden pond which was well planted, without being overgrown and had little shading from trees. Despite pond 2 and pond 3 having little to no in-water vegetation (essential for egg-laying) and heavy shading, they both still score quite highly because of the surrounding supporting habitats. Pond 2 is used as an attenuation pond for the adjacent property so receives increased levels of surface water run-off which will lower its suitability for breeding GCN notably. Table 3 below summarises the scores for each pond.

None of the ponds will be impacted by the development, but the survey work serves to identify the risk of GCN to be present in the on-site grassland whilst not breeding and egg-laying in the ponds.

The eDNA test returned a negative result which indicates that it is highly unlikely that they are breeding in the ponds or passing through regularly. They could still enter the site at other times of year given the high density of ponds in the area and surrounding suitable terrestrial habitat.

There were no records for GCN returned from the data search.

No further surveys are required, precautionary mitigation is recommended.

	Pond Name	Pond 1 (garden)	Pond 2 (in field attenuation)	Pond 3 (between fields)
	Grid Ref	ST 85572 28418	ST 85564 28508	ST 85458 28584
SI No	SI Description	SI Value	SI Value	SI Value
1	Geographic location	1.00	1.00	1.00
2	Pond area	0.30	0.25	0.50
3	Pond permanence	1.00	1.00	1.00
4	Water quality	1.00	0.67	0.67
5	Shade	1.00	0.20	0.20
6	Water fowl effect	1.00	1.00	1.00
7	Fish presence	1.00	1.00	1.00
8	Pond Density	1.00	1.00	1.00
9	Terrestrial habitat	1.00	1.00	1.00
10	Macrophyte cover	0.60	0.30	0.40
HSI Score		0.84	0.63	0.70
Pond suitability		Excellent	Average	Good

Table 3. Pond Habitat Suitability Index scores for the three off-site ponds within the property.

Other Amphibians

Pond 1 provides good breeding and shelter habitat for Common Frogs, Common Toads and other common species of newts. These could also be present in the grassland, hedgerows, woodland and general habitat networks in and around the site.

There were no records for any amphibians returned from the data search.

No further surveys are required, the precautionary mitigation for GCN will also protect other common amphibians.



Photo 11. Pond 1; the garden pond.



Photo 12. Pond 2; the attenuation pond.

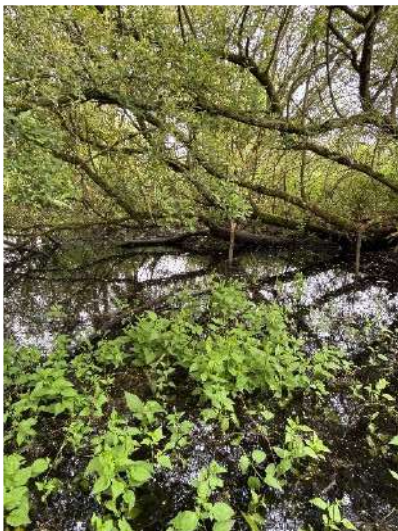


Photo 13. Pond 3; the between field pond to the north.

4.3.8 Otters and Water Voles

There are no supporting habitats on or adjacent to the site for Otters or Water Voles. The site does not lie in a location that could be a commuting route for Otters, away from any rivers or streams.

There were no records returned from the data search for either species.

No further surveys or mitigation required.

4.3.9 Invertebrates

The Blackthorn and Ash trees in the hedgerows provides larval and adult habitat for Brown Hairstreak butterflies respectively. The English Elm in the hedgerows provides larval habitat for White Letter Hairstreak butterflies.

All the hedgerows will be retained in full so no further surveys are required. The loss of H4 and H5 could result in lost habitat for these two species so mitigation is recommended.

The grassland does not provide a habitat that could support a significant invertebrate community due to the low species diversity, small size and management.

The data search returned records for the Small Heath butterfly (1), Wall butterfly (4) and the Yellow Loosetrife Bee (1). Both the Wall butterfly and Yellow Loosetrife Bee are rare species, the latter relying almost solely on the flowering plant Yellow Loosetrife, using the oils rather than nectar as a food source. Yellow Loosetrife is found in wet places such as the edges of ponds and rivers.

4.3.10 Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs could be found on site utilising the hedgerow networks, newly planted woodland, garden etc. Hedgehogs could shelter in the hedgerows, with some potential hibernation locations in the more densely vegetated areas off-site. There are no hibernation features on site.

None of the hedgerows will be removed and hedgehogs are highly unlikely to be present in the grassland or any working areas during the daytime.

The loss of hedgerows H4 and H5 will have resulted in the loss of supporting habitat for this species.

There were no records of this species from the data search.

No further surveys are required, mitigation for loss of habitat is recommended.

5. Proposal Layout – Constraints and Opportunities

5.1. The BNG Hierarchy

All of the mitigation and enhancements in relation to BNG have been achieved on-site. No off-site habitat creation or purchasing of credits will be required.

5.2. Ecological Constraints: Avoidance – Mitigation – Compensation

Following CIEEM guidelines any and all potential impacts (ecological constraints) were assessed and followed the process of firstly avoiding the impact, then mitigating for it to bring the impact to a negligible level then, if mitigation and avoidance cannot be achieved, the impact/loss is compensated for.

The key ecological constraints are the hedgerows removed prior to the 2026 survey and the small areas of grassland in which reptiles and amphibians may be present.

The lost lengths of hedgerow represent minor loss of habitat to nesting birds, reptiles, amphibians, Dormice and Hedgehogs. The retained hedgerows and woodland will required protecting during construction works. New hedgerow will need to be provided to mitigate for this loss.

There will be a small loss of the Modified Grassland onsite to the new access roads and drainage system; the remainder will be retained and enhanced to deliver a net gain. The new SuDS will be created in the grassland and also provide ecological value to the site.

Following the ecological constraints process it is possible to avoid any impacts on the retained hedgerows and woodland through the implementation of a suitable buffer and demarcation.

The loss of habitats is as small as is reasonable, with the majority of the development being within the existing hardstanding of the farmyard and barn.

5.3. Enhancements

Enhancements will be provided as an extension of the new habitat creation under the BNG assessment. The majority of the Modified Grassland will be enhanced to species-rich, with additional species-rich grassland created around the new house. A new Intensive Orchard and length of Species-rich Native Hedgerow will be planted to achieve the required 10% net gains.

6. Assessment of the Effects with Mitigation

The proposal has the potential to affect the following:

- Hedgerows and Grassland (BNG)
- Damage to retained hedgerows and trees during works
- Foraging and commuting bats
- Reptiles, Great Crested Newts and other Amphibians
- Breeding birds
- Dormice and Hedgehogs in the hedgerows
- Badgers

6.2 BNG Net Gain Assessment and Proposed Post-intervention Habitats

Parts of the Modified Grassland will be lost to the new access road and parking area and SuDS. Hedgerows H4 and H5 have already been lost. All other habitats will be retained in full.

There will be a loss of 0.0944ha of Modified Grassland representing a loss of 0.19 habitat units. The loss of H4 (66.1m) and H5 (54.0m) represents loss of 0.26 and 0.32 habitat units respectively.

The retained grassland totals 0.0898ha and all of this will be enhanced to species-rich Modified Grassland in 'moderate' condition. Modified Grassland was chosen as the small size of the habitat in total as well where it becomes thin strips around the new house and SuDS would make incorporating the structural diversity and general management necessary for semi-natural grassland types impractical and unlikely to be achieved.

Enhancing the retained grassland through re-seeding with a flowering lawn mix will provide species tolerant of more intensive mowing regimes suitable for such a location. This will deliver 0.31 habitat units. Additional newly created species-rich Modified Grassland will be created covering 0.0051ha and delivering 0.02 habitat units.

New habitat creation will consist of three SuDS features; scrapes (0.0029 ha), a pond (0.0112ha) and a reedbed (0.0096ha) which will deliver 0.01 habitat units each. These are all recorded as SuDS under the 'Urban' broad habitat type to ensure that management as SuDS does not prevent creation as ecological habitats. An Intensive Orchard consisting of 18 fruit trees will be planted to the south of

the site. Neither the SuDS or Intensive Orchard habitats have condition scores so only need to be created and maintained. This will cover 0.0354ha and deliver 0.07 habitat units. The areas of vegetated garden will cover 0.0463ha and deliver 0.09 habitat units. N.b. the proposals will include the sowing of species-rich grassland within the residential curtilage, however as this cannot be legally secured, it must be recorded as Vegetated Garden only.

The new drive and parking, new building and un-vegetated garden areas make up the remainder of the site and deliver no habitat units.

This will result in a post-intervention total of 0.54 habitat units, up from 0.42 which will deliver a 33.85% net gain on area habitats.

There will be the loss of 2m of H1, Species-rich Native Hedgerow with Trees, which represents a loss of less than 0.01 habitat units.

There will be the creation of 0.09km of Native Species-rich Hedgerow with Trees on site, with a target condition score of 'good', to deliver 0.7 habitat units. This was planted over the winter of 2025-26 (see photo 4, section 4.2.1). To create this habitat, at least 1 tree per 30m will need to be allowed to grow above the hedgerow canopy to over 5m in height. This will result in a post-intervention total of 1.33 habitat units up from 1.13 which will deliver a 18.04% net gain for hedgerows.

The target condition criteria for the enhanced Modified Grassland and Species-rich Native Hedgerow with Trees can be found in appendix 2. The plan of the on-site post-intervention habitats is shown in figure 5 below.

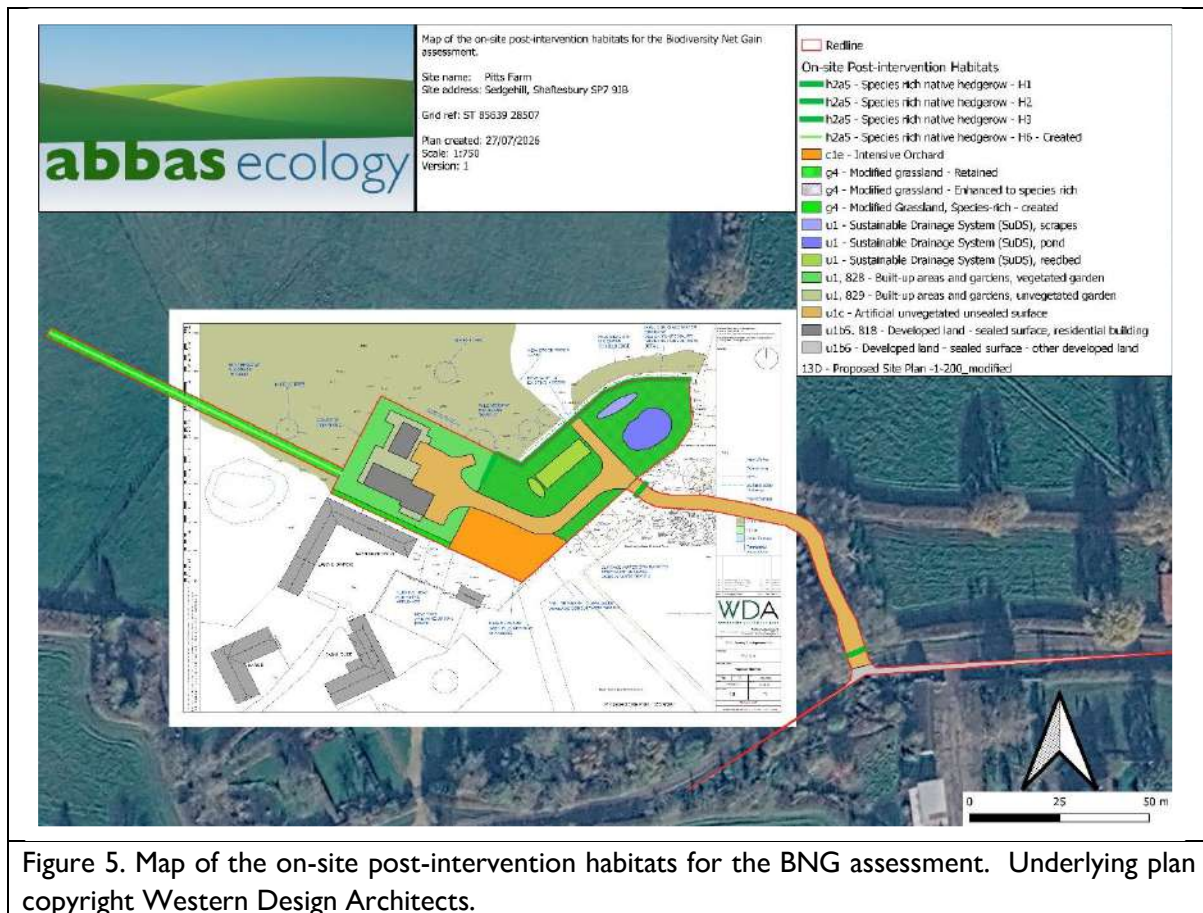


Figure 5. Map of the on-site post-intervention habitats for the BNG assessment. Underlying plan copyright Western Design Architects.

6.2 Damage to retained hedgerows and trees during works

Potential Impacts

Vehicular movement, the storage of materials and waste could all result in damage to hedgerows and trees in and adjacent to the site.

Mitigation

The retained hedgerows and trees will be protected as per the arboriculture report 'WTP2 023-26 AIA' by Wadey Trees Ltd.

In addition, all contractors will be instructed not to store materials or waste within 2m of any and all hedgerows and trees. The idea location for storage of materials and waste is likely on the existing hardstanding to the south, which extends off-site.

6.2 Foraging and Commuting Bats

Potential Impacts

Lighting at night could result in a disturbance that stops bats from using habitats for foraging and commuting. The new house is over 10m from the nearest hedgerow (H3) and is 7m from the newly planted hedgerow (H6) to the northwest. As these two hedgerows terminate at the site their value for commuting is limited and therefore the development poses a negligible impact on commuting bats in this area.

Any external lighting along the driveway within 10m of hedgerows and trees could result in a disturbance to bats.

Mitigation

Should any external lighting be required within 10m of any hedgerow or tree the lighting design must follow Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night¹. The key points will be as follows:

- Avoid illuminating the canopies of the hedgerows and trees, with units pointing downwards and away from any bat features.
- Use LEDs with a 'warm' colour that results in less disturbance
- Units must have motion sensors (PIR) and short timers (<1min).
- 0% upward light ratio. Lights can be hooded and point downwards
- No lighting pointing at any bat boxes included as a part of the development.

6.2 Reptiles, Great Crested Newts and other Amphibians

Potential Impacts

The loss of the Modified Grassland will result in the loss of a small amount of supporting terrestrial habitat. During construction works there is a risk of disturbance and harm to any individuals sheltering in the grassland at the time.

Mitigation

The grassland must be cut to a height no more than 5cm prior to the commencement of any works including the creation of the SuDS features and re-seeding of the area. This will persuade individuals out of the area. This must be carried out between March and September when reptiles are mobile enough to move away; any vegetation over 10cm must be cut down to this height prior, left for 24hrs, then cut to a maximum of 5cm height to persuade individuals out of the area. This must be carried out using a brushcutter with the head held horizontally to avoid hitting any reptiles or amphibians that may be present. Mowers should not be used until the grassland has been first cut to 5cm as these pose too high a risk of harm.

6.2 Breeding Birds

Potential Impacts

Nesting birds in the hedgerows, trees and owl box may be disturbed during the works. The scale of the development will not likely result in a significant level of disturbance, with the nearest habitat to the main area of construction works (the location of the new house) being the end of H3. This is a relatively small section of hedgerow at a terminus and is already in an area subject to human activity, so the risk of nesting birds being present is very low.

Vehicular activity along the track will result in some increased disturbance but given the scale of the development the risk of abandonment of eggs or young is very low.

Construction activity for the creation of the SuDS poses a risk of disturbance to nesting birds in H2 and H3, including the Tawny Owl nest box.

The loss of H4 and H5 represents a loss of suitable nesting habitat.

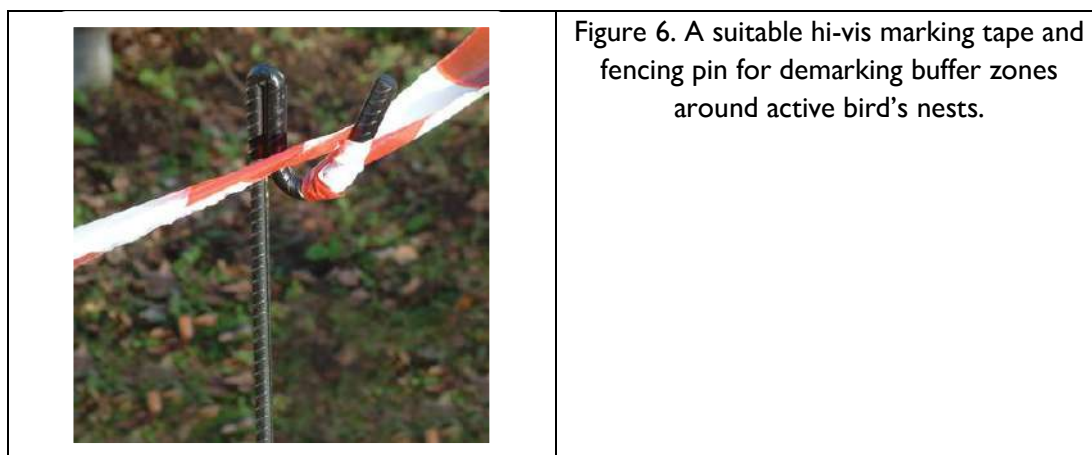
Mitigation

Should any SuDS creation works be carried out between April and August inclusive, a check for active nests by a suitably qualified ecologist must be carried out. This includes for the Tawny Owl nest box.

Should it be confirmed to not be in use, it is recommended that the Tawny Owl nest box is taken down or blocked up during the full works period for this development, and re-installed/re-opened once all risk of disturbance has ceased.

Should an active nest be found in any location, either during a check or at any other time, a 5m buffer must be installed such as is shown in fig. 9 below. Contractors must be instructed to stay out of the area until all chicks have fledged.

Under the BNG assessment, new hedgerow planting will provide replacement habitat for the loss of H4 and H5, that can be used by nesting birds once it has reached a size to provide good continuous canopy cover.



6.2 Dormice and Hedgehogs in the hedgerows

Potential Impacts

The loss of H4 and H5 represents a loss of supporting habitat for these two species. Construction activity for the creation of the SuDS poses a risk of disturbance to nesting or sheltering Dormice in H2. It is not anticipated that Dormice are at risk of harm from any works.

Mitigation

Under the BNG assessment, new hedgerow planting will provide replacement habitat that can be used by nesting birds, once it has reached a size to provide good continuous canopy cover.

Should any SuDS creation works be carried out during the breeding season (May to September inclusive) August inclusive, a check for active nests by a suitably qualified ecologist must be carried out. Should an active nest be found in any location, either during a check or at any other time, a 5m buffer must be installed such as is shown in fig. 9 below. Contractors must be instructed to stay out of the area until all young have matured and left the nest.

6.2 Badgers

Potential Impacts

Although no signs of use by Badgers was found on site, given the rural location Badgers could enter the site during construction works. Steep-sided holes in the ground could cause individuals to become trapped and stored materials (e.g. cement and liquid chemicals) could cause harm to curious individuals.

Mitigation

Prior to commencement of works the old setts must be checked to ensure Badgers have not re-established in them. Should use of the on-site sett be reestablished then survey work to determine the extent of use must be carried out prior to applying for a licence from Natural England so that the sett can be closed and destroyed. No works may proceed until the sett has been closed due to the extremely close proximity to the development area requiring groundworks.

During works the following precautionary mitigation will be applied:

- Any chemicals kept on site overnight (including cement and similar items) must be stored in a location where Badgers cannot reach them e.g. on stacked pallets or lockable containers.
- Any pits or trenches must be covered up overnight or given an earth ramp of no more than 45° left at one end to allow individuals to escape if they fall in.

7. Cumulative Effects

There were no other planning applications found on the planning portal within 1km that could result in cumulative effects.

8. Enhancements

All planning applications must achieve a net biodiversity gain. The BNG assessment provides the mechanism for delivering biodiversity gain for habitats only, so additional species-specific enhancements are proposed below.

There were no specific enhancements identified from the Wiltshire BAP so features are included based on existing habitats in and adjacent to the site and from the data search. Examples of suitable products are included.

- A built-in bat box will be installed on a suitable elevation of the house facing north or east towards the adjacent fields and hedgerows. Should a suitable location on the building not be identifiable, a tree mounted bat box must be installed on a suitably large, healthy tree at least 3m high.
- Two Dormouse net boxes will be installed in the young woodland and/or the adjacent hedgerow on suitably large trunks.
- Yellow Loostripe will be planted around the SuDS features to provide a valuable resource for the rare Yellow Loostripe Bee that was recorded in the area.



Figure 10. A Schwegler 2F Universal Bat Box for tree mounting. https://www.wildcare.co.uk/bat-box-45.html	Figure 11. A Habitat brand integrated bat box for installing in structures. https://www.habibat.co.uk/bat-boxes
	
Figure 12. A Schwegler Dormouse nest box. https://www.wildcare.co.uk/schwegler-ks-nest-box-for-european-dormice.html	

9. Monitoring

The creation of the Species-rich Native Hedgerow will require securing for a 30-year period under the BNG assessment requirements for habitats with a 'medium' distinctiveness or higher. This habitat will be created and managed under a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) which will be created following granting of planning permission. This will require reporting back to the council, typically on years 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 & 30. As this habitat has already been planted, the HMMP will detail any amendments required to ensure it meets the target habitat type, e.g. if more species need to be added to ensure it is classified as species-rich.

The enhancement to the Modified Grassland or creation of the Intensive Orchard are not classified as 'significant' enhancements so will not require the same legal securing nor inclusion in the HMMP, but may be subject to reporting back to the council over a shorter period, e.g. 5 years, to ensure creation and maintenance.

Monitoring visits will be conducted by a suitably qualified ecologist and a report sent to the LPA.

Photographic evidence of the completed mitigation and enhancements will be submitted to the LPA by the Developer/Site owner.

10. Conclusions

There will be no residual impacts to biodiversity if the mitigation is implemented fully. Completion of the design of the BNG assessment will result in the minimum target of 10% net gain on habitat units being achieved. There is scope for amendments to the BNG layout, if required, following granting of the planning permission.

The scale of the proposals are unlikely to require a Landscape Ecology Management Plan, but hedgerow and tree protection and grass cutting may need to be included in a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP).

A HMMP will be required in line with BNG assessment for the creation of the Species-rich Native Hedgerow.

References

Bats:

1. Bat Conservation Trust (London) & Institution of Lighting Professionals (Rugby) (2023). Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night (p29 & 30).
2. BCT (2020) Core Sustainance Zones and habitats of importance for designing Biodiversity Net Gain for bats. Bat Conservation Trust, London. <https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/guidance-for-professionals/bat-species-core-sustenance-zones-and-habitats-for-biodiversity-net-gain>
3. Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th ed), The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Other Mammals:

4. Bright et. al. 2006, The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd ed. Natural England
5. Strachan Et. al. (2011), Water Vole Conservation Handbook, Third Ed., *WildCRU, University of Oxford Publication, 2011*

Reptiles and Amphibians:

6. Froglife, 1999. Reptile survey: an introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation. Froglife Advice Sheet 10. Froglife.
7. Langton et. al., Froglife 2001, Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook, Froglife, Halesworth.

Appendix I: Legislation (summary)

In England, all bats, dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), otters (*Lutra lutra*), great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*), smooth snakes (*Coronella austriaca*) and sand lizards (*Lacerta agilis*) are legally protected under Annex IV of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (1992), which is transposed into domestic law via the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). Nightjars (*Caprimulgus europaeus*) are protected under the above Regulations under Annex I (as originated from the EC Birds Directive).

Badgers (*Meles meles*) are protected under The Protection of Badgers (1992).

Some species are also listed under Annex II of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (1992), including barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*), Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*), greater horseshoe (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), great crested newt, stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) and otter.

The above-named species and adders (*Vipera berus*), slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*), grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*), common lizards (*Zootoca vivipara*), water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) and several invertebrate species are also protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) (as amended); hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) are partially protected under Schedule 6 of the WCA (1981). Barn owls (*Tyto alba*) and other breeding birds are protected under Schedule 1 of the WCA (1981).

Schedule 9 of the WCA (1981) includes non-native, invasive species including (but not limited to) Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*).

Some sites that have been designated for nature conservation are legally protected due to being of European importance. These include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) (protected under the EC Habitats and Species Directive (1992), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds (protected under the EC Birds Directive) and Ramsar (Ramsar Convention, 1975). Other protected sites include Sites of

Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Protected Road Verges.

Hedgerows that qualify as 'important' under The Hedgerows Regulations (1997) are legally protected under the Regulations.

The National Planning Framework has been revised in December 2024. Section 15, paragraphs 187 to 201 can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/15-conserving-and-enhancing-the-natural-environment> Conserving and enhancing the Natural Environment. Section 15, NPPF December 2024 states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment."

Appendix 2: BNG Habitat Creation Condition Criteria (summary)

Modified Grassland

In a management plan aiming to achieve 'moderate' condition the grassland will show:

- • A minimum of 6 plant species per square metre achieved by,
- sowing a diverse grassland seed mix that includes a range of native grasses and wildflowers, to create new or enhance existing grasslands
- choosing a mix with 100% native species
- choosing species that can tolerate a variety of soil conditions and mowing.
- Less than 20% scrub and less than 20% bracken cover.
- No invasive non-native plant species as listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

Species-rich Native Hedgerow with Trees

In a management plan aiming to achieve 'good' condition the hedgerow will show:

- At least 80% native woody species, with at least 5 native species per average 30m length of hedgerow.
- At least 1.5m wide and 1.5m tall. There will be enough space for the hedgerow to grow to this required size and be maintained at this size.
- A minimum of 1-metre-wide strip of undisturbed ground along the hedgerow length on one or both sides, for grasses and wildflowers to grow. The strip width is measured from the edge of the hedgerow growth, not the middle. This space requirement is included in the plan for creating or improving hedgerows.
- No damage caused by human activities, such as inappropriate management or vandalism.
- If more than 10% of the hedgerow shows damage, there is relevant management put in place to stop the damage continuing. This adjustment is to maintain the hedgerow in the condition required in the SSM and management plan. It could include additional planting to replace any damaged hedgerow plants.
- A continuous, dense natural boundary feature with no gaps in the canopy or lower parts of the hedgerow.
- Species that indicate high nutrient levels in the soil, such as nettles *Urtica* spp., cleavers *Galium aparine* and docks *Rumex* spp take up less than 20% of the ground layer under the hedgerow.
- It is free from invasive non-native species (INNS) listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended).
- At least 95% are in healthy condition, with little evidence of adverse impact on tree health from animals, pests, diseases, or human activity.