

Ecological Impact Assessment

May 2026

Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road
Swallowfield
Location

Prepared by
CSA Environmental

On behalf of
Wyvols Court Farm Ltd

Report No: CSA/7728/07

This report may contain sensitive ecological information. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to determine if this should be made publicly available.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The development of three commercial units is proposed at Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield, for which planning permission is sought.

CSA Environmental was instructed by Wyvols Court Farm Ltd to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of the proposed development. To inform this assessment, a desktop study and field survey were undertaken.

The Site presently comprises a series of grassland parcels, one of which forms a portion of a larger agricultural field which extends beyond the site boundary. A short length of ditch habitat is present on-site, which extends off-site to the north. The Site is present within Wyvols Court Farm, and so already subject to a level of artificial lighting and human disturbance. No on-site boundary vegetation is present.

The Site is anticipated to support an assemblage of common and widespread bat species, with the occasional presence of species more susceptible to artificial light. Native hedgerow and tree planting has been incorporated into scheme design to increase the overall connectivity across the Site, and a sensitive lighting strategy will be prepared to minimise artificial light-spill onto existing dispersal corridors within the local landscape.

The on-site habitats have the potential to be utilised by great crested newt in their terrestrial phase, with their confirmed presence within ponds in a dispersible range of the Site. Derogation licensing will be secured for all works relating to the destruction of suitable terrestrial habitat for the species. The Site is anticipated to be occasionally used by individual reptiles dispersing through the wider landscape.

Precautionary working methods will be implemented for nesting birds and reptiles, which will be set out within a Construction Environmental Management Plan.

Opportunities for ecological enhancement may be secured by planning condition. New habitat creation is proposed to include native hedgerow, wildflower meadow planting, mixed native scrub and individual trees within greenspace areas.

Based on successful implementation of the proposed avoidance, mitigation and enhancement, the development is not anticipated to result in any significant residual negative effects on important ecological features. The scheme is considered to accord with all relevant nature conservation legislation, as well as with the provisions of Policy CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan (2010).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by CSA Environmental on behalf of Wyvols Court Farm Ltd. It sets out the findings of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) of proposed development at Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield (hereafter 'the Site'). The development of three commercial units is proposed for which planning permission is sought.
- 1.2 The scope of this assessment has been determined with consideration of best-practice guidance provided by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2024) and the Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development published by the British Standards Institute (BS 42020:2013).
- 1.3 The Site occupies an area of c. 1.64ha and is located around central grid reference SU 71991 64746, to the south of Reading, Berkshire. The Site forms a portion of Wyvols Court Farm, consisting of a series of grassland parcels, one of which forms a portion of a larger agricultural field which extends beyond the site boundary (see Habitats Plan in Appendix A). A short length of ditch habitat is present on-site, which extends off-site to the north. The landscape context of the Site is dominated by arable fields with discrete parcels of woodland. The River Loddon runs north of the Site, and the residential areas of Swallowfield are present to the east.
- 1.4 An initial desk study and field survey, including a UK Habitat Classification survey were undertaken for the Site in September 2025 as part of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, the findings of which are presented herein.
- 1.5 This EclA aims to:
 - Establish baseline ecological conditions at the Site.
 - Determine the importance of ecological features which could be affected by the proposed scheme.
 - Identify any likely significant impacts or effects of the proposed development on important ecological features, in the absence of mitigation, including cumulative impacts.
 - Set out any measures necessary to effectively avoid or mitigate likely significant effects, and identify residual impacts.
 - Identify any compensation measures required to offset residual impacts.
 - Set out potential ecological enhancement measures that may be secured by the proposed scheme
 - Confirm how proposed mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures could be secured.

- Provide sufficient information to determine whether the project accords with relevant nature conservation policies and legislation, and where appropriate, to allow conditions or obligations to be imposed by the relevant authority.
- 1.6 An EclA can be used for the appraisal of projects of any scale. This is a best practice evaluation process, recommended by CIEEM (2024). It is intended that the evaluation of findings presented here-in will aid the Wokingham Borough Council in their review of the planning application.
- 1.7 This report should be read in conjunction with the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment: Design Stage report (CSA/7728/04) which details further ecological assessment undertaken for the purpose of assessing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), and the predicted net effect of the proposed development on biodiversity.

2.0 LEGISLATION, PLANNING POLICY & STANDING ADVICE

Legislation

- 2.1 Legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity of particular relevance to this EclA includes:
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
 - The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
 - The Environment Act 2021
- 2.2 This legislation has been addressed, as appropriate, in the production of this report with further information provided in Appendix B.

National Planning Policy

- 2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2024) sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, is of particular relevance to this report as it relates to ecology and biodiversity. Further details are provided in Appendix B.
- 2.4 Accompanying the NPPF, central government guidance on the implementation of planning policies is set out within online Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). The Natural Environment PPG addresses biodiversity conservation, from individual site and species protection through to the supporting of ecosystem services. Further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity conservation within the planning system is provided by Government Circular 06/2005.

Local Planning Policy

- 2.5 A number of local planning policies relate to ecology, biodiversity and/or nature conservation. These are summarised in Appendix B.

Standing Advice

- 2.6 Natural England Standing Advice regarding protected species aims to support local authorities and forms a material consideration in determining applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation. Standing advice has therefore been given due consideration, alongside other detailed guidance documents, in the scoping of ecological surveys and production of this report.

3.0 METHODS

Desk Study

- 3.1 An ecological desk study was undertaken in September 2025 comprising a review of online resources and biological records centre data as detailed below.
- 3.2 The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database was reviewed to identify the following ecological features (based on the Site's likely 'zone of influence' in respect of such features):
 - Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites within 10km of the Site (including possible/proposed sites)
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within 3km of the Site
 - Other relevant data e.g. Ancient Woodland Inventory within 1km of the Site
- 3.3 A review was undertaken of the location of any such designations, their distance from and connectivity with the Site, and the reasons for their designation. This information was used to determine whether they may be within the proposed development's Zone of Influence (Zol).
- 3.4 Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) was contacted for details of any non-statutory nature conservation designations and records of protected/notable habitats and species. This information was requested for an area encompassing the Site and adjacent land within c. 2km of its central grid reference. This search area was selected to include the likely zone of influence of effects upon non-statutory designations and protected or notable habitats and species.
- 3.5 Further online resources were reviewed for information which may aid the identification of important ecological features. The Woodland Trust's online Ancient Tree Inventory was reviewed for known ancient or veteran trees within the Site and adjacent land. Interactive online mapping provided by the charity 'Buglife' was used to determine whether the Site falls within an Important Invertebrate Area.
- 3.6 In accordance with Natural England's Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (2001), a desktop search was undertaken to identify ponds within 500m of the Site which may have potential to support breeding great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, using Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping, the MAGIC database and aerial photography.
- 3.7 Where possible under the terms of the data provider, relevant desk study data are presented in Appendix C.

Field Surveys

- 3.8 A UK Habitat Classification ('UKHab') survey was carried out in fine and dry weather conditions on 29 September 2025 by Megan Bridgman ACIEEM and Rhys Leighton encompassing the Site and immediately adjacent habitats that could be viewed.
- 3.9 UKHab is a unified and comprehensive system for mapping and classifying habitats, designed to provide a simple and robust approach to surveying and monitoring, and replaces Phase 1 Habitat survey methods. The method allows for identification of important habitat types, including habitats of Principal Importance under Section 41 (S41) of the NERC Act (2006) and Habitats Directive Annex I habitats. This method also allows for direct translation of habitats into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Defra, 2025).
- 3.10 The following parameters were adopted for the UKHab survey undertaken for this EclA:
- UKHab Professional edition (Butcher *et al.*, 2020, commercial End User Licence Agreement (EULA))
 - Minimum Mappable Unit (MMU):
 - 10m²/0.001ha (polygons)
 - 5m (linear)
 - Primary Habitats recorded to a minimum of Level 2 (see below) with UKHab codes provided
 - Mandatory secondary codes used
 - Base-mapping comprising a combination of aerial imagery and topographic information
- 3.11 Primary Habitats are recorded to a minimum of Level 2. Where the survey is conducted at an appropriate time of year (e.g. May to July for grassland) habitats may be recorded to Level 3, 4 or 5, only if conditions and the experience of the surveyor allow.
- 3.12 Alongside the UKHab survey, additional field survey information was collected, comprising:
- Detailed floral species lists recorded for each identified habitat/parcel
 - Evidence of, or potential for, European Protected Species (EPS) (including bats, great crested newt, dormouse and otter)
 - Evidence of, or potential for, other protected species (including birds, reptiles, water vole, badger and certain invertebrates)
 - Evidence of, or potential for, other notable species (including S41 Species of Principal Importance as well as notable, rare, protected or controlled plants and invertebrates)
 - Any other survey information relevant to ecological matters

- 3.13 Results of the UKHab survey are presented on the Habitats Plan in Appendix A. Appendix D provides photographs of the habitats at the Site and Appendix E provides a list of floral species recorded in each habitat parcel. Nomenclature for higher plants within this report is consistent with the fourth edition of The New Flora of the British Isles (Stace, 2019).

Limitations

- 3.14 There were no specific limitations to the desk study, however, the field survey was conducted outside of the peak botanical season for grassland. This is not anticipated to impact the overall classification of the on-site habitat; however, the species list is considered to be representative, not comprehensive.

Evaluation and Assessment

- 3.15 Ecological features are identified, evaluated and assessed in accordance with the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (2018), with detailed methods provided in Appendix F.
- 3.16 It is an established principle (CIEEM, 2024) that EcIA is an iterative process. Specialist advice on the avoidance and mitigation of the potential negative effects of the proposed development has been input from an early design stage.

4.0 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Nature Conservation Designations

Statutory

- 4.1 There are no statutory designations covering any part of the Site.
- 4.2 A single international statutory designation was identified within 10km of the Site; the Thames Basin Heaths SPA (c. 2.8km south-east). The proposed development is not understood to result in a net increase of residential dwellings, as such it is anticipated that mitigation will not be required in accordance with Policy CP8 of the Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan (2010).
- 4.3 Two national statutory designations were identified within 3km of the Site; the Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI (c. 200m north) and Bramshill SSSI (c. 2.8km south-east), alongside two local statutory designations within 3km of the Site; the Swallowfield Meadow LNR (c. 500m east of the Site) and The Marshes LNR (c. 1.8km south-east). These statutory designations are described in Table 1 below.
- 4.4 With the exception of the Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI which is discussed further in Section 5.0 in relation to the River Loddon, with consideration of the broad nature of the proposals, the qualifying features of the above designations and their spatial relationship to the Site, no potential impact pathways have been identified and the remaining statutory designations are therefore scoped out of detailed assessment. As SSSIs are administered and designated under national legislation, the Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI is considered to be important at the National level.
- 4.5 The Site falls within the fluvial catchment of the River Thames. It shares no hydrological connectivity with any statutory river, wetland, estuary or coastal designation which has been identified in advice from Natural England as being vulnerable to increases in nutrient loading from new development.

Non-Statutory

- 4.6 A total of 14 non-statutory designations were identified within 2km of the Site, comprising both Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Proposed LWS. Closest to the Site is the River Loddon (Part) LWS (c. 420m north), with the closest point of the River Loddon present c. 175m north of the Site. All non-statutory designations within 2km of the Site are described in Table 1 below.
- 4.7 The southern portion of the Site is also present within the Loddon Valley South Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA), which extends across the wider landscape surrounding the village of Swallowfield. The identified

targets and opportunities for this mapped area include management, protection and restoration of river, lowland meadows and wet woodland habitats, as well as the management of arable land for farmland bird species.

- 4.8 With the exception of the River Loddon (Part) LWS which is discussed further in Section 5.0 in relation to the River Loddon, in view of their reasons for designation and likely sensitivities, and with consideration of their spatial relationship with the Site, no potential impact pathways have been identified and the remaining non-statutory designations are therefore scoped out of detailed assessment. As SINC's are designated according to criteria applied in a county context, the River Loddon (Part) LWS is considered to be ecologically important at the County level.

Table 1. Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations within search radii

Site Name & Designation	Distance & Direction from Survey Area	Special Interests or Qualifying Features
International Designations within 10km		
Thames Basin Heaths SPA	c. 2.8km south-east	Supports nationally important breeding populations of Dartford warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i> , nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> and woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i> .
National Designations within 3km		
Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI	c. 200m north	Traditionally managed, seasonally wet hay meadows supporting nationally important populations of rare fritillary <i>Fritillary meleagris</i> and Loddon pondweed <i>Potamogeton nodosus</i> . Other species recorded include water vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i> , little grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> , mute swan <i>Cygnus olor</i> and kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i> .
Bramshill SSSI	c. 2.8km south-east	Series of shallow ponds and mires supporting a rich assemblage of dragonfly and damselfly. Conifer plantations support internationally important populations of nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler. Other species recorded include hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i> and little ringed plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i> .
Local Designations within 3km		
Swallowfield Meadow LNR	c. 500m east	Comprises copse, meadow, native hedgerows, ditches and seasonal ponds which support a rich floral assemblage. Water vole have also been recorded.
The Marshes LNR	c. 1.8km south-east	Comprises wet woodland, grassland, ponds and planted native shrubs and trees.

Non-statutory Designations within 2km		
River Loddon (Part) LWS	c. 420m north	17km stretch of the River Loddon running from Swallowfield to the River Thames in Wargrave. Habitats present include marsh, islands, inlets, river cliffs and riffles. Water vole and a high diversity of dragonfly and damselfly are present.
Beaumont's Castle Wood and Moat LWS	c. 760m west	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland and watercourse that connects to the River Loddon floodplain.
St Legers Copse, Collins Copse LWS	c. 850m south	Ancient woodland dominated by hazel <i>Corylus Avellana</i> coppice.
Highgrove Copse LWS	c. 1.1km south-west	Ancient woodland dominated by hazel <i>Corylus Avellana</i> coppice.
Priory Copse Proposed LWS	c. 1.1km west	Ancient replanted woodland.
Wood North of Beech Hill Coverts/Clayhill Proposed LWS	c. 1.2km west	As below for Wood North of Beech Hill Coverts/Clayhill LWS.
Beech Hill Coverts Proposed LWS	c. 1.5km west	Ancient and semi-natural woodland.
Wood North of Beech Hill Coverts/Clayhill LWS	c. 1.4km west	Forms part of a network of ancient woodland in the local landscape. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland, a Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance, is present.
Norman's Shaw LWS	c. 1.6km north-west	Ancient semi-natural woodland dominated by bluebell <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> and hazel coppice. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland Habitat of Principle Importance present.
Woods between Whitehouse and Highlands LWS	c. 1.6km north-west	Mature broadleaved woodland with ancient indicator ground flora. Ponds have previously supported great crested newt <i>Triturus cristatus</i> . Lowland mixed deciduous woodland, a Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance, is present.
Norman's Shaw Proposed LWS	c. 1.7km north-west	As above for Norman's Shaw LWS.
Great Wood LWS	c. 1.7km north-east	Ancient woodland dominated by oak <i>Quercus</i> sp. and ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> .
Cuckoo Pen SINC	c. 1.7km east	A small parcel of ash-dominated, long-established woodland.
The Marshes, Riseley LWS	c. 1.8km south-east	Comprises wet woodland (Habitat of Principal Importance), grazed grassland and amenity grassland.

Habitats and Flora

- 4.9 Habitats recorded on-site are illustrated in Appendix A with detailed species lists provided in Appendix E. Relevant UKHab codes are provided within parentheses for each habitat type recorded [e.g. Other Neutral Grassland (g3c)].

Irreplaceable Habitats

- 4.10 There is no ancient woodland, as shown on the Ancient Woodland Inventory, covering any part of the Site or immediately adjacent land. The nearest parcel is present c. 1.7km north-east of the Site.
- 4.11 No trees on or adjacent to Site are listed on the Ancient Tree Inventory.

Notable Flora Records

- 4.12 The TVERC provided 24 records of eight notable plant species from within the search area. Most frequently occurring within the records is native bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, as listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Of potential relevance to the on-site grassland habitats are wild strawberry *Fragaria vesca* and wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*.
- 4.13 A further 67 records of six invasive flora species were returned, with the majority of records comprising Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, as listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). No invasive non-native species were recorded on-site during the field survey.

Modified grassland (g4)

- 4.14 Grassland G1 comprises a portion of a larger agricultural field extending beyond the site boundary, which is managed for a hay cut, with a short sward that appeared to be recently sown. The sward was relatively diverse, comprising frequent perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, alongside occasional colonising herbaceous species including bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, scarlet pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, germander speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, bristly oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides* and clover *Trifolium* sp. Species recorded within the margin were broadly consistent with those recorded within the field itself, with the addition of daisy *Bellis perennis*, dove's-foot crane's-bill *Geranium molle*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and knotgrass *Polygonum* sp.
- 4.15 The above-described species composition is consistent with that of 'Modified grassland', furthermore, as advised by the landowner, the field was recently sown with a seed mix dominated by perennial rye-grass and other cultivated grass varieties. This habitat type is widespread within the local area and comprises predominantly common flora species. It is therefore scoped out of further assessment.

Other neutral grassland (g3c)

- 4.16 Grassland G2 is present to the north of the hardstanding access track which appears regularly managed to maintain a short sward. Species present include perennial rye-grass, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, clover, Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus*, ribwort plantain and daisy.

Further species recorded along the unmanaged interface with the adjacent woodland habitat include cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, alongside creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, dove's-foot crane's-bill, common fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* and black nightshade *Solanum nigrum*. The species composition of the grassland parcel appears to be more rye-dominated within the western portion, with a greater diversity of species present easterly towards the woodland edge.

- 4.17 Grassland G3 is a small parcel present to the north of Grassland G1 which appears regularly managed to maintain a short sward height, with picnic benches present indicating an amenity use by those occupying the existing off-site commercial units. Species present include common nettle *Urtica dioica*, perennial rye-grass, Yorkshire-fog, common ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., clover and yarrow.
- 4.18 The above habitat type is widespread within the local area and comprises predominantly common flora species. It is therefore scoped out of further assessment.

Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)

- 4.19 A hardstanding track bisects the Site, providing access to Wyvols Court Farm from Basingstoke Road.

Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c)

- 4.20 A small portion of a wider gravel farmyard is present on-site which is largely used for parking and machinery storage.

Ditch (r1)

- 4.21 A small section (c. 30m) of a ditch is present to the north of Field F1 which is assumed to connect to the River Loddon present to the north of the Site, however, this is not visible via OS mapping. The ditch was recorded to be dry at the time of the field survey, despite a recent period of heavy rainfall. Species recorded were broadly consistent with that of the surrounding grassland, alongside species indicative of wetter conditions, such as willow *Salix* sp. and rush *Juncus* sp.
- 4.22 As the ditch appears to be regularly dry, or at most seasonally wet, it does not provide a consistent resource for wildlife. Moreover, it borders an arable field and is therefore likely to fill with agricultural run-off, creating a nutrient-loaded environment. The on-site ditch is therefore considered to be important at the less than Local level.

Fauna

Bats

- 4.23 A total of 502 bat records were identified within the search area, dating from 2002 to 2024. These include common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Nathusius's Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auratus*, Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*, serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* and barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, alongside further records of unidentified species of *Myotis*.
- 4.24 Closest to the Site is a cluster of four records, three of common pipistrelle and a single record of brown long-eared bat (c. 200m east), all dating from 2010. These records are of roosting bats associated with a residential dwelling within the village of Swallowfield. Overall, the records are widespread around the Site, with hotspots of records associated with the residential areas of Swallowfield and Spencers Wood.
- 4.25 A total of 25 records of barbastelle were returned dating between 2014 and 2022, all of which relating to bats in flight. The majority of these records are present c. 300m east of the Site, related to seasonal bat activity surveys undertaken in 2022 by CSA Environmental of land present c. 50m north-east of the Site, alongside a further parcel c. 200m east of the Site for which planning permission has since been granted (Land west of Trowes Lane and north of Charlton Lane, Swallowfield. Planning reference 230422). These surveys found the parcels to support common and widespread species, with the surveyors noting activity to be dominated by foraging pipistrelle bats. Low numbers of barbastelle were detected, indicating occasional use of the parcels as part of a wider territory.
- 4.26 A large proportion of the records are of roosting bats, the closest of which to the Site is described above. These records are largely of bat droppings and small numbers of individual roosting bats, with no records of large maternity or hibernation colonies. Dusk emergence surveys were undertaken in 2025 by CSA Environmental of a derelict outbuilding within Wyvols Court Farm (c. 20m north of the Site). These surveys found the structure to support two non-breeding day roosts each of individual common pipistrelle bats.
- 4.27 Nearby Granted EPS Licence Applications include one relating to both common and soprano pipistrelle bats, associated with a residential dwelling c. 250m south of the Site, with a licence end date of 2014. A further granted licence application is located c. 400m north-east of the Site, again relating to both common and soprano pipistrelle bats, with a licence end date of 2012. Both of the above permitted the destruction of/damage to a resting place.

- 4.28 The open grassland offers superficially suitable habitat for foraging bats, however, given the extent of the on-site habitat, regular management and artificial light/anthropogenic disturbance from the adjacent off-site commercial units, it is unlikely to represent a key resource within the local landscape. However, the nearby off-site woodland and boundary vegetation provide suitable green corridors for dispersing bats. While no bat activity surveys have been undertaken at the Site due to its scale, the assemblage of bats that may be using the Site is likely important at up to the Local level.
- 4.29 It is understood that a small area of facilitation pruning will be required at the access point, comprising the removal of immature blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* shrubs, with no impacts relating to roosting bats anticipated.

Badger

- 4.30 The TVERC have provided 31 records of badger *Meles meles* from within the search area, dating from 2003 to 2025. Closest to the Site is a cluster of three records (c. 400m south-west), each of an individual badger dating between 2013 to 2024. None of the returned records were in relation to setts or latrines, predominantly associated with individuals observed dispersing through the landscape, or those present along the roadside resulting from traffic mortalities.
- 4.31 Badgers are common and widespread and will persist in a variety of habitats. Habitats on-site provide opportunities for foraging, shelter and dispersal, and are well-connected with the wider landscape. No signs of badger were identified during the field survey, however, records indicate their presence in the local landscape. Frequent mammal digging was observed within the off-site woodland to the east, however this was considered likely to be attributed to rabbit activity due its size and general character.
- 4.32 While badger are likely to occasionally forage or disperse through the Site/land immediately surrounding the Site, no setts have been identified, and badger are scoped out of further assessment.

Dormouse

- 4.33 Two records of dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* were identified within the search area, both of which dating from 2014. Both records are located c. 1.7km south of the Site, in relation to an individual nest. A single granted EPS licence is present within the search area, located c. 2km south of the Site, with a licence end date of 2018.
- 4.34 Dedicated surveys undertaken by CSA Environmental of the two land parcels as described above determined dormice to be likely absent, however, these surveys were undertaken in 2022 and therefore no longer represent up to date evidence. There is no suitable dormouse

habitat present on-site, and limited connectivity to suitable dormouse habitat present within the wider landscape, therefore dormice are considered likely absent from the Site and are scoped out of further assessment.

Riparian Mammals

- 4.35 No records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* or otter *Lutra lutra* were identified in the search area. The River Loddon, present c. 175m north of the Site at its closest point, is known to support water vole. However, the on-site and intervening habitat is not suitable for supporting this species, and it is therefore considered unlikely that water vole will be utilising or dispersing through the on-site habitats.
- 4.36 There is no suitable on-site aquatic or riparian habitat capable of supporting water vole or otter and no connectivity between the Site and suitable riparian habitat. Both otter and water vole are considered likely absent from the Site and are scoped out of further assessment.

Other Mammals

- 4.37 A total of 27 records of hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* were identified within the search area, dating from 2007 to 2023. These are predominantly present within the residential areas of Swallowfield and Spencers Wood. Closest to the Site is a record of an individual hedgehog present along the A33 major road (c. 250m south). The on-site grassland is suitable for supporting foraging and dispersing hedgehog. The Site is well-connected to the surrounding landscape including residential gardens which are likely to support this species, however, given the abundance of suitable habitat within the wider landscape, the Site is unlikely to represent a key resource for the species.
- 4.38 Five records of brown hare *Lepus europaeus* were identified within the search area, dating from 2006 to 2015. These records are all present c. 1.7km south of the Site across the extensive farmland habitat, with a peak count of five individuals recorded. The on-site grassland and nearby woodland edge habitat provide suitable resources for foraging and dispersal, however, given the limited available of extensive tracts of suitable habitat for both species in the wider landscape, the Site is not likely to represent a key resource for the species and so a notable assemblage is not anticipated.
- 4.39 On balance, the Site is not likely to represent a significant resource for hedgehog or brown hare given the scale of the Site and the widespread availability of suitable habitat in the local landscape for both species. These species are scoped out of further assessment.

Birds

- 4.40 A total of 588 records of 60 bird species were identified within the search area, dating from 2002 to 2024. Most frequently occurring within the

records is the BOCC Red List species spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, with 111 records returned. This species is widespread across the south of England, and typical within urban, woodland and farmland habitats.

- 4.41 A total of 21 records of barn owl *Tyto alba*, as listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were identified within the search area. In closest proximity to the Site are 15 records in relation to a nest within Wyvols Court Farm (c. 20m west of the Site), within which the Site is present. These records were submitted by Wokingham Borough Council dating from 2002 to 2007, suggesting a long-term monitoring of at least one barn owl nest located within the wider context of the farm. The landowner has advised that these records are in relation to a series of barn owl boxes mounted on mature trees across Wyvols Court Farm, all of which are present outside of the Site boundary.
- 4.42 The Site is located c. 2.8km from the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, designated due to the presence of internationally important populations of nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler, however no records for these species have been returned from within the search area. There is no suitable habitat for supporting populations of the qualifying species for the Thames Basin Heaths SPA on-site.
- 4.43 The on-site grassland is capable of supporting foraging birds by a range of generalist species. The assemblage of birds using the Site is likely to comprise common and widespread species. These species are scoped out of further assessment.

Reptiles

- 4.44 Four records of reptile species were identified within the search area, comprising three records of grass snake *Natrix helvetica* and a single record of slow worm *Anguis fragilis*, dating from 2006 to 2022. These records are predominantly relating to small numbers of individuals, with a peak count of three grass snake. Closest to the Site is two records of individual sub-adult grass snake relating to refugia surveys undertaken by CSA Environmental in 2022 at 'Land west of Trowes Lane and north of Charlton Lane, Swallowfield'.
- 4.45 The on-site grassland field margins provide suitable habitat for supporting reptiles, and while any population of reptiles using the Site is likely to be very low, all reptiles are protected from reckless or intentional injury or killing. Reptiles which may occur within the Site are, therefore, considered to be important at the Local level.

Amphibians

- 4.46 A total of 112 records of five amphibian species were identified within the search area, including common frog *Rana temporaria*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*, palmate newt *Lissotriton*

helveticus and great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*. The records are widely distributed around the Site, with a particular cluster of c. 50 records comprising all the above species present c. 1.7km north-west of the Site. The on-site grassland field margins provide suitable habitat for sheltering, foraging and dispersing amphibians.

- 4.47 Within 200m of the Site are seven records of great crested newt and a single record of palmate newt. The most recent of which, comprising five of these records, are those in association with surveys undertaken by CSA Environmental in relation to 'Land West of Trowes Lane and north of Charlton Lane'. These are discussed in more detail alongside an appraisal of the Site in respect of great crested newt below.

Great Crested Newt

- 4.48 A total of 29 records of great crested newt were identified within the search area, the most recent of which are relating to survey work undertaken by CSA Environmental in 2022 as outlined above. Despite spending much of their annual lifecycle within the terrestrial environment, great crested newts are dependent upon the presence of suitable aquatic breeding habitat in order for a population to persist. No potential breeding ponds were identified on-site during the field survey, while 11 appear to be present within a dispersible range of the Site, based on OS mapping.
- 4.49 Further to the aforementioned survey work undertaken by CSA Environmental in 2022, a total of seven ponds were subject to eDNA sampling (those within a dispersible range of the Site include P2-4, P7, P9), from which positive results for the presence of great crested newt were returned for Pond P2, P7 and P9 (see Pond Plan in Appendix C). Population estimate surveys of Pond P9 were subsequently undertaken from which a peak count of one adult was identified during torch-light searches.
- 4.50 The predominant on-site habitat, comprising managed grassland maintained at a short sward height, does not represent suitable habitat for great crested newts. However, the Site peripheries, comprising the unmanaged grassland margins, provide opportunities for sheltering, foraging and dispersal. It is therefore considered possible that great crested newt may be utilising the on-site habitats during their terrestrial phase, with the assemblage considered important at the Local level.

Invertebrates

- 4.51 A total of 141 records of 27 invertebrate species were identified within the search area. Of note, a total of 68 of these records are of stag beetle *Lucanus cervus*, as listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). This species inhabits decaying wood and is therefore commonly recorded within woodland and tree line habitats. Species of moth identified in the search area that are of relevance to

various common and widespread habitats, such as the grassland present on-site, include beaded chestnut *Agrochola lychnidis*, buff ermine *Spilosoma lutea* and feathered gothic *Tholera decimalis*.

- 4.52 The Site is not located within an Important Invertebrate Area (IIA). The habitats on-site are generally common and widespread within the local landscape and therefore unlikely to support a notable assemblage of invertebrates. These species have therefore been scoped out of further assessment.

Future Baseline

- 4.53 The Site is presently under active management, including the periodic cutting of grassland and arable field margins. These management interventions maintain the on-site conditions in a relatively stable state. There is no known intention to cease this management, other than to accommodate the proposed development should planning permission be granted. As such, the future baseline status of important ecological features is not anticipated to vary significantly from that at present.

Summary of Ecological Features

- 4.54 Table 2 below summarises all important ecological features identified within the respective zones of influence, together with the geographic context of their importance:

Table 2. Summary of important ecological features and their geographic context

Ecological Feature	Geographic Context of Importance and/or Protection Status
River Loddon	National
Bats	Local
Reptiles	Local
Great Crested Newt	Local

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

The Proposed Development

- 5.1 Planning permission is sought for the development of three commercial units at the Site. The following impact assessment is based on the 'Illustrative Masterplan' (drawing number 2506_220D) prepared by O3arch.
- 5.2 The construction phase of the proposed development will comprise the following:
- Removal of existing grassland habitat to facilitate development.
 - Laying of concrete foundations to outline the commercial units and associated parking.
 - Construction of the commercial units atop the concrete foundation.
 - The establishment of landscape planting, including wildflower grassland, native mixed scrub, species-rich native hedgerow and individual trees.
 - Establishment of c. 0.05km of ditch engineered such that it will retain a consistent water depth of c. 50cm.
- 5.3 The operational phase of the proposed development will comprise the following:
- Commercial units in use
 - Minor increase in vehicle/pedestrian presence
 - Increased artificial lighting and anthropogenic noise

Assumptions

- 5.4 The following assumptions have been made during the assessment of potential effects of the proposed development on important ecological features. Although 'assumed' and therefore taken as part of the pre-mitigation scenario, these measures are referenced in the proceeding sections where integral to the mitigation strategy.
- 5.5 In accordance with BS42020:2013, it is assumed that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be secured by planning condition and prepared at the detailed design stage. In addition to the construction phase impact avoidance and mitigation measures identified in the following sections, the CEMP will detail standard environmental control measures, including though not limited to the following:
- Implementation of strict protection measures for the root protection areas of retained trees and hedgerows, in accordance with BS5837:2012
 - Standard best practice construction phase pollution prevention and control measures

- Sensitive working methods and timing to avoid direct impacts to nesting birds (generally vegetation removal outside nesting season of March through August)
 - All working measures needed to comply with the terms of any EPS derogation licencing specific to the development phase or works activity
 - Updated ecological surveys, where necessary, to identify shifts in the baseline ecological condition (such as to support EPS derogation licence applications) in order that revised impact avoidance and mitigation measures can be adopted as required
- 5.6 In accordance with BS42020:2013, it is assumed that a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) will be secured by planning condition and prepared at the detailed design stage. The LEMP will set out measures for the establishment and long-term management of newly created and retained habitats to maximise benefits for biodiversity.

Potential Impacts and Ecological Effects

River Loddon

- 5.7 The Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI and River Loddon (Part) LWS are present c. 200m and c. 420m north of the Site, respectively. The Site is present within the fluvial catchment of the River Loddon, with potential hydrological connectivity via the on-site ditch. At its closest point to the Site, the River Loddon is present c. 175m north, downstream of the River Loddon (Part) LWS. The proposed development, in the absence of mitigation measures, could therefore result in chemical pollutants entering the above designations vectored by surface water discharge.
- 5.8 Given the Site's proximity to the designations, individual pollution events during construction that could result from poor construction management may impact directly on sensitive habitats of the designation and the species it supports. Pollution events during construction may include, but would not necessarily be limited to, chemical leaks and spills arising from construction plant and machinery. During the operational phase of the proposed development, in the absence of appropriate site drainage, the increased impermeable surfacing at the Site could result in an increase in contaminated run-off entering the surrounding terrestrial environment.

Bats

- 5.9 The on-site grassland within the context of the surrounding arable fields provides suitable habitat for foraging bats. There is no boundary vegetation present on-site, though a network of hedgerows and tree lines is present across the local landscape to aid dispersal. Given the scale of the proposals and the abundance of suitable foraging and dispersal habitat in the wider landscape, this minor loss of on-site

grassland habitat is not considered likely to result in significant negative effects upon the local bat assemblage. This is to say that the local diversity, distribution or abundance of bats is unlikely to be appreciably affected.

- 5.10 The Site is present within Wyvols Court Farm, adjacent to an existing farmyard and commercial units which remain artificially lit overnight. The proposed development would also be subject to artificial lighting which is required to remain lit overnight for security reasons. Increases in artificial light levels may, in the absence of mitigation, lead to a break in the connectivity across the local landscape for dispersing bats.

Birds

- 5.11 Removal of vegetation, such as facilitation pruning at the site access, will be timed to occur outside of the nesting bird season (generally March-August, inclusive). If this cannot be avoided, then a thorough check for nesting birds will be carried out immediately prior to works by an appropriately qualified ecologist. If nesting birds are found to be present, works will be subject to an appropriately sized exclusion zone until all young are confirmed to have fledged.

Reptiles

- 5.12 It is anticipated that the Site may support a very low population of reptiles within the discrete areas of on-site habitat. Due to the scale and nature of the development, it is not anticipated to have any significant effect on the wider landscapes carrying capacity for reptile species, however in the absence of mitigation, potential impacts could occur on reptiles during the Site clearance phase of development in the form of killing and/or injury to individuals, which would constitute an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Great Crested Newt

- 5.13 Great crested newt are confirmed to be supported by ponds within a dispersible range of the Site, and therefore it is considered possible that the species is utilising the on-site habitats during their terrestrial phase.
- 5.14 All great crested newt habitat is protected from damage or destruction under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and individual great crested newt are protected from killing and injury. Therefore, in the absence of mitigation, the loss of terrestrial habitat during the construction phase is likely to result in the committal of an offence, albeit unlikely to materially affect local conservation status.

Mitigation

River Loddon

- 5.15 To minimise the potential for construction phase point source pollution incidents occurring and leading to negative environmental impacts, further measures will be incorporated into the CEMP. Such measures should include the appropriate storage and control of materials/chemicals to avoid pollution (for example the use of drip trays beneath plant).
- 5.16 To minimise the potential for operational phase diffuse source pollution leading to off-site environmental impacts, best practice Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) should be designed and installed in accordance with the requirements in the CIRIA SuDS Manual (C753). Step 3 under Section 26.7.1 of the SuDS manual outlines that the requirement for extra treatment should be considered in relation to discharge to environmentally protected sites. It states that 'an additional treatment component (i.e. over and above that required for standard discharges), or other equivalent protection, is required that provides environmental protection in the event of an unexpected pollution event or poor system performance'.

Bats

- 5.17 Newly planted hedgerows and trees will increase the overall connectivity across the Site, creating new opportunities for dispersing bats within the local landscape. Furthermore, the creation of diverse wildflower meadow and a permanently wet ditch will provide increased foraging opportunities relative to the existing on-site habitats.
- 5.18 In the absence of mitigation, increased artificial lighting resulting from the proposed development has to the potential to interrupt dispersal routes for bats within the local landscape. To minimise this impact, a sensitive lighting strategy will be designed, agreed and implemented for the development. This will ensure that dark corridors are maintained, minimising light spill to retained and newly created semi-natural habitats. This may be secured by planning condition.

Reptiles

- 5.19 Newly planted mixed scrub and wildflower grassland habitats will result in an overall net gain in on-site suitable reptile habitat. Furthermore, the proposed ditch will increase opportunities for invertebrate prey species.
- 5.20 In order to avoid killing and/or injury of individual reptiles during the Site clearance phase of development, precautionary working methods should be employed during the early construction phase. Full details of these methods will be set out in a CEMP at the detailed design stage, however, it is likely to include sensitive timing to avoid the hibernation window and gradual reduction of vegetation to ground level to allow

reptiles to disperse on their own prior to Site clearance. Following these measures, no significant adverse effects upon reptiles are anticipated.

Great Crested Newt

- 5.21 No linear vegetation is currently present on-site, and therefore the proposed development will result in a net increase in suitable terrestrial habitat through native hedgerow planting, alongside scrub and wildflower meadow habitat creation. Furthermore, there will be an increase in the availability of aquatic breeding habitat for great crested newts, with the creation of a permanently wet ditch habitat, with marginal riparian wildflower planting.
- 5.22 The proposed development works will be subject to appropriate licencing for the destruction of terrestrial habitat on-site. District-Level Licencing (DLL) is available for the Site, as confirmed by the NatureSpace Partnership - the scheme administrator for Wokingham Borough Council. This would commit the development to measures to ensure that the scheme as a whole will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the local great crested newt population at a favourable conservation status.

Residual Effects

- 5.23 Table 3 below summarises the assessment of potential impacts on each important ecological feature, proposed mitigation and the assessed residual effects.

Table 3. Summary of effects

Important Ecological Feature	Potential Impacts and Effects	Avoidance & Mitigation Measures	Mechanism by which Measures are Secured	Residual Effects
River Loddon	Potential pollution of the associated statutory and non-statutory designations by surface water discharge	Appropriate storage of materials/chemicals at the construction phase Additional treatment of surface water discharge at the operational phase through creation of a SuDS basin feature	CEMP secured through Planning Condition	No significant effect
Bats	Potential development edge effects from artificial lighting causing disturbance of foraging bats	New habitat creation, management of green space for biodiversity gain, sensitive lighting strategy	LEMP and Lighting Strategy secured through Planning Condition	No significant effect

Important Ecological Feature	Potential Impacts and Effects	Avoidance & Mitigation Measures	Mechanism by which Measures are Secured	Residual Effects
Birds	Potential damage or destruction of nests and eggs	Sensitive timing of works / nest checks by ecologist	CEMP secured through Planning Condition	No significant effect
Reptiles	Killing/injury of individuals during Site clearance phase	Precautionary working methods prior to Site clearance	CEMP secured through planning condition	No significant effect
Great Crested Newt	Permanent loss of terrestrial habitat Killing/injury of individual newts during construction phase	Funding of strategic mitigation through DLL	Statutory derogation licensing	No significant effect

5.24 Subject to the implementation of the above mitigation, no significant residual effects on any important ecological features are anticipated to result from the construction or operation of the proposed development.

Cumulative Effects

5.25 Land present c. 230m east of the Site is subject to planning consent (planning reference 202845) for the development of 20 residential dwellings, approved in June 2021 and in the process of being built out at the time of the field survey. This is therefore considered to be part of the baseline situation.

5.26 A further planning approval is present c. 230m south of the Site (planning reference 230422) for the erection of 81 residential dwellings, approved at appeal in July 2024 (appeal reference APP/X0360/W/24/3340006). This is discussed in Table 4 below, alongside further plans/projects that have been scoped in for assessment of potential additive or synergistic effects on the ecological features identified in Table 3 above.

Table 4. Summary of potential cumulative effects

Reference, distance from Site and materials reviewed	Potential impact/effect of plan or project in isolation	Potential for significant cumulative effect?
230422, c. 230m south-east Land west of Trowes Lane and north of Charlton Lane, Swallowfield	Planning application supported by an ecological assessment in which potential impacts were identified for dispersing / foraging bats, nesting birds, reptiles and great crested newts.	No, in view of the scale and spatial relationship of both sites and given that any impacts will be mitigated, no significant negative

Reference, distance from Site and materials reviewed	Potential impact/effect of plan or project in isolation	Potential for significant cumulative effect?
Ecological Impact Assessment - CSA Environmental, 2024		cumulative effect is anticipated.
252430, c. 440m south-east Land east of Trowes Lane, Swallowfield Ecological Appraisal - LUC, 2025	Planning application supported by an ecological appraisal/assessment in which potential impacts were identified for dispersing / foraging bats, badger, nesting birds and reptiles.	No, in view of the scale and spatial relationship of both sites and given that any impacts will be mitigated, no significant negative cumulative effect is anticipated.
251413, c. 600m south-east Robin Lodge Nursery, Part Lane, Swallowfield Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - John Wenman Ecological Consultancy, 2024	Planning application supported by an ecological appraisal/assessment in which potential impacts were identified for dispersing / foraging bats, nesting birds, reptiles and great crested newts.	No, in view of the scale and spatial relationship of both sites and given that any impacts will be mitigated, no significant negative cumulative effect is anticipated.

- 5.27 As summarised in Table 4, no significant cumulative effects on important ecological features are anticipated to result from the proposed development in combination with the above plans/projects.

Compensation

- 5.28 No significant residual negative effects on important ecological features are anticipated to result from the proposed development, following the inclusion of impact avoidance and mitigation measures described above. As such, no compensatory measures are proposed.

Enhancement

- 5.29 The Landscaping Strategy (CSA/7728/112) includes landscape planting enhancements which will make positive contributions to on-site biodiversity.
- 5.30 New habitat creation will provide opportunities for numerous species considered to be present in the local area. In addition to these enhancements which are embedded into development proposals, a range of additional ecological enhancement measures will be delivered as part of the proposed development, as identified below. Further details will be set out in a LEMP at the detailed design stage, however as an indicative guide:
- Inclusion of plant species of known wildlife value within the landscaping scheme, including night-scented varieties to benefit bats.

- Provision of new bat roosting opportunities: At least six bat boxes (two per unit) will be erected on the commercial units. This will be a purpose-built, durable and long-lasting variety such as available from Schwegler or Habibat. Where possible, it will be incorporated into the fabric of new build.
- Provision of new bird nesting opportunities: At least six swift nesting boxes (two per unit) will be erected on the neighbourhood centre. This will be a purpose-built, durable and long-lasting variety such as Manthorpe nesting brick (or similar). Where possible, it will be incorporated into the fabric of new build.
- Creation of log piles: Timber generated from tree clearance works at the Site will be used to make at least 1 log pile for wildlife benefit. This will be sited within boundary vegetation where they will be least disturbed. New material can be added as required following any future management works.
- Provision of hedgehog gaps: Hedgehogs have been scoped out of detailed assessment, and no specific mitigation is proposed, however it is important that opportunities for hedgehogs to move through the landscape are preserved. Although not strictly an 'enhancement' measure, provision of hedgehog-friendly gravel boards or equivalent, providing a minimum 5x5 inch gap, will be used to maintain permeability for hedgehogs across the development in any new close-board fencing. The number and location of hedgehog gaps will be determined at the detailed design stage and set out within the LEMP.

Monitoring

- 5.31 No post-development monitoring of important ecological features is proposed. Monitoring in relation to off-site compensation for BNG will be secured through a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 In the absence of any mitigation measures, the proposed development would have the potential to result in a negative effect. However, with the implementation of some straightforward mitigation and precautionary measures as proposed here, the development is not anticipated to result in any significant residual negative effects on important ecological features.
- 6.2 The Landscape Strategy demonstrates the potential to deliver net benefits for wildlife in the form of new habitat creation, with the opportunity to provide additional biodiversity enhancement measures alongside the commercial units.
- 6.3 The measures set out herein can be secured through appropriate conditions attached to any planning consent, and the development may therefore be delivered without harm to nature conservation interests. Specifically, it is anticipated that planning conditions would be used to secure:
- Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP): In addition to wider environmental controls and best practice construction management, the CEMP will set out construction-phase impact avoidance measures with respect to the River Loddon, reptiles and great crested newt.
 - Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP): The LEMP will detail the establishment and long-term management of retained and newly created habitats to maximise benefits for wildlife. It will include a graphical Ecological Enhancement Plan, setting out the number, type and position of enhancement features.
 - Lighting Strategy: A sensitive lighting strategy will accompany the detailed layout, ensuring that dark corridors are maintained, and minimising light spill to retained and newly created habitats.
- 6.4 Measures to minimise impacts and avoid significant negative effects on great crested newts are further assured through the applicable legislative framework, which triggers statutory derogation licencing administered by Natural England.
- 6.5 Based on the successful implementation of avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures set out herein, the scheme is considered to accord with all relevant nature conservation legislation, as well as with the provisions of the Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan (2010).

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Appendix A

Habitats Plan



- Indicative site boundary
- Other neutral grassland (g3c)
- Modified grassland (g4)
- Developed land; sealed surface (u1b)
- Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c)
- Ditch (r1)
- Target note
1 - Rubble pile

0 25 50 m

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Project	Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield	Date	January 2026	Drawing No.	CSA/7728/109
Drawing Title	Habitats Plan	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	B
Client	Wyvols Court Farm Ltd	Drawn	MB	Checked	MR

Appendix B

Legislation and Planning Policy

- 1.1. The **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017** (as amended) make prescriptions for the designation and protection of Sites of Community Importance ('European sites', i.e. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) and European Protected Species (EPS). The latter include all native bats, great crested newts, dormice, otters and certain reptiles, listed under Annex II of the Regulations. Following the UK's departure from the European Union, the provisions of the Regulations have been retained through enactment of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which came into force on 31 December 2020.
- 1.2. The **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** (as amended, principally by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) forms the basis for protection of statutory designated sites of national importance (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest; SSSIs) and native species that are rare and vulnerable in a national context. Additionally, badgers are protected under the **Protection of Badgers Act 1992**.
- 1.3. The **Environment Act 2021** received Royal Assent in November 2021. Through an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the Environment Act introduced a mandatory requirement for all planning permissions to be conditional upon the submission of a Biodiversity Gain Plan for approval by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan will need to demonstrate a net gain of at least 10% in the biodiversity value of the development site.
- 1.4. Section 40(1) of the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006** (as amended) states that each public authority, "must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity." This legislation makes it clear that planning authorities should consider impacts to biodiversity when determining planning applications, with particular regard to the Section 41 (S41) lists of 56 habitats and 943 species of principal importance. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has been superseded by the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy, however Local BAPs continue to influence biodiversity management and conservation effort, including through the spatial planning system, at the local scale.
- 1.5. The **National Planning Policy Framework (2024)** (NPPF) sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. With regards to ecology and biodiversity, Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, paragraph 187, states that the planning system and planning policies should minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

- 1.6. Paragraph 193 sets out the principles that local planning authorities should apply when determining planning applications:
- 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.
 - 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.
 - 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 reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.
 - 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.
- 1.7. Accompanying the NPPF, central government guidance on the implementation of planning policies is set out within online Planning Policy Guidance (PPG). The Natural Environment PPG addresses principles across a broad spectrum of topics targeting biodiversity conservation, from individual site and species protection through to the supporting of ecosystem services, and the use of local ecological networks to support the national Nature Recovery Network. In particular, the PPG promotes the delivery of measurable Biodiversity Net Gain through the creation and enhancement of habitats alongside development.
- 1.8. The **Government Circular 06/2005**, which is referred to within the NPPF, defines statutory nature conservation sites and protected species as a material consideration in the planning process.
- 1.9. Local planning policies of relevance to ecology, biodiversity and/or nature conservation have been set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of regional and local planning policy relating to ecology

Policy	Summary
Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan (adopted 2010)	
Policy CP7: Biodiversity	Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced

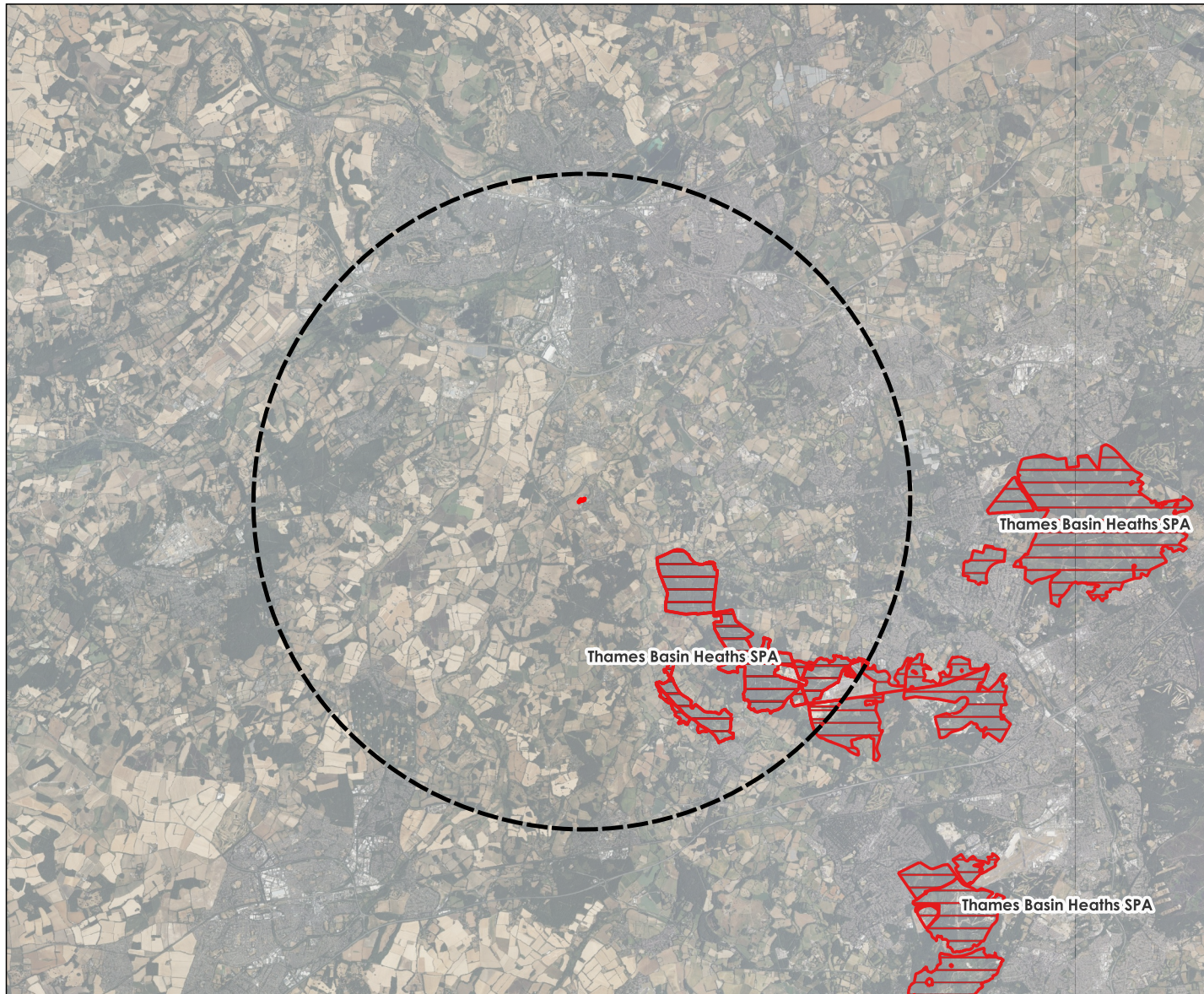
Policy	Summary
	and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance. Development: a) which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or b) which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or c) that compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans... will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and: a) mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or b) appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided.
Policy CP8: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area	Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.

Appendix C

Desk Study Information



-  Survey area
-  10km search radius
-  Special Protection Area (SPA)



0 5 10 km



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Project	Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield	Date	December 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/7728/104
Drawing Title	International Designations within 10km of the Site	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	-
Client	Wyvols Court Farm Ltd	Drawn	MB	Checked	MR



-  Survey area
-  3km search radius
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
-  Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

0 0.75 1.5 km



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Project	Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield	Date	January 2026	Drawing No.	CSA/7728/105
Drawing Title	National and Local Designations within 3km of the Site	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	-
Client	Wyvols Court Farm Ltd	Drawn	MB	Checked	MR



-  Survey area
-  Deciduous woodland

0 50 100 m



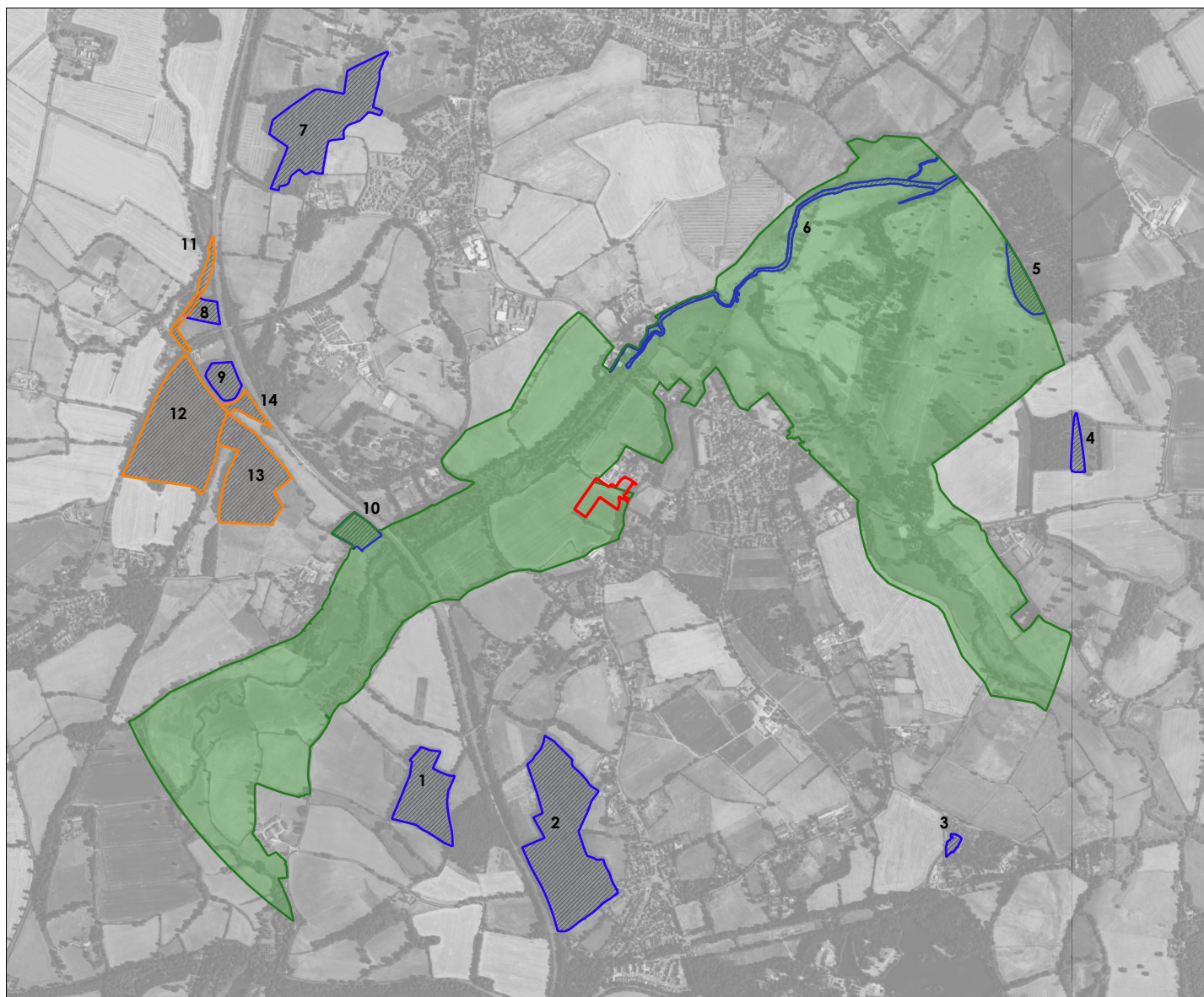
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Project	Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield	Date	January 2026	Drawing No.	CSA/7728/106
Drawing Title	Priority Habitats Plan	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	-
Client	Wyvols Court Farm Ltd	Drawn	MB	Checked	MR



- Survey area
- Loddon Valley South Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA)
- Local Wildlife Site (LWS)
- Proposed Local Wildlife Site

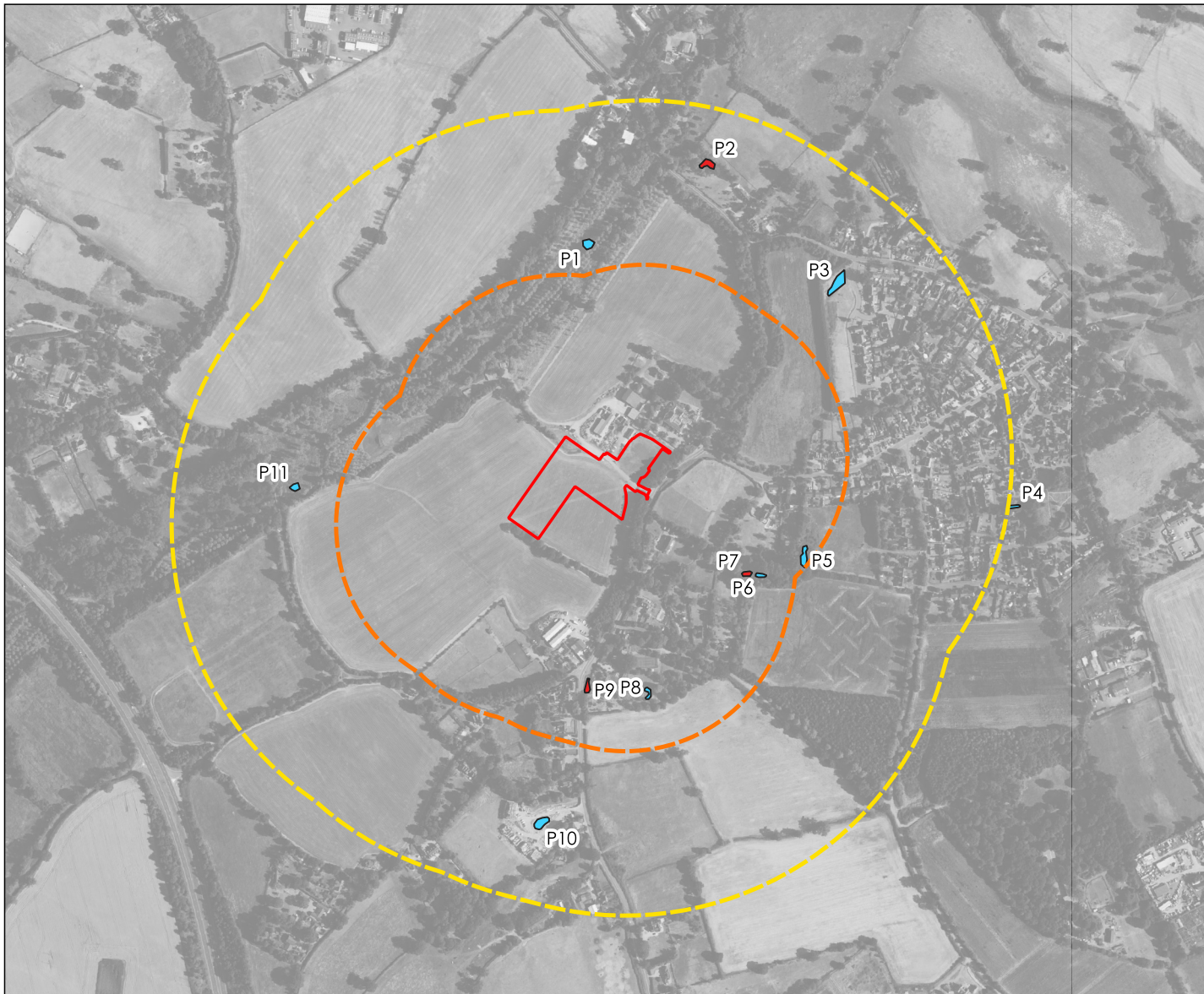
Ref	Site name
1	Highgrove Copse LWS
2	St. Leger's Copse, Collin's Copse LWS
3	The Marshes, Riseley LWS
4	Cuckoo Pen LWS
5	Great Wood LWS
6	Loddon River (part) LWS
7	Woods Between Whitehouse and Highlands LWS
8	Norman's Shaw LWS
9	Wood North of Beech Hill Coverts/Clayhill LWS
10	Beaumys Castle Wood and Moat LWS
11	Norman's Shaw Proposed LWS
12	Beech Hill Coverts Proposed LWS
13	Priory Copse Proposed LWS
14	Wood North of Beech Hill Coverts/Clayhill Proposed LWS

0 0.5 1 km



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Project	Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield	Date	January 2026	Drawing No.	CSA/7728/107
Drawing Title	Non-Statutory Designations within 2km of the Site	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	A
Client	Wyvols Court Farm Ltd	Drawn	MB	Checked	MR



- Survey area
- 250m core dispersal range
- 500m wider dispersal range
- Pond historically known to support GCN
- Other pond



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Project	Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield	Date	January 2026	Drawing No.	CSA/7728/108
Drawing Title	Pond Plan	Scale	Refer to scale	Rev	-
Client	Wyvols Court Farm Ltd	Drawn	MB	Checked	MR

Appendix D

Photographs



Photograph 1. Grassland G1.



Photograph 2. Grassland G2.



Photograph 3. Off-site woodland edge to the south of Grassland G1.



Photograph 4. Commercial storage to the east of Grassland G2.



Photograph 5. Off-site farmyard to the east.

Appendix E

Habitats and Flora Species List

Table 1. Habitat Polygons

Site Name	Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield			
Survey Date and Surveyor(s)	29/09/2025 Megan Bridgman ACIEEM, Rhys Leighton			
Scientific Name	Common Name	Habitat Parcel Number/Habitat Type		
		Grassland G1	Grassland G2	Grassland G3
Herb Species				
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	X		X
Anagallis arvensis	Scarlet pimpernel	X		
Arctium sp.	Burdock	X		
Bellis perennis	Daisy	X	X	
Cichorium intybus	Chicory	X		
Chenopodium sp.	Goosefoot	X		
Cirsium arvense	Creeping thistle		X	X
Cirsium vulgare	Spear thistle	X		X
Galium aparine	Cleavers		X	
Geranium molle	Dove's-foot crane's-bill	X	X	X
Helminthotheca echiioides	Bristly oxtongue	X		
Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed			X
Lamium purpureum	Red dead-nettle		X	
Lotus corniculatus	Common bird's-foot-trefoil	X		
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort plantain	X	X	
Polygonum sp.	Knotgrass	X		
Pulicaria dysenterica	Common fleabane		X	
Ranunculus repens	Creeping buttercup		X	
Rumex sp.	Dock		X	
Senecio jacobaea	Common ragwort			X
Senecio vulgaris	Groundsel			
Solanum nigrum	Black nightshade		X	
Taraxacum agg.	Dandelion		X	X
Trifolium pratense	Red clover	X		
Trifolium repens	White clover	X		
Trifolium sp.	Clover		X	X
Urtica dioica	Common nettle		X	X
Veronica chamaedrys	Germander speedwell	X		
Grasses				
Arrhenatherum elatius	False oat-grass		X	
Dactylis glomerata	Cock's-foot		X	
Holcus lanatus	Yorkshire-fog		X	
Lolium perenne	Perennial rye-grass	X	X	
Woody Species				
Broadleaved				
Rubus fruticosus agg.	Bramble		X	

Appendix F

Evaluation & Assessment Methods

- 1.1. Ecological features are evaluated and assessed in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2024) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). For clarity, the evaluation and assessment process adopted within this EcIA is set out below.

Establishing Potentially Important Ecological Features

- 1.2. Ecological features are assessed where they are considered to be important, and where they may be impacted by a proposed development. A feature may be considered important for a variety of reasons, such as quality, extent, rarity and/or statutory protection. Table 1 below sets out a non-exhaustive list of ecological features that are typically considered, along with key examples:

Table 1. Potentially important ecological features (adapted from CIEEM 2024)

Potentially Important Ecological Features	Typical examples
Statutory designated sites under international conventions or European Legislation	Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA)
Statutory designated sites under national legislation	Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR, Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
Non-statutory, locally designated wildlife sites	Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), County Wildlife Sites (CWSs), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)
National biodiversity lists	Habitats or Species of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biodiversity (Section 41, NERC Act 2006), Ancient Woodland Inventory
Local biodiversity lists	Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species or habitats
Red Listed / Rare Species	Species of conservation concern, Red Data Book (RDB) species, Birds of Conservation Concern, nationally rare and nationally scarce species
Legally Protected Species	E.g. species listed under Sch.5 of the W&C Act 1981, or Sch.2 of the Hag. Regs. 2017
Legally Controlled Species	E.g. species listed under Sch.9 of the W&C Act 1981

- 1.3. It should also be noted that the social, community, economic or multi-functional importance attributed to ecological features are not assessed as they fall outwith the scope of this assessment.

Establishing Likely Zone of Influence

- 1.4. The 'zone of influence' for a project is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects as a result of the project and associated activities. The project's zone of influence varies across different ecological features, which have different vulnerabilities and

sensitivities. For the purposes of this assessment, the following zones were considered:

- International statutory nature conservation designations up to 10km from the Site
- National and local statutory nature conservation designations up to 3km from the Site
- Non-statutory locally designated wildlife sites up to 1km from the Site

1.5. These arbitrary distances are considered sufficient for identifying the nature conservation designations which could be subject to significant effects. However, it is acknowledged that in certain circumstances effects beyond these distances are possible and should be considered as far as is reasonably practicable to do so.

1.6. For other ecological features, such as habitats and species, the appropriate zone of influence is described and justified as appropriate within the report, depending on their respective sensitivity to an environmental change.

1.7. The results of professionally accredited or published scientific studies have been used and referenced, where available, to establish the spatial and temporal limits of the biophysical changes likely to be caused by specific activities, and to justify decisions about the zone of influence.

Geographic Context and Significance Criteria

1.8. The importance of ecological features, as well as the significance of any likely impacts and their effects, are considered here within a defined geographic context:

- International
- National
- Regional
- County
- Local

1.9. While higher geographic tiers correspond to clearly defined areas, local context is subjective and will vary on a case-by-case basis. It will range from the Site and its surroundings, to ecologically connected environs, to the scale of the District/Borough, according to the professional judgement of the author.

1.10. The size, conservation status and the quality of features are all relevant in determining their importance and assigning this to the geographic scale. Where the importance of a feature is considered to fall below the Local scale, they are scoped out of detailed assessment.

- 1.11. Impacts and their effects are taken to be significant where they support or undermine biodiversity conservation objectives, with the scale of significance defined according to the above geographic context. Where an impact or effect is unlikely to be perceptible at a Local scale, this is taken to be not significant.

Characterising Ecological Impacts and their Effects

- 1.12. Where likely significant ecological impacts and effects are identified in connection with the proposed project, these are considered and described with reference to the following characteristics (where this is helpful in accurately portraying the ecological effect and determining the scale of significance):
- Positive or negative (i.e. does the anticipated change accord with nature conservation policies and objectives?)
 - Extent (i.e. the spatial area over which the impact or effect may occur)
 - Magnitude (i.e. the quantified size, amount, intensity or volume)
 - Duration (i.e. the timeframe over which the impact or effect may occur, in both human and ecological terms)
 - Frequency and timing (i.e. the number of times an activity occurs, where this is likely to influence the effect)
 - Reversibility (i.e. is spontaneous recovery possible or may the effect be counteracted by mitigation?)



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