

21st August 2026

Technical Report

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land at Church Farm, Lower Seagry

LPC (Trull) Ltd

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Terms of Reference	1
1.2 Site Location and Description	1
1.3 The Proposed Development	1
1.4 Objectives	1
2. Legislation, Policy and Guidelines	2
2.1 Legislation	2
2.2 Policy framework	2
2.3 Guidelines	2
3. Methodology	3
3.1 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	3
3.2 Ecological Desk Study	3
3.3 Extended UKHab Survey	3
3.4 Invasive non-native species survey	4
3.5 Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) / Preliminary (Bat) Roost Assessment (PRA)	4
3.6 Survey Limitations	5
4. Results	6
4.1 Desk Study	6
4.2 Species of Conservation Interest	7
4.3 UKHab Survey	10
4.4 Protected or Otherwise Notable Species	12
5. Appraisal and Recommendations	14
5.1 Proposed Development	14
5.2 Nature Conservation Designations	14
5.3 Potential Habitats of Principal Importance	14
5.4 Habitats	15
5.5 Protected or Otherwise Notable Species	16
6. Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations	19
7. References	20
Appendices	21
Appendix A. Legislation and Policy	22
Appendix B. Figures	24
Appendix C. Target Notes	26
Appendix D. Species List	28

Contents

Tables

Table 1:	Bat Roost Suitability Categories	5
Table 2:	Statutory Designated Sites of National, Regional or Local Importance within 10 km	6
Table 3:	Non-statutory Designated Sites within 2 km of the Site	7
Table 4:	Potential HPIs and Ancient Woodland within 2 km of the Site	7
Table 5:	Non-avian Species of Conservation Interest within 2 km of the Site	8
Table 6:	Legally Protected or Otherwise Notable Avian Species	8
Table 7:	Condition Assessment of On-Site and Off-Site Habitats	11
Table 8:	Findings of the GLA / PRA	12
Table 9:	Habitat Evaluation	15
Table 10:	Legislation	22
Table 11:	Policy	23
Table 12:	Target Notes and Site Photos	26
Table 13:	Species List	28

Document Prepared For

Stephen Peters

Church Farm,
Lower Seagry
Wiltshire
SN15 5EP

Document Prepared By

Ben Warwick

Senior Ecological Consultant

ben.warwick@atmosconsulting.com

Document Approved By

Dr Mikael Forup

Technical Director (Biodiversity & BNG)

mikael.forup@atmosconsulting.com

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1. Introduction

1.1 Terms of Reference

In November 2025, Atmos consulting Ltd (Atmos) were commissioned by Stephen Peters (the 'Client') to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land at Church Farm (the 'Site'), Lower Seagry, within the Wiltshire Council area. The work was undertaken to identify potential key ecological constraints and opportunities associated with a future development within the Site (the 'Proposed Development'), possible mitigation requirements and any detailed further surveys that may be required to inform a detailed Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA).

The PEA is based on an ecological desk study and an extended UK Habitat (UKHab) survey, as well as surveys for bat roosts and invasive non-native species (INNS). The habitat survey mapped and classified habitats within the Site and adjacent areas and was 'extended' to include an assessment of features with the potential to support protected or otherwise notable species. A preliminary appraisal was subsequently undertaken of potential effects on important ecological features from development within the Site.

1.2 Site Location and Description

The Site is located at Church Farm, Lower Seagry, SN15 5EP, at approximate National Grid Reference ST 95799 80727 and comprises modified grassland and developed land.

1.3 The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development involves the installation of a riding arena, approximately 0.175 ha in size. This will involve the conversion of modified grassland into unsealed urban land in the form of a horse arena. The existing hardstanding will be converted into unsealed urban land.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this report are to:

- Provide a desk-based study of nature conservation designations and records of protected or otherwise notable species from the Site and local area;
- Provide a description of habitats present on Site;
- Provide any evidence of protected or otherwise notable species present on Site or immediately adjacent areas;
- Confirm the conservation significance of the Site and assess the potential for impacts on habitats or species likely to represent a material consideration in planning terms, or establish the scope and extent of any additional specialist ecological surveys that will be required before such confirmation can be made; and to
- Recommend mitigation and enhancement strategies to reduce likely effects and to improve biodiversity within the Site.

2. Legislation, Policy and Guidelines

Relevant legislation, policy and guideline documents considered during the preparation of this PEA are provided in Appendix A and summarised below.

2.1 Legislation

Full consideration has been given to relevant nature conservation legislation when carrying out this assessment. This includes the following:

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (the 'WCA');
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992;
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997;
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) (the 'CRoW Act');
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (the 'NERC Act');
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); and
- The Environment Act 2021.

2.2 Policy framework

Full consideration has been given to relevant policy when carrying out this assessment. This includes the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024);
- Section 41 Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England (UK Government, 2025);
- Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan (Wiltshire Council, 2015)
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Wiltshire and Swindon (Wiltshire Council, 2025a); and
- Wiltshire Council Enhanced Biodiversity Duty Report (Wiltshire Council, 2025b).

2.3 Guidelines

The assessment has been undertaken in cognisance of the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal produced by the Professional Standards Committee of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2017) as well as the following best practice guidelines:

- UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0; and
- The Bat Conservation Trust, London. Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn).

3. Methodology

3.1 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

This section describes the methods used in the PEA, which was based on an ecological desk study, an extended UKHab survey, as well as a bat survey and an INNS survey.

The fieldwork was undertaken on 17th December 2025 by senior ecologist, Ben Warwick BSc QCIEEM.

3.2 Ecological Desk Study

In accordance with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017), an ecology desk study was carried out using a range of publicly available information sources to provide an understanding of the ecological context of the Site and wider area.

In terms of nature conservation designations, the desk study identified any statutory designation, i.e. any Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar wetland, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserve (NNR), Marine Protection Area (MPA) or Local Nature Reserve (LNR), within 2 km of the Site boundary, and any non-statutory designation, such as any Local Wildlife Site (LWS), Site of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC) or an area of woodland included on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), within a 2 km distance of the Site boundary.

Existing records for protected or otherwise notable species, e.g. Species of Principal Importance in England as listed in Sections 41 and 42 of the NERC Act local priority species on the Wiltshire Council Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Wiltshire and Swindon (Wiltshire, 2025a), or red- or amber-listed species on the fifth review of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC5) (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021), were identified within a 2 km distance of the Site boundary. Only records from within the last 10 years were considered relevant to the study.

Data records available for commercial purposes were obtained from the following:

- MAGIC Map (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside, 2025);
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas (NBN, 2025); and
- Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC).

3.3 Extended UKHab Survey

An extended UKHab survey was carried out of the Site and an up to 50 m buffer (access permitting) following the standard survey methodology (UK Hab Ltd., 2023). The classification, which is designed to provide a simple and robust approach to both habitat baselining and monitoring, covers terrestrial and freshwater habitats and is flexible enough for use in a wide range of situations, from walkover surveys of small urban sites to regional and national-scale rural habitat mapping.

During the survey, habitats over 0.1 ha located within the Site or a 50 m buffer were mapped and classified according to their vegetation types. Dominant plant species were recorded in accordance with plant species nomenclature in Stace (2010). It should be noted that the survey did not compile a complete list of flora and faunal inventory for the Site and that further specialist surveys would be required if this data is necessary. A series of target notes (TNs) were produced to describe representative habitats and features of interest, as well as habitats too small to be mapped.

The condition of individual habitat parcels present was assessed using the methodology developed by Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (2025a). The results were saved within a copy of DEFRA's Condition Assessment workbook.

The habitat survey was 'extended' to record features on Site with the potential to support protected or otherwise notable species; signs of badger and potential roost features for bats were assessed. Any evidence of protected or otherwise notable species, including birds, was therefore also recorded as target notes.

The extended UKHab method enables a suitably experienced ecologist to undertake a baseline ecological appraisal of the Site that will:

- Provide a preliminary evaluation of the nature conservation significance of the Site and assess the potential for impacts on habitats/species likely to represent a material consideration in planning terms; and
- Determine the scope of any further specialized surveys that may be required to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment.

3.4 Invasive non-native species survey

A search for invasive species was undertaken, including but not limited to Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*.

3.5 Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) / Preliminary (Bat) Roost Assessment (PRA)

A GLTA/PRA survey was undertaken in accordance with the standard Bat Conservation Trust guidelines (Collins, 2023). This consisted of a ground-based assessment to identify potential roost features (PRFs) on trees and structures. The survey involved the use of close focusing binoculars to identify (from ground level) any PRFs within the trees and/or structures. All potential bat access/egress points and PRFs, for example knot holes, woodpecker holes and limb wounds for trees, and cracks, openings, gaps of lifted concrete for structures were identified and recorded along with any evidence that may have indicated the location of roosts, such as stains and/or scratch marks (from claw holds, fur, oil secretions etc.); bat droppings, feeding remains; and odours or noise characteristics of bats, to aid in the search for bats and signs of bats such as droppings, urine staining and feeding remains. Where such signs were found, the location and distribution were marked on a plan of the structure.

The trees were classified for their potential to support roosting bats, using a scale of None, PRF – Individual (PRF-I) and PRF-Multiple (PRF-M), as well as its hibernation suitability. It was also considered whether the tree could be fully assessed and, if it could not, the tree was classified as 'Further Assessment Required' (FAR). This could be owing to external factors, such as vegetation obscuring view, limited access or any other reason for an inability to fully assess the feature from the ground. In these situations, it is recommended the survey is undertaken at a different time of year (i.e. winter), when there is less vegetation on the trees, or an aerial inspection is undertaken to fully assess the suitability of a feature.

The structures were classified for their potential to support roosting bats, using a scale of None, Negligible, Low, Moderate, High, or Confirmed, as well as their hibernation suitability, following best practice guidelines. This assessment was based on both the intrinsic suitability of the features to support roosting bats and other evidence giving an indication of the likelihood of use (e.g., presence of droppings, cobwebs, or exposure to elements).

Table 1, overleaf, outlines the assessment criteria.

Table 1: Bat Roost Suitability Categories

Bat Roost Suitability	Description	Survey Requirement
Trees		
None	The tree is not likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e., a complete absence of crevices/suitable areas for shelter).	No survey required.
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or a very small number of bats either due to size or lack of surrounding suitable habitats.	No further surveys required.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and therefore may be used by a maternity colony.	Three aerial inspection or emergence surveys undertaken between May and September, with at least two of the surveys between May and August. Surveys should be undertaken at least three weeks apart.
Structures		
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).	None
Negligible	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.	None
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, surrounding conditions 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).	One survey visit. One dusk emergence survey (structures).
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions 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).	Two separate dusk emergence survey visits.
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 and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g., maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.	Three separate dusk emergence survey visits.

3.6 Survey Limitations

The timing of the survey, outside of the optimal time period for habitat surveys from April to October, inclusive, is not considered a significant limitation given the agricultural nature of the Site and the fact that community dominants were readily identifiable. No other potential limitations were identified.

4. Results

4.1 Desk Study

4.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites of International Importance

There are no Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas or Ramsar sites located within 10 km of the Site (DEFRA, 2026).

4.1.2 Statutory Designated Sites of National, Regional or Local Importance

There are three Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and six Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 10 km of the Site (DEFRA, 2026). Further information on these designations can be found in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Statutory Designated Sites of National, Regional or Local Importance within 10 km

Names	Designation	Distance and Direction from Site	Reason for Designation
Harries Ground, Rodbourne SSSI	SSSI	3 km northwest	Harries Ground supports a nationally important species rich neutral grassland community. This community comprises a dry type characterised by crested-dog's tail and lesser knapweed. The relevant national vegetation classification communities are <i>Cynosurus cristatus</i> - <i>Centaurea nigra</i> lowland hay meadow pasture, <i>Danthonia decumbens</i> sub-community (NVC MG5c). The site also contains a population of a nationally scarce butterfly, the marsh fritillary <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> .
Sutton Lane Meadows SSSI	SSSI	3.1 km south	Sutton Lane Meadows is a botanically diverse area of unimproved neutral grassland. The site comprises two extremely herb-rich meadows which are cut for hay in late summer and grazed in autumn. The meadow contains important populations of two locally uncommon plant species. Small wetland areas and ancient hedgerows add to the interest. Of particular interest is the presence of approximately 500 green-winged orchids <i>Orchis morio</i> , comprising one of the most important hay meadow colonies in the county. In addition, there are small numbers of meadow saffron <i>Colchicum autumnale</i> , a plant which is known from only one other Wiltshire grassland site.
Stanton St. Quintin Quarry and Motorway Cutting SSSI	SSSI	4 km southwest	Designated for geological reasons and not discussed further.
Kellaways - West Tytherton, River Avon SSSI	SSSI	5.52 km south	Designated for geological reasons and not discussed further.
Bencroft Hill Meadows SSSI	SSSI	7.42 km south	An area of unimproved pasture on neutral clay soils, of exceptional botanical quality. The sward supports a variety of grasses and sedges.
Ravensroost Wood SSSI	SSSI	9.45 km northeast	Ravensroost Wood is a structurally varied and botanically rich wet ash-wych elm <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> - <i>Ulmus glabra</i> and wet ash-maple <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> - <i>Acer campestre</i> woodland, with a complex system of rides, ditches and small ponds. This combination supports a diverse flora including uncommon and locally rare species.
Corston Quarry and Pond	LNR	4.95 km northwest	Small disused quarry with pond, scrub and species-rich grassland.

Names	Designation	Distance and Direction from Site	Reason for Designation
Conygre Mead	LNR	7.1 km north	Mostly open grassland with mature willows (<i>Salix</i> spp.), tall mixed species hedge forms, some damp grassland areas, and with some species that are suggestive of calcareous grassland.
Mortimore's Wood	LNR	9.68 km southwest	Habitats include woodland, woodland edge and riverbank. The ground flora is diverse with different species dominating locally. Bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> , dog's mercury <i>Mercurialis perennis</i> , wood anemone <i>Anemone nemorosa</i> , bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> and ivy <i>Hedera helix</i> .

4.1.3 Non-statutory Designated Sites

A total of four non-statutory designations are located within 2 km of the Site (DEFRA, 2026). Further details on these sites can be found in Table 3, below.

Table 3: Non-statutory Designated Sites within 2 km of the Site

Name	Designation	Distance and Direction from Site	Reason for Designation
Bristol Avon River	SNCI	115 m south	One of the main river systems draining north-west Wiltshire.
North Draycot Park	SNCI	2 km southwest	Old parkland with a high concentration of very old oak trees in semi-improved grassland.
Seagry Wood and Oak Hill	SNCI	1.9 km northwest	Mixed conifer and sweet chestnut plantation on an ancient woodland site. Located on gently sloping land on clay and greensand with a rich ground flora, including abundant bluebells.
Great Somerford Gravel Pits	SNCI	1.6 km northwest	Two small gravel pits now standing open water.

4.1.4 Potential Habitats of Principal Importance and Ancient Woodland

There are numerous habitats of principal importance in England which have been identified using Magic (DEFRA, 2026) within 2 km of the Site. Further details on these sites can be found in Table 4, below.

Table 4: Potential HPis and Ancient Woodland within 2 km of the Site

Habitat	Distance and direction from Site	Description
Traditional Orchard	1.67 km southeast	There are two traditional orchard habitats within 2 km of the Site.
Deciduous Woodland	1.16 km west	There are many deciduous woodland habitats within 2 km of the Site.
Wood-pasture and Parkland	1.15 km west	There are two wood pasture and parkland habitats within 2 km of the Site.
Seagry Wood	1.7 km northwest	Mostly semi-natural ancient woodland on Kellaways sands and clay.

4.2 Species of Conservation Interest

4.2.1 Protected or Otherwise Notable Species

As summarised in Table 5, overleaf, records were identified of numerous non-avian species of nature conservation interest from areas within 2 km of the Site boundary and dating from within the last 10 years (WSBRC, 2025).

Table 5: Non-avian Species of Conservation Interest within 2 km of the Site

Common Name	Scientific Name	Detail of Record(s)	Legal / Conservation Status
Amphibians			
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	A single record located 1.6 km west.	Protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA
Reptiles			
Grass Snake	<i>Natrix helvetica</i>	A single record identified 1.9 km north.	Protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA
Mammals			
Unidentified <i>Myotis</i> bat	<i>Myotis</i> sp.	4 records, the closest located 1.9 km south	Bats (and their roosts) are strictly protected as European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Also protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA
Brown Long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	2 records, the closest located 1.9 km south.	Bats (and their roosts) are strictly protected as European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Also protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA
Water Vole	<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	A single record identified 240 m south along the River Avon.	Protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA
European Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	11 records, closest located 400 m southwest.	Protected under Schedule 6 of the WCA
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	10 records, the closest located 440 m southeast, along the River Avon.	Otters (and their resting places) are strictly protected as European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 Also protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA Species of Principal Importance
Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	A single record identified 1.8 km west.	Badgers and their setts are fully protected under the Protection of Badger Act 1992 (as amended)
Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	3 records, the closest located 540 m southeast.	Protected under Schedule 6 of the WCA
Polecat	<i>Mustela putorius</i>	2 records, both being 1.9 km southeast.	Species listed under Section 41
Invertebrates			
Terrestrial Invertebrates		49 records of terrestrial invertebrate including <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i> and <i>Tyria jacobaeae</i> . The closest is located 1.8 km north.	Species listed under Section 41

As summarised in Table 6, below, records were identified of numerous bird species of nature conservation interest from areas within 2 km of the Site boundary and dating from within the last 10 years.

Table 6: Legally Protected or Otherwise Notable Avian Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Legal / Conservation Status				
		Annex 1, Birds Directive	Schedule 1, WCA	Species of Principal Importance	LBAP	BoCC 5
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		X	X		Amber
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>		X		X	Amber

Common Name	Scientific Name	Legal / Conservation Status				
		Annex 1, Birds Directive	Schedule 1, WCA	Species of Principal Importance	LBAP	BoCC 5
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			X		Amber
Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>					Green
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>				X	Amber
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>					Green
Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>					Green
Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>		X			Green
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>			X	X	Red
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>					Amber
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>		X		X	Green
Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>				X	Green
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>		X		X	Green
Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>					Red
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>					Green
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>					Amber
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>			X		Red
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>		X			Green
House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>					Red
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>			X		Red
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>					Amber
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	X	X	X		Green
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			X	X	Red
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>			X		Amber
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>			X	X	Red
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	X				Green
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>					Amber
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>			X		Red
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>				X	Red
Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>					Red
Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>					Green
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	X	X			Green
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	X	X	X		Green
Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>			X		Red
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>		X			Amber
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			X		Amber
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>					Amber
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				X	Amber
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>			X	X	Red
Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>				X	Amber
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			X		Amber
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			X		Amber

Common Name	Scientific Name	Legal / Conservation Status				
		Annex 1, Birds Directive	Schedule 1, WCA	Species of Principal Importance	LBAP	BoCC 5
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			X	X	Red
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>			X	X	Red
Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>					Amber
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>					Red
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>					Amber
Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>					Amber
Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>					Amber
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>					Amber
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			X		Amber
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>			X		Red
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			X		Red

It should be noted that all nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

4.2.2 Invasive Non-native species (INNS)

No records of INNS were identified from areas within 2 km of the Site boundary and dating from within the last 10 years.

4.3 UKHab Survey

The habitats recorded on-Site and within the survey buffer are described below and in Figure 1 in Appendix B.

4.3.1 On-Site Habitats

Modified Grassland (G4)

The Site was dominated by modified grassland heavily grazed by horses; the sward height at the time of survey was monotonous consistent varied between approximately 5-10 cm. The grassland was dominated by species including cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, fescues *Festuca* spp., common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, chickweed *Stellaria media*, and ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, see TN 1 in Table 12, Appendix C. For a full species list see Table 13 in Appendix D.

Hardstanding (U1b)

Hardstanding is present on Site, used as a pathway, see TN 2.

4.3.2 Off-Site Habitats

The dominant habitat off-Site is also modified grassland. In addition, there is arable land (not surveyed) and native hedgerow, see Table 7, overleaf.

Other Native Hedgerow (H2a6)

A single hedgerow is present within the buffer zone of the Site and connects to the southwest corner of Site boundary; the species present are hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, elm *Ulmus minor*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus*. The hedgerow is likely to be less than 100 years old due to the lack of species richness, only three woody species present, and the small size and young age of these individuals. On average the hedgerow is more than 1.5 m in height and width. There is a consistent presence of canopy within 0.5 m of the ground and there are no significant gaps within the hedgerow. At least 1 m of vegetated undisturbed ground is present along the base of the hedgerow, however, there is evidence of nutrient enrichment due to the presence of species such as dock and nettles. Invasive species were not identified within the hedgerow and there was no sign of recent damage from human activities such as excessive hedgerow cutting although there was evidence of historic hedgerow management.

Cropland (C1)

A field of cropland with temporary grass and leys cover is present within the buffer zone to the west of the Site.

Hardstanding (U1b)

Hardstanding is present within the buffer zone.

Buildings (U1b5)

Five buildings are present within the buffer zone.

Individual Tree

Two individual trees are present on Site within the buffer zone.

4.3.3 Condition Assessment

The habitats within the Site were assigned a condition score (where appropriate) according to the Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology (DEFRA, 2025), as illustrated in Figure 1 and summarised in Table 7, below.

Table 7: Condition Assessment of On-Site and Off-Site Habitats

Habitat Name	Habitat Condition	Condition criteria passed
On-Site		
Modified Grassland (all)	Moderate	A, C, E, F, G
Urban land, sealed	N/A	N/A
Off-Site		
Other Native Hedgerow	Good	A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, D1, D2
Cropland	N/A	N/A
Hardstanding	N/A	N/A
Buildings	N/A	N/A
Individual tree	N/A	N/A

4.4 Protected or Otherwise Notable Species

4.4.1 Amphibians

The Site is unsuitable for amphibians, including great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, due to the lack of waterbodies on-Site. However, the River Avon is present approximately 115 m south of the Site with associated areas of wetland, no ponds, which offer suitable habitat for species.

4.4.2 Reptiles

No incidental evidence of reptiles, such as snakes and lizards, was recorded. The heavily grazed grass habitat offers very limited habitat for foraging and nesting. Therefore, reptiles are not considered to be present on Site.

4.4.3 Bats

Habitat Appraisal

The Site offers minimal potential for roosting bats due to the lack of trees and man-made structures. The wider Survey Area does contain two trees and multiple buildings; the potential roosting feature classification has been summarised in Table 8, below.

Table 8: Findings of the GLA / PRA

Tree / Building Reference	Description	Bat Roost Suitability
Ash Tree	Mature ash tree adjacent on northeast of Site boundary. No cavities suitable for use.	PRF-I
Individual tree	Young tree 10 m east of Site boundary. No cavities suitable for use.	PRF-I
Building 1	5 m east of Site boundary. Few suitable cavities for bat roosting.	Low
Building 2	20 m east of Site boundary. Few suitable cavities for bat roosting.	Low
Building 3	40 m east of Site boundary. Few suitable cavities for bat roosting.	Low
Building 4	50 m east of Site boundary. Few suitable cavities for bat roosting.	Low
Building 5	10 m east of Site boundary. Few suitable cavities for bat roosting.	Low

The Site is located within the disturbance distance (20 m) of potential bat roost features; the ash tree, individual tree, Buildings 1 and 5. The Proposed Development could cause disturbance to potential roosting features associated with the two trees and Buildings 1 and 5.

4.4.4 Badger

No *ad-hoc* evidence of badger presence was identified within the Site or buffer zone, and badgers are concluded to be absent. The Site provides sub-optimal habitat for badger due to the heavily grazed, short grassland; however, the species could use the area to forage. The wider Survey Area offers potential to host badger due to the presence of hedgerows, where setts could potentially be established. A hedgerow connects to the southwest boundary of Site; a sett or signs of badger were not identified within this habitat. Work could be conducted within 30 m of a badger feature during the Proposed Development.

4.4.5 Otter

No *ad-hoc* evidence of otter presence was identified within the Site or buffer zone. The Site provides unsuitable habitat for otters due to the lack of watercourses and waterbodies within the boundary, and the species is concluded to be absent. The wider Survey Area contains potential habitat for otter as the River Avon is located approximately 115 m south of the Site. Therefore, the Proposed

Development could cause disturbance to an otter feature, such as a holt, within the legal 200 m disturbance zone.

4.4.6 Water vole

No *ad-hoc* evidence of water vole presence was identified within the Site or buffer zone. The Site provides unsuitable habitat for water voles due to the lack of watercourses and waterbodies within the boundary, and the species is concluded to be absent. The wider Survey Area contains potential habitat for water vole as the River Avon is located approximately 115 m south of the Site. Therefore, the Proposed Development is unlikely to adversely impact upon the species.

4.4.7 Hazel Dormouse

No *ad-hoc* evidence of hazel dormouse presence was identified within the Site or buffer zone. The Site provides unsuitable habitat for hazel dormice due to being comprised of open and short grassland habitat, and the species is concluded to be absent. The buffer zone contains potentially suitable habitat for the species; a hedgerow connects to the southwest boundary of the Site. Therefore, the work involved in the Proposed Development could cause disturbance by taking place within 25 m of a hazel dormouse feature.

4.4.8 Birds

The Site provides suitable habitat for bird species; with the grassland offering only foraging potential as it is too disturbed to offer ground nesting potential. A hedgerow connects to the southwest of boundary of the Site and offers suitable nesting habitat for small birds. Therefore, the Proposed Development has the potential to disturb nesting bird species.

4.4.9 Invasive Non-Native Species

No species classified on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act was identified within the Site or surrounding buffer. Therefore, the Proposed Development is unlikely to impact upon INNS.

5. Appraisal and Recommendations

5.1 Proposed Development

The Proposed Development involves the installation of a riding arena, approximately 0.175 ha in size. This will involve the conversion of modified grassland into unsealed urban land in the form of a horse arena. The existing hardstanding will be converted into unsealed urban land. The Proposed Development will involve low-level excavation with the use of tractors, similar to general agricultural activities such as ploughing, hedgerow management and slurry dispersal.

5.2 Nature Conservation Designations

Status

Nine statutory designated sites and four non-statutory designated sites were identified within 10 km of the Site, see Tables 2 and 3.

Appraisal

Two statutory designated sites, Stanton St. Quintin Quarry and Motorway Cutting SSSI, Kellaways - West Tytherton, are designated for geological reasons, therefore, the Proposed Development will not affect these designations.

The remaining seven statutory designated sites are located at least 3 km from Site. Given the small size and the low-level nature of the Proposed Development and the large distance between it and the statutory designations, there is minimal risk of adverse effects upon statutory designations.

Three non-statutory designated sites are located more than at least 1.6 km from Site. Given the small size and the low-level nature of the Proposed Development there is minimal risk to the non-statutory designations.

The River Avon SNCI is located 115 m south of the Site. The close proximity to the Proposed Development increases the risk of adverse effects upon the non-statutory designation. Therefore, mitigation is proposed in the form a no-disturbance zone to avoid impacts from the low-level nature of the Proposed Development. With appropriate mitigation in place the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a negative impact upon this non-statutory designation.

Recommendations

The following mitigation should be implemented to ensure the Proposed Development does not have a negative impact upon nature conservation designations for the River Avon:

- Implementation of a no-disturbance zone of 100 m between the Proposed Development and the River Avon to avoid low-level impacts.

5.3 Potential Habitats of Principal Importance

Status

Four potential habitats of principal importance were identified within 2 km of the Site, see Table 4.

Appraisal

The traditional orchards, deciduous woodland, wood-pasture and parkland, and semi-natural ancient woodland are dissimilar habitats to those present on Site. Therefore, the Proposed Development will not adversely affect the distribution or abundance of these habitats of principal importance.

5.4 Habitats

Status

Only two habitats within the Site and five habitats off-Site were identified, see Section 3.2.1. The habitats are evaluated in Table 9, below.

Table 9: Habitat Evaluation

Habitat Name	Habitat Code	Evaluation
On-Site		
Modified grassland (moderate)	G4	Habitat description does not align with nature conservation priorities.
Hardstanding	U1b	Habitat description does not align with nature conservation priorities.
Off-Site		
Other native hedgerow	H2a6	Habitat description does not align with nature conservation priorities.
Cropland	C	Habitat description does not align with nature conservation priorities.
Individual tree	N/A	Habitat description does not align with nature conservation priorities.
Urban	U1b	Habitat description does not align with nature conservation priorities.
Building	U1b5	Habitat description does not align with nature conservation priorities.

Appraisal

The urban land on Site is considered to be of negligible intrinsic ecological value. The grassland habitat, i.e. modified grassland in moderate condition, is not of strategic importance locally or nationally. Amended Biodiversity Net Gain legislation, effective from 6th of August 2026, states that applications made after this date are exempt from the statutory BNG requirements for a minimum 10% uplift in Biodiversity Units when the Proposed Development results in less than 0.2 ha of natural/vegetated habitat loss and no on-site priority habitat or priority habitat within 500 m of the Proposed Development will be impacted. The hedgerow present on the southwest boundary of the Site consists of only three woody species; hawthorn, blackthorn and elm; thus, it is not species rich. The habitat shows signs of recent intensive management within the previous 5 years. The Proposed Development will not impact the structure of the hedgerow; therefore, no mitigation is required to protect the habitat.

The Site is located approximately 115 m north of the River Avon which could be susceptible to impacts such as pollution. However, the nature of the low-level works involved in the Proposed Development are similar to general agricultural activities already conducted on the farm, therefore, to avoid increasing disturbance a no-disturbance buffer should be implemented. With appropriate mitigation the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a negative impact upon habitats on Site and in the wider area.

The Proposed Development will replace 0.175 ha of modified grassland with artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface to install the riding arena, as illustrated in Figure 2, Appendix B.

Recommendations

The Proposed Development should seek to retain or enhance existing habitats, where possible.

In addition, the following measures should be implemented during construction to avoid impacting the River Avon:

- Secure storage and safe disposal of any materials and substances to prevent accidental contamination of habitats.

5.5 Protected or Otherwise Notable Species

The Proposed Development is considered to have no impact upon the following species and groups given the lack of evidence from the field survey and desk study; amphibians, reptiles, water vole and INNS.

5.5.1 Bats

Status

Bat species and associated features, such as roosts, are protected under the WCA 1981 Schedules 5 and 6 – animals. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take a wild animal, and obstruct, disturb or destroy an animal feature. Therefore, work to be completed within suitable habitat must first be considered by a suitably qualified ecologist, and a permit obtained where necessary. Additionally, bats are strictly protected under European law as European Protected Species.

Appraisal

The Site does not contain structures with potential roosting features; the ash tree and Building 1 to 5; inclusive, are located within the buffer zone. The structure of the buildings and trees will not be affected by the Proposed Development. Buildings 1 and 5 and the ash tree are located within the disturbance distance of potential roost features, however, the nature of the works is similar to general agricultural activity and is thus unlikely to cause significant effects to bat species. Buildings 2 to 4; inclusive, are located outside of the disturbance distance of potential roosting features; therefore, the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a negative impact upon bat species.

5.5.2 Badger

Status

Badgers and their setts are protected in England and Wales under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, where it is illegal to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger and to disturb, damage or destroy a badger's sett. Badgers and their setts are protected in England and Wales under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, where it is illegal to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger and to disturb, damage or destroy a badger's sett.

Appraisal

The natural habitat within the Site is considered sub-optimal for badger; however, the hedgerow connecting to the southwest corner of the Site is considered suitable foraging and sett habitat, although no signs of the species were identified during the survey. The low-level impact of the Proposed Development is similar to agricultural disturbances such as ploughing, to which species in the wider landscape would already be habituated. Although badgers could move onto Site to forage, the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a negative impact upon the species.

5.5.3 Otter

Status

Otter is protected in Wales as a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is illegal to capture, kill, injure, or disturb otters, or to damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places (holts).

Appraisal

The habitat on Site is unsuitable for the species; however, the River Avon is approximately 115 m south at its closest point. The species is unlikely to be present on Site, however, potential otter features such as holts, may be present within 200 m of the Site. The low-level impact of the Proposed Development is similar to agricultural disturbances such as ploughing, to which species in the wider landscape would already be habituated. A certain level of mitigation, such as a no-disturbance zone should be implemented to mitigate the potential disturbance to otter in the River Avon. With this in place the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a negative impact upon the species.

Recommendations

Mitigation for otter is required due to the presence of suitable habitat within the wider landscape. The River Avon is located approximately 115 m south of the Site; therefore, the following mitigation should be adhered to:

- Work should be undertaken during daylight hours as otters are primarily nocturnal; and
- Implement a no-disturbance zone of 100 m from the River Avon to avoid increasing disturbance above usual agricultural activity.

5.5.4 Hazel dormouse

Status

Hazel dormice are listed under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981, providing them with full protection in the UK. Dormice are also listed as a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017, as amended). Additionally, dormice are listed as a species of principal importance under Section 42 (Wales) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Appraisal

The desk study did not identify records of hazel dormouse within 2 km of the Site. The natural habitat present on Site is considered sub-optimal habitat for the species due to a lack of woodland or hedgerows. However, hedgerows do exist within the wider landscape; one in particular connects to the southwest boundary of Site. The hedgerow shows signs of management within the last 5 years. The heavily grazed, short grassland is unsuitable for the species. As the hedgerow is located outside of the Site boundary, the Proposed Development will not directly impact upon the habitat. However, works will take place within 25 m, the no-disturbance buffer distance of hazel dormouse. The low-level impact of the Proposed Development is similar to agricultural disturbances such as ploughing, to which species in the wider landscape would already be habituated. Therefore, it is considered unlikely the Proposed Development would have a negative impact upon the species.

5.5.5 Birds

Status

It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is also illegal to take, damage or destroy a nest, or to take or destroy eggs. Some birds are afforded additional protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Bird species listed in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) are considered rare, vulnerable, endangered, or otherwise in need of special conservation measures across Europe.

Birds of Conservation Concern (BOCC) is the UK's national assessment of the conservation status of bird species. It classifies all regularly occurring birds into Red, Amber, or Green lists based on a series of quantitative criteria including population decline, range contraction, rarity, international importance, and risk of global extinction. The Red List includes species of highest conservation concern (e.g., those with severe declines or depleted breeding populations), the Amber List includes species of moderate concern.

Appraisal

The habitat present on-Site is unsuitable for ground nesting birds as the grassland is heavily grazed which discourages birds from breeding. The hedgerow within the buffer zone offers potential for nesting birds such as blackbird and wren; the Proposed Development will keep the habitat intact. However, there is potential to cause disturbance to breeding species; therefore, timing the works outside of the breeding season and implementing a no-disturbance zone are recommended. If this is not possible, other appropriate mitigation is proposed below. With this mitigation the Proposed Development is unlikely to have a negative impact upon birds.

Recommendations

Given the presence of suitable breeding habitat in the buffer zone, it is recommended the following mitigation measures are implemented:

- Conduct work outside of the breeding season, March – September; inclusive, to avoid disturbance of potential nesting birds within the hedgerow in the buffer zone;
- If the above is not possible, a suitable buffer of 5 m should be implemented around the hedgerow to avoid potential disturbance to nesting birds; and
- The nesting habitats on Site should be enhanced via the provision of bird nesting boxes. Nest boxes should be a variety of hole sizes and types e.g. tunnel front, open fronted, to appeal to a range of species. They will be constructed of woodcrete as this is more durable than wood and offer better protection from predators. These can be installed on north or east-facing sides of existing trees and on the converted building once construction has finished.

6. Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

The Proposed Development involves the installation of a riding arena, approximately 0.175 ha in size. This will involve the conversion of modified grassland into unsealed urban land in the form of a horse arena. The existing hardstanding will be converted into unsealed urban land. The Proposed Development will involve low-level excavation with the use of tractors, similar to general agricultural activities such as ploughing, hedgerow management and slurry dispersal.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has identified four potential constraints to the Proposed Development, although in all cases mitigation will be implemented to avoid significant effects and maintain their integrity. The following mitigation measures will ensure there is no impact upon ecological receptors:

- As per amended legislation, effective from 6th of August 2026, the Proposed Development is not subject to the statutory BNG requirement of a minimum 10% uplift, because less than 0.2 ha of natural/vegetated habitat will be lost and no on-site priority habitat or priority habitat within 500 m of the Proposed Development will be impacted;
- The River Avon SNCI is 115 m from the Site; therefore, the works have the potential to impact this habitat. A no-disturbance zone of 100 m from the River Avon will be implemented with no works being undertaken within this zone;
- Work will be conducted within 200 m of suitable habitat for otter; therefore, a no-disturbance zone of 100 m from the River Avon will be implemented to avoid increasing the level of disturbance above general agricultural activities; and
- Work should be conducted outside of the birds' breeding season, March – September; inclusive. If this is not possible a 5 m buffer zone will be implemented between the adjacent hedgerow and the Proposed Development.

7. References

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Appendices



Appendix A. Legislation and Policy

Table 10: Legislation

Name	Description
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (the 'WCA')	The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the key legislation for the protection of habitats and species. In England it is this legislation which is used to notify Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and protect certain species of animals and plants. Schedules attached to the Act categorise species. The level of protection given to a species depends on the schedule it's listed on. The main schedules are: • Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedules 1, 1A, A1, 2, 3 and 4 – birds • Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedules 5 and 6 – animals Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 8 – plants
Habitats Directive (and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 – see below)	EEC Council Directive 92/43/EEC, The Conservation of Natural Habitats and of wild fauna and flora, known as the 'Habitats Directive', protects over 1,000 animal and plant species, as well as 200 habitat types, listed in the Directive's annexes are protected in various ways: • Annex II species (about 900): core areas of their habitat are designed as Sites of Community importance (SCIs) and included in the UK site network. These sites must be managed in accordance with the species own ecological needs. • Annex IV species (over 400, including many annex II species): a strict protection regime must be applied across their entire natural range within the EU, both within and out-with Natura 2000 sites. • Annex V species (over 90): Member States must ensure that their exploitation and taking in the wild is compatible with maintaining them in a favourable conservation status. The objectives in relation to the UK site network (previously 'Natura 2000' sites) are to: • maintain or restore certain habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive to favourable conservation status (FCS); and • contribute to ensuring the survival and reproduction of certain species of wild bird in their area of distribution and to maintaining their populations at levels which correspond to ecological, scientific and cultural requirements, while taking account of economic and recreational requirements
The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended by The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019	These regulations translate the Habitats Directive into domestic law. This legislation protects habitats and species across Europe and so includes species on animal found in the UK. These species are known as European Protected Species (EPS) and these regulations are the primary regulations protecting these species, rather than the WCA.
The Protection of Badgers Act 1992	The Protection of Badgers Act ensures that it is a criminal offence to kill, injure, take a badger as well as damaging or interfering with a sett unless a specific license is gained from a statutory authority.
The Hedgerows Regulations 1997	The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 were created to protect hedgerows, in particular those in the countryside aged 30 years or older. It is a criminal offence to remove a hedgerow in contravention to the regulations. The legislation includes sub-categories detailing specific descriptions of offences, the procedure of notification to the local planning authority, circumstances that exempt the need to notify, replacement and retention notices, appeals against those notices, local planning authority records of hedgerows, injunctions, and how hedgerows may be defined to be 'important'.
The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (the 'CRoW Act') 2000 (as amended)	The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 made some changes to the WCA in respect of nature conservation, including extending offences of disturbing certain birds and animals are to cover reckless as well as intentional acts.
The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (the 'NERC Act')	This act means the government have a duty to make sure that all parties involved are taking steps to improve the conservation of biodiversity and species that are involved in developments.
Environment Act 2021	The Environment Act 2021 makes provision about targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment; environmental protection; waste and resource

Name	Description
	efficiency; air quality; water and nature and biodiversity. Part 6 is the key chapter for biodiversity as detailed below: • Schedule 14 makes provision for at least 10% biodiversity gain to be a condition of planning permission in England; and • Schedule 15 makes provision about biodiversity net gain in relation to development consent for national significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs)

Table 11: Policy

Name	Description
The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023)	The National Planning Policy Framework encompasses local and neighbourhood plans, while also including spatial development strategies, produced by both elected mayors and other combined authorities.
Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan (2015)	The Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan includes, Wiltshire Core Strategy incorporating saved policies from district local plans, Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan, Minerals and Waste Plans and made Neighbourhood Plans.

Appendix B. Figures

Figure 1: UKHab Results – Church Farm

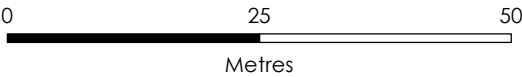


Church Farm



UKHab Survey Results

- Key**
- Site boundary
 - Survey area
- UKHab Results**
- c - Cropland
 - g4 - Modified grassland
 - u1b - Developed land, sealed surface
 - u1b5 - Buildings
 - h2a6 - Other native hedgerow
 - Individual ash tree
 - Individual tree
 - Building



Scale @ A3:
1:750



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Figure 2: Proposed Development UKHab – Church Farm

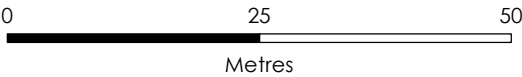


Church Farm



UKHab Proposed Layout

- Key**
- Site boundary
 - Survey area
 - Individual ash tree
 - Individual tree
- Proposed habitat areas**
- c - Cropland
 - g4 - Modified grassland
 - u1b - Developed land sealed surface
 - u1b5 - Buildings
 - u1c - Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface
 - h2a6 - Other native hedgerow



Scale @ A3:
1:750



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Appendix C. Target Notes

Table 12: Target Notes and Site Photos

Description	Photo
TN 1 – Modified Grassland Modified grassland habitat within Site. Species present: yarrow, common bent, cock's-foot, fescues, broad-leaved dock. Other native hedgerow connects to southwest Site boundary, hawthorn, blackthorn and brambles present.	
TN 2 – Urban Land Hardstanding pathway in southern part of Site.	

Description	Photo
	
TN 3 – Tree and Building 1 Mature ash tree outside of Site boundary. No cavities suitable for roosting bats. PRF-I. To be left <i>in-situ</i>. Building 5 outside of Site boundary. Only one or two cavities suitable for hosting individual bat species. Low roosting potential. To be left <i>in-situ</i>.	

Appendix D. Species List

Table 13: Species List

Common Name	Scientific Name
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Common bent	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>
Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Fescues	<i>Festuca</i> spp.
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>
Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Common dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Elm	<i>Ulmus minor</i>
Common nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>