

Land North of Barkham Road
Langley Common
Barkham
Wokingham
Berkshire

Updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (including Ground Level Tree Assessment for Bats)

Report Quality Control Information	
Author	Lauren Hayward (qualifying member of CIEEM) & Vicky Potts MCIEEM
Reviewer	Vicky Potts (MCEEIM)
Approver	John Wenman (MCIEEM)

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1 Diesel House, Honey Hill, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 3BL
Telephone: 0118 327 1810 Mobile: 07979 403099 E-mail: info@wenman-ecology.co.uk
www.wenman-ecology.co.uk

John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales with registered number OC339057.
Registered office: 100 New Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, Berkshire RG45 6JP where you may look at a list of members' names.

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Alfred Dragon to undertake an updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), including the findings of a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) for bats and a Great Crested Newt Habitat Assessment on 'Land to the North of Barkham Road' in Barkham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 77529 66940). The EA was commissioned in connection with pre-app planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the construction of a new dwelling and associated landscaping including the addition of a new driveway on the land (refer to proposed plan in **Appendix 5**).

1.1.2 A Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken by GPM Ecology in 2008, which identified the potential for the grassland within the site to support reptiles. A follow up reptile survey was undertaken in 2008 by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy which showed that the site supports grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*) and the survey findings were consistent with a 'good population' being present. Follow up reports detailing the reptile mitigation proposals necessary, botanical survey findings and habitat management proposals was prepared by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in 2010 and amended in 2011. A further Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Feasibility Assessment was undertaken in October 2022. The 2022 survey found the land to consist of unmanaged grassland surrounded by woodland and dense blackthorn scrub. An updated PEA undertaken by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in August 2023 found the site to have become dominated by scrub with small parcels of grassland scattered through the site. An updated reptile survey was also undertaken in 2023 on site to determine if there have been any changes in the grass snake population on site and to guide recommendations for excluding them from the development footprint. The survey found no evidence of reptiles on site (Report ref: R3566a).

1.1.3 A further updated PEA was undertaken by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in September 2024 which found the site to consist primarily of unmanaged, mixed scrub with areas of rank grassland dominated by tussocks of coarse grass such as tufted hair grass, with areas of tall herb and rushes, and scattered trees. Since the PEA was undertaken on the 4th September

2024 the site has undergone some management including the removal of sections of scrub which was encroaching the site under ecological supervision mid-September 2024 and the removal of some sections of mixed scrub in and the relocation of several trees from the eastern side of the site to the front southern side of the site.

- 1.1.4** The site falls within 5km of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) and therefore a financial contribution for any net gain in residential development is required. The site is not statutorily designated and the closest statutorily designated site of wildlife importance i.e. Longmoor Bog (Site of Special Scientific Interest) SSSI, is 1.32km from the site's boundary. The proposals do not fall within categories of activities within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone likely to have an impact on the SSSI.
- 1.1.5** The area of ownership comprising an area of just over 1.4 ha of land consisting primarily of lowland mixed deciduous woodland to the west with a strip to the north along an offsite ditch, and unmanaged, other neutral grassland, dominated by tussocks of coarse grass, such as tufted hair grass, with areas of mixed scrub, tall herb and rushes, and scattered trees. The woodland towards the western side of the site and northern boundary of the site consisting largely of secondary, alder and oak dominated woodland. Dense blackthorn scrub had established towards the northern side of the site around the edge of the woodland. A native hedgerow was present on the southern boundary along Barkham Road. The mixed scrub was structurally diverse but considered to be of no special botanical interest and the woodland was an example of a habitat of principal importance for conservation (HPI).
- 1.1.6** The habitats within the proposed development boundary (approximately 0.25 ha) consists primarily of other neutral grassland with areas of blackthorn scrub towards the northern side of the boundary and scattered trees including ash, oak, turkey oak and hawthorn. The habitats on site are of conservation value within context of the site and local level.
- 1.1.7** The proposed residential development is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) under the self-build exemption. The development does not

consist of more than 9 dwellings and the development area has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares.

- 1.1.8 Section 9** provides recommendations for ecological mitigation and compensation including: mitigation measures to protect the onsite and adjacent woodland; onsite habitat protection and mitigation measures; updated reptile presence/absence surveys; precautions for nesting birds and badgers; and ecological enhancement opportunities.
- 1.1.9** This report contains information regarding a mobile species (i.e. bats) so it will likely be valid for 12 months only (CIEEM 2019b).

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Alfred Dragon to undertake an updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of 'Land to the North of Barkham Road' in Barkham, Berkshire (OS grid reference: SU 77529 66940). The PEA was commissioned in connection with pre-app planning proposals to be lodged with Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the construction of a new dwelling and associated landscaping including the addition of a new driveway on the land.
- 2.1.2** There has been a series of ecological surveys completed on site since 2008: A Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken by GPM Ecology in 2008, which identified the potential for the grassland within the site to support reptiles. A follow up reptile survey was undertaken in 2008 by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy. The reptile survey showed that the site supports grass snakes (*Natrix natrix*) and the survey findings were consistent with a 'good population' being present. Follow up reports detailing reptile mitigation proposals necessary, botanical survey findings and habitat management proposals was prepared by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in 2010, 2011, 2022 and 2024.
- 2.1.3** A further Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Feasibility Assessment was undertaken in October 2022. The 2022 survey found the land to consist of unmanaged grassland surrounded by woodland and dense blackthorn scrub. An updated PEA undertaken by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in August 2023 and September 2024 found the site to have become dominated by scrub with small parcels of grassland scattered through the site.
- 2.1.4** An updated reptile survey was undertaken in 2023 on site to determine if there have been any changes in the grass snake population on site and to guide recommendations for excluding them from the development footprint. The survey found no evidence of reptiles on site (Report ref: R3566a). An

updated reptile survey is being conducted in 2026 to determine the mitigation measures required.

- 2.1.5** The previous surveys in 2008, 2010 and 2011 were undertaken as part of two planning applications which were refused for the building of a dwelling on the land between Cadwell and 6 Bridge Cottages and for a feasibility survey (planning application references F/2013/0461 & F/2010/1692). An additional PEA and BNG feasibility survey was undertaken in 2022 to consider the ecological impacts of the proposals to building a new dwelling on the land. The updated PEA survey in 2023 was undertaken in connection with pre-application advice for the proposed erection of a dwelling on the land north of Barkham Road (240473). The report was updated in 2024 to include additional woodland habitat to the western side of the site, increasing the site from 0.9 ha to 1.14 ha. This report combines previous reports and includes the whole ownership site which covers 1.14 ha with an area of 0.25 ha due to be developed. After recent management of the mixed scrub onsite, the updated PEA survey that follows, reports the latest status of the site.

2.2 Site Location and Context

- 2.2.1** The land to the north of Barkham Road (henceforth referred to as the 'site'), comprises unmanaged grassland and woodland, with the area of ownership land covering just over 1.14 ha. The site is situated on the northern side of Barkham Road in Barkham, Berkshire (OS Grid reference for approximate centre of the development site OS grid reference: SU 77529 66940). The site is in a semi-rural setting surrounded by a continuation of the woodland to the northwest, a brook on the northern boundary which connects to grazed paddocks, arable fields to the south and a few residential properties to the east and one residential property to the west. In the wider area more extensive woodland (The Coombes) is situated 200 metres to the north east of the site.
- 2.2.2** The habitats nearby are suitable for use by a range of fauna adapted to a semi-rural area and likely to form part of important foraging and commuting corridors for birds and bats.

2.3 Report Objectives

2.3.1 The aim of this PEA is to understand the nature of the site and assess its ecological value. The key objectives are:

- to identify any likely ecological constraints associated with the planning proposals;
- establish appropriate mitigation measures in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy (i.e., avoid > minimise > remediate > compensate);
- determine any additional surveys following on from this preliminary stage; and
- recognise opportunities for biodiversity enhancement in line with national and local planning policy.

3 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The following legislation is considered relevant for the purpose of this preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA):

- Wildlife and Countryside Act (W&CA) 1981 (as amended)
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations ('Habitat') Regulations 2017
- Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

3.1.2 These acts hold relevance to both protected and invasive species and the degree of protection varies depending on faunal/floral group or species. For example, some species of European importance receive full protection within the UK under the Habitat Regulations (e.g., bats), whereas others, may only be afforded protection through national legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (e.g., common lizard). For a detailed overview of species-specific legislation, please refer to **Appendix 1**.

3.2 European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing

3.2.1 The Government's statutory nature conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences that permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. An EPS mitigation licence can be issued if the following three tests derived from Regulation 55 have been satisfied:

- (2)(e) – the derogation is for the purposes of '*preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.*'
- (9)(a) – there is '*no satisfactory alternative*' to the derogation; and
- (9)(b) – '*the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a*

favourable conservation status in their natural range.'

3.2.2 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3)(e) of the Habitat Regulations consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affected EPS before granted planning permission. If an EPS mitigation licence is necessary, a licence can be sought once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on licence applications within 30 working days of submission.

4 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 National Planning Policy

4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2024, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied.

Section 15 of the NPPF sets out the approach local authorities should adopt to conserve and enhancing the natural environment when preparing planning policy and when considering planning applications. Paragraph 193 sets out the principles LPAs should apply when determining planning applications, as follows:

'When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

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

4.1.2 In England, BNG became mandatory for major development from the 12th February 2024 and for minor development (small sites) from the 2nd April 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). In practice, planning permission in England is now subject to a

condition to secure a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity, unless the development is a type that is exempt from mandatory BNG requirements.

4.2 Local Planning Policy

4.2.1 Wokingham Borough Council's development plans are formed of a number of documents including the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (January 2010), Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (February 2014), and supplementary planning documents (SPDs), which set out planning criteria used to determine applications for planning permission in the Borough. The Local Plan Update aims to refine the current Core Strategy and provide a strategy for the Borough up to March 2036. The following policies relate to biodiversity:

'Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP7 – Biodiversity

Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced 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:*
 - i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
 - ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided.*

Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths

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.

MDD Local Plan: 'Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development

1. *Sites of national or international importance are shown and sites of local importance are defined on the Policies Map.*
2. *Planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 – Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they:*
 - a) *Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing;*
 - b) *Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation; and*
 - c) *Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.*

5 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

5.1 Zone of Influence

5.1.1 Ecological assessment guidance (CIEEM 2018) recommends that all ecological features that occur within a 'Zone of Influence' (Zol) for a proposed development are investigated. The Zol includes:

- Areas directly within the land take for the proposed development and access;
- Areas which will be temporarily affected during construction;
- Areas likely to be impacted by hydrological disruption; and
- Areas where there is a risk of wider disbenefits including, but not limited to, any increase in air, water, or noise pollution; or visual or vibrational disturbance during construction and/or operation.

5.1.2 The Zol is variable depending on the nature of the construction activities and the ecological receptors affected. For this assessment the following zones have been defined as described in Tables 1 and 2.

Ecological features	Zone of influence	Notes
Internationally designated sites- see notes	5km	Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) & Ramsar site
Nationally designated sites – see notes	2km	Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
Local sites – see notes	1km	Local Wildlife Site (LWS), Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
Species records (notable and protected) – see notes	1km	Refer to Table 5.2
Habitats of principal importance for conservation	1km	As defined under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
Site (species and habitats)	Site and land within 30m (as access constraints allow)	

Table 1 – Zone of influence

Legislation and Policy
Annex II of the Habitats Directive (non-priority species) - Endangered animal and plant species that are of Community interest (i.e. endangered, vulnerable, rare or endemic in the European Community) requiring the designation of special areas of conservation.
Annex IV of the Habitats Directive - Animal and plant species of Community interest (i.e. endangered, vulnerable, rare or endemic in the European Community) in need of strict protection. They are protected from killing, disturbance or the destruction of them or their habitat
Schedule 2 of Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (European Protected Species animal) - It is an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade in the animals listed in Schedule 2.
Priority Species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
Schedule 1 Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – birds protected from disturbance at their nests, or their dependent young.
Schedule 5 Section 9 Part 1 (taking) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - Animals which are protected from being taken.

Schedule 5 Section 9 Parts 4b/c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) -
 Animals which are protected from intentional disturbance while occupying a structure or place
 used for shelter or protection / Animals which are protected from their access to any structure or
 place which they use for shelter or protection being obstructed.

Table 2 – Notable and protected species definitions.

5.2 Desk Study

- 5.2.1** A desktop study was conducted by Vicky Potts MCIEEM and Lauren Hayward – qualifying member of the CIEEM before and after visiting the site. The study utilised data from open access online resources to acquire information on the nature of the site and its surroundings and highlight any potential ecological features. The Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) was commissioned to undertake a search of pre-existing records of protected and/or notable species and non-statutorily designated wildlife sites held by them within a 1km radius around a central point inside the site.
- 5.2.2** The DEFRA Data Services Platform was used to obtain geospatial datasets for designated sites (i.e. RAMSAR, SPA, SAC, SSSI) and important habitats (i.e. Priority Habitat Inventory, Ancient Woodland Inventory) to be analysed in QGIS. The Multi-Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) website was examined for granted European Protected Species (EPS) licence applications. These geospatial datasets and Google Earth satellite imagery were used to determine the extent and connectivity of habitats, how the site is linked to the surrounding landscape and whether the development could have wider scale impacts on biodiversity.
- 5.2.3** The DEFRA Data Services Platform and the MAGIC website was used to obtain geospatial datasets for designated sites (i.e., RAMSAR, SPA, SAC, SSSI) and habitat inventories (i.e., Priority Habitat Inventory, Ancient Woodland Inventory) to be analysed in QGIS. The Multi-Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) website was examined for granted European protected species applications. Furthermore, geospatial datasets and Google Earth satellite imagery were used to determine the extent and connectivity of habitats, how the site is linked to the surrounding landscape and whether the development could have wider scale impacts on biodiversity.
- 5.2.4** The Wokingham Borough Council planning portal was searched for pre-existing ecological reports for the application site and other nearby planning applications.
- 5.2.5** Google Earth satellite imagery and online OS mapping websites were consulted to provide insight into historic and current land use; such

information helps contextualise the continuity of habitats and determine the importance of existing ecological features on site.

- 5.2.6** The type of soil on site was inferred using geological information taken from the British Geological Survey and on-site interpretation.

5.3 Field Survey

Survey details

- 5.3.1** A site walkover was undertaken on 2nd April 2026 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM- and Lauren Hayward (qualifying member of CIEEM). The site was surveyed using the UK Habitat Classification version 2 (UKHab Ltd 2023) in accordance with the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2nd Edition (CIEEM 2017). Particular attention was given to evidence of protected and priority species (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 species of principal importance) and the site's potential to support such species.
- 5.3.2** Photographs of habitats and other ecological features were taken during the site walkover and mapped using QGIS software after the survey visit (**Appendices 2 & 3**). Plant species were recorded to aid habitat classification.

5.4 Ground Level Tree Assessment

Survey Details

- 5.4.1** A ground level inspection of the trees identified that require removal or arboricultural works to allow for the building of the new dwelling were surveyed, including T66, T67, T68, T69, T122, G148 and G149. The survey was undertaken on the 10th February 2026 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM registered under Natural England Bat Survey Class Licence CL18 (Licence reference number: 2025-85632-CL18-BAT) and assisted by Lauren Hayward, in accordance with good practice guidance (Collins 2023). The equipment used during the inspection comprised binoculars, a high-power (1 million candlepower) LED torch, a headtorch, ladder, PPE (facemask, gloves etc.) and a Teslong NTS500 Digital Endoscope. The inspection involved a systematic search around all aspects of each tree for potential roost features (PRFs) during daylight hours. An investigation of accessible PRFs on some

trees for evidence of bat presence was undertaken with a torch and Teslong endoscope; all other features were too high to access.

Types of PRFs

5.4.2 The types of PRFs that can be exploited by bats are derived from Bat Roosts in Trees BTHK (2018) and include:

- PRFs formed by disease and decay such as woodpecker holes, squirrel holes, knot holes, pruning cuts, tear-outs, wounds, cankers, compression forks and butt-rots;
- PRFs formed by damage such as lightning strikes, hazard beams, subsidence cracks, shearing cracks, transverse snaps, welds, lifting bark, desiccation fissures and frost cracks; and
- PRFs formed by association such as fluting and ivy.

Signs of Bats

5.4.3 The only conclusive evidence of a bat roost in a tree is the presence of actual bats (live or dead) or their droppings. However, it is important to note that bat droppings are less likely to persist in tree roosts compared to roosts in buildings so their absence inside a PRF does not necessarily equate to evidence of bat absence. Other signs of bats inside PRFs include:

- Bat fly puparia (pupal cases);
- Odour (ammonia-type smell);
- Staining below or inside an entrance;
- Smoothing of an entrance; and
- Audible squeaking at dusk or in warm weather.

5.4.4 These signs are not conclusive in isolation or combination because they can be caused by other animals (i.e. birds and squirrels) or as a result of wet rot

for staining. However, it should be noted that bat roosts can exist in trees whilst exhibiting no signs externally.

PRF Categorisation

- 5.4.5** The trees have been assessed for their suitability to possess bat roosts using the categories detailed in **Table 3** below:

Table 3. Categories for suitability of tree for roosting bats (Source: Collins 2023).

Suitability	Description
None	There are no PRFs present in the tree or it is highly unlikely that any PRFs are present.
FAR	Further assessment is required to establish whether PRFs are present in the tree.
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF where further assessment is required to determine the potential suitability of the tree for roosting bats.
PRF-I	A PRF that is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to its size or the lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	A PRF that is suitable for multiple bats and could therefore be used by a maternity colony.

5.5 Survey Constraints

- 5.5.1** Full access was available to the site and therefore there were no significant access constraints. All ecological survey work is subject to seasonal constraints because not all plant and animal species are visible throughout the year and therefore the report represents a snapshot of the site at the time of the survey only. The plant species recorded should not be considered a comprehensive list of species present.
- 5.5.2** There were no significant survey limitations because the GLTA was carried out in February, so the canopy was not in leaf and visible. The GLTA was carried out in dry and calm weather.

6 DESK STUDY FINDINGS

6.1 Designated Sites

- 6.1.1** The desk study returned one internationally designated statutory sites within a 5km radius of the application site; two nationally designated statutory sites within a 2km radius; and three locally designated non-statutory sites, i.e. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), were highlighted within a 1km search radius (see Tables **4a** and **4b** below).

Table 4a. Statutorily designated sites within the vicinity of the site (Source: Magic).

Site name	Designation	Description	Distance from nearest site boundary (m)
Thames Basin Heath	Special Protected Area (SPA)	Approximately 118,529ha of heathland habitat which supports 3 rare bird species – nightjar, Dartford warbler and woodlark as well as many of species of flora and fauna including silver-studded blue and rare reptiles.	~4030 SW
Longmoor Bog	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Approximately 14.4ha of a base poor valley mire with alder and willow carr and wet heathland which supports a wide variety of flora and fauna.	~1382 SE
Longmoor Bog	Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	Approximately 11.75 ha of land with habitats including lowland valley mire and wet (bog) woodland. Species include bog bush cricket, adders, bog bean and common wintergreen.	~1382 SE

Table 4b. Non-statutorily designated sites within the vicinity of the site (Source: TVERC).

Site name	Designation	Description	Distance from nearest site boundary (m)
The Coombes	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Approximately 33.4ha which consists primarily of an area of lowland mixed deciduous woodland that varies in its structure and species throughout. There are some features indicative of long-established woodland, including bank and ditches with associated mature trees, and 23 long-established woodland indicators.	~200 NE
Hazelton's Copse	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Approximately 2.55ha and comprises a lowland mixed deciduous woodland, which is marked on the ancient woodland inventory as ancient semi-natural woodland. Most of the standard trees were cleared approximately 50 years ago. The canopy is predominately tall, thin ash and oak with field maple over neglected hazel coppice, which in the more open areas of a sub-canopy. Seventeen ancient woodland indicators are scattered throughout the Copse.	~870 NW
Bearwood Estate Woods and Lakes	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	Approximately 135.7 ha of extensive, long established, broadleaved woodland with a large lake and some areas of conifer plantation and mixed woodland. A number of species associated with ancient woodland have been record onsite including wood spurge. The lake and woodland onsite attracts a wide variety of birds.	~1382 SE

6.2 Important Habitats

- 6.2.1** The desk study revealed that the western side and the northern boundary of site is mapped as lowland deciduous woodland - a habitat mapped in the priority habitat inventory (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 habitats of principal importance (HPI)) and is recognised for its amenity value with two tree preservation orders (TPOs) covering the woodland on site.

6.3 Protected Species and Notable Species

- 6.3.1** The search of the TVERC database revealed a range of protected and notable species records starting from 1960. Only recent records, defined as fewer than ten years old, are included in this report (see **Tables 5a & 5b** below).

Table 5a. Recent protected and/or notable species records within the vicinity of the site (Source: TVERC).

Common name	Scientific name	No. of records	Most recent record	Nearest record (m)	Precision (m)	Status
Amphibians & Reptiles						
Common frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	1	2018	~676 N	100	Bern3, HDir5, WCA5
Grass snake	<i>Natrix helvetica</i>	16	2018	~744 NE	10	WCA_5s94 b/c NERC_s41
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	2	2018	~744 NE	10	WCA_5s91 k NERC_S41
Invertebrates						
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	3	2023	~387 SW	100	NERC_S41 WCA5
White-clawed Crayfish	<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>	1	2020	~145 E	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.1t/s9.5a
Common frog						
Grass snake	<i>Natrix helvetica</i>	16	2018	~744 NE	10	WCA_5s94 b/c NERC_s41
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	2	2018	~744 NE	10	WCA_5s91 k NERC_S41
Invertebrates						
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	3	2023	~387 SW	100	NERC_S41 WCA5
White-clawed Crayfish	<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>	1	2020	~145 E	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.1t/s9.5a
Mammals – Bats						
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	25	2023	~119 SW	100	Hab_4 HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c NERC_s41

Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	53	2023	~119 SW	100	Hab_4 HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c
Pipistrelle bat species	<i>Pipistrellus</i>	11	2021	~407 SW	1	Hab_4 HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c
Brown long-eared	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	16	2023	~119 SW	100	Hab_4 HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c
Long-eared bat species	<i>Plecotus</i>	5	2017	~490 NE	1	Hab_4 HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c
Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis daubentoniid</i>	3	2019	~253 SW	100	Hab_4 HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c
Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	23	2023	~119 SW	100	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c NERC_s41
<i>Myotis</i> bat species	<i>Myotis</i> sp.	1	2016	~1040 SE	1000	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c NERC_s41
Serotine	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	5	2023	~644 NE	100	Hab_4 HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c
Nathusius's Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	2	2018	~413 SW	1	Hab_4 HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c
Birds						
Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	6	2020	~1060 SW	1000	WCA_1p1 BOCC_amber
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	4	2019	~2000 SW	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_amber
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	8	2019	~2000 SW	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_amber
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	1	2023	~493 NE	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_red
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	1	2024	~493 NE	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_red
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea cabaret</i>	1	2023	~1060 SW	1000	NERC_s41
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	12	2024	~493 NE	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_red
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	3	2024	~493 NE	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_red
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	8	2023	~493 NE	1000	WCA_1p1 EU_Bird_1
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	6	2024	~493 NE	1000	WCA_1p1
Terrestrial Mammals (excl. bats)						
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	1	2016	~743 SE	10	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94 b/c NERC_s41

Table 5b. Species status key.

Abbreviation	Legislation
Hab_4	Annex IV of the Habitats Directive – Animal and plant species of Community interest (i.e. endangered, vulnerable, rare or endemic in the European Community) in need of strict protection. They are protected from killing,

	disturbance or the destruction of them or their habitat.
HabReg_2	Schedule 2 of Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (European Protected Species animal) – It is an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade in the animals listed in Schedule 2.
HDir5	Habitats Directive, Annex V – Species whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures
HDir2	
WCA_1p1	Schedule 1 Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – birds protected from disturbance at their nests, or their dependent young.
WCA_1p2	Schedule 1 Part 2 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – birds protected from disturbance at their nests, or their dependent young and Birds Protected By Special Penalties During The Close Season
WCA_5s94b/c	Schedule 5 Section 9 Parts 4b/c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – Animals which are protected from intentional disturbance while occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection / Animals which are protected from their access to any structure or place which they use for shelter or protection being obstructed.
WCA5	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 5 - Animals which are protected
NERC_s41	Priority Species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
BOCC_red	Birds of Conservation Concern Red list
BOCC_amber	Birds of Conservation Concern Amber list
Bern 3	Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Appendix 3 - Protected fauna species
Eu_Bird_1	Annex I of the Birds Directive

6.3.2 European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences that have been granted inside a 2km radius of the application site in the last 10 years, are detailed in **Table 6** below.

Table 6. European Protected Species (EPS) licences granted within a 2km radius (Source: MAGIC).

Case Reference of Granted Licence	Species on the Licence	Licensable Period	Licensable Works	Distance (m)
2016-26319-EPS-MIT-2	Soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>) Brown long eared (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>) Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	26/02/2019 to 31/12/2021	Destruction of resting place	~1053 SW
2016-24999-EPS-MIT-1	Soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>) Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	16/02/2017 to 16/02/2027	Destruction of breeding roost and resting place	~1092 SE
2017-31502-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	29/09/2017 to 30/04/2023	Destruction of resting place	~1289 NE
2017-31454-EPS-MIT	Soprano pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>) Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	16/10/2017 to 30/10/2022	Destruction of resting place	~1454 SW
2017-31865-EPS-MIT-2	Brown long eared (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>) Common pipistrelle	06/09/2018 to 30/09/2023	Destruction of resting place	~1638 SW

	<i>(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)</i> Soprano pipistrelle <i>(Pipistrellus pygmaeus)</i> Nathusius pipistrelle <i>(Pipistrellus nathusii)</i>			
2015-16599-EPS-MIT-2	Common pipistrelle <i>(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)</i>	04/10/2016 to 04/10/2021	Destruction of resting place	~1737 SW
2016-22331-EPS-MIT	Brown long eared <i>(Plecotus auritus)</i> Common pipistrelle <i>(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)</i> Soprano pipistrelle <i>(Pipistrellus pygmaeus)</i> Nathusius pipistrelle <i>(Pipistrellus nathusii)</i>	21/04/2016 to 30/04/2026	Destruction of resting place	~1759 SW
2019-38952-EPS-MIT	Common pipistrelle <i>(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)</i>	01/02/2019 to 31/12/2024	Destruction of resting place	~1764 SW

- 6.3.3** The NatureSpace great crested newt (GCN) impact map depicts that the application site falls within a amber risk zone; these zones are defined as comprising suitable habitat – GCN are likely to be present. There were no records for GCN within the TVERC record search and a search on MAGIC showed that there were no GCN Class Survey Licence returns or EPS Licence applications within 2 km from the site boundary.
- 6.3.4** A ditch is present on the northern boundary of the site but there are no ponds onsite. Mapping shows there to be four ponds within 500m of the site including one 194 m to the southwest, 315 m and 390 m to the east and 488 to the northeast.
- 6.3.5** A review of previous surveys completed in relation to nearby planning applications found a pond was surveyed at 145 Nash Grove Lane approximately 1.79 km southeast of the site in 2024 by The Ash Partnership UK Ltd. The survey revealed a negative eDNA result for the presence of

great crested newts. No other nearby planning applications were found which were likely to impact GCNs.

6.3.6 There have been no rare reptile mitigation licences granted within 5km radius of the site within the last 10 years, although there are suitable habitats for these protected species in close vicinity to the site and within the wider area.

6.3.7 No hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) mitigation licences has been granted within 5km radius of the site within the last 10 years.

6.4 Historic and Current Land Use

6.4.1 Google Satellite imagery dating back to 2003 shows the site was similar as existing with the western side comprising a strip of woodland, with a strip along the northern boundary and grassland with scattered trees covering the centre and eastern side of the site. The site had become overgrown over the years, in particular over the last five years however it was partially cleared in September 2025. The site now comprises an area of grassland in the centre of the site and groups of trees have been relocated from the eastern and north-eastern side of the site towards the southern side of the site.

6.4.2 Historical OS mapping shows all the site as being wooded in 1961 but mapping prior to this shows the site as being farmland.

6.5 Geology, Soils and Topography

6.5.1 The geology of the application site is slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils; landscapes associated with such soils include grassland and arable some woodland, and the habitats associated with such soils include seasonally wet pastures and woodlands.

7 FIELD SURVEY FINDINGS

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 The site covers an approximate ownership area of approximately 1.14 ha of grassland, blackthorn scrub with patches of unmanaged woodland.

7.1.2 The following UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) habitats were observed during the site walkover: g3c Other neutral grassland, h3a blackthorn scrub, w1f lowland mixed deciduous woodland and h2a hedgerow. Secondary codes included: *10 scattered scrub, 14 scattered rushes, 16 tall herb, 32 scattered trees, 124 anthills, 128 tall tussocky, 201 young trees planted, 202 young trees self-set, 203 mature trees, 210 coppice, 214 fallen dead wood abundant, 503 wet, and 521 unmanaged.*

7.1.3 The UKHab primary habitats are outlined below; associated photographs are displayed in **Appendix 2**, and the habitat survey is mapped in **Appendix 3**.

7.2 g3c – Other neutral grassland

10 scattered scrub, 14 scattered rush, 16 tall herbs, 32 scattered trees, 124 anthills, 128 tall tussocky, 201 young trees planted, 202 young trees self-set, 503 wet

7.2.1 A large area of mixed scrub that had previously encroached the site and over taking the previously recorded grassland during the previous surveys undertaken in 2011, 2022 and 2024, has recently been managed and cut back, exposing a large area of grassland towards the southern side of the site. The grassland was dominated with other neutral grassland with scattered trees and scattered scrub.

7.2.2 The areas where the grassland was open had a tall and tussocky sward with a number of anthills present in places, and was also damp in places. The grassland was dominated by coarse and competitive grasses with the occasional rush. Creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) were dominant within the sward with clumps of tufted hair grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) being locally frequent. The grassland had a diverse range of forbs and tall herbs with species such as common fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*),

common vetch (*Vicia sativa*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) and willow (*Salix caprea*), St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), greater stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and occasional species such as tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), common toadflax (*Linaria vulgaris*) and greater bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus uliginosus*).

- 7.2.3** Additional species recorded in 2023 included lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), mint species (*Mentha* sp.), forget me-not species (*Myosotis* sp.), angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), upright hedge parsley (*Torilis japonica*), and locally abundant marsh woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) and common fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*).
- 7.2.4** Additional species recorded within the grassland in the development site during the 2026 updated walkover survey, included mouse ear (*Pilosella officinarum*), common chickweed (*Stellaria media*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echinoides*), primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), daffodils (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*), marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) (**Photograph 1**). There was a small pile of bricks located towards the southern proposed development boundary, offering potential sheltering and hibernation habitats for fauna such as reptiles and amphibians (**Photograph 2; TN1**).
- 7.2.5** Additional species recorded during the updated 2026 walkover survey within an opening amongst the blackthorn scrub to the eastern side of the proposed development site, included sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), ground-elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*),

doves-foot cranes-bill (*Geranium molle*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*) (**Photograph 3**).

7.2.6 A mature oak (*Quercus robur*) tree and apple tree (*Malus sp.*) (T122 – refer to GLTA below) was situated within the grassland just outside of the development area (**Photograph 4, TN2 & TN3**).

7.2.7 There were still clumps of scrub primarily along the south eastern boundary of the site and some patches were present outside the development area to the south eastern side of the other neutral grassland. Species present included bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), damson (*Prunus domestica* ssp.), box (*Buxus sempervirens*) with occasional scattered immature trees including ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), willow (*Salix* sp.), oak (*Quercus robur*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*) present onsite, especially along the eastern boundary of the proposed development site (**Photograph 5**).

7.3 H3a - Blackthorn scrub

7.3.1 The northern and north eastern edges of the grassland were characterised by dense blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) scrub (**Photograph 6**).

7.4 W1f - Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

202 young trees self-set, 203, mature tree, 210 coppice, 214 fallen dead wood abundant, 521 unmanagefd

7.4.1 The woodland on the site's western edge and outside of the development area comprised zones of secondary, oak-dominated woodland to the west of the grassland with alder-dominated canopy to the north west and a small strip of mature broadleaved woodland to the north of the grassland and bordering the Barkham Brook beyond (**Photograph 7**).

7.4.2 The woodland was dominated by mature and semi-mature oak (*Quercus robur*) and mature alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) coppiced trees with occasional ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), white willow (*Salix alba*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), and honeysuckle (*Lonicera*

periclymenum) (**Photographs 8 & 9**). Popular (*Populus* sp.) and cherry (*Prunus avium*) were also noted during the updated 2024 survey.

7.4.3 The ground flora was dominated by grasses including Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) (noted in 2024), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) plus several rush and sedge species.

Herbaceous ground flora species present included ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), false wood brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), figwort (*Scrophularia* sp.), hedge parsley (*Torilis arvensis*), and male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) (**Photograph 10**).

7.4.4 Standing and fallen dead wood was present, in particular towards the north western end of the site and along the brook, with numerous features offering potential roosting opportunities for bats including rot holes and peeling bark (**Photographs 11 - 13**). Ivy (*Hedera helix*) covered some of the trees along the brook also offering potential features for use by roosting bats.

7.4.5 Species recorded in the 2011 survey included rough meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), false fox sedge (*Carex otrubae*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), wood dock (*Rumex sanguineus*), lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and a few species typical of ancient woodland such as moschatel (*Adoxa moschatellina*) and bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).

7.4.6 The remains of an old brick wall and nearby piles of bricks were present within the woodland (**Photographs 14 & 15; TN4**) offering potential sheltering and hibernation habitats for fauna such as reptiles and amphibians. A timber clad shed in a dilapidated state was present within the woodland outside of the development (**Photograph 16; TN5**).

7.5 H2a – Hedgerow (Priority Habitat) (Secondary code: 203)

7.5.1 A native hedgerow was present along the southern boundary of the site along Barkham Road, comprising blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*) with scattered mature oak (*Quercus robur*) trees (**Photograph 17**). In addition honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), purple toadflax (*Linaria purpurea*) and black horehound (*Ballota nigra*) were recorded in 2024. The hedgerow has not been managed on site as it merges with the adjacent woodland habitat but has been

managed on the roadside to maintain a clear footpath and visibility for the adjacent highway.

7.6 Ground Level Tree Assessment

Overview

- 7.6.1** The findings from the Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) carried out for the trees that require arboricultural works or removal in order to allow the development are detailed in **Table 4** with photographs.

Survey Findings

Table 7. GLTA survey findings.

Tree ref.:	T64 (Target note 2)	Species:	Oak		
Proposed arb works:	Mature oak – to be retained				
Contextual photographs:					
					
PRF ref.:	PRF location:	PRF type:	PRF direction:	PRF height (m):	PRF suitability / signs:
N/A	-	-	-	-	None
Recommendations	No features suitable for use by bats. No further surveys required.				

Tree ref.:	T66, T67, T68, T69	Species:	Hawthorn, Oak, Hawthorn, Oak
Proposed arb works:	Young and dead trees – proposed removal		
Contextual photographs:			

					
PRF ref.:	PRF location:	PRF type:	PRF direction:	PRF height (m):	PRF suitability / signs:
N/A	-	-	-	-	None
Recommendations		Group of trees in scrub. No further surveys required.			

Tree ref.:	T122 (Target note 3)	Species:	Apple
Proposed arb works:	Tree Identified on edge of the development – to be removed		

Contextual photographs:

PRF1 & 2



PRF3

PRF ref.:	PRF location:	PRF type:	PRF direction:	PRF height (m):	PRF suitability / signs:
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1	Branch	Small holes	N	2	PRF-I
2	Branch	Hole	S	1.75	PRF-I
3	Branch	Silt wound	W	1.5	PRF-I
4	Branch	Wound	E	1.5	None
5	Branch	Wound	NW	1.5	PRF-I
Recommendations		Further surveys required as its being removed due to closeness to the new building.			

Tree ref.:		G148 & G149		Species:		Blackthorn and hazel					
Proposed arb works:		Removal of scrub for development of new dwelling									
Contextual photographs:											
											
G148				G148							
PRF ref.:		PRF location:		PRF type:		PRF direction:		PRF height (m):		PRF suitability / signs:	
N/A		-		-		-		-		None	
Recommendations		No further surveys required.									

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Assessment of Existing Ecological Value – Habitats

Designated sites

- 8.1.1** The desk study revealed that the site is not statutorily designated for its wildlife interest and therefore not currently recognised as being of international or national importance.
- 8.1.2** The site falls within 5km of the Thames Basin Heath SPA and the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for Longmoor Bog SSSI. There are three non-statutorily designated sites within 1km of the site's boundary – including a site selected for its lowland mixed deciduous woodland 200m to the northeast and one selected for its unimproved acid grassland and small patches of heath 500m to the south. The second closest is also a lowland mixed deciduous woodland 670 metres to the northwest of the site.

Habitats

- 8.1.3** The site is characterised predominantly by lowland mixed deciduous woodland, other neutral grassland, blackthorn scrub and a native hedgerow, which are habitats of moderate to high ecological value at the site level.
- 8.1.4** Over half of the ownership area is mapped as lowland deciduous woodland - a habitat mapped in the priority habitat inventory (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 habitats of principal importance (HPI)) - and is recognised for its amenity value with two tree preservation orders (TPOs) covering the woodland on site. The woodland is of ecological value at local level.
- 8.1.5** The native hedgerow on site is also an example of a HPI, and the combination of the hedgerow and woodland offers site-level ecological value for species adapted to suburban and rural environments, such as nesting birds and roosting bats. Overall, the hedgerow is of ecological value at the local level, but of negligible at a wider national scale.
- 8.1.6** The blackthorn scrub and scattered mixed scrub amongst other neutral grassland on site, offer habitats suitable for a range of faunal groups such as nesting birds, reptiles (shown by previous survey findings), amphibians, small

mammals and invertebrates adapted to rural and suburban areas and are of site level value.

8.2 Assessment of Existing Ecological Value – Species

Bats

8.2.1 The site has high-quality habitat for foraging and roosting bats comprising unmanaged grassland and woodland, with a brook on the northern boundary connecting to grazed paddocks to the north with hedgerows which link to more extensive patches of woodlands 200m to the north. Furthermore, bat mitigation licences granted within the last 10 years identified at least four species inside a 2km radius of the site: brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), natterers (*Myotis nattereri*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

8.2.2 Tree T122 just on the northern edge of the proposed development site, and will be retained, had a few PRFs that had potential to be used on an occasional basis by individual bats and therefore has potential PRF-I suitability. The features could be inspected with an endoscope from the ground and no current evidence of use by roosting bats was found. Trees T66, T67, T68, T69, G148 and G149 - had no features suitable for use by bats.

Hazel dormice

8.2.3 Hazel dormice favour dense habitat connected to woodland that allows animals to move easily through habitats without coming to the ground (English Nature 2006). The blackthorn scrub and the mixed scrub was scattered and they are sub-optimal habitat for dormice but will be used if there is no optimal habitat within their range. The hedgerow on the southern side of the site and the oak and alder woodland had been left unmanaged resulting in a lack of dense understorey or continuous ground cover that are favoured by dormice. The site has limited connectivity to suitable dormouse habitat in the local Barkham area. Furthermore, there are no records for hazel dormice within the search radius and a search of MAGIC showed no dormouse

mitigation licences within 2km and as such, the presence of dormice on site is highly unlikely.

Amphibians

- 8.2.4** There is no standing water on the development site offering breeding potential for notable species, such as the fully protected great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). An offsite ditch is present along the northern boundary of the ownership (blue line) boundary. Mapping shows that in the surrounding area within a 500m radius there is one pond which is just under 200 m to the southwest of the site at Handpost Farm, and a second 315 m to the east. An HSI assessment was undertaken of the pond at Handpost Farm by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy as part of un-associated survey work in 2023 and was rated poor habitat for great crested newts. The flowing water in the ditch does not provide suitable breeding conditions for GCN although they may use the off-site ditch and adjacent woodland and scrub for sheltering and commuting between ponds. Taking this into account, it is considered there is a low risk that GCN could be present onsite.
- 8.2.5** The unmanaged tall and tussocky grassland with the scattered mixed scrub and patch of blackthorn scrub on the site provide sheltering and/or foraging habitats for other notable amphibians. The dead wood, old brick wall and piles of bricks within the woodland onsite also offer hibernation habitat for amphibians. Common frog (*Rana temporaria*) has been recorded 650m from the site and may be present on site. Other amphibian species of conservation importance, such as the common toad (*Bufo bufo*), may use the areas of scrub and grassland (ARC, 2009).

Reptiles

- 8.2.6** The unmanaged neutral grassland with patches of scattered scrub and blackthorn scrub on site offer sheltering and/or foraging opportunities for reptiles, and the dead wood, old brick wall and pile of bricks also offers hibernation opportunities for reptiles. Grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) has been recorded at four sites within 1km to the site, including a breeding population of grass snake recorded onsite in 2008. Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) has

been recorded at three sites with the closest being approximately 380m from the site.

- 8.2.7** During the survey in 2022 it was considered that although the land had been left unmanaged for a number of years the site supports a mosaic of habitats within the grassland and woodland, and still offered suitable habitats for use by reptiles in particular grass snake which were recorded previously on site. It still had potential to support a stable reptile population of conservation importance locally or on a wider scale. However, an updated reptile survey undertaken in 2023 found no reptiles using the site currently (Report ref: R3566a), likely a consequence of the scrubbing over of the site resulting in shadier conditions and less tussocky grassland. The site has since been partially cleared creating an open grassland area similar to how it was when reptiles were recorded in 2008.

Nesting birds

- 8.2.8** The walkover survey showed the site's woodland, scrub and hedgerow habitats are likely to be of ecological value at site level and local level for common and widespread nesting bird species adapted to semi-rural environments which may include notable species of conservation importance.

Badgers (and other mammals)

- 8.2.9** There was no evidence of badger activity (i.e., setts trails, snuffle holes or mammal diggings) on site and as such it is unlikely to support badger setts or to be of importance to badgers; however, there are records within the search radius including one 530m west of the site.
- 8.2.10** Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) – an SPI (as defined under the NERC Act 2006 Section 41 species of principal importance) – may nest within the hedgerow and may cross the site and shelter and forage within the grassland habitats.
- 8.2.11** The Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) - an SPI (as defined under the NERC Act 2006 Section 41 species of principal importance) has been recorded along a ditch in Barkham approximately 715m to the southeast of the site and mapping shows that this ditch connects to the ditch onsite. Otters are known to use a number of nesting sites within their home range, including above ground shelters, such as stands of scrub or areas of rank grass, and

underground 'holts', for example cavities under tree roots. The woodland and scrub offer potential habitats for otters to use to shelter.

Invertebrates

- 8.2.12** The mixed and blackthorn scrub with unmanaged grassland and woodland with their complex of habitats and abundant fallen and standing wood offer good quality habitat for invertebrates and is of ecological value for invertebrates. The woodland offered abundant deadwood and rotting tree stumps, the specialist habitat requirements to support stag beetle larvae – an SPI species recorded nearby (approximately 80m from the site). The mosaic of habitats may be important for protected or notable invertebrate species but unlikely to support an invertebrate assemblage of conservation importance beyond the scale of the site.

8.3 Impact Assessment

Summary of proposals

- 8.3.1** The planning proposals are for the construction of a dwelling, associated driveway and landscaping in an area of existing blackthorn scrub and other neutral grassland habitat.

Designated sites and habitats

- 8.3.2** The site is not statutorily or non-statutorily designated for its wildlife interest and therefore the proposals will have no direct impacts on protected sites. The site falls within 5km of the Thames Basin Heath SPA and falls within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for Longmoor Bog SSSI. Wokingham Borough Council '*concludes that residential proposals involving increases of one or more net additional dwelling within 5km (linear) of the SPA will need to be assessed for whether there is likely to be significant impacts*' (Wokingham Borough Adopted Core Strategy, CP8, 2010). In order to mitigate these potentially adverse impacts on the SPA, the Appropriate Assessment deems that a financial contribution will be needed to go towards the management and monitoring required from increased recreational pressures on the SPA. With regards to the SSSI Impact Risk Zone, the construction of an individual residential property on this site does not fall within the development types for

which Natural England should be consulted and as such impacts on the SSSI are highly unlikely.

- 8.3.3** The site supports lowland deciduous woodland – a habitat of principal importance for biodiversity (HPI) as defined as under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006) – and has two TPOs, including a woodland TPO (ref: TPO-1597-2017) which covers the woodland to the north and west of the site, and an area TPO (ref: TPO-1597-2017), which covers the eastern side of the site. The woodland to the west and north of the site covered by the woodland TPO will be retained and left untouched as part of the plans. The proposals have been designed to have no impact on the woodland with a sensitive approach to the development with longer term aims to enhance the site.
- 8.3.4** A small section of the area TPO to the east of the site is due to be impacted within the red line boundary. Therefore, appropriate enhancement and compensation measures for the scattered trees and scrub habitats lost are required, and precautionary measures should be adopted during the development works and post development to protect the woodland from indirect effects during construction and for the long term i.e. post-construction. Furthermore, any clearance of trees within the site will require approval as they fall under a TPO.
- 8.3.5** The proposed residential development is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) under the self-build exemption. The development does not consist of more than 9 dwellings and the development area has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares.
- 8.3.6** The development area comprises an area of approximately 0.25 hectares and impacts some of the blackthorn scrub (**h3a**) (0.1218 ha) and other neutral grassland (**g3c**) (0.1365 ha). An area of 1.1616 ha hectares of woodland other neutral grassland and scrub under the same ownership will be retained to the western side and on the northern boundary of the site. This part of the land will be protected during construction and retained and enhanced post development of this area– refer to **Section 9.2**.

Bats

- 8.3.7** The site offered numerous potential roosting sites within the mature trees in the woodland, along the hedgerow and scattered trees amongst the scrub. However, the proposals will not involve the removal of any mature or semi-

mature trees with potential roost features apart from T122. The removal of small scattered trees and scrub will not dramatically reduce the foraging opportunities for bats or have an impact on roosting potential for bats.

- 8.3.8** The arboricultural works proposed for the trees will not result in the loss of PRFs and associated roosts if present identified in T122 which was classified as having PRF-I suitability. If in the future the tree is proposed to be removed or have works undertaken in the absence of precautions and further investigations, this could lead to the disturbance, injury or death of any roosting bats in occupancy at the time of the operations and therefore further survey is recommended (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.3**).
- 8.3.9** Additional artificial lighting will be installed on site, and there is some risk that foraging routes would be illuminated, which could cause disturbance to bats. As insects are attracted to artificial lighting, several species of bats, including species such as the pipistrelles, noctule, Leisler's bat and serotine, have been shown to be attracted to lighting to forage (Stone *et. al.* 2015b). Several species of bats, particularly the slower flying species, such as the long-eared bats and *Myotis* species, have on the other hand been shown to avoid lighting, possibly as a consequence of the risk of increased predation from diurnal raptors (Stone *et. al.* 2015a). Several species may be sensitive to increased lighting particularly UV light, and lighting may disrupt visual foraging behavior in groups such as long-eared bats (Fure 2006). Furthermore, the artificial attraction of insects to lighting may have an adverse impact on the availability of insects in nearby habitats and therefore an impact on the foraging success of bats that avoid lighting and such measures to avoid such impacts should be adopted (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.3**).

Nesting birds

- 8.3.10** The woodland, hedgerow, blackthorn scrub and mixed scrub with grassland provide nesting opportunities for common and widespread bird species. Whilst the hedgerow, woodland and some of the scrub are to be retained, the removal of patches of scrub and scattered trees and shrubs within the other natural grassland and blackthorn scrub within the development area as a result of the new access and the new dwelling may lead to the disturbance of

nesting birds and as such necessary precautions must be adopted to ensure the work goes ahead lawfully (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.4**).

Amphibians

- 8.3.11** The proposals will require the removal of other neutral grassland with scattered scrub and blackthorn scrub to build the new dwelling and associated landscaping. Pre-existing survey data and OS mapping shows that great crested newts are unlikely to be found on site, however, there is potential that they are present using the ditch for traversing between ponds, which is situated on the land under the same ownership boundary. There is a very low risk for individual GCN to use the site for sheltering and therefore precautionary measures should be adopted to ensure that no individuals are harmed during construction works (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.5**).

Reptiles

- 8.3.12** The complex of woodland and grassland found on site in 2008 was shown to support grass snake at that time. The site had been left unmanaged since the previous surveys, and as a result, it has become increasingly overgrown with scrub with fewer open patches of grassland for basking and numerous sheltering opportunities. In the most recent reptile survey undertaken in 2023 the site had become encroached and overshadowed with scrub and no reptiles were present, however the site has since been cleared offering more suitable habitats for reptiles to colonise the site again. There is a high risk that groundwork and site clearance could harm reptiles; and therefore a further updated survey is recommended (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.6**).

Other mammals

- 8.3.13** There is a risk that otters are using the woodland and scrub along the northern boundary of the site in association with the ditch, however the proposed works will not have an impact on these areas. The site potentially could be used by smaller mammals, such as the hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*).
- 8.3.14** The proposals will retain most of the woodland, hedgerow and blackthorn scrub. Otters will not take shelter in the blackthorn scrub and more open patches of grassland habitat, that is to be impacted by the development. As

such, the proposals are unlikely to have an impact on otters or on their ability to move through the site.

8.3.15 Badgers (*Meles meles*) have been recorded close to the site, however there has been no evidence of presence, such as sett entrances or latrines, on site during any of the previous surveys. Badgers can excavate a sett entrance at any time of the year and there is potential for a sett on site to be excavated prior to site clearance. Therefore, a precautionary method of working will ensure that no individuals are harmed during the construction activities (see recommendations in **Section 9.7**).

8.3.16 Small mammals such as hedgehogs are likely to be traversing the blackthorn scrub and grassland to cross the site, and therefore precautions must be adopted during construction (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.8**).

Invertebrates

8.3.17 The loss/damage of the mosaic of habitats within the grassland amongst the mixed scrub on site could have a negative impact on the assemblage of invertebrates present. In order to reduce this impact, mitigation measures during construction and post-construction are recommended (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.9**).

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.2 Designated sites

- 9.2.1** Policy CP8 of the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy document states that any new residential development within 5km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA will need to provide avoidance and mitigation measures and this can be achieved through a financial contribution. The contribution is calculated based on the number of residential units and size of each property to fund SPA access management measures and monitoring in line with the Delivery Framework together with provision of Suitable Alternative of Natural Greenspace (SANG) reducing recreational pressure on the SPA.

9.3 Habitats

- 9.3.1** Based on the current proposals, none of the woodland is to be lost, however patches of other neutral grassland and blackthorn scrub will be lost. In order to comply with the planning policies and avoid biodiversity loss, this loss will need to be compensated for by enhancing the retained woodland onsite (see recommendations in **Section 9.10**). A Section 106 agreement will be required to ensure that planning obligations are met and the woodland within the ownership boundary is secured for the long term. Any new woodland planting as part of the development will need to make use of native species typical of the existing woodland and consider carefully underlying ground conditions. The position of the house has been moved since previous applications to avoid the loss of the woodland and therefore remove the need to compensate for its loss.

- 9.3.2** The proposed development would need to minimise the impact on the retained priority habitat woodland and the native hedgerow within the same ownership but outside of the development, which are examples of a priority habitat, and scrub. The retained woodland, scrub and hedgerow, on site should be protected during construction to avoid damage to root systems and retain a foraging and nesting habitat for birds, foraging roosting and commuting habitat for bats, and sheltering and foraging habitat for mammals, amphibians and reptiles. The following precautionary measures and enhancement proposals are recommended:

- Erection of Heras fencing with netting around the woodland, mixed scrub and blackthorn scrub, and along the hedgerow in advance of

site clearance, enclosing tree Root Protection Areas and to reduce dust reaching the ditch;

- Prohibition of construction activities, material storage, use of vehicles, fires etc. within the fenced area to prevent damage to tree roots and compaction of the soil - these type of activities should be restricted to areas of existing grassland (in line with recommendations for reptiles/amphibians);
- Adopting procedures to avoid pollution incidents, e.g. fuel spills or surface runoff; and
- Reasonable avoidance measures for notable/protected species and stopping and seeking advice from a suitably qualified ecologist if protected species are encountered during construction.

9.3.3 A CEMP: Biodiversity document should be prepared to avoid and mitigate any adverse effects from construction activities on the important habitats and associated protected/priority species that may be present.

9.3.4 In the long term the woodland and scrub should be managed to halt any further loss or degradation, and the following enhancements are examples of recommended management practices:

- In order to avoid negative impacts on the ditch, retained woodland, scrub and off-site hedgerows from the proposed development, an effective natural buffer needs to be created/retained between these habitats and the built environment. This can be achieved by increasing the density of the existing scrub with native planting of additional scrub/trees and/or creation of a grassland strip.
- In the long term the areas of neutral grassland amongst the mixed scrub to be retained should be managed to provide a continued mosaic of habitats as existing and to prevent scrub encroaching the whole site to maximise the ecological value of the site, providing opportunities for a range of species including mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates;
- Garden planting should be designed to avoid plants that could spread and become invasive in the woodland, and
- The blackthorn scrub and any mixed scrub retained should be

managed with scalloped edges by cutting small patches to diversify scrub structure and increase its species diversity.

- The woodland should be managed to enhance the structural diversity within the woodland by increasing growth within the shrub layer to complement the existing mature canopy layer, through selective planting of native UK species.
- The former alder coppice stools are over-mature and several show signs of decay making them vulnerable to wind throw. Therefore, another aim of the woodland's management should be to retain the alder coppice stools in the longer term.
- Structural diversity could be added to the woodland by limited coppicing within the area of alder-dominated woodland. Coppicing should be re-instated on a 20 year cycle with no more than four coppice stools cut in small groups in any one year with at least 25% of the stools being retained as mature trees within the area in the long term. The cut material should be retained in stacks within the woodland to provide decaying wood habitats; brash should be used to protect cut coppice stools from deer browsing.
- The oak-dominated secondary woodland and mature woodland areas should be managed as areas of non-intervention woodland. Fallen or dead wood should be retained in situ wherever safety considerations allow to maximise the availability of dead wood habitats.

9.3.5 The recommended habitat management measures will be secured with the provision of a Landscape and Environmental Management Plan (LEMP).

9.4 Bats

Precautionary Working Method Statement

9.4.1 If in the future T122 is to be removed or have works undertaken a precautionary method of working during tree works is recommended to mitigate for the potential use of the PRFs by roosting bats for the tree classified as PRF-I (T122). This approach will ensure that the tree works will not 'deliberately' or 'intentionally/recklessly' disturb, injure or kill any bats that

may be in occupancy at the time. The precautionary measures to be adopted include:

- A toolbox talk delivered to the arborists before the tree works by a suitably licensed ecologist detailing how bats use trees, legal protections, working methods (i.e. section-felling), potential roost features, actions to be taken if a bat is found and personal safety procedures;
- A repeat inspection of the potential roost feature (PRF) by a suitably licensed ecologist, immediately before the works. If bats are found to be present during the inspection and/or there is evidence of roosting bats and they will be impacted by the works, a mitigation licence will be required for the works to proceed;
- A section-felling approach, taking care when exposing PRF (i.e. peeling bark, splits, wounds and holes), under the direct supervision of a suitably licensed ecologist. Each section should be carefully lowered to the ground and checked for bats by a licensed ecologist; and
- During the soft-felling process, if any roosting bats are found, work must stop immediately and advice sought from the licensed ecologist; a mitigation licence will likely be required for the felling of the tree (if it has not been felled to the ground at this point).

9.4.2 If these precautionary measures are adhered to, the work to the tree is considered highly unlikely to contravene legislation protecting bats. Therefore, a European Protected Species mitigation licence is not required at this stage to allow these works to go ahead lawfully.

9.4.3 In the long-term, dark corridors should be retained on site along the western, southern and northern boundaries, thereby maintaining foraging and commuting corridors for bats across the site. Exterior lighting on the new building should be avoided, but where essential, lighting with low or no UV content, i.e. warm white LED lamps (2700K or below), should be used in place of mercury and metal halides and luminaires or other directional light accessories should be used to ensure that light spillage onto the woodland and scrub is avoided (BCT and ILP, 2023).

9.4.4 If any trees within the woodland are proposed for removal in the future for health and safety reasons for example, it is recommended that a ground level

tree assessment is carried out by an ecologist to assess any potential impacts on roosting bats.

9.5 Nesting Birds

- 9.5.1** The scattered patches of scrub removal should be completed outside of the peak bird nesting season (March to August) or alternatively, following an inspection by an ecologist confirming that there is no current nesting activity. If nesting birds are discovered prior to or during the course of any work, work should stop immediately and should only continue once bird nesting has finished i.e., young have fledged and left the nest.

9.6 Great Crested Newt

- 9.6.1** Although the risk is low, to avoid the risk of contravening legislation and harming individual great crested newts (GCN) and other amphibians during the works, the following precautionary avoidance measures will be adopted during the construction phase:
- Prior to construction any piles of rubble, bricks and brash on the site should be removed carefully by hand under the supervision of an ecologist; the removal of stacked items should be timed to take place outside of the winter (late October through to February) to minimise the chance of disturbing newts sheltering beneath materials during the hibernation season;
 - During construction, any open excavations and trenches should be backfilled before nightfall or alternatively, escape ramps should be installed to allow individual GCN (and other small animals) to escape if they become trapped;
 - Any building materials or materials excavated during the development that need to be stored on site prior to use/disposal should be positioned on hard standing and raised off the ground on pallets or in skips to avoid them providing temporary resting places or hibernation sites for individual GCN; and
 - In the unlikely event that GCN is encountered during the construction phase, the works will stop immediately and a licensed ecologist will be called onto site to attend to the GCN and liaise with Natural England

on how to proceed; work will continue only once written advice has been received.

9.7 Reptiles

- 9.7.1** Since undertaking the walkover survey on the 4th September 2024 the site has been partially cleared and therefore opened up the tussocky grassland. Therefore an updated reptile survey is recommended prior to site clearance to confirm the status of reptiles on site and determine whether reptile exclusion is necessary or if non-licensed avoidance measures can be used during the site clearance.

9.8 Badgers

- 9.8.1** Although there are no currently active sett entrances on site, there is potential for badgers to use the site in the future and therefore they could be impacted during site clearance and ground excavations. It is recommended that an updated badger survey is carried out prior to commencement of site clearance, to confirm continued absence.

9.9 Small mammals

- 9.9.1** Mammals such as hedgehogs may be negatively impacted by construction works and therefore any open excavations and trenches should be backfilled before nightfall, or alternatively, escape ramps should be installed to allow animals to escape if they become trapped.

9.10 Invertebrates

- 9.10.1** The site has the potential to support a diverse invertebrate community particularly saproxylic invertebrates (those associated with dead and decaying wood). Any piles of dead or decaying wood should be moved prior to construction to unaffected wooded areas and additional piles created. In addition, the grassland, scrub and woodland habitats are proposed to be enhanced (refer to **Section 9.10**) specifically targeting an increase in species and structural diversity in each habitat, which will in turn benefit invertebrates.

9.11 Ecological Enhancement Opportunities

9.11.1 The proposals present opportunities for the ecological enhancement of the site. In outline, the following provide opportunities for enhancement:

- Landscaping to incorporate native planting within the new vegetated garden habitats within the development area;
- Enhancement of the retained neutral grassland through low intensity management to create a structurally diverse sward with areas of taller and shorter grassland and enhancement of the blackthorn scrub with rotational cutting to create a diverse range of age within the scrub;
- Creation of habitat features on the woodland and scrub margins e.g. log piles (including partially buried log piles), open compost heaps and hibernacula (partially buried piles of logs, stones covered with turf) to create cover and habitat for invertebrates and other small fauna such as small mammals and reptiles;
- The provision of integrated bat boxes on the new building on site;
- The provision of house sparrow or starling nest boxes at the eaves of the new building; and
- If fencing is necessary, it should be open such as post or rail or have specific gaps beneath (13cm square) on each boundary (apart from the roadside boundary) to allow the free movement of wildlife such as hedgehogs
- Due to the roost switching behaviour exhibited by tree-roosting bats and to prevent the reduction in the roosting resource following the tree removal of T122, a Schwegler 2FN Bat Box (or an approved functional equivalent) will be fixed onto a suitable neighbouring mature tree to compensate for the tree being removed had PRFs.

10 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1 – LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Amphibians

The seven native species of amphibian receive protection under the W&AC 1981 (as amended). The four widespread and common amphibians (common frog, toad, smooth newt and palmate newt) receive only limited protection – making their sale illegal.

The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) receives full protection under the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and under the Habitat Regulations 2019. The combined legislation makes it illegal to:

- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take a great crested newt;
- possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a great crested newt; and
- intentionally or recklessly disturb great crested newts; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating animals, to hibernate or migrate.

Great crested newts (*T. cristatus*) and common toads (*Bufo bufo*) are species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England ('UKBAP Priority Species') under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Badgers

Badgers are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. The Act makes activities such as development that would harm or disturb badgers or damage, obstruct or destroy their setts illegal. If badgers are to be affected

by the proposed development, activities can be undertaken only under a licence issued by Natural England.

Bats

All bat species in Britain are fully protected by the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and by the Habitat Regulations 2019. In summary, the combined legislation makes it an offence to:

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;
- deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate; or to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
- deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Birds

All wild birds are protected under the W&CA 1981 (as amended). The Act makes it an offence to kill, injure or take a wild bird or to damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird whilst in use or being built. Species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, such as barn owls and kingfishers, are afforded additional protection against disturbance while nesting.

Hazel dormice

Hazel dormice receive full protection under the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and under the Habitat Regulations 2019. These make it illegal to:

- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take a dormouse;
- possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a dormouse;
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a dormouse; and
- intentionally or recklessly disturb dormice; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating animals, to hibernate or migrate.

Invasive non-native plants

The W&CA 1981 (as amended) provides the primary controls on the release of non-native species into the wild in Great Britain. It is an offence under Section 14(2) of the Act to 'plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9, Part II. The species listed in the Act include Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*).

Otters

Otters are fully protected by the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and by the Habitat Regulations 2019. In summary, the combined legislation makes it an offence to:

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by an otter;
- deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb otters; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of otters to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
- deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Reptiles

The four widespread reptiles most likely to be encountered (adder, grass snake, slow worm and common lizard) are protected under the W&CA 1981 (as amended). The Act makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, possess or sell any of the species.

The aforementioned species are all listed as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England ('UKBAP Priority Species') under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Water voles

Since April 2008, water voles have received full protection under Section 9 in Schedule 5 of the W&CA 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take water voles or to possess or control live or dead water voles or derivatives. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly

damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection or intentionally or recklessly disturb water voles whilst occupying a structure or place used for that purpose.

The water vole is listed as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England (*'UKBAP Priority Species'*) under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Wild mammals

Under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 it is an offence to intentionally inflict unnecessary suffering, as specified by the Act, on any wild mammal.

APPENDIX 2 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



3. Large area of unmanaged other neutral grassland with tussocks of grasses and ruderal vegetation present to the south of the blackhorn scrub (gc3).



4. Small pile of bricks towards southern boundary of the proposed development site (g3c, TN1).



5. Small area of unmanaged neutral grassland towards the eastern side of the proposed site development boundary (g3c).



6. Mature oak tree was situated within the centre of the other neutral grassland (g3c, TN2)



7. The patch of mixed scrub along the south eastern boundary of the site within the other neutral grassland (g3c).



8. Dense blackthorn encroaching onto the grassland around the woodland edges (h3a)



9. Brook just outside the site's boundary to the north.



10. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland towards the western side of the site (w1f).



11. Lowland mixed deciduous woodland towards the western side of the site (w1f).



12. Ground flora amongst the woodland (w1f)



13. Fallen dead wood present within the woodland (w1f).



14. Dead tree with numerous features present in the woodland (w1f).



15. Dead tree with numerous features present in the woodland (w1f).



16. Remains of a brick wall within the woodland (TN4).



17. Pile of bricks within the woodland (TN4).



18. Shed present within the western side of the woodland (TN5)



19. Native hedgerow with trees along the southern boundary of the site (h2a).

APPENDIX 3 – UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION BASELINE HABITATS PLAN



Land north of Barkham Road Barkham

Preliminary Ecological Survey UK Habitat Baseline Survey Plan

Key:

- Target notes
- Ownership boundary
- Red Line Boundary copy

HABITATS

- Blackthorn scrub
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- Other neutral grassland

Mapped by: Vicky Potts MCIEEM

Date: May 2026

Scale: A4 1 : 800

JOHNWENMAN
ecological consultancy

APPENDIX 4 – PROPOSED PLAN