

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment

Survey site:

Wind In the Willows, Islandstone Lane, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0RJ

Client:

Henry Giles

Survey date:

22 May 2024

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Wokingham Borough Council. The proposal is described as:

The development of five additional traveller pitches including day rooms and parking together with replacement of topsoil with wholestone running surface and installation of package treatment plant.

[Unsubmitted]

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

The site survey was undertaken by Jamie-Lee Anderson, Consultant Ecologist (Accredited Agent on Natural England Bat Licence Number: 2019-41480-CLS-CLS)					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (mph)	Rain
22/05/2024	13.8	95	100	8.9	None

Ecological Survey Factor Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Habitats and plants (see Habitat Map in Appendix 1, PRA Plan in Appendix 2, Location Plan in Appendix 3, Proposal Plan in Appendix 4 and Photos in Appendix 5). Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i> <i>(UKHabs codes used)</i>	Site Context The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference SU 80432 72978 and has an area of approximately 0.48ha. The site comprises one residential dwelling (B1), associated outbuildings, a gravel drive, hardstanding, paddocks. The site is located in a rural setting, approximately 650m away from the village of Hurst, off the single track Islandstone Lane and adjacent to Nelson's Lane. Hedgerow with trees run the length of the site boundaries and extend into the local landscape, that consists largely of arable fields. Aerial imagery shows the local landscape to have a woodland and grassland character, with arable land connected by lines of trees and hedgerows in close proximity to the site. Water bodies can be found nearby (see Appendix 5) within 500m. The site does not contain habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006), but further notable habitats are present within 2km. The site is bounded by lines of trees and hedgerow which are of good quality and could be of value to local wildlife populations (as detailed in subsequent sections of this table). The remaining habitats are common and widespread and have low ecological value. No protected or notable plant species were recorded during the survey.

	On-site habitat descriptions • Buildings – u1b5 ◦ There are several traveller pitches and a day room on site. • Developed land; sealed surface – (u1b6) ◦ There are areas of hardstanding on site. • Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface – (u1c) ◦ The site entrance is dominated by gravel, providing vehicular access and parking. • Built linear feature – (u1e) ◦ There are numerous fences of timber construction on site, separating the grazing yard for the pony. • Other neutral grassland – (g3c) ◦ Grazing pasture, comprise of dominant perennial rye, occasional creeping buttercup, thistle, bramble, yarrow and herb Robert and rare thistle. Sward length is homogenously short and there are large areas of bare ground. • Hedgerow – (117) ◦ There is a species poor non-native ornamental hedgerow on site. • Bare ground – (510) ◦ There are numerous patches of bare ground on site. • Vegetated garden – (828) ◦ There are parcels of vegetated garden on site with ornamental shrubbery. Local notable habitats Numerous patches of lowland mixed deciduous (LMDW) are present is close proximity to the site. The closest is located ~0.46km to the northeast. Parcels of ancient woodland are located southeast and northeast of the site, the closest is located ~1.4km northeast. The trees located on the site boundary likely have functional connectivity to these patches of woodland, given their proximity to the site and the presence of numerous trees throughout the wider landscape. LMDW is classed as a priority habitat under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, 2006. Further priority habitats are present within 2km of the site, wood pasture and parkland, closest located 0.7km north and traditional orchards the closest located ~0.2km.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	On-site habitats The habitats on-site are widespread and not notable; however, the proposed development will result in the loss of vegetated garden and bare ground habitat. This is likely to have minimal impact on biodiversity considering the small area of commonplace habitat (vegetated garden) being lost. Notable habitats No impacts to any notable habitats are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such habitats as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.

<i>Recommendations</i>	On-site habitats Retained trees should be protected in line with the measures outlined in the British Standard "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2012). A biodiversity net gain (BNG) report may be required for the proposal. Notable habitats None required.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	On-site designations The site is not subject to any designation. Statutory designated sites (within 2km) There is one statutory site within 2km of the site. The site lies within the impact risk zone for Lodge Wood and Sandford Mill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) however proposed development type is not listed as a possible high risk for this designation. Non-statutory designated sites The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site cannot be established without data from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	On-site designations No impacts foreseen. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites No impacts to designated sites are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such sites (where known) as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers.
<i>Recommendations</i>	On-site designations None required. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites None required.
Invasive / Non-native species	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	N/A

Recommendations	No further surveys but remain vigilant.			
Invertebrates				
Summary of Survey Findings	The habitats present on-site, including lawns, ornamental shrubs and hedgerow, likely provide common invertebrates with opportunities to forage and shelter. The site contains no further notable habitats which may provide niches for specialised or protected invertebrates.			
Foreseen Impacts	None foreseen.			
Recommendations	No further surveys. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The incorporation of bee bricks (e.g. Ibstock BeeHabitat or similar alternative brand) into the fabric of the new buildings would provide sheltering opportunities for pollinators. These should be installed 0.5m above ground level on a south-facing elevation with no obscuring vegetation. The site could be further enhanced via the provision of native wildflowers or wildflower turf, which would provide foraging opportunities for invertebrates.			
Bats				
Summary of Survey Findings	EPSL data A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed. There are seven EPSLs within a 2km radius of site as detailed below:			
	EPSL Records			
	Reference	Species	Date	Reason for license
	2016-25277-EPS-MIT	S-Pip	14/09/2016	Destruction of breeding site.
	2015-8658-EPS-MIT	BLE, C-Pip	28/04/2015	Destruction of breeding site.
	EPSM2012-4899	C-Pip, BLE	04/10/2012	Destruction of resting place.
	2019-43858-EPS-MIT	S-Pip	01/02/2020	Destruction of resting place.
	2016-25277-EPS-MIT-1	S-Pip	15/06/2017	Destruction of breeding site.
	2017-32001-EPS-MIT	C-Pip	01/01/2018	Destruction of resting place.
	2015-8658-EPS-MIT-1	BLE, C-Pip	18/04/2019	Destruction of breeding site. Destruction of resting site.
	Foraging and commuting habitat Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for bats in the form of vegetated garden, hedgerow with trees and scattered scrub. These habitats are likely to provide micro-climatic conditions that support			

invertebrates that will in turn provide foraging opportunities for local bat populations. Most notably, the hedgerows on site are mature and extend beyond the site, adding to the continuity of vegetated linear features present in the wider landscape. Bats are well known to utilise linear features to aid navigation whilst travelling between foraging resources and roost sites.

Roosting habitat

Buildings and trees to be impacted by the proposed development are assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats below. No evidence of roosting bats was identified on or within B1 or any of the surveyed trees on-site.

Building B1

B1 is a single-storey mobile home. The home has a pitched and gabled roof lined in bitumen. There is no separate loft space within B1. B1 is due to be demolished to facilitate the proposed development. No roosting features were found on B1. The home is of good construction, and no gaps or cracks are present in which bats could roost are present. No evidence of bats was found.



B1 – South elevation.

Associated outbuildings were inspected, and no evidence of bats was found. B1 (pictured above), is the only building on site proposed to be demolished during construction.

B1 Suitability Assessment

	Given the absence of features identified on the property, it is assessed that B1 provides negligible habitat value for roosting bats.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Roosting habitat [Buildings] Bats are very unlikely to be roosting within this building and as such, there are not anticipated to be any impacts on bats in this location as a result of the proposed development. Foraging and commuting habitat The proposed development will not result in the removal of any habitats which could be used by foraging or commuting bats. However, the proposed development will include the use of lighting which could spill on to bat roosting, foraging or commuting habitat and deter bats from using these areas. Artificial lighting The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats or the retained building without mitigation. This may disturb commuting bats.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Roosting habitat [Buildings] In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is discovered during the development all work must stop and a bat licensed ecologist contacted for further advice. Foraging and commuting habitat No further surveys are required. Artificial lighting A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors. Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting-2 Suggested biodiversity enhancements The installation of three bat boxes at the site will provide additional roosting habitat for bats. The bat boxes will be incorporated into the fabric of the new dwellings. They will be suitable for pipistrelles (which have been identified locally through EPSL data). Suitable bat boxes include Habibat Bat Box, Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box or similar alternative brand. Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south or south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance, away from artificial light.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Buildings

	No evidence of nesting birds was identified on or within B1 or associated buildings. B1 is deemed to provide negligible habitat value for nesting birds due to a lack of suitable nesting sites or access points. Trees and vegetation No bird nests were identified within the vegetation on-site, however they all offer nesting opportunities and nest-building resources for birds. Barn owls The site does not appear to provide any suitable nesting sites for barn owls. Overwintering birds Due to the small size of the site and the extent and type of the habitats recorded, the site not considered suitable to support a significant assemblage of protected and/or notable birds.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Buildings/trees The proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests. Barn owls None foreseen. Overwintering birds None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Buildings/trees Any building or vegetation removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged. Barn owls None required. Overwintering birds None required.

	Suggested biodiversity enhancements The installation of a minimum of two bird boxes on mature trees around the site boundaries or on retained buildings will provide additional nesting habitat for birds e.g. Schwegler No 17 Swift Nest Box (buildings) Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace (buildings) Schwegler 1B Nest Boxes (trees) Schwegler 2H Robin Boxes (trees) Woodstone Nest Box (buildings or trees) Or a similar alternative brand. Tree boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight. Small-hole boxes are best placed approximately 1-3m above ground on an area of the tree trunk where foliage will not obscure the entrance hole. Swift and sparrow boxes should be positioned at the eaves of a building and can be incorporated into the fabric of the building during construction.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for protected reptiles within 2km of the site. Habitat suitability Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide suitable foraging, commuting, and refuge opportunities for reptiles in the form of scattered scrub and the hedgerows with trees. It is noted that due to recent management of grassland on site which retained a short sward length at the time of survey, the grassland is currently suboptimal for reptiles due to an absence of refuge opportunities. Furthermore, the arable land dominating the site centrally is not suitable to support reptiles due to frequent disturbance and coverage of bare ground. The site is also enclosed by intensely managed agricultural land in addition to hardstanding roads. These landscape features are likely to significantly limit dispersal opportunities onto the site for reptiles from the wider landscape. However, although the majority of enclosing agricultural fields are subject to intense management including grazing and regular ploughing, the fields are likely to retain narrow unmanaged field margins interconnected by hedgerows that may provide foraging and commuting opportunities for a limited number of reptiles. Although potential connectivity to the site for reptiles is limited in extent, the presence of a small population of common reptiles cannot be fully discounted, albeit limited to peripheral vegetation.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Vegetated garden and bare ground habitat types will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local reptile populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, site clearance could result in the death or injury of reptiles, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	A precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles during construction, including the following measures:

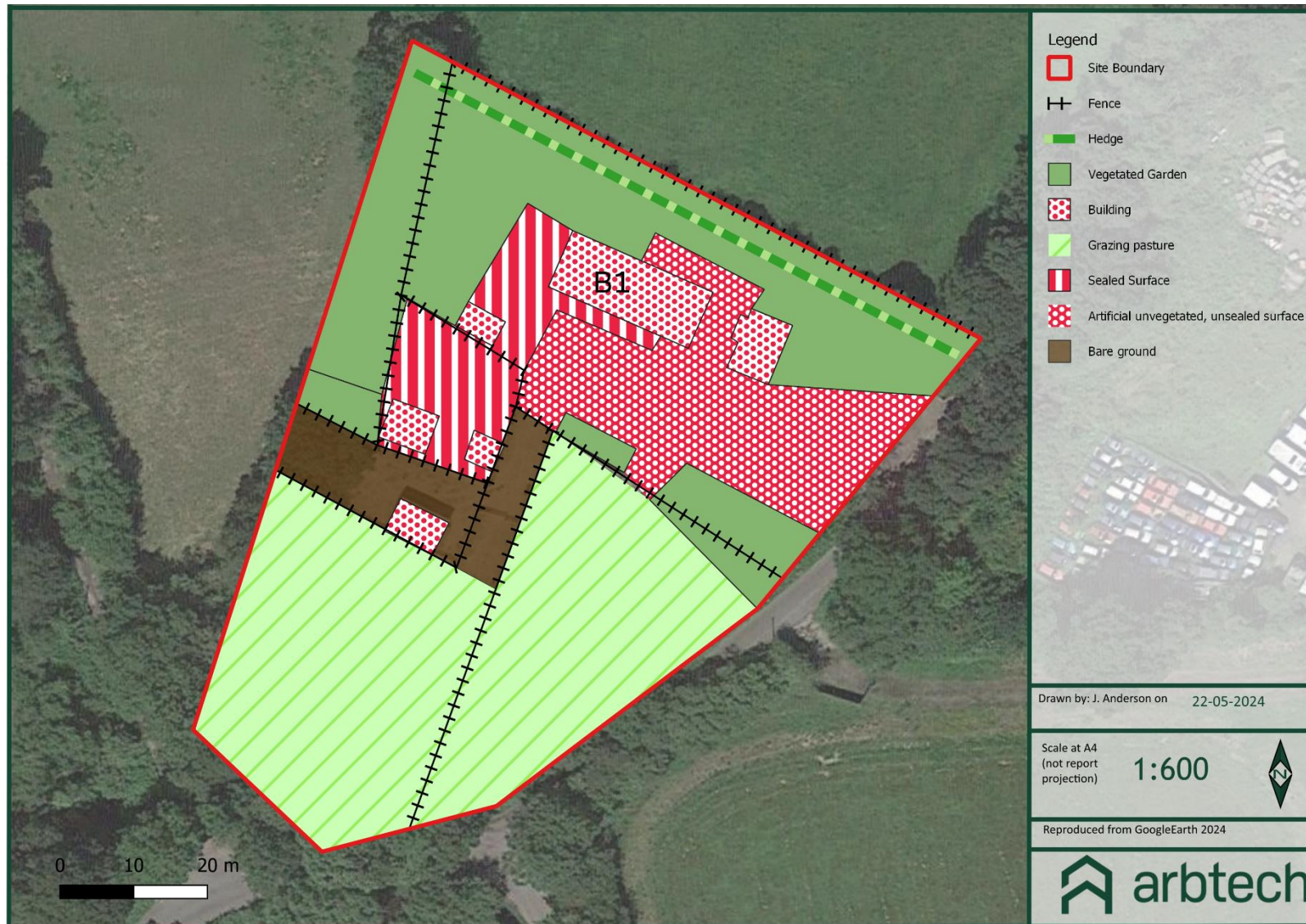
	• Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage reptiles. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • If any reptiles are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. • In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The site could be enhanced for reptiles post-development with the inclusion of log piles (created from felled materials) and planting of areas of native shrubs, to provide sheltering opportunities.
Amphibians	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL and survey data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for great crested newts within 2km of the site. However, the MAGIC database did return evidence indicating the presence of great crested newts resulting from historic pond surveys undertaken in 2018. These records are located 1.92km south. Great crested newts exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; great crested newts are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding ponds (Langton <i>et al.</i> 2001). Habitat suitability There are no ponds on the site, but a review of aerial imagery (MAGIC and OS Maps) indicates the presence of four ponds within 500m; pond one (P1) is located ~0.397km south of the site and is situated within a cluster of trees in an arable field, pond two (P2) is located ~0.295km northwest within a residential garden, pond three (P3) is located ~0.154km east within an area of grassland next to an industrial site, and finally pond four (P4) is located ~0.285km east within a small area of scattered trees, next to a parcel of grassland connecting to P3. Roads and tracks are likely to represent a significant barrier to dispersal, however, ditches, grassland and other habitats with sheltering opportunities (such as hedges and woodland) are present and connects the site to the wider landscape. Given the lack of suitably connected breeding ponds, the presence of great crested newts on site is considered acceptably low. Common amphibians may still be present within suitable areas of habitat on-site as they can travel great distances from ponds. Areas of shrubbery may provide foraging and sheltering opportunities for amphibians. No hibernation opportunities were identified on-site.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Given the lack of suitably connected breeding ponds within 500m of the site, the presence of GCN on-site is considered unlikely and therefore impacts to amphibians as a result of the proposed development are deemed to be acceptably low.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to great crested newts, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented for common amphibians during construction, including the following measures: • A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any amphibians to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter amphibians from the working area. • Any rubble piles will be dismantled by hand and debris and brash will be stored on pallets or removed from the site to prevent amphibians from utilising these areas. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby aquatic habitats that amphibians could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • If any common amphibians are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. • In the unlikely event that a great crested newt is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The site could be enhanced for amphibians post-development through creation of amphibian hibernacula using rubble and logs from site clearance. Information on how to construct a hibernaculum can be found here: https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/hibernaculum
Badger	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No badger setts were noted on site or within a 30m radius of the site. The site is considered unsuitable for badgers given the lack of suitable sett excavation areas/ground. Further, there is limited suitable badger foraging habitat on site given the lack of fruiting trees/scrub. Badgers could use the site for transient periods of time, and their presence on site in the future cannot be discounted.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on badgers as a result of the proposed development. However, badgers could be injured during construction, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to bat roosts, further badger surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • A toolbox talk will be given to contractors regarding the possible presence of badgers at the site.

	• A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for any new badger activity if works do not commence within three months. • Heras fencing will be erected around the working area to prevent encroachment into retained habitats where badger setts could be present. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which badgers could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. Suggested biodiversity enhancements Planting fruit bearing trees and species-rich grassland to increase foraging opportunities for badgers.
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for otters or water voles within 2km of the site. There are no water courses on or connected to the site. There are also no riparian habitats present on site or within an influencing distance.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	EPSL data A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for hazel dormice within 2km of the site. Habitat suitability Dormice typically utilise a three-dimensional habitat structure as to commute between feeding and breeding sites whilst avoiding predation. As such habitats on site are considered unsuitable for hazel dormice and therefore the likelihood of this species being present on site is considered acceptably low. Furthermore, for isolated habitats in the UK, research indicates that dormice require 20ha of woodland habitat to support a viable population (Bright <i>et al.</i> 1994). Although 20ha of woodland is not present on or directly adjacent to the sites, the hedgerows and treelines present are connected to an extensive network within the wider landscape, which in turn, are connected to multiple woodland pockets. The closest area of woodland to the site is 0.46km from site. The site is enclosed by urban infrastructure including roads and significant residential development. These landscape features fragment suitable dormice habitat in the wider landscape and are likely to limit dispersal opportunities to the site. As such it is considered likely that hazel dormice are absent from site.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None foreseen.
Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Hedgehogs are well adapted to a variety of environments, and although no evidence of hedgehogs was found during the survey, their presence on site in the future cannot be discounted.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Vegetated garden and bare ground will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Similar to the badgers, a precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. Suggested biodiversity enhancements The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for hedgehogs: • Planting fruit bearing trees and species-rich grassland to increase foraging opportunities. • Creation of brash piles or installation of hedgehog houses in shady areas. Installation of gaps under boundary fencing to enable hedgehogs to move freely through the site.

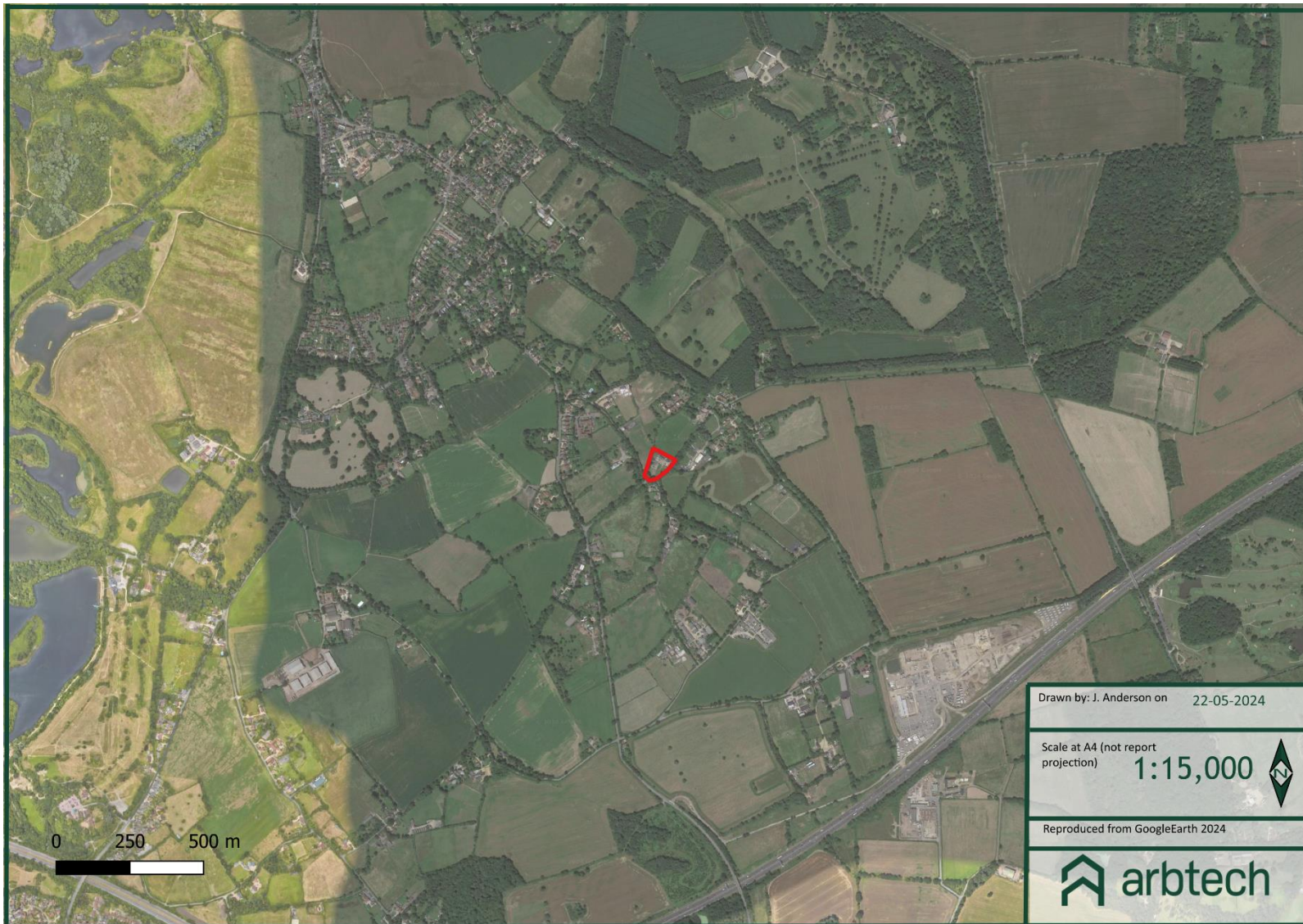
Appendix 1: Survey/Habitat map



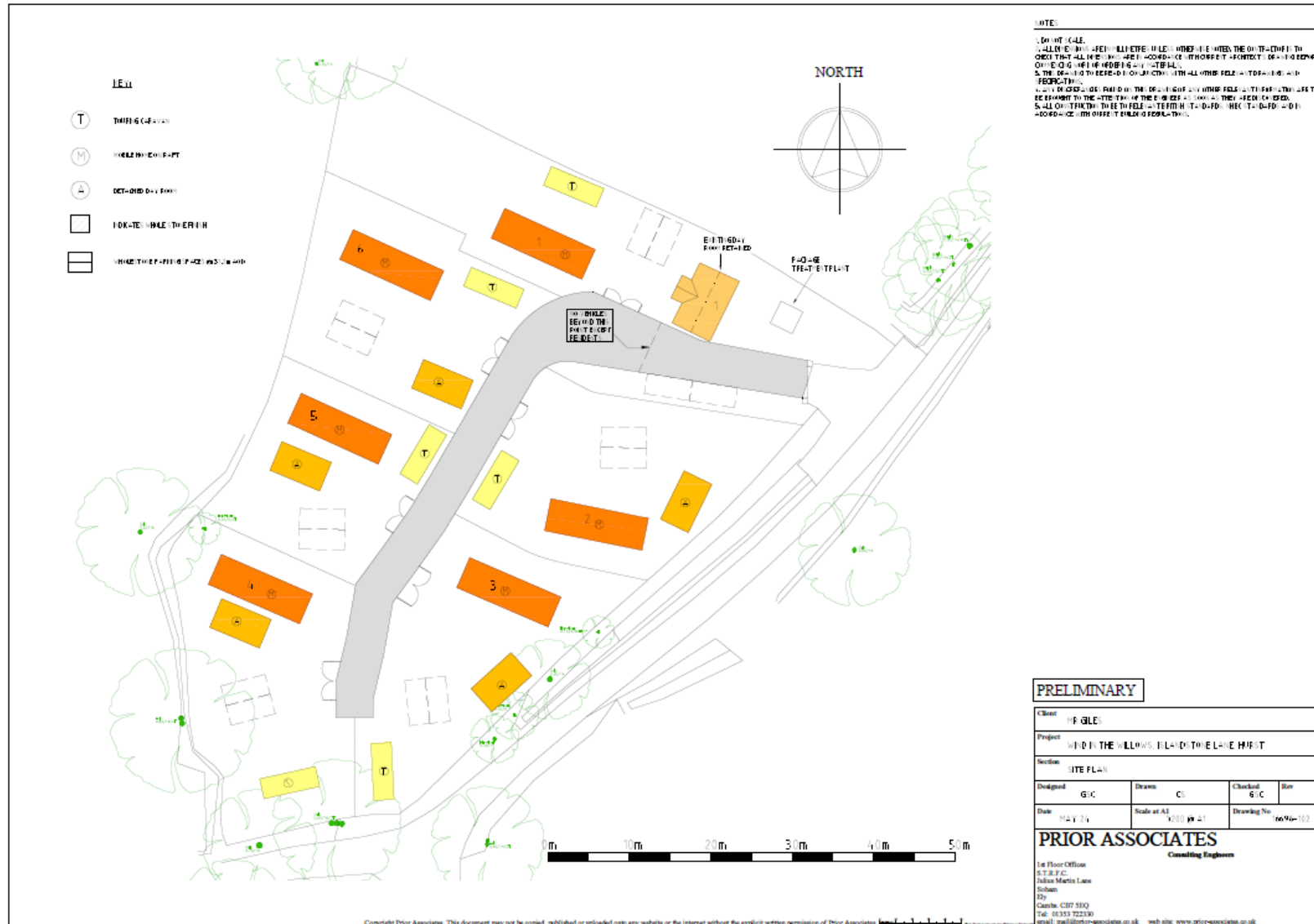
Appendix 2: PRA Plan

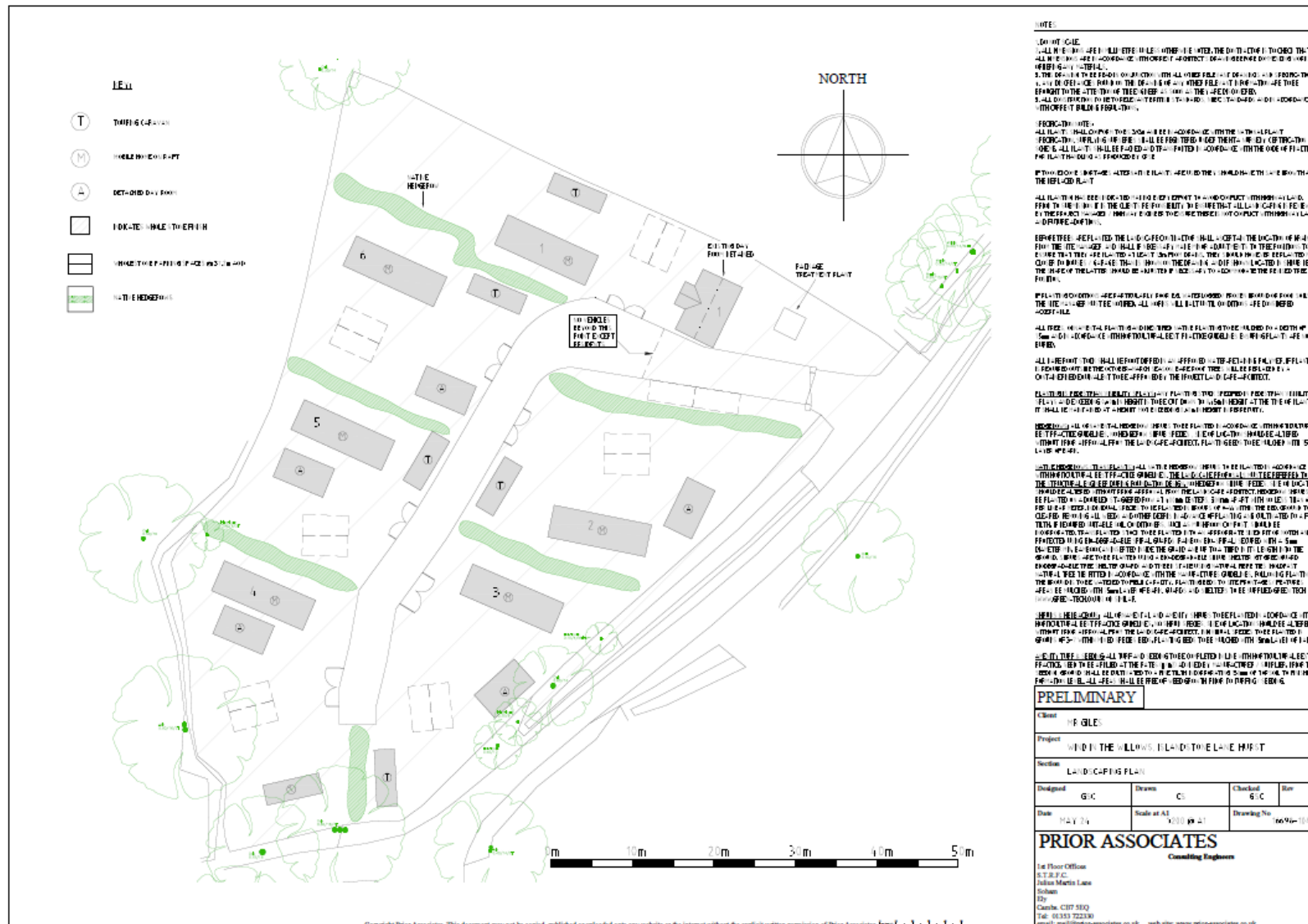


Appendix 3: Location map

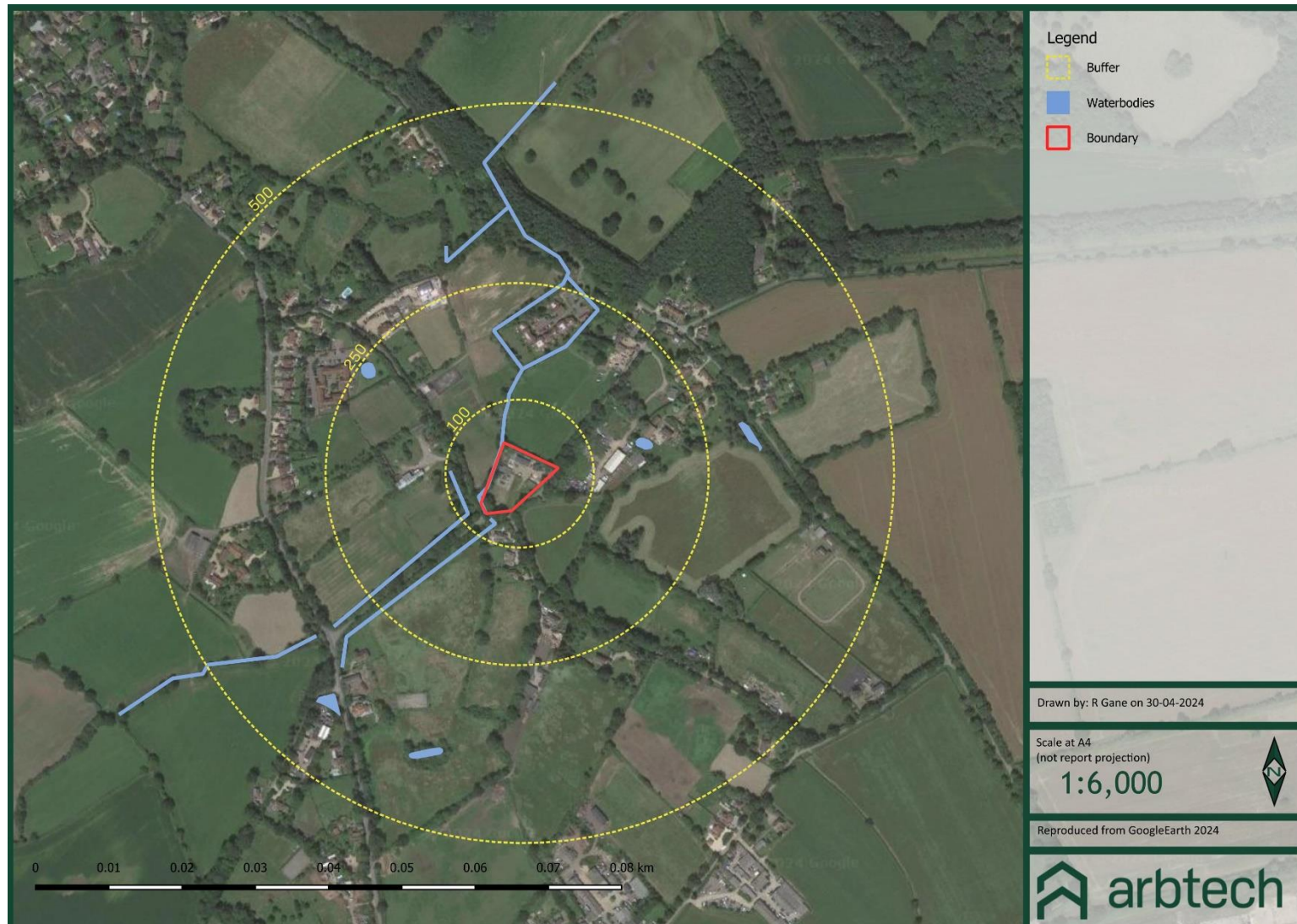


Appendix 4: Proposed plan





Appendix 5: Waterbodies



Appendix 6: Photos**B1 – South elevation**

B1 is a mobile home that is due to be demolished to facilitate the proposed development. No potential roosting features were found externally, and no evidence of bats was found either. There is no separate loft space within the interior of B1.

**B1 – East elevation**

The construction of B1 is good. The roof is lined with bitumen, which is flat and tightly sealed, therefore no gaps are created. There are no gaps or cracks in the walls or roof in which bats could roost.

**Outbuilding – Southwest elevation**

This building is referred to as ‘the day room’ and is located on the northeast boundary of the site. The building is brick built with a pitched and gabled roof clad in slate-composite tiles. The building is not due to be affected by the proposed development. No potential roosting features were observed on this building.

**Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface – looking eastwards**

Vehicular access and parking is provided on site by the presence of gravel.

**Hedgerow**

There is an ornamental hedgerow present on site. Species comprise hornbeam and laurel. The hedgerow is >1.5m in height and <2m in width along its entirety.

**Vegetated garden**

There is short sward length grass with ornamental shrubbery on site.

**Bare ground**

There are patches of bare ground present on site where vehicular paths have been formed, as well as where the pony walks between pasture and stable.

**Grassland – South of the site**

There is a grazing pasture for the pony on site. Grass length is homogenously short sward length. There are large areas of bare ground. No bracken or bramble presence was noted. Species composition is dominant perennial rye, sheep's fescue and cocks foot, with occasional creeping buttercup, herb Robert and rare docks.



Outbuilding – West of the site
There is a stable present at the junction of the bare ground and the grassland which is a stable for the pony.



Built linear feature
The fencing on site is in the form of post and rail timber.

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Version control			
Status	Issue	Name	Date
Draft	0.1	Jamie-Lee Anderson BSc (Hons) Consultant Ecologist	30/05/2024
Proof	0.2	Mel Reid BSc (Hons) MRes MRSB, Senior Consultant	05/06/2024
Final	1.0	Jamie-Lee Anderson BSc (Hons) Consultant Ecologist	06/06/2024