



Dove House, Little Somerfield, SN15 5JW

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal



August 2026

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The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken by All Ecology are representative at the time of surveying.

Every endeavour has been made to identify the presence of protected species on site, where this falls within the agreed scope of works.

The flora and fauna detailed within this report are those noted during the field survey and from anecdotal evidence. It should not be viewed as a complete list of flora and fauna species that may frequent or exist on site at other times of the year.

Up to date standard methodologies have been used, which are accepted by Natural England and other statutory conservation bodies. No responsibility will be accepted where these methodologies fail to identify all species on-site.

All Ecology cannot take responsibility where Government, national bodies or industry subsequently modify standards.

All Ecology cannot accept responsibility for data collected from third parties.

Reference to sections or particular paragraphs of this document taken out of context may lead to misrepresentation.

Summary

In August 2026, All Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as Dove House, Little Somerford, SN15 5JW. The site comprises an area of short grassland, with some individual trees, ruderal species, a dry ditch/stream partially enclosed by a non-native and ornamental hedge and a Beech hedge with an open boundary that connects to the wider site.

The site is the subject of a planning application for the construction of a tennis court along the south boundary of the site. This will involve the removal of grassland.

The habitats present on site are of low to moderate ecological value in terms of their vegetation and the proposed works would result in only the loss of a small area of grassland.

Any impacts as a result of loss/changes to the remaining habitats are considered to be low.

The habitats on site have limited potential to support protected or notable species. The following species/groups are either present, potentially present, or could be encouraged onto the site and the recommended actions are as follows:

- Bats – No further surveys are required. General details on lighting are given.
- Other Mammals – Badgers will be generally absent with potential currently limited to passing individual Badgers. Rabbits are known to be present and Hedgehogs and other small mammals could also be present at times. As a precaution it is recommended that during the construction phase of the project any trenches and other excavations are back-filled before nightfall or a ramp left to allow animals to easily exit, and any open pipes larger than 150 mm should be capped off overnight.
- Amphibians – There is a pond within 250 m that may support amphibians including Great Crested Newts. No suitable habitat will be lost and works are concerned with the construction of a tennis court. Ponds or suitable terrestrial habitat would not be affected and any impact to newts would be through the risk of harm to individuals that could cross the working area. Subject to agreement from the council, it is proposed that works could proceed without the need for further surveys or a district licence application by implementing reasonable avoid measures and precautionary methods of working. Details given.

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1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 In August 2026, All Ecology was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as Dove House, Little Somerford, SN15 5JW. The site comprises an area of short grassland, with some individual trees, ruderal species, a dry ditch/stream partially enclosed by a non-native and ornamental hedge and a Beech hedge with an open boundary that connects to the wider site.
- 1.2 The site is the subject of a planning application for the construction of a tennis court along the south boundary of the site. This will involve the removal of grassland.

Objectives and Aim

- 1.3 The main objectives and aim of the survey were to identify features of ecological interest, undertake a basic search of habitats present for evidence of use, or potential use, by protected species, and to identify any other possible ecological constraints to any further development of the site.

Site Location & Aerial Photograph

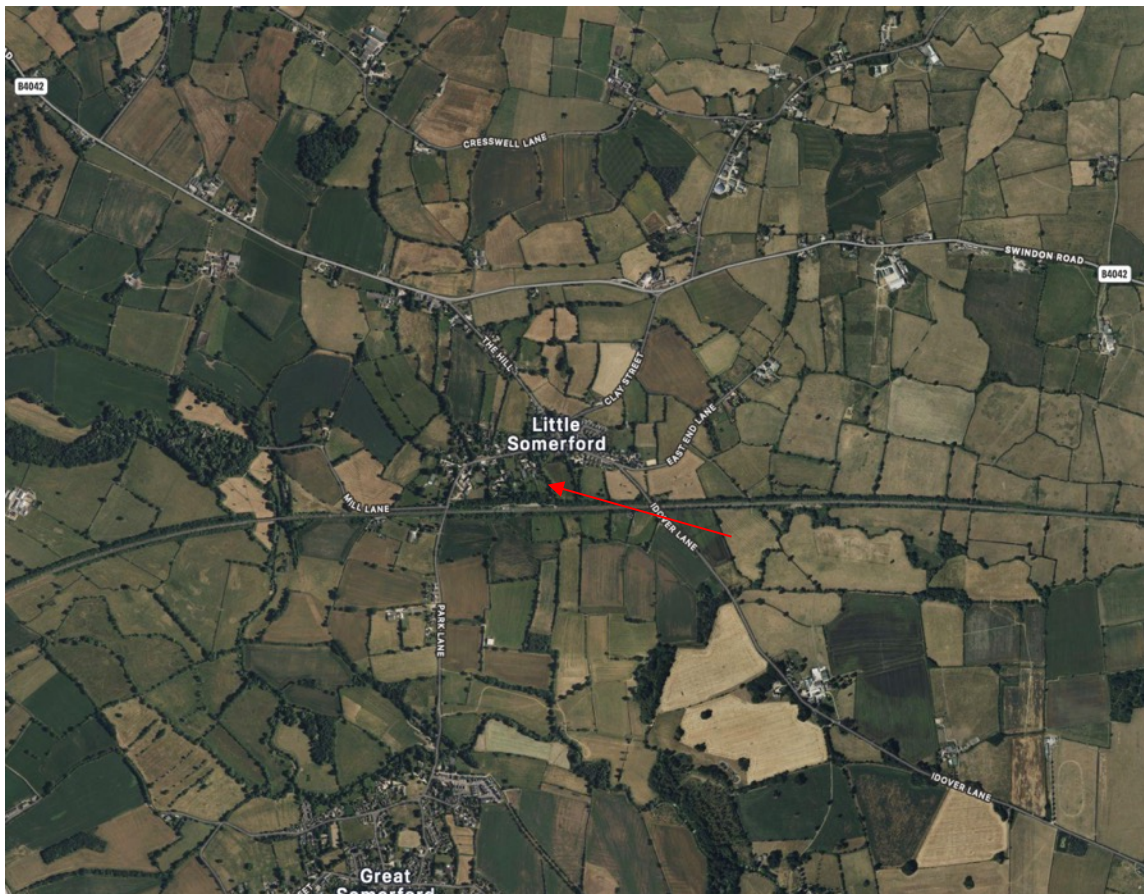


Figure 1: Site location plan.



Figure 2: Aerial view of the site.

2.0 Methodology

Personnel

- 2.1 The survey was carried out by Jacob Richardson BSc Hons and the work overseen by James Godbeer BSc Hons MCIEEM, an ecologist with over 19 years' experience working as a consultant. James has extensive experience of managing environmental contracts, and particular experience in surveying, assessment and mitigation for rare and protected species. He has considerable knowledge of the development and planning process including Ecological Impact Assessments, sustainable ecological design and he has completed ecology chapters of Environmental Statements. James holds a number of protected species licences including bats (all species, all counties, Class Licence Registration No. 2015-12313-CLS-CLS), and Great Crested Newts (Class Licence Registration No. 2019-44282-CLS-CLS). He has successfully obtained European Protected Species mitigation licences for a number of bat species including Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Serotine, Brown Long-eared, Common Pipistrelle and Natterer's bats, for a number of roost types including maternity and hibernation sites.

Desk Study

- 2.2 Given the small size and nature of the site, which was mostly poor grassland, and the nature of the proposals, a request for data from the local records centre was not deemed necessary.
- 2.3 Online OS maps and aerial photographs were inspected for the presence of ponds in the surrounding area. Additionally, MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside, 2026) was used to establish the distance and direction of statutory and non-statutory designated sites within the search area.

Habitat Survey

- 2.4 The site was visited on the 12th August 2026 and surveyed in accordance with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase I Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential that might warrant further study.
- 2.5 In addition to Phase I, UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) methodology was also used to categorise and map the primary habitat types present within the survey area using a standard set of habitat categories, with associated secondary codes/features identified where applicable (UKHab Ltd, 2023). Details of current management and habitat condition have also been recorded where appropriate.

Fauna

- 2.6 There were no buildings on site to assess for bat roosting potential.
- 2.7 The trees were assessed for their potential to support bat roosts by visually inspecting them from the ground using binoculars and high-powered torches where appropriate. Potential features such as holes, cavities or splits are then recorded and then inspected where possible for signs of bats, which include grease/urine stains, scratch marks, droppings or the bats themselves.

- 2.8 The habitats present on the site were searched for signs of animal activity. The site and surroundings, for a minimum distance of 30 m where access was available, were searched for signs of Badgers. These include setts, latrines, dung pits, snuffle marks or hairs caught in hedges or on fencing.
- 2.9 Incidental observations of invertebrates and birds were recorded and a search made for any signs of previous nesting.
- 2.10 Any refuges on site such as logs or other debris were lifted and inspected for reptiles and amphibians.
- 2.11 There are no ponds on site, however OS maps indicate that there are five ponds within 250 m of the site. Pond 1 was accessible and was subject to the GCN HSI Assessment. Ponds 2 – 5 were located on private land and access to carry out a HSI Assessment was not possible. See Appendix 1 for detailed results.

Valuation of Ecological Features

- 2.12 The valuation process used in this report follows the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018).
- 2.13 The value of areas of habitat and plant communities has been measured against published criteria where available. Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been searched to identify whether action has been taken to protect all areas of a particular habitat and to identify current factors causing loss and decline of particular habitats. The presence of injurious and legally controlled weeds has also been taken into account.
- 2.14 When assigning a level of value to a species, its distribution and status (including a consideration of trends based on available historic records) has been taken into account. Other factors influencing the value of a species are: legal protection, rarity and Species Action Plans (SAPs). Guidance, where it is available, for the identification of populations of sufficient size for them to be considered of national or international importance has also been taken into account.

Nomenclature

- 2.15 The English name only of flora and fauna species is given in the main text of this report; however, scientific names are used for invertebrates where no English name is available. Vascular plants and charophytes follow the nomenclature of The Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) 2007 database (BSBI, 2007) with all other flora and fauna following the Nameserver facility of the National Biodiversity Network Species Dictionary (<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nbn/>), which is managed by the Natural History Museum.

Limitations

- 2.16 The site was fully accessible with no limitations to undertaking the survey in accordance with the stated methodology.

3.0 Results

Desk Study

3.1 There are no statutory designated sites within 1 km of the site.

Habitats

3.2 The following table presents a description of the habitats present.

Table 1: Details of habitats present on and bordering the site.

Site Habitats	Description
Modified grassland (g4)	There are two distinct grasslands on site, the main short in the area of the proposed works and the area of grassland along the east boundary. The short grassland is dominated by White Clover, with frequent occurrences of Creeping Buttercup, Fescue sp., Cock's-foot and Perennial Rye-grass, and rare occurrences of Common Nettle, Broad-leaved Dock, and Creeping Thistle. The remaining grassland on site adjacent to the ditch and east boundary is dominated by Fescue sp., Yorkshire Fog, with frequent Bristly Oxtongue, and occasional occurrences Barren Brome, Broad-leaved Dock, Bramble ag. and Common Nettle.
BNG 17 – Ruderal/Ephemeral	There is a strip of ruderal species along the west of the ditch that comprises Creeping Thistle, Common Nettle, Creeping Thistle, Broad-leaved Dock and Lesser Burdock.
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (h2b)	There is a non-native and ornamental hedgerow comprising of Cherry Laurel along the west and south boundary. There is a short and gappy Beech hedge along the east boundary.
r2b – Other rivers and streams	There is a mostly dry ditch/stream adjacent to the east boundary of the site, surrounded by Elder, Field Elm, Field Bindweed and Common Nettle.
Individual trees	There are several trees on site, including Wild Cherry, Ash, Hornbeam, Oak sp, Hawthorn, and Willow sp.



1: General view of the site facing south.



2: General view of the site facing north.



3: General view of the site facing east.



4: General view of the site facing west.



5: View along the east boundary looking north.



6: View along the east boundary looking south



7: View of the trees on site.



8: View of the trees and ruderal on site.



9: View of the ditch/stream.



10: View of the ditch/stream.

Fauna

3.3 The following table assesses the potential for other protected species to be present.

Table 2: Protected Species Assessment

Fauna	Description
Bats	Habitats (roosting): The trees on site were inspected for potential roosting features such as rot holes, flaking bark, tree splits etc., which found a willow sp. tree to have potential roosting features for bats. This tree (photos 11 & 12) contains a decaying trunk which provides potential roosting potential for bats. This tree is likely to be retained. Habitats (foraging/commuting): The open grassland areas on site provide sub-optimal foraging habitat but are associated with surrounding habitats that provide sheltered locations that will be used by foraging and commuting bats. Common species will be present and more notable species could also be present at times.
Badgers	Habitats: The site provides foraging opportunities for Badgers within the grassland and ruderal on site but there is not much potential for setts.

	Presence/absence: The site was searched for evidence of Badgers such as digging, latrines, setts etc but no evidence was recorded.
Dormice	Habitats: None. Presence/absence: Absent from the site.
Otters and Water Voles	Habitats: No significant watercourses on site or near to the site. A mostly dry stream/ditch along the east boundary of the site is deemed to be unsuitable. Presence/absence: Absent.
Other Mammals	Habitats: The areas of ruderal provide areas of cover for common small mammals and Hedgehogs. These habitats also provide foraging opportunities for common mammal species. Presence/absence: Rabbit droppings were identified on site, indicating that rabbits are present within the site or surrounding areas. Hedgehogs and other common small mammals may be present but other notable species are likely to be absent.
Birds	Foraging Habitats: The site as a whole provides a variety of habitats including grassland, hedges, and trees. Nesting Habitats: The grassland is unsuitable for ground nesting birds. An oak tree had evidence of previous nesting (photo 13) and other trees could be used by nesting birds in the future. Presence/absence: No birds were observed on site during the survey. However, common bird species are known to be present in the area, with an oak tree containing evidence of previous nesting and additional trees have the potential to provide suitable nesting habitat in the future.
Reptiles	Habitats: The open areas of grassland are of poor habitats, although the ruderal areas provide some limited cover and shelter for reptiles. Overall, the site is considered generally unsuitable for reptiles, with the proposed area of works providing poor-quality habitat. Presence/absence: Absent from the areas of work.
Amphibian	Terrestrial Habitats: The site provides terrestrial habitat for amphibians in the ruderal habitats but the short grassland is poor. Aquatic Habitats: There are no ponds on site; however, OS maps indicate that there are five ponds within 250 m of the site. Pond 1 was accessible and was subject to the GCN HSI Assessment and scored 0.76, a rating of 'very good'. Ponds 2 – 5 were located on private land and access to carry out a HSI Assessment was not possible. See Appendix 1 for detailed results. Presence/absence: Pond 1 is confirmed as being potentially suitable for Great Crested Newts and is close to the site. Newts and other amphibians could be present on site but will be generally confined to the more overgrown boundary habitats. The short grass is unsuitable but amphibians crossing this is a possibility.

Invertebrates	Habitats: The habitats on site are common habitats that are mostly poor for invertebrates. The trees are the main areas of interest. Presence/absence: Common assemblages of invertebrates are expected to be present but the potential for notable species to be present is low.
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11: Willow sp. with PRFs.



12: View of the hollow trunk.



13: Oak with old nest.

4.0 Development Constraints and Recommendations

Development Proposals

- 4.1 The site is the subject of a planning application for the construction of a tennis court along the south boundary of the site. This will involve the removal of grassland.

Habitats

- 4.2 The NERC Priority Habitats include all hedgerows with at least 80% cover of at least one woody UK native species (JNCC, 2019). The Cherry Laurel hedge was formed by non-native species and as such does not qualify as NERC Priority Habitat. The Beech hedge along the east boundary had at least 80% cover of native species and as such technically qualifies as NERC Priority Habitat although it is within garden curtilage/domestic curtilage and is therefore exempt from Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and cannot be classified as 'important'. Both hedges will be retained.
- 4.3 The grassland on site was identified as modified (amenity) grassland. In order to qualify as a NERC Priority Habitat, grassland typically has to be unimproved (good semi-improved grassland can also qualify) and would have to be examples of grasslands such as lowland calcareous grassland or lowland dry acid grassland, habitats not present on site.
- 4.4 The remaining habitats on site are of low to moderate ecological value i.e. the trees, stream/ditch and ruderal. The impact of the proposed tennis court on these habitats is considered to be negligible.
- 4.5 No specific habitat creation is required or proposed. If any new trees or shrubs are to be planted, native tree and shrub species should be used as these are most beneficial to invertebrates, and many also produce seeds, nuts and berries that are food for native mammals and birds. Planting of non-native plant species should be limited to those that are not invasive and should prioritise those that provide a good source of nectar for invertebrates.

Fauna

Bats

- 4.6 A tree in the southeast corner of the site was identified as having potential roosting features for bats and was covered in Ivy that may have hidden further potential roosting features. This tree is likely to be retained and therefore no further investigation would be required.
- 4.7 Given the small scale of the proposals, and the absence of any proposed lighting, any impacts to bats are likely to be negligible and no further surveys are recommended. The garden could be significantly enhanced for bats by erecting bat boxes on the trees but there is no requirement to do this.

Badgers and other mammals

- 4.8 Badgers will be generally absent with potential currently limited to passing individual Badgers. Rabbits are known to be present and Hedgehogs and other small mammals could also be present at times. As a precaution it is recommended that during the construction phase of the project any trenches, if required, and other excavations are back-filled before nightfall or a ramp

left to allow animals to easily exit, and any open pipes larger than 150 mm should be capped off overnight.

Birds

- 4.9 The site provides foraging habitat in general with the trees also provide nesting habitats. One tree had evidence of previous nesting and birds will likely nest in the future. Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments). No removal of any suitable nesting habitats is required but should this become necessary then any works in this regard should take place outside the nesting season of March to August. Where this is not possible these habitats would need to be surveyed for nesting birds prior to works taking place.
- 4.10 It is recommended that any new planting on site should concentrate on species that are native to the area and ideally produce a range of seeds and berries at varying times of the year. Nectar rich plants could also be used encourage invertebrates on to the site, which in turn provide food for birds as well as other species such as bats.

Amphibians

- 4.11 OS maps indicate that there are five ponds within 250 m of the site. Pond 1 was accessible and was subject to the GCN HSI Assessment and scored 0.76, a rating of 'very good'. Ponds 2 – 5 were located on private land and access to carry out a HSI Assessment was not possible.
- 4.12 Great Crested Newts and their places of breeding or rest are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 making it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb a Great Crested Newt and to damage or destroy a breeding or resting site of this species. All activities that would otherwise constitute an offence under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 must be licensed by Natural England. Great Crested Newts are also a NERC Priority Species.
- 4.13 The site as a whole measures approximately 0.18 ha in size but works will be confined to small area adjacent to the existing hedgerow, estimated to be 300 m² in size. Using Natural England's Great Crested Newt Rapid Risk Assessment, for any land (not just newt habitat) which is within 100 m – 250 m of any breeding pond where between 0.01 ha – 0.1 ha is to be lost or damaged, the risk of an offence being committed is rated as 'Green; Offence Highly unlikely'.
- 4.14 Only short modified grassland is proposed to be lost. Ponds or suitable terrestrial habitat would not be affected and any impact to newts would be through the risk of harm to individuals that could cross the working area.
- 4.15 Subject to agreement from the council, it is proposed that works could proceed without the need for further surveys or a district licence application by implementing reasonable avoid measures and precautionary methods of working. Due to the nature of works and the habitats to be impacted on site, the risk of harm to Great Crested Newts will be minimal when following precautionary methods of working for amphibians.
- Species of amphibians, including Great Crested Newts could be found on site throughout the construction phase although any potential is minimal. A licensed newt worker will not be required day to day and instead all contractors will be briefed on the identification of amphibians. Any contractors on site would be advised to carry out all

work with care and vigilance. Should any Great Crested Newts be found during works, then works would cease and a licensed Ecologist consulted before works continue.

- Works would be restricted to the designated development area and the impact of works on adjacent habitats avoided by the clear demarcation of the works area.
- The duration of any groundworks would be kept as short as possible and any trenches left overnight should be covered or provided with ramps to prevent amphibians (and other animals) from becoming trapped.
- Works will be undertaken during daylight hours only when GCN are less active and are less likely to occupy the area identified for works.
- Any debris, spoil collected during site clearance would be removed from the site immediately to avoid it becoming used as refuges by amphibians and reptiles. Any building materials would be kept off site, or where necessary, stored on pallets to prevent them being used as cover.

5.0 References

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The Protection of Badgers Act 1992, (c.51), London: HMSO.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments). (c.69), London: HMSO.

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Habitat Suitability Index Assessment

Methodology

- 6.1 The pond to the north on the wider site was subject to the Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment. The assessment was undertaken during the Ecological Appraisal by a licensed ecologist (Class Licence Registration No. 2016-20363-CLS-CLS), trained in the assessment of water bodies for their potential to support populations of Great Crested Newts.
- 6.2 The HSI is a measure of habitat quality using a numerical index between 0 and 1 derived from an assessment of variables known to influence the presence of Great Crested Newts (Oldham et al. 2000). It is used to assess whether a water body warrants detailed surveys to establish presence or absence of newts and aids in the assessment of impacts and the design of mitigation measures. Since January 2008 it has been a requirement to include the results of HSI assessments in European Protected Species (EPS) licence applications.
- 6.3 To calculate the HSI of the water bodies ecologists first record the following variables before applying the HSI calculation to these: pond size; surface area; water depth; water quality; % shade, % macrophyte cover; presence of fish and waterfowl; number of water bodies within 1 km of survey water body; quality of terrestrial habitat surrounding ponds; and type of marginal/aquatic vegetation (Oldham et al. 2000).
- 6.4 Once the HSI score is obtained it can be used to define water body suitability for Great Crested Newts in the following way (National Amphibian Recording Scheme, 2008):

Table 1: HSI Scores

<0.5	Poor
0.5 – 0.59	Below Average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
>0.8	Excellent

- 6.5 Water bodies scoring less than 0.5 are deemed as unlikely to support Great Crested Newts and further surveys are not usually required.

Results

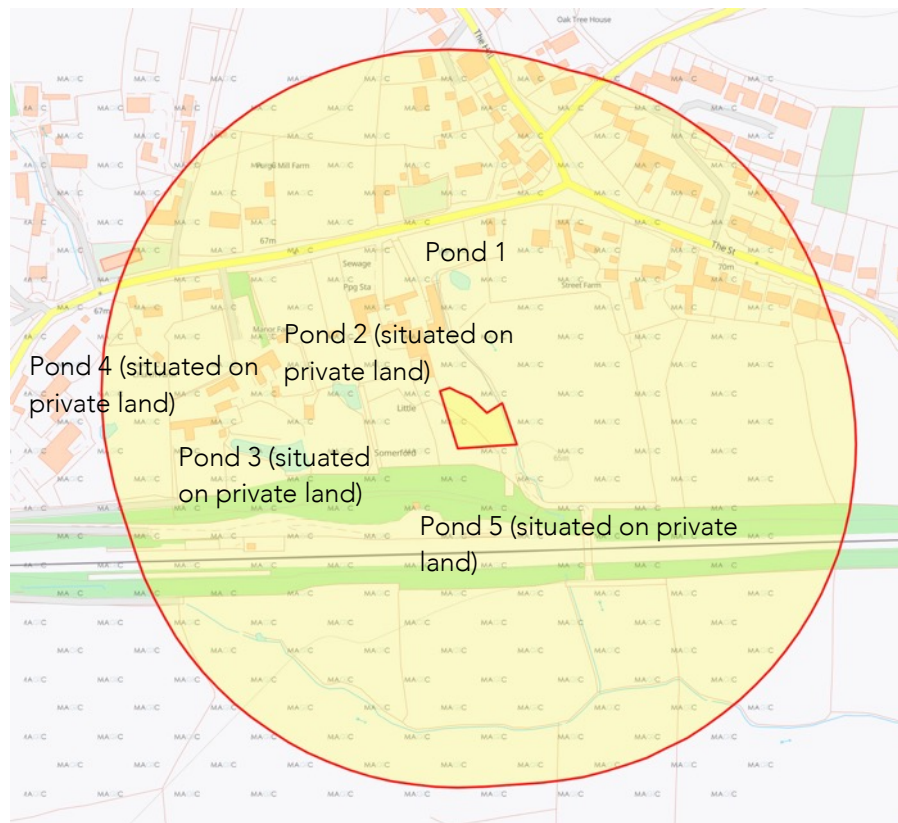


Figure 1: Ponds within 250 m.



Figure 2: Pond 1.

6.6 Pond 1 was accessible and were subject to the GCN HSI Assessment. Pond 1 was subject to the GCN HSI Assessment and scored 0.76, a rating of 'very good'. Ponds 2 – 5 were located on private land and access to carry out a HSI Assessment was not possible.

Table 2: HSI Assessment Result

HSI Variables	Pond 1
SI1 - Location	1
SI2 - Pond area	0.1
SI3 - Pond drying	0.9
SI4 - Water quality	1
SI5 - Shade	1
SI6 - Fowl	1
SI7 - Fish	1
SI8 - Ponds	1
SI9 - Terr'l habitat	1
SI10 -Macrophytes	0.7
HSI Score	0.76