

Ecological Impact Assessment



**Stour Power – Meadow
Project, Stourhead
27th August 2026**



**Tyler
Grange**

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Summary

- S.1. This report has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Limited on behalf of the National Trust. It sets out the findings of an Ecological Impact Assessment for the Stour Power – Meadow Project, Stourhead, Stourton, Warminster, hereinafter referred to as ‘the site’. The proposals are for the installation of a small-scale ground-mounted solar farm to provide behind-the-meter renewable electricity to the Stourhead estate.
- S.2. An extended Phase 1 / UK Habitat Classification (UK Habs) survey and a suite of preliminary protected species assessments were undertaken on 13th August 2025. A summary of the results follows.
- S.3. The site measures c. 1.49 ha and comprises modified grassland (negligible ecological importance), artificial unsealed surface (negligible ecological importance), and species-rich native hedgerows with trees (priority habitat of local ecological importance).
- S.4. Habitats within the site provide opportunities for common nesting birds, foraging and commuting bats, dormice within hedgerows, and low-level use by badger and reptiles.
- S.5. One statutory designated site lies within 2 km (Heath Farm Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest, 1.5 km west) and twelve Local Wildlife Sites lie within 2 km (nearest: Bonham Hanging LWS, 0.3 km west). Due to small site scale, separation distances, and standard construction safeguards, **no adverse effects** are anticipated on statutory or non-statutory sites. No SACs, SPAs or Ramsar sites occur within 10 km.
- S.6. Only habitats of negligible ecological importance, namely modified grassland, will be affected by the proposals, and no permanent loss of habitat is required. Directional drilling will avoid impacts to hedgerow root protection areas. All species-rich hedgerows will be retained and buffered.
- S.7. New habitat creation is proposed within the site, and includes new native species-rich hedgerow planting and species-rich grassland seeding using local provenance seed. Other biodiversity enhancements include the installation of new bat and bird boxes across the site. These measures will increase the diversity and quantity of habitat for bats, birds, invertebrates, dormice, badger and reptiles.
- S.8. A separate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment (report ref: **18103_R03b_BNG Assessment**) has been completed. The proposed hedgerow creation and grassland enhancement deliver a measurable net gains in biodiversity.
- S.9. It is therefore concluded that the proposed development complies with relevant legislation and planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework and Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Mitigation and enhancement measures will be secured via conditions, including a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP). The development avoids significant ecological impacts and will result in meaningful long-term biodiversity enhancement.



Section 1: Introduction and Context

Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Ltd on behalf of the National Trust. This report sets out the findings of a Ecological Assessment of land at the National Trust Stourhead site, Stourton, Warminster, BA12 6QD (OS Grid Reference ST 77688 33841), hereafter referred to as 'the site'. See **Figure 1.1** for the indicative red line boundary.



Figure 1.1: Indicative red line boundary (© Google Aerial Imagery)

- 1.2. This assessment has been undertaken to inform a planning application for the installation of a new ground mounted solar farm that connects to existing infrastructure within the Stourhead site to provide 'behind-the-meter' electrical generation that powers the National Trust Stourhead site. The site proposals are shown in **Appendix 1**.

Site Context

- 1.3. The site is approximately 1.49 ha in size and comprises a single grassland field, referred to as Brimbles, bound by a network of hedgerows (see **Plan 18103/P01b**). This field sits to the south of the existing National Trust visitors centre, restaurant and carparking areas.

Purpose

- 1.4. This report:



- Uses available background data and results of the field surveys to describe and evaluate the ecological features present within the likely “Zone of Influence”^{1 2} (Zol) of the proposed development;
- Describes the actual or potential ecological issues and opportunities that might arise as a result of the site’s development.
- Where appropriate, makes commitments for mitigation measures for adverse effects on ecological features as well as ecological enhancements, to ensure conformity with policy and legislation listed in **Appendix 2**; and
- Can be used to inform a planning application for the site’s development.

1.5. This assessment and the terminology used are consistent with published guidance^{3 4}. A full methodology is set out in **Appendix 3**.

Methodology

- 1.6. The habitat survey comprised an extended Phase 1⁵ and UK Hab⁶ survey.
- 1.7. The data search was based on records purchased from Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC), as well as data from the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)⁷.
- 1.8. The methodologies for protected species surveys are set out in **Appendices 2 - 4**.

Quality Control

- 1.9. All ecologists at Tyler Grange Group Limited are members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) or are working towards membership, and act under the direction of members and abide by the Institute’s Code of Professional Conduct⁸.

¹ CIEEM (2018) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

² Defined as the area over which ecological features may be affected by biophysical changes as a result of the proposed project and associated activities. This is likely to extend beyond the project site, for example where there are ecological or hydrological links beyond the site boundaries.

³ CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

⁴ CIEEM (2018) *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

⁵ JNCC. (2010) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a Technique for Environmental Audit*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

⁶ UKHab Ltd (2023) *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)

⁷ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx> [Accessed 18/02/2026]

⁸ CIEEM (2022) *Code of Professional Conduct*. CIEEM, Winchester.



Section 2: Ecological Features and Evaluation

Designated Sites

- 2.1. The data search returned one statutory and one non-statutory designated site within 2 km of the site. These are detailed in **Table 2.1** over the page.
- 2.2. No other statutory or non-statutory designated sites are located within 2 km of the site, and no special areas of conservation (SAC), special protection areas (SPA) or Ramsar sites are located within 10 km of the site.



Table 2.1. Designated Sites

Designated site	Distance and direction from site	Citation	Ecological Importance
Heath Farm Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	1.5 km west	Heath Hill Farm comprises a number of adjacent hay meadows and permanent pastures, which support floristically rich unimproved neutral to calcareous grassland, and rush pasture, in a mosaic with semi-improved and improved grassland.	National
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	0.3 km west at the closest point	12 LWS are located within 2 km of the site, the closest of which is the Bonham Hanging LWS, located 0.3 km west of the site. Bonham Hanging LWS is a broadleaved and coniferous plantation woodland on an ancient site on a steep west-facing slope on the Stourhead estate.	Local

Habitats and Flora

- 2.3. The habitats and presence of, or potential for, protected species that could be affected by the proposed development are summarised below in **Table 2.2**. Species which are considered likely absent from the site based on professional judgement following consideration of the habitats within the site, signs of species presence at the time of survey and data search records, are not discussed. The locations of habitats, with hedgerow reference labels, are shown on the Habitats Features Plan **18103/P01b**.



Table 2.2. Habitats and Flora

Habitats	Description and Species	Ecological Importance	Photograph
<u>Primary code:</u> Modified grassland g4 <u>Secondary code(s):</u> Grazed 100 Sheep grazed 102 Mown 106	The entirety of the Brimbles field comprises short modified grassland swards. The Brimbles field showed evidence of recent grazing, and the sward exhibited a composition typical of improved grassland, with the sward being dominated by Yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i>, with abundant cock's foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> and perennial rye <i>Lolium perenne</i>. Other species frequently found within the sward include creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i>, creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i>, white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i>, broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>, common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>, common daisy <i>Bellis perennis</i>, dandelion <i>Taraxacum sp</i>, ribwort plantain <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>, common hogweed <i>Heracleum sphondylium</i> and bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	This habitat is very common in the wider landscape and provides limited opportunities for faunal species, and is therefore considered to be of negligible ecological importance.	
<u>Primary code:</u> Modified grassland g4 <u>Secondary code(s):</u> Mown 106	Areas of modified grassland are present adjacent to the carpark and other walkways to provide amenity value across the site. These areas were intensively managed and appeared to be mown on a regular basis. Species within the sward were very limited, with these areas dominated by Yorkshire fog and perennial rye, along with occasional common daisy, white clover, creeping thistle, ribwort plantain and dandelions. Common nettles were also present adjacent to most of these areas, beyond the extent of the mown areas.	This habitat is maintained for its amenity value, rather for that of biodiversity, and is therefore considered to be of negligible ecological importance.	
<u>Primary code:</u> Native hedgerow h2a <u>Secondary code(s):</u> Hedgerow with trees 11 Flailed hedgerow 116	Three hedgerows are present within the site that border the grassland fields: Hedge H1 runs in a north-south direction along the eastern edge of the Brimbles field. H1 comprises a species-rich hedgerow with a mixture of young and semi-mature trees. Species present within H1 include hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>, sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>, hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose <i>Rosa canina</i>, bramble, elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i>, and willow <i>Salix sp</i>. H2 continues north off H1 and is separated by an access track and is similar in character. Hedgerow H3 crosses the site and extends offsite and defines a small camping / touring area within the site and comprises a low species-rich hedgerow of field maple <i>Acer campestre</i>, hazel, black thorn, dog rose <i>Rosa canina</i>, ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> and beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>.	While common in the wider area, hedgerows are a habitat of principle importance (HoPI) and therefore considered to be of local ecological importance.	
<u>Primary code:</u> Artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface u1c <u>Secondary code(s):</u> Road 800 Car park 804	An existing access track comprising artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface as well as part of the adjacent gravel car park are also present within part of the site.	These habitats posses no inherent ecological value and are therefore of negligible ecological importance.	See image above.

Protected and Notable Species

- 2.4. The below section sets out the potential for protected species on site. Species which are considered likely absent from the site based on professional judgement, following consideration the of habitats within the site, signs of species presence at the time of survey and data search records, are not discussed.

Amphibians

- 2.5. The data search returned one record of common toad *Bufo bufo* within 2 km of the site. This record of common toad was approx. 1.35 km west of the site in 2024. No records of great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus*, nor any European Protected Species (EPS) licences were returned for GCN within 2 km of the site.
- 2.6. The terrestrial habitats on site could offer some suitable habitat for GCN, however this is limited to the hedgerows across the site.
- 2.7. No waterbodies are present within the site, and only one waterbody comprising the large Garden Lake, is located within 250 m of the site, located c. 230 m northwest of the site. The Garden Lake supports a large number of common waterfowl and is assumed to be stocked with fish, which reduce the suitability of this feature for GCN and other amphibians. Furthermore, lake is separated from the site by several roads that see regular use and are considered to be dispersal barriers.
- 2.8. As such, GCN are considered likely absent from the site and are **not discussed any further within this report**.
- 2.9. Other more mobile amphibian species such as common toad may be present within the site. It is considered any population utilising terrestrial habitats on site, such as the hedgerows and margins, will also be using further habitats beyond the site boundary and not reliant site alone, and therefore any population present is considered to be of **negligible ecological importance**.

Badger

- 2.10. Six records of badger *Meles meles* were recorded within 2km of the site. The nearest record was 0.66 km southwest of the site.
- 2.11. The majority of the site provides suitable habitat for badger, although no evidence of badger or their setts was recorded during the site survey.
- 2.12. Given the extent of suitable habitat in the wider area for badger, it is not considered that any population of badgers would be reliant upon the site alone. It is therefore considered that the any population of badger utilising the site is of no more than **site ecological importance**.

Bats

- 2.13. The data search returned records for thirteen bat species within 2 km of the site. Including:



- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*;
- Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*;
- Brandt's Bat *Myotis brandtii*;
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*;
- Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*;
- Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*;
- Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*;
- Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*;
- Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*;
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctule*;
- Serotine *Cnephaeus serotinus*;
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*; and
- Whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*.

- 2.14. The nearest of these was a record of lesser horseshoe bat approx. 0.3 km west of the site in 2025.
- 2.15. In addition, two granted EPS licences for bats were returned within a 2 km radius of the site. The closest licence was adjacent to the northern boundary of the site (case reference: 2016-21127-EPS-AD2) and was granted for the damage of a breeding and resting place for brown long-eared and lesser horseshoe bats in 2016.
- 2.16. The habitats present within the site, namely the hedgerows with trees, provide suitable habitat for foraging, commuting and roosting bats owing to the lack of artificial light across the site, and the connectivity of the hedgerows to suitable bat habitat in the wider area.
- 2.17. No trees with potential roosting features (PRFs) were recorded within or adjacent to the site boundary during the survey.
- 2.18. Overall, the habitats present within the site are common within the wider area and do not provide any specific features or habitats that would not be readily available to bats within the near vicinity of the site. As such, any population of bats utilising the site is anticipated to be of no more than **site ecological importance**.



Birds

- 2.19. The data search returned a number of records of protected and notable birds species within 2 km of the site. Of these, species of relevance to the site include lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*, corn bunting *Emberiza calandra* and yellowhammer *Emberiza citronella*.
- 2.20. Habitats on site, such as the grassland and native hedgerows, have the potential to support common and widespread nesting birds. The grassland field was considered unsuitable for ground nesting birds, owing to the very short sward, regular grazing and disturbance.
- 2.21. It is therefore concluded that the site is not of any particular ornithological interest, and any assemblage of birds that may use the site for foraging and breeding is of **negligible ecological importance**. Nonetheless, consideration for nesting birds to avoid a breach of legislation is discussed in **Section 3** of this report.

Dormice

- 2.22. 119 records of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* were returned within 2 km of the site the closest being approx. 0.18km west in 2009. No EPS licences were recorded within 2 km of the site.
- 2.23. The native species-rich hedgerows with trees throughout the site provide suitable habitat for dormice, comprising areas of fruiting hazel, with connection to other suitable habitat in the wider area.
- 2.24. Surveys throughout the Stourhead estate have recorded dormice presence within the hedgerows and other wooded areas, and as such the presence of dormice within the hedgerows on site is assumed.
- 2.25. Any population of dormice present within the site are therefore considered to be of **local ecological importance**.

Reptiles

- 2.26. The data search returned the records of four reptile species, including one record of slow worm *Anguis fragilis*, one record of adder *Vipera berus*, two records of grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and five records of common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*. Of these, the closest to the site was a common lizard, recorded in 2024 c. 0.2 km northwest of the site.
- 2.27. The majority of the site in its current state is unsuitable for reptiles, owing to the short grassland sward and lack of refugia, however, the hedgerow bases provide limited suitable habitat for reptile species.
- 2.28. Given the extent of suitable reptile habitat within the wider area, any population of reptiles present within the site is considered to be of no more than **negligible ecological importance**.



Section 3: Ecological Impacts, Mitigation, and Enhancement

Proposed Development

- 3.1. The proposals for the site comprise the installation of a new ground mounted solar farm that connects to existing infrastructure within the Stourhead site to provide 'behind-the-meter' electrical generation that powers the National Trust Stourhead site.
- 3.2. The potential impacts at this site as a result of the proposed development are set out below, with reference to relevant legislation and planning policy.

Design Evolution

- 3.3. The design of the Development has been iterative, and in accordance with policy and best practice guidance, follow the 'mitigation hierarchy'. As such, the Development has been designed to avoid and retain the most important ecological features to ensure they can be managed in the long-term to enhance their importance for biodiversity. Where this is not possible, new habitats have been proposed to compensate for habitat losses with the aim of maximising the overall ecological value of the habitats proposed on site. A summary of how the design follows the mitigation hierarchy is set out below:
- The scheme has been designed to avoid impacts to habitats of importance, namely the species-rich hedgerows and trees, which will be retained and buffered;
 - Directional drilling from outside of the root protection areas will be used to pass the new power cable under any hedgerows, which avoids the need for hedgerow removal that could impact upon nesting birds and dormice;
 - The modified grassland within the site will be retained and with the area around the proposed array to be enhanced to a more species-rich grassland sward and appropriately managed for the benefit of biodiversity; and
 - A new species rich hedgerow will be planted within the site to suitably screen the solar panels, but also provide new habitat for a range of faunal groups.

Designated Sites

Statutory Sites

- 3.4. Given the nature of the site proposals, the small scale, and the distances involved between the site the Heath Farm Hill SSSI, no adverse direct or indirect effects are anticipated, and no specific mitigation is required.
- 3.5. Nonetheless, standard construction safeguards will take place, such as those in relation to noise, vibration, dust and contaminated run-off. These measures, in conjunction with the small scale of the development, will ensure no impacts occur to any adjacent habitats and



protected sites in the study area or any other off-site receptors, and will be detailed within a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), expected to be conditioned.

Non-statutory Sites

- 3.6. Twelve non-statutory designated sites are located within 2 km of the site boundary, with the closest, Bonham Hanging LWS, located approximately 0.3 km west of the site.
- 3.7. These non-statutory sites are all separated from the site by existing roads and areas of open space, and thus are unlikely to be directly impacted as a result of the proposed development. Furthermore, the standard construction safeguards as mentioned above in respect to statutory sites will be detailed within a CEMP will prevent impacts occurring during construction, such as from run-off, dust and noise, to ensure that no impacts occur to any non-statutory designated sites.
- 3.8. As such, the proposed development would be in line with relevant legislation and planning policy regarding designated sites.

Habitats and Flora

- 3.9. All habitats on-site to be impacted by the proposals are of negligible ecological importance, namely the modified grassland. The impacts to the grassland is limited to the installation of the solar panel stands, which does not require the removal of any significant areas of this habitat. Whilst a temporary construction access if to be created this will be reseeded to grassland following the completion of works. All other habitats within the site of ecological importance, comprising the species-rich native hedgerows with trees, are to be retained and buffered as part of the scheme.
- 3.10. To avoid impacts to any of the hedgerows within the site, any new cable installation will be undertaken using the method of directional drilling from outside of the hedgerow root protection areas (RPAs). This removes the need for any hedgerow breaks or removal during the construction phase of the development, and overall no hedgerow loss is required.
- 3.11. New habitat creation in the form of new native species-rich hedgerow planting is to take place within the site to provide screening to the new solar panels. This new hedgerow will improve connectivity across the site to existing hedgerows, and will provide new opportunities for a range of faunal groups including nesting and foraging birds, dormice, badger, bats, reptiles, invertebrates, and common amphibians.
- 3.12. Furthermore, the existing grassland sward within the site is to be overseeded with a species-rich seed mix from across the Stourhead site, to enhance the species diversity within the sward and provide improved foraging opportunities for invertebrates, birds and small mammals.
- 3.13. Overall, the native planting of new native species-rich hedgerow and grassland enhancement, shrubs is expected to improve the site overall for biodiversity.
- 3.14. A separate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment has been undertaken (report ref: **18103_R03b_BNG Assessment**) to detail the net gain in biodiversity delivered by the scheme,



as shown within the associated BNG Metric (18103_The Statutory Biodiversity Metric_Rev B_270826).

Protected and Notable Species

Badger

- 3.15. The legislation protecting badgers, The Protection of Badgers Act, 1992, protects them against killing, injury and cruel ill-treatment as well as preventing damage, destruction or obstruction to an active badger sett, or from disturbing a badger when it is occupying such a sett.
- 3.16. No evidence of badger was recorded within the site, however this species is known to be present locally.
- 3.17. As badgers could be present in the area, protection measures for badger will be undertaken prior to and during construction. Such measures will include briefing all contractors working on the site regarding the potential presence of badgers and any trenches or deep pits that are to be left open overnight will be covered or provided with a means of escape should a badger enter, such as a roughened plank of wood placed in the trench as a ramp to the surface. This will also avoid impacts to any other small or medium sized mammals.
- 3.18. The storage of topsoil or other 'soft' building materials on site should be given careful consideration. Badgers will readily adopt such mounds as setts, which would then be afforded the same protection as established setts. Such mounds will be regularly inspected to check for use by badgers throughout the construction period as detailed within a CEMP.
- 3.19. Post-development the provision of new native species-rich hedgerow and grassland enhancement would provide increased opportunities for badger within the site and with the adoption of protection measures during construction, overall no impact to this species would occur

Bats

- 3.20. In England and Wales, bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and the WCA (1981) (as amended). Some bat species are also priority species; see **Appendix 1** for full details with regard to the protection of bats.
- 3.21. The proposals have been designed to retain and protect the features of greatest importance to foraging and commuting bats, namely the species-rich hedgerows with trees which provide the greatest opportunities. These features will be protected through the retention and enhancement of land adjacent to these features, creating buffers that will comprise native planting for the benefit of biodiversity including bats and other wildlife.
- 3.22. No new lighting is proposed as part of the scheme, and as such the site will remain dark for the use by bats and other nocturnal species.
- 3.23. The creation of new hedgerow will provide a new linear feature of importance for bats and will improve connectivity across the site, post-development. Furthermore, the enhancement of the grassland sward is expected to improve floristic diversity at the site which will increase



suitable habitat for invertebrates, thereby increasing the prey production and enhancing foraging opportunities for bats.

- 3.24. To further enhance the site for roosting bats, two bat boxes are recommended to be incorporated within scheme using externally erected bat boxes on to suitably retained hedgerow trees (expected to be secured via a suitably worded planning condition).
- 3.25. Overall, it is considered that the proposals for the site would not result in significant impacts to bats with the replacement habitats at the site providing improved opportunities and with any bat species that could be present likely to continue to forage across the site. The details of the habitat management and ecological enhancements would expect to be secured through a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) through appropriately worded planning conditions.

Birds

- 3.26. All birds, their nests and eggs, are protected by law and as such it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or take any wild bird; intentionally take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; and intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- 3.27. Any impacts to nesting birds will be avoided as part of the scheme, through the buffering and retention of all hedgerows across the site, and the systematic use of directional drilling.
- 3.28. Nonetheless, to avoid triggering the legislation protecting nesting birds, the clearance of suitable habitat (the trees and hedgerow), if required, should be timed outside the nesting bird season (generally taken as March to September inclusive, though this is not defined in law and birds may nest outside of this time). If any clearance works to nesting habitats are required during the nesting season, then pre-removal checks for nesting birds must be carried out by a suitably experienced Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW), no more than 48 hours prior to the works commencing. If any nesting birds are found to be present, an appropriate buffer zone will be implemented, within which works are excluded for the duration of the breeding attempt. Any active nests will need to be left in situ until a suitably experienced ecologist confirms that the chicks have fledged and the nest is no longer active.
- 3.29. The creation of new native species-rich hedgerow within the site and enhancement of the grassland sward will provide new nesting and foraging opportunities for birds within the site.
- 3.30. Furthermore, additional enhancement will be provided in the form of two new nesting boxes targeting species of conservation concern known to be present, installed onto suitably retained hedgerow trees across the site (expected to be secured via a suitably worded planning condition).

Dormouse

- 3.31. Dormice have been recorded across the wider Stourhead site and as such are assumed to be present within all hedgerows across the development site.



- 3.32. Dormice and their resting and breeding places are protected by law, and as such it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure, or take a hazel dormouse, or possess any part of it; intentionally take, damage, disturb, or destroy a place used for shelter or protection.
- 3.33. As a result, the scheme has been designed to avoid any impacts to suitable dormouse habitat within the site, namely the species-rich hedgerows with trees.
- 3.34. No hedgerow removal is proposed as part of the developments, and all hedgerow on site is to be suitably retained and buffered.
- 3.35. As stated above, any new cable installation will be undertaken using the method of directional drilling from outside of the hedgerow root protection areas (RPAs). This removes the need for any hedgerow breaks or removal during the construction phase of the development, avoiding any impacts to dormice.
- 3.36. Should any hedgerow loss be required, provided the removal does not exceed 3 linear meters, the removal should be completed under precautionary working methods and the supervision of a suitably qualified ECoW, and immediately following a thorough fingertip search of the area that is to be removed.
- 3.37. If removal of greater than 3 linear meters of hedgerow is required, or a dormouse or evidence of dormice is found during any works to suitable dormouse habitat onsite, then all works must stop and the site will require a Natural England dormouse licence before any further works that may impact dormouse habitat can be undertaken. This licence would detail the appropriate mitigation measures required in order for the removal of hedgerow to continue.
- 3.38. The proposals include the creation of new native species-rich, and will provide a net gain in terms of suitable dormouse habitat post-development. Suitable retained and created habitat will also be buffered from the operational areas of the site and be subject to appropriate management to ensure their condition is maintained (to be detailed within a HMMP, as secured by condition).
- 3.39. Furthermore, given the use case of the site, no increased disturbance through pet predation or public access are anticipated post-development.
- 3.40. Overall, the retention of the existing hedgerow and the areas of new hedgerow planting will result in a net gain in dormouse habitat, ensuring that the favourable conservation status of dormice will be maintained for the long-term and that no adverse effects will occur.

Reptiles

- 3.41. All of Britain's native reptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA). Any impacts to suitable reptile habitat, namely the hedgerow margins, will be avoided as part of the scheme, through the buffering and protecting of the existing hedgerows within the site.
- 3.42. The creation of new native species-rich hedgerow within the site and enhancement of the grassland sward will provide new habitat for any reptiles within the site, along with improved connectivity to existing retained habitat.



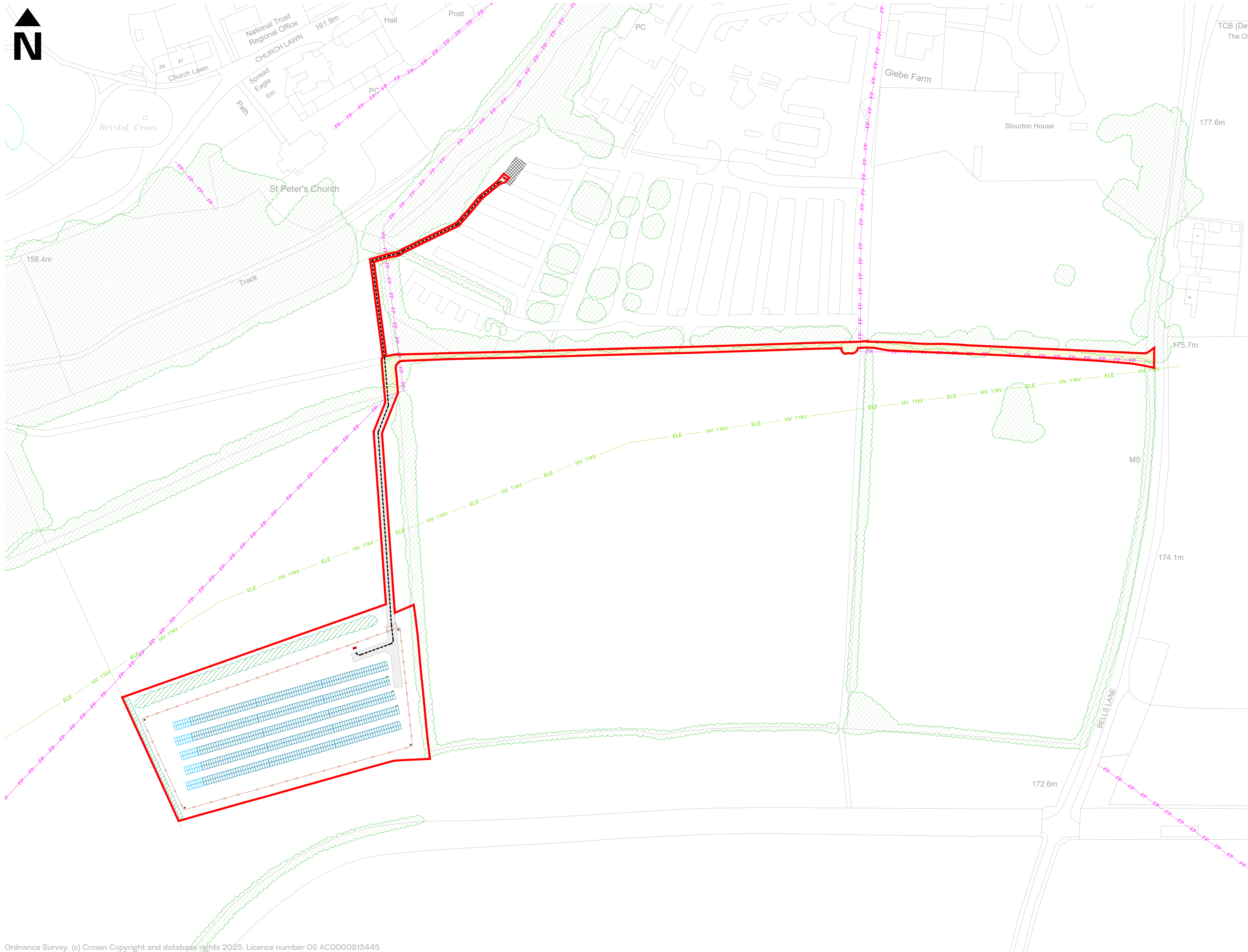
Section 4: Conclusions

- 4.1. No impacts to any designated sites are anticipated due to the small scale of the development and the separation distance from any designated sites.
- 4.2. The development will primarily affect habitats of negligible ecological importance, namely modified grassland, and no significant permanent loss of any habitat is required to facilitate the proposals.
- 4.3. Habitat creation and enhancement at the site, comprising new species-rich hedgerow planting and grassland enhancement, will provide increased ecological importance of such habitats and additional opportunities for biodiversity within the site. As a result, no impacts to any protected species are anticipated.
- 4.4. Any vegetation removal should be supervised by a suitably qualified ecologist / ECoW, following a pre-works check for nesting birds and dormice. Should either species be encountered, then works must stop and the relevant mitigation measures introduced, including the provision of a protected species licence from Natural England for impacts to dormice, as necessary.
- 4.5. Regard will be had for other species, including badger and reptiles during the construction phase. New habitats of importance for a range of species, including badger, bats, birds, reptiles and invertebrates will be created as part of the proposals.
- 4.6. A HMMP is expected to be conditioned to ensure long-term management (30 years) of habitats post-development which is a requirement of the Environment Act 2021.
- 4.7. A CEMP will be produced (to be controlled through a planning condition) to control the construction phase mitigation measures and ensure that no impacts occur to off-site receptors and designated sites.
- 4.8. In conclusion, in anticipation of the implementation of any necessary mitigation, the proposed development will be compliant with relevant planning policies, including Core Policy 50 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015, as well as legislation with regard to ecology.



Appendix 1: Proposed Site Layout Plan (AEM053-PL01 08)





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This drawing is to be submitted for planning purposes only. All dimensions are to be confirmed on site prior to commencement of work.

Revisions:					
Revision	Date	Revision Notes	Drawn	Inspected	
01	14.10.25	First Issue	RR	ZH	
02	28.10.25	Red Line Boundary and Indicative Substation adjusted, DVD Access Track, Transformer and Switchgear removed, Distribution Panel relocated. Panel spec changed to 2 in P, inter row spacing increased to 4m. Panels adjusted to be in line with southern fence line	RR	ZH	
03	29.10.25	Western and Southern field boundaries formed by stock fencing added, Red Line Boundary and CCTV adjusted	RR	ZH	
04	30.03.26	RLB, Cable Route, Indicative Substation Compound and Logo Amended	EM	SP	
05	21.04.26	RLB and Indicative Substation Compound Area Amended	EM	ZH	
06	22.04.26	Red Line Boundary Amended	MR	ZH	
07	27.07.26	Cable Route Amended	WC	ZH	
08	14.08.26	Proposed Vegetation Added & RLB Amended to Accommodate Swept Path Report	MR	ZH	

- LEGEND:
- PLANNING APPLICATION BOUNDARY
 - SITE ACCESS
 - TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTION ACCESS TRACK
 - PERIMETER FENCELINE
 - CABLE ROUTE
 - WATERCOURSES
 - FOOTPATH

- SITE INFRASTRUCTURE:
- SSE INDICATIVE COMPOUND AREA
 - SECURITY GATE (PERIMETER FENCE)
 - CCTV CAMERA
 - PV DISTRIBUTION BOARD
 - STRING INVERTER

- SERVICES:
- ELE HV 11kV O/H 11kV LINE ELE HV 11kV

- VEGETATION:
- EXISTING VEGETATION
 - PROPOSED VEGETATION
 - TEMPORARILY REMOVED VEGETATION

- INDICATIVE PV MODULE LAYOUT:
- FULL TABLE PV ARRAY
 - QUARTER TABLE PV ARRAY

Status: **PLANNING**

Project: **STOURHEAD SOLAR FARM**

Client:



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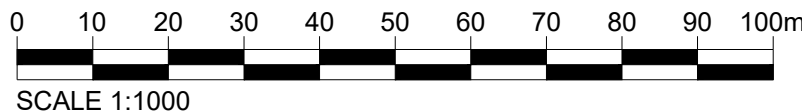
Drawing Title: **STOURHEAD SOLAR FARM
PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT PLAN**

Drawn: RR	Checked: ZH	Drawing Scale: 1:1000	Site: A1
Project Code: AEM053-	Drawing Number: PL-01	Revision: 08	

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STOURHEAD SOLAR FARM - PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT PLAN

Scale: 1:1000@A1



Appendix 2: Legislation and Planning Policy

Legislation

- A2.1. Specific habitats and species receive legal protection in the UK under various pieces of legislation, including:
- The Environment Act 2021;
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended);
 - The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
 - The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000;
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006;
 - The Hedgerows Regulations 1997; and
 - The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- A2.2. The European Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna, 1992, often referred to as the 'Habitats Directive', provides for the protection of key habitats and species considered of European importance. Annexes II and IV of the Directive list all species considered of community interest. The legal framework to protect the species covered by the Habitats Directive has been enacted under UK law through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- A2.3. In Britain, the WCA 1981 (as amended) is the primary legislation protecting habitats and species. SSSIs, representing the best examples of our natural heritage, are notified under the WCA 1981 (as amended) by reason of their flora, fauna, geology or other features. All breeding birds, their nests, eggs and young are protected under the Act, which makes it illegal to knowingly destroy or disturb the nest site during nesting season. Schedules 1, 5 and 8 afford protection to individual birds, other animals and plants.
- A2.4. The CROW Act 2000 strengthens the species enforcement provisions of the WCA 1981 (as amended) and makes it an offence to 'recklessly' disturb a protected animal whilst it is using a place of rest or shelter or breeding/nest site.

Environment Act 2021: Upcoming Town and Country Planning Act

- A2.5. The Environment Act gained Royal Assent in November 2022. Whilst the premise of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been around prior to this, the Assent of the Act sets the Framework for future legislation to be changed. This will be in the form of the Town and Country Planning Act (TaCPA), specifically Schedule 14 of the TaCPA, which will make Biodiversity Net Gain a condition of planning (not a planning condition). The target 'gain' is currently set at 10% but the Secretary of State has the ability to change this.



- A2.6. The timescales for changes to the wording of the TaCPA are that it will be legally mandated and enforceable from January 2024.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024

- A2.7. The NPPF was published in December 2024 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It replaces the previous NPPF originally published in March 2012 and most recently in December 2023.
- A2.8. Paragraph 11 states that:
- "Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development."*
- A2.9. Section 11 of the NPPF, paragraph 125, sub-section a) states that planning policies and decisions should:
- a) *"encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains - such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;*
 - b) *recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production"*
- A2.10. Section 13 refers to development in the Green Belt and introduces 'Golden Rules' that, at paragraph 159, state how such development should *"support nature's recovery"* and *"where land has been identified as having particular potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies, proposals should contribute towards these outcomes"*.
- A2.11. Section 15 of the NPPF (paragraphs 187 to 195) considers the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.
- A2.12. Paragraph 187 states that planning and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) *"protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
 - b) *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
 - c) *maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate; and*
 - d) *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and*



incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs”

A2.13. Paragraph 188 states that plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

A2.14. Paragraph 192 states that in order to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) *“Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁹; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation¹⁰; and*
- b) *promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”*

A2.15. When determining planning applications, Paragraph 193 states that local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) *“if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- b) *development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
- c) *development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons¹¹ and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- d) *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.”*

⁹ Circular 06/2005 provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.

¹⁰ Where areas that are part of the Nature Recovery Network are identified in plans, it may be appropriate to specify the types of development that may be suitable within them.

¹¹ For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat.



A2.16. As stated in paragraph 194 the following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- a) *“potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;*
- b) *listed or proposed Ramsar sites¹²; and*
- c) *sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.”*

A2.17. Paragraph 195 states that

“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site”.

Local Planning Policy

Wiltshire Core Strategy 2015

A2.18. The Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document was formally adopted on 20th January 2015. The plan provides a positive and flexible overarching planning policy framework for Wiltshire for the period up to 2026. Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity relates to ecology and nature conservation and is summarised as follows:

A2.19. Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

‘Protection

Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Where it has been demonstrated that such features cannot be retained, removal or damage shall only be acceptable in circumstances where the anticipated ecological impacts have been mitigated as far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures can be secured to ensure no net loss of the local biodiversity resource, and secure the integrity of local ecological networks and provision of ecosystem services.

All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.

Any development potentially affecting a Natura 2000 site must provide avoidance measures in accordance with the strategic plans or guidance set out in paragraphs 6.75-6.77 above where possible, otherwise bespoke measures must be provided to demonstrate that the proposals would have no adverse effect upon the Natura 2000 network. Any development that would have an

¹² Potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation and proposed Ramsar sites are sites on which Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for designation as a Special Protection Area, candidate Special Area of Conservation or Ramsar site.



adverse effect on the integrity of a European nature conservation site will not be in accordance with the Core Strategy.

Biodiversity enhancement

All development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Major development in particular must include measures to deliver biodiversity gains through opportunities to restore, enhance and create valuable habitats, ecological networks and ecosystem services. Such enhancement measures will contribute to the objectives and targets of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or River Basin/Catchment Management Plan, particularly through landscape scale projects, and be relevant to the local landscape character.

Local sites

Sustainable development will avoid direct and indirect impacts upon local sites through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment. Damage or disturbance to local sites will generally be unacceptable, other than in exceptional circumstances where it has been demonstrated that such impacts:

- i. cannot reasonably be avoided*
- ii. are reduced as far as possible*
- iii. are outweighed by other planning considerations in the public interest*
- iv. where appropriate compensation measures can be secured through planning obligations or agreements.*

Development proposals affecting local sites must make a reasonable contribution to their favourable management in the long-term.'

Biodiversity Actions Plans¹³

A2.20. The Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan 2008 includes habitat and species action plans for Wiltshire. This includes the following habitats and species relevant to the site:

- Woodland;
- Wood-pasture, Parkland and Ancient Trees;
- Ancient and/or Species-rich Hedgerows;
- Farmland Habitat;
- Rivers, Streams and Associated Habitats;
- Bats;
- Water Vole;
- Otter;
- Brown Hare;
- Hazel Dormouse;

¹³ Wiltshire Biodiversity Action Plan (2008) Available at: <https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/wiltshirebap2008%281%29.pdf> [accessed 13/02/2026]



- Skylark;
- Kingfisher;
- Linnet;
- Quail;
- Grey Partridge;
- Bullfinch
- Song Thrush;
- Barn owl;
- Lapwing; and
- Great Crested Newt.



Appendix 3: Methodology and Results

Data Search

- A3.1. A desk-based study was conducted whereby records of designated sites and records of protected and priority species were purchased and interrogated for the site and the surrounding landscape. The aim of the data search is to collate existing ecological records for the site and adjacent areas. Obtaining existing records is an important part of the assessment process as it provides information on issues that may not be apparent during a single survey, which by its nature provides only a 'snapshot' of the ecology of a given site.
- A3.2. The following resources were consulted/contacted:
- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the countryside (MAGIC) website¹⁴;
 - Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC)¹⁵; (Data ordered on 03/09/2025 and received on 12/09/2025);
 - Wiltshire Council website¹⁶;
 - Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) website¹⁷,
 - Natural England (NE) designated sites website¹⁸,
 - Ordnance Survey mapping; and
 - Google Maps, including aerial photography.
- A3.3. The following areas of search around the boundary of the site boundary were applied:
- 2 km for protected and priority species, national statutory designated and non-statutory sites; and
 - 10 km for European statutory sites.

'Extended' Phase I Survey and UK Habs

- A3.4. An 'extended' Phase 1 survey was carried out on the 13th of August 2025 by Joseph Small BSc (Hons), a suitably experienced ecologist, qualifying member of CIEEM, and FISC Level 3. The methods used during the walkover survey broadly followed methods used in an 'extended' Phase I habitat survey¹⁹ and entailed recording the main plant species and classifying and mapping

¹⁴ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/> [Accessed 12/08/2025]

¹⁵ <https://www.wsbr.org/> [Accessed: 03/09/2025]

¹⁶ <https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/> [Accessed 03/09/2025]

¹⁷ <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/ProtectedSites/> [Accessed 03/09/2025]

¹⁸ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/> [Accessed 12/08/2025]

¹⁹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit. JNCC, Peterborough.



habitat types with reference to the Habitat Definitions provided by the UK Habitat Classification Working Group²⁰.

- A3.5. Additionally, the habitats identified were evaluated for their potential to support legally protected and notable fauna species. Where access allowed, adjacent habitats were also considered in order to assess the site within the wider landscape and to provide information with which to assess possible impacts within the context of the site boundary.
- A3.6. All habitats were assessed utilising the relevant condition criteria for the relevant habitat type under the Statutory Biodiversity Metric 1.0.4 which included confirming 'pass' / 'fail' criteria taken from the UK Habitat/Phase 1 methodology where necessary.

Preliminary Bat Surveys

- A3.7. The surveys followed standard methodologies set out in the Bat Mitigation Guidelines²¹, the Bat Workers Manual²² and Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists- Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition²³ and comprised:
- Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) – Ground level inspection of trees to assess potential of trees on site to support roosting bats; and
 - Day-time Bat Walkover (DBW) – Walkover of the sites to assess potential bat activity including foraging areas and potential commuting routes.

Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA)

- A3.8. A GLTA was undertaken on all trees within the Site boundary. The assessment was undertaken on 13th of August 2025 by Joseph Small BSc (Hons). All surveys were daytime inspections and the conditions for all surveys was considered optimal. All trees were inspected from the ground using binoculars, high powered torch and digital camera for accessible features. Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) of interest include at detailed in **Table A2.1** below.

Table A2.1: PRF Types that can be Exploited by Bats and How they Form - adapted from Collins, 2023.

PRFs formed by disease and decay	PRFs formed by damage	PRFs formed by association
Woodpecker Holes Squirrel Holes Knot Holes Pruning Cuts Tear Outs Wounds Cankers Compression Forks Butt Rots	lightning Strikes Hazard Beams Subsidence Cracks Shearing Cracks Transverse Snaps Welds Lifting Bark Desiccation Fissures Frost Cracks	Fluting Ivy

²⁰ UKHab Ltd. (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)

²¹ Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2023). UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

²² Mitchell-Jones, A.J., & McLeish, A.P. (eds). (2004) 3rd Edition Bat Workers' Manual., JNCC, Peterborough, ISBN 1 86107 558 8

²³ Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London. ISBN-978-1-7395126-0-6



A3.9. The potential of trees to support roosting bats was assessed using the criteria shown in **Table A2.2** below.

Table A2.2: Assessment of Tree Suitability Criteria - adapted from Collins, 2023.

Roost Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitat
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree.
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present.

Day-time Bat Walkover (DBW)

A3.10. A DBW was undertaken on all habitats within the Site boundary. The assessment was undertaken on 13th of August 2025 by Joseph Small BSc (Hons). All surveys were daytime inspections and the conditions for all surveys were considered optimal. The DBW assessed habitats on-site for the likelihood to be used by foraging and commuting bats as detailed in **Table A2.3** below. This combined with desk study records of local bats and bat roosts, and potential for roosting bats on-site is used to determine suitability of the site for bat activity.

Table A2.3: Flight Path and Foraging Habits Assessment Criteria - adapted from Collins, 2023.

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats
None	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	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	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	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	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,



Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats
	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.



Appendix 4: Badger Legislation Methodology Results

Legislation and Conservation Status

- A4.1. The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 consolidates the previous Badger Acts of 1973 and 1991. The legislation aims to protect the species from persecution, rather than being a response to an unfavourable conservation status. As well as protecting the animal itself, the 1992 Act also makes the intentional or reckless destruction, damage, or obstruction of a badger sett an offence.
- A4.2. A sett is defined as 'any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger'. In addition, the intentional elimination of sufficient foraging area to support a known social group of badgers may, in certain circumstances, be construed as an offence by constituting 'cruel ill treatment' of a badger. Badgers are not the subject of conservation action.
- A4.3. Due to the continued persecution of this species, all details relating to the location of badger setts must be kept out of the public domain and not submitted to any public portal as part of the application submission.

Badger Surveys

- A4.4. A badger survey was undertaken at the site, and within 30m, where accessible, on the 13th of August 2025, by Joseph Small BSc (Hons). This survey comprised two main elements, the first of these was a thorough search for evidence of badger setts. If any setts were encountered each sett entrance was noted and plotted even if the entrance appeared disused.
- A4.5. The number of holes comprising each sett was recorded and setts classified as disused, partially used or active. Sett descriptions and categories of use are set out in **Tables A4.1** and **A4.2** below.
- A4.6. Sett classification is only possible in relation to the other setts within a clan's territory and if the entire territory range cannot be assessed, classification may not be possible.
- A4.7. The following information was recorded:
- The number and location of well used or very active entrances; these are clear from any debris or vegetation and are obviously in regular use and may, or may not, have been excavated recently;
 - The number and location of partially-active entrances; these are not in regular use and have debris such as leaves and twigs in the entrance or have plants growing in or around the edge of the entrance; and
 - The number of disused entrances; these have not been in use for some time, are partly or completely blocked and cannot be used without considerable clearance. If the entrance has been disused for some time all that may be visible is a depression in the ground where the hole used to be and the remains of the spoil heap.
- A4.8. Secondly, the survey area was walked, and signs of badger activity recorded in order to determine the classification of each sett present within proximity of the site. Typical badger field signs include:



- Tracks and mammal pathways;
- Push-throughs (gaps where badgers regularly push their way through fencing or hedgerows);
- Latrines and dung pits;
- Badger hairs;
- Badger prints;
- Foraging activity (e.g. snuffle holes); and
- Additional sett entrances.

A4.9. For any setts recorded, these were examined and assigned to one of four categories of importance to the badger clan, as defined by published guidance ^{24 25 26 27 28 29}.

Table A4.1. Classification of Badger Setts

Type of Badger Sett	Description
Main Sett	The continuously used, breeding and over-wintering sett for the social group of badgers (clan). Main setts usually more entrances than the rest of clans setts, with large spoil heaps and the setts generally look well used. There are well-used paths to and from the sett and between sett entrances.
Annex Sett	Annex setts are often close to a main sett, usually less than 150m away, and are often connected to the main sett by one or more obvious well-worn paths. Annex setts usually have several holes, but may not be in use all the time, even if the main sett is very active.
Subsidiary Sett	Subsidiary setts often only have a few holes. They are usually at least 50m from a main sett and do not have an obvious path connecting with another sett. They are not continuously active, with seasonal use.
Outlier Sett	Outlier setts usually have only one or two holes, often have little spoil outside the hole, with no obvious path connecting with another sett and are only used sporadically. When not in use by badgers, they are often taken over by foxes or rabbits. However, they can still be recognised as badger setts by the shape of the tunnel (not the actual entrance hole), which is usually at least 250mm in diameter, and is rounded or a flattened oval shape. Fox and rabbit tunnels are smaller and often taller than broad.

²⁴ Harris S., Cresswell, P., Jefferies, D. (1989) *Surveying Badgers*. The Mammal Society, London.

²⁵ Wilson, G., Harris, S., McLaren, G. (1997) *Changes in the British badger population 1988 to 1997*. People's Trust for Endangered Species, London.

²⁶ Cresswell, P., S. Harris, D. J. Jefferies (1990) *The history, distribution, status and habitat requirements of the badger in Britain*. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, England.

²⁷ Natural England (2022) Badgers: surveys and mitigation for development projects, Natural England standing advice, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/badgers-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects> [Accessed: 18/02/2026]

²⁸ Andrews, R. (2013). The Classification of Badger (*Meles meles*) Setts in the UK: A Review and Guidance for Surveyors. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management - *In Practice* **82**: 27-31

²⁹ Scottish Badgers (2018). *Surveying for Badgers: Good Practice Guidelines*. Version 1. https://www.scottishbadgers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Surveying-for-Badgers-Good-Practice-Guidelines_V1-2020-2455979.pdf



Table A4.2. Indicators of Badger Sett use

Classification of Use	Description
Active	Clear of debris and vegetation, obviously in regular use
Partially-active	Not in regular use, with leaves or twigs in entrance or moss and other plants growing around the entrance.
Disused	Partially or completely blocked entrances, unable to be used without a considerable amount of clearance.

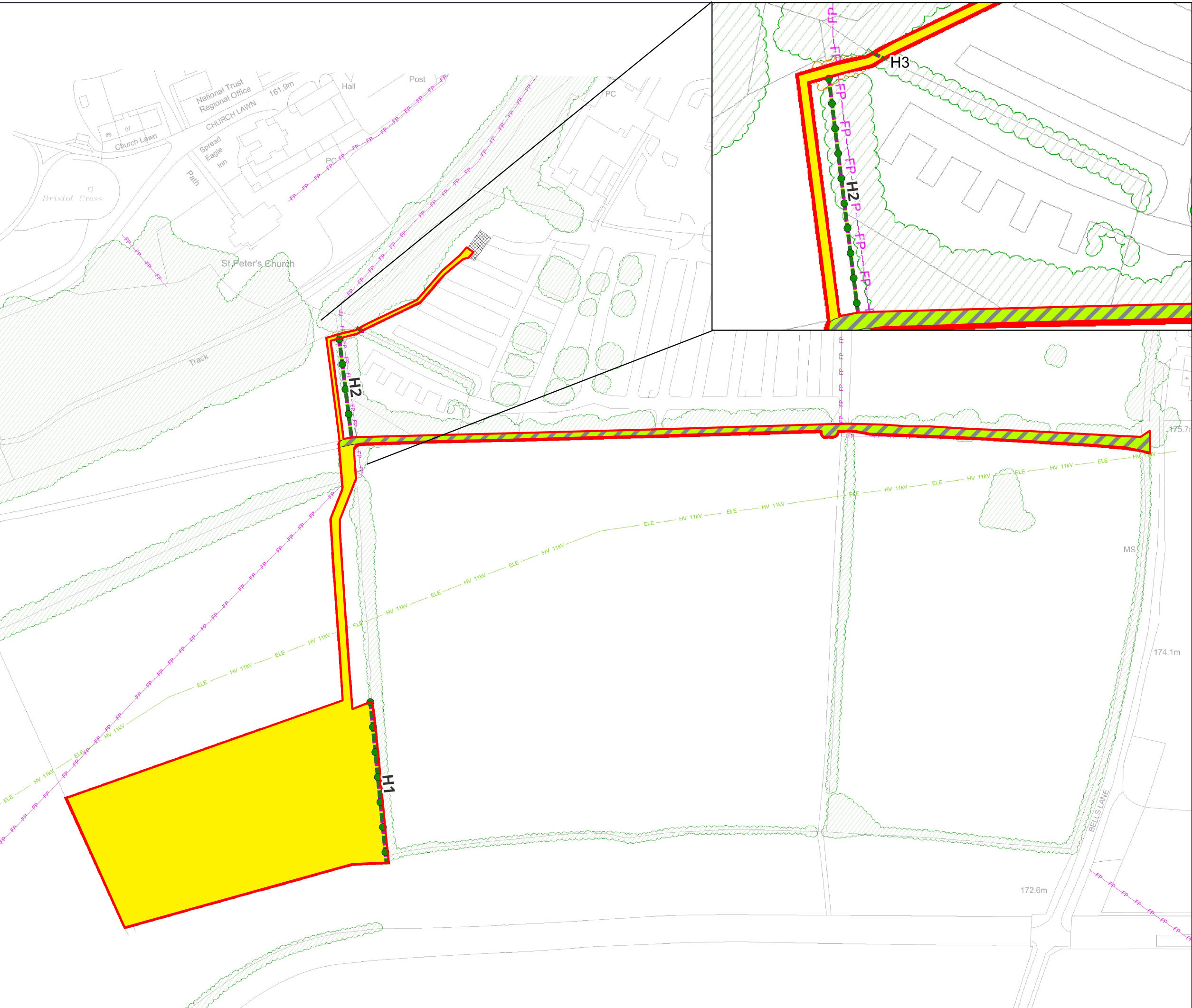
A4.10. The survey area was searched systematically, with particular attention paid to areas where the vegetation and/or the topography offered good suitability for sett creation. Areas with dense ground cover (hedges, scrub, woodland, etc) were examined closely; if the vegetation prevented entry, then the perimeter was examined, in order to detect paths suggesting a hidden sett within the area.



Plans:

Plan 1: Habitat Features Plan **18103/P01b**





- Legend**
- Redline Boundary
 - Baseline Habitats
 - Artificial; Unsealed
 - Modified grassland (Poor)
 - Species-rich native hedgerow
 - Species-rich native hedgerow with trees



Project	Stour Power - Meadow Project
Drawing Title	Habitat Features Plan
Scale	1:1,882
Drawing No.	18103/P01a
Date	August 2026
Checked	JS/LH



The background is a dark blue-grey color. In the center is a large, irregular yellow shape. Surrounding this shape are various geometric elements: a light blue pentagon at the top left, a purple arrow pointing down at the top right, a purple asterisk on the left, a black hand icon with three lines above it at the top center, a black and white striped fan-like shape at the bottom right, and several other triangles and polygons in shades of blue, black, and white. A black leafy branch is on the far left.

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